

Partners in Education: Eric Parquet

By Shawnta S. Barnes – December 7, 2018



Principal Eric Parquet

Education professionals know the task of shaping children's futures can be difficult yet rewarding. The hours are long and they don't end when students go home and some educators go home to another educator. This series aims to highlight dynamic education duos who find a way to balance being immersed in the world of education at school and many times at home too.

Eric Parquet is the principal of Henry W. Longfellow Medical/STEM Middle School 28 in Indianapolis Public Schools. The 2016-17 school year is the first year for this Medical/STEM focused school. A former Chemistry teacher and administrator in Pike Township, Parquet believed becoming the leader of this school was the perfect fit for him.

Shawnta Barnes: Who inspires you?

Eric Parquet: Both of my parents inspire me and my father inspires my leadership. I came from a family of educators; my mom was a school counselor and my dad was a former assistant principal and then a district level student advocate. Although my parents are educators, I didn't see that initially as my path.

I went to Xavier as a pharmacy major. The summer after my sophomore year, I went to my old school to coach football. After that summer, I decided to enter education because I wanted to coach football. Once I entered the classroom, teaching became a love of mine and it wasn't just about football anymore. Then, I decided to move into school leadership.

SB: Describe an adversity you had to overcome as a leader.

EP: The biggest adversity I had to overcome was opening up a new school and getting the word out about who we are, the mission, and the programming. Luckily, I was hired the January before so I was able to get my feet wet and prepare for the position. I went into every K-6 school in the district and talked to parents and students. My next task was to quickly hire staff and build the expectations and culture I wanted to bring into the building with my team.

SB: What has been your greatest triumph as a leader?

EP: I think my staff and I did a good job of opening up our school with 320 students. We plan to grow to 450. Our kids come from all over the city and they come to work hard every day. I am blessed with a wonderful staff who brought the vision I have for this school to life.

SB: STEM has become a buzzword recently in education. How do you incorporate STEM throughout your curriculum to ensure it is truly a STEM school?

EP: First, we want to make sure STEM happens in all subjects, not just science and math. STEM is represented in social studies, English, PE and art.

As a school, we read four novels in our English classes, but each novel has a STEM focus. Also, we have school wide thematic units. This week our thematic unit is field medicine. In social studies, students learned how field medicine was used during the Revolutionary War and they had an opportunity to compare it to field medicine today. English classes incorporated field medicine vocabulary into their lessons.

Through Project Lead the Way, our students take project-based learning courses. Each course is a semester long. In seventh grade, students will take Medical Detectives and Design & Modeling and in 8th grade, students take Computer Science and Automation & Robotics.

Our programming feeds into Arsenal Tech and Crispus Attucks High School. Most of our 8th-grade students are choosing to attend Crispus Attucks next school year. I have built relationships with both principals to ensure we have a strong feeder system. For example, high school students from Attucks will be at our Medipalooza.

SB: How are you addressing the need for more minorities to enter the STEM profession in your school?

EP: Our school is majority minority. We encourage our students to pursue STEM careers in the future. STEM employers also need more females. The demand is there; we just need our students to be equipped and ready to pursue the careers.



Principals Eric and Keana Parquet with their two sons.

SB: How do you find balance between personal and professional life especially being married to a principal?

EP: We both go home and watch TV with our computers on our lap. We find that sometimes our conversations will go right back to education, but we embrace it. We both love what we do and I think it helps our relationship.

SB: What advice do you have for other educators considering principalship?

EP: You have to have a passion for students and student learning. You have to believe all kids can learn and be successful even ones from difficult backgrounds; you must show love.

SB: What legacy do you hope to leave as a school leader?

EP: I just want kids to understand that we have their best interest and we want to see them successfully graduate from high school, go on to college and work in the STEM field when they get older.

SB: Any final thoughts?

EP: Indianapolis Public Schools gets a bad wrap sometimes, but this has been the best move I have made from a career standpoint. We have great kids and great teachers and we are doing a good job educating our students.

Click [here](#) to read about Eric Parquet's wife Principal Keana Parquet.