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Hey Shawnta! I Hate My School, My Principal, and My Job. I Love the Students, but I Don't Think I Can Make It

Through This Year. What Should I Do?

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October 20, 2022

Hey Shawnta!

I hate my school. I hate my principal. I hate my job. I love the students but don't think I can make it through this year. What should I do?

Sincerely,

Love the Kids; Hate the Job

Hi Love the Kids; Hate the Job,

Whew! You ain't said nothin' but a word!

I had to switch over to non-standard English to express the gravity of how your question made me feel. I've been there. Trust and believe that!

I love the show Stranger Things. In the first season, the song "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" by The Clash was featured many times. Stay or go are your options. Let's look at staying first.

If You Stay ...

If you stay through the end of the school year, are there ways that your situation can improve? Is there an administrator besides your principal you can confide in—or maybe an instructional coach or a colleague? Having someone you can confide in about how you feel might give you an extra boost to press on throughout the year. Also, if possible, limit the extra time you spend at school. If you have additional tasks to complete after your contract time ends, move to another location to complete your work, whether it is a coffee shop or your home. Being physically in a space that brings you no joy longer than you have to can harm your mental health.

If your mental health is being impacted to your detriment, I suggest you leave. A healthy and happy teacher is the best teacher for students.

If You Go ...

If you go, you have two options (1) leave as soon as possible or (2) leave at the end of a term. If you choose option 1, you might have guilt about how your students will perform or how they will feel about you leaving. Yes, there will be some students who are hurt and sad, but your students are not getting the best version of you, and that is not fair to them.

If you have a partner whose income can cover you, take a break from teaching. Use that time to determine if teaching is the right career path for you. If it is not, make a plan for a new career path. If you think you only need a new school and a new administrator, make sure you work with your next school to find the best time to

leave. It is the middle of the school year, and they will be able to see on your job application that you are currently employed. Administrators typically have experience receiving a teacher from another school mid-year and should be able to work with you.

If you choose option 2, be strategic and try to leave at the end of the school year. While making your exit plan, ensure you are still teaching students to the best of your abilities and think about what you can put on your resume from your current job. If you don't have enough highlights, think about the activities you can participate in that you can later put on a resume when it's time to leave. If you can't make it until the end, try to make it to the end of the first semester. An exit is always cleaner at a natural breaking point.

Only once in my career have I left during the school year. I bounced in September, but I wanted to leave at the end of the previous school year. The principal convinced me to stay and promised it would get better. It did not. Whatever you decide, your decision is O.K., and you don't need anyone else's validation.

Shawnta