



## Teachers Aren't the Only Ones Leaving the Profession; Administrators are Leaving Too

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The coronavirus pandemic put a strain on the education profession. Teachers shifted from in person education to remote education with no notice and had to figure out how to make it work so students could learn. This was on top of trying to survive the pandemic and care for themselves and their loved ones. The pressure was too much. The pandemic became the straw that broke the camel's back and pushed some teachers to leave the profession. They weren't alone. Some administrators had the same idea.

According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), “Forty-five percent of principals report that pandemic working conditions are accelerating their plans to leave the profession.” I understand that decision. During the 2019-2020, I accepted my first school administration job. It was not the first administrator job I had been offered, but the first one I chose to accept. Despite having a P-12 building administrator license in addition to my four teaching licenses, I was not sure if I was ready to take that leap. During the summer of 2019, I decided I would find out if I was cut out for school administration work.

The role I accepted was a middle school academic dean. When I told my parents, they asked, “What do you actually do?” *Sidenote: charter schools should spend less time creating fancy titles and more time creating quality schools.* At this particular school, the principal supervised no teachers; the academic deans did. During my time in the role, I supervised the middle school social studies department, the middle school English department, and the K-8 electives team. I hired teachers, and when necessary, I terminated teachers. I also coached teachers, conducted professional developments, managed timecards, and completed teacher evaluations.

Although I am confident that I was cut out for the job and my team repeatedly told me I was a great supervisor, I was completely burned out with little support from the administration above me. I was stuck in the middle trying to meet the needs of my teachers and students while staying on top of COVID-19 requirements and guidance and implementing the plans of the administration above me regardless of whether the plans made any sense. I ended up isolated and was asked to address situations that should have come from above me.

I had a teacher yell in my face after our school’s first in person event. The teacher yelled at me after I sent her an email earlier in the day asking her to follow the protocol for reporting concerns about the cafeteria food quality instead of sharing the information with students. Another administrator was present and stood there with tears welling up in her eyes. The principal agreed that I did not do anything wrong and that I followed proper protocol, but I was asked to explain to this individual how the behavior of her yelling in my face while wagging her finger in my face could be seen by me as a Black woman and she as an older white woman.

We went through five COVID-19 plans as we slowly brought different grades back to campus. Preparing for each phase in addition to prepping for the next school year, as well as my normal daily activities, was a lot of work. During the 2020-2021, I was somehow functioning on 3-5 hours of sleep daily. I also rarely drink coffee, so this was without caffeine. Although I kept being informed that I was doing a great job and even earned a performance bonus, it was clear

my job was not taking equity work seriously, the leaders above me lacked the competency to support and grow me professionally, and that I would completely burn out if I did not walk away.

The worse part was how I was treated when my dad died. He died while I was recovering from surgery. I kept receiving communication asking when I would return, and I was not given five days of bereavement, only three. When I pointed out that this is not standard, I was brushed off. However, after my pushback and HR talking to multiple schools, they decided to up the bereavement days to five for the death of a close loved one starting with the 2021-2022 school year. On the day I returned back after my dad's funeral, I was told that I did not appear to be invested in the job. If I could not show my investment, my job would be posted. I asked, "How am I supposed to look after the death of my dad?" My principal's response was silence. This action along with others were the final straws that told me I needed to get out of there.

I began thinking about what I would do if I wasn't a teacher, an academic coach, or an administrator. In May, I decided to shift into education consulting full-time by starting my own business Blazing Brilliance LLC. I have never felt such liberation. Over the past few years, I had to turn down consulting opportunities because school leaders want people who can come during the school day and not only after school hours.

Unless building-level administrators get more support this exodus will continue. I was not willing to risk any more of my mental or physical health over the title of administrator. I'm not chasing titles; I'm chasing liberation.