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|  | Thank you very much Amanda, I am going to start with the first question, how long have you been in the teaching profession. |
|  | Teaching profession, is 36 years now, urm ja in 2007, no 2004 I decided I had it, I am going out of the whole thing, then it was on and I was post level one. Then in they asked me to come back and just help out, and since then I am back again. |
|  | So then how long have you been serving as a principal, that is in total, that is at this school and if you have been a principal at another school. |
|  | No, 2 and a half years now, as of the 1st of April, the biggest April fool in 2020. |
|  | Laughs, okay, them tell me, what is your view of a successful school in terms of learner performance. |
|  | Right, in terms of learner performance, the teachers must have enough knowledge of whatever they are teaching and then they also have to follow the curriculum but then there must also be more than just the curriculum. If you want your learners to do well, you cannot just feed them porridge you have to put the milk with as well. And that is one thing I can tell you of our school. Last year when we started with all of this we didn’t have knowledge of teams. So we had to start teaching without the knowledge of teams. So I first had to train all my teachers then we had to start with the learners. But if I look back now, how they are handling teams at this moment in time they are outing the milk with the porridge. |
|  | So would you say the way, or rather is that a contributing factor towards the academic success of learners. |
|  | Yes, definitely, definitely. The thing is Brandon, you cannot tell the child all the time, yaay you must come with your books to school and you must learn. There must be something I must give him to learn in the first place, secondly I must give him the “lus” to want to learn, difficult as it may be, but If I am not enthusiastic about school and teaching how can I ask my learner to be about his school work. And whatever I project is what will be a deciding factor if the learner will want to learn or not. If it is needed at a later stage to just give him a smack behind (Both laughs) the head and remind him the importance of school, then we have to do it. The thing is, I have to put corrective measures in place to ensure the academic success of the learners. So even if I have to make a big deal out of something small he did, the fact that he wrote a 1 and didn’t do the rest of the question, he started, he made an effort. And from that effort you must make a hellava thing as if it is that I won the lotto of 5 million. The child will then realise okay, I wrote a 1, let me try and do the second one. I think many a times, especially you in mathematics, why is the child not doing his homework? Because he does not know how to do it. So for that child to struggle with a problem and to hear ag no you did it wring it must be done this that and the other. Urm but to tell him, okay, that first part you can do, but let’s do the next steps together so that he can confidently do questions 1, 2, 3 and 4, so that there can always be an improvement. |
|  | So urm, that was answered very well thank you. SO urm, as a school, that gets learners from poor communities that faces inordinate hardships. Communities like elsies and ravensmead and so on, |
|  | Yaaaaaaaa |
|  | But you still manage to achieve a 95% or above 90% pass rate in the NSC examination. So then, would you say that your school is successful? |
|  | Yes, we are successful and the reason for that is we have the discipline structure in place. If we did not have that, then it would not be the case where we can get the 95% pass. |
|  | So can you just elaborate on your discipline structure |
|  | Discipline and values comes together. So it’s not the person is standing right in front of you and you break him down and hope he builds up himself. Have to make a connection that whatever was wrong and link it to the values of my school. And the main thing is responsibility. And that is something you must have after the school until the day that you die. So responsibility is my main focus. So if you stand in front of me, are you able to say that I can put a tick next to responsibility for you. And I want the learners to understand that if you don’t do your homework or of you don’t attend your class or of you dot attend school for that matter then responsibility becomes a question mark and you have to take ownership of your own situation and the only way that you can do that id to take up responsibility and to say ok I am willing to do this, I am responsible for whatever I have to do and take it further from there. |
|  | Ok good, so then how do you as an individual feel about continuous professional development? |
|  | It’s something that must be done. It’s like a doctor, would you like to go to a doctor that graduated in 1962 and tell you now what to do without continuously upskilling himself. And I think that is… that is a bit of a problem with teachers. Teachers think that when I am done, I am done. And I am also one of that that said I will never take a book again, but the one thing that yiu must remember you don’t have to take a book physically, you don’t have to enrol yourself in one other a course. You can do short courses, you can do a bit of reading, you can simply speak to other people and become part of a community or whatever the case may be so that you can learn from other people. And I think that is one of the things that teachers are afraid to do. They don’t want to sit down with someone and discuss a situation because they are afraid of criticism. And that’s one thing of teachers, they don’t like critics. And I think that’s our weakness. I had a boy here this morning and I said to him all of us make the wrong decisions sometimes. So it’s not that we are angels, we cannot make mistakes, but we have to learn from our mistakes. So, urm, the same is, when I teach accounting, and if I am not totally sure, I will tell the learners, jissie, I am self not sure now but I will find out and get back to you. I didn’t know this but this that and the other. So I think the fact that you can acknowledge that you don’t have all the knowledge is really okay, but it creates the space for you to develop yourself. And that will help you build on yourself and therefor will make you a learner forever. |
|  | Mmmmm 100%, so tell me, how often do you as the principal develop yourself, and your staff because I hear you speak about teams and you had to train your teachers. |
|  | Okay, If I look at me as the principal, there is a lot of developing opportunities now with the WCED because they have the means of social media and stuff like that they can use it, you don’t have to go to a specific venue. So the contact is definitely more than what it was in the past. But for me as a principal, I like to connect things that happens in life to what is happening at school. What I mean by this is, there are a lot happening outside of school. One big thing for example. I own a horse, my horse taught me to discipline myself and also to discipline a child. Because I am a very energetic person, because if I walk down the passages, everyone will stand because here I come. So it’s the way that I carry myself. SO the energy I have I had to learn to control because some people can take a lot of energy and others become very anxious. So even if it has nothing to do with education, the fact that I learnt how to work with my horse helped e with discipline in my own school. It also helped me to understand that there isn’t only a whit and a black side, there is a grey area but I must be in control of the grey area so that I can fix what is not functional at school. Like the academic success of learners. A 30% pass is good enough for me for a learner that failed miserable. So it’s necessary that I develop myself to gain better insight into good leadership and teaching practices. And the other thing that I said is, there is short courses, but I like the short courses for finance for example or how do I cope with HR or something like that, because at this moment I am a teacher yes, but I also have to manage other people but isn’t a teacher also a manager of people? In this case just of children. You just have to treat that learner with the same respect. Those are the types of courses or reading material I am very interested in. |
|  | What is your opinion, your honest opinion on IQMS? |
|  | I don’t know of IQMS is the correct way of doing it, we are moving over to QMS now and that where we feeding back is more than once a year, it’s like a working document, so you going to say right, this is what I project, and then in 3 months’ time, right let’s check what happened or why did it jot happen. SO they are forcing you to put something in place, while IQMS is just something we filled in so that we can just get done with the tedious process. But I really think the QMS that we moving over to know will have a bigger effect because you as a teacher will be evaluated more than once in just one year. It must be done, but If I look at the way the WCED and DBE is handling it, I cannot say that IQMS is going to be successful. I have my doubts. |
|  | So are you saying IQMS is not fruitful because the principle is there and its good, but teachers just do it to get it over and done with? |
|  | Yes, at the moment IQMS serves no purpose. Its more about the 1.5%. That’s the only reason teachers do it besides from the fact that it is mandatory from head office. |
|  | Okay, then, what kinds of leadership styles, according to you, are there? |
|  | Look there is a lot, it can be the one where I am sitting on the chair and you are doing everything and I mind my own business. Or it can be the one where we say right, we are a team, we are going to do this together and I allow you to give your input ad we discuss it. Or it can be where I tell people this is the story, no discussions and I expect you to do that or it can be a combination of the lot. If I look at the leadership in our schools, a lot is lassies faire, “laat die saak maar net an gan” and that’s the struggle we our schools face with the leaders. (Both laughs), “en hoop niks gebeur nie.” |
|  | So then, which of the following leadership styles you would say you employ as the principal of the school. |
|  | You see sometimes, there is a need for me to say that look no discussions allowed, this is what it is and It needs to be done. But normally, I would gp for the transformational leadership and participative leadership. I… I…. I really like it to empower my people, I want to empower you, so most of the time I am a transformational leader because I want you to give your input and we take it from there and discuss what is going on. If you can just think back to the day we had the fun day for example I told you here you go, take it and run with it and now and then I asked you bring the following back to me and I gave my feedback around what you were busy with and it was a great success because I have to allow the person to use own initiative but I must also tryst them that they are responsible enough to take up what needs to be done. I am not scared to work, if something needs to be done, I am not going to ask you to do something and I self don’t want to do it, therefore I say I am the participative one because I allow you to work with me. But I think I am more transformational than anything else by checking how can you do something for me and how can I help you to grow in that regard. Because in 5 years’ time I am gone, and then someone else must take this chair and I would like someone who will take this chair to do better than what I did not to first gain the knowledge to be able to sit in the chair. |
|  | SO urm, can you just give me an example of how you used transformational leadership in the day to day functionality of the school. |
|  | If I can take the SMT for example, normally we only had the “Dag-bestuur” of three people that called the shots, the SMT under my leadership is 16 people, so I have all the post levels on there and also I have the people that works with the learner’s problems, like MS September, and I have the RCL representative there as well as the school council. Because we are a unit, there cannot only be three people that decides what is the way forward. Even if we are sitting there, I will tell you this is your portfolio, this is what we need, lets discuss it quickly and then I give it over to you. If there is need for me to receive feedback, I will say right, I want to see you at this or that time so that we can just quickly discuss it. Butu I give you a lot of rope, although I have my eyes where it and ears on the ground at all time I will definitely let you go and do your thing. The moment I see there is a situation, I will pull you back and say let’s correct this together and there you go again. And I think now that we have a bigger SMT, it really makes a difference in the day to day running of the school because I don’t think there is anyone in the staffroom who is afraid to stand up and say something. Which is great because we did not have that situation before and I also have an open door policy, I can be busy with an email or whatever, If one of my staff comes, I will stop immediately because you would not come in here to ask me something if you didn’t think it was important. |
|  | I love that and I agree with you, so, how do you monitor curriculum delivery of the teachers in the classroom? In terms of content and teaching. |
|  | Okay, let us go back to our hierarchy, so if I go to my subject head, the subject head will be the first level. Up till now we did not do regular classroom visits because of Covid, but I had a meeting with them on Wednesday and I told them as of next year I need to see a register where you do your class visits and where you can give me feedback on what is happening on in these teachers’ classes but I also need you to monitor what is happening with the results and maybe see that there is something you can help this person with to improve the result so whatever the case may be. With accounting and that is where teams come in, because we have a team for the teachers and whatever I develop for the subject I will drop into the team and the rest of the department will also drop something in there so I have a whole library that I can use for my classes. So if I see my learners are struggling with cash flow statements then I will go to that team library and see but what else is there. Between myself and the other accounting teacher, I ask her, to come to my class and teach them a certain topic she’s much better in than what I am and I will sit in, or I ask her to sit in one of my lessons where I know she can benefit from. I also like to listen to the feedback of the learners when I sit in her class, because that will tell me immediately if she’s doing a better job, but again, there we go back to this whole thing of criticism. DO you see it as criticism or do you see it as growth for yourself? SO we have the hierarchy is terms of curriculum delivery which starts at the subject heads, then we have the files that comes to the head of academics and then it comes to me to sign off. So we are trying to do more class visits but Covid – ja. What can I say about Covid, there is a lot of things that one can do, but with the restrictions of Covid, it’s just keeping you back. The fact that the learners isn’t coming each and every day. Just this morning I told the staff, we don’t have the staff briefings in the morning anymore, but no no no, we are going back to that so that we can start the day on the right note and not let any important information just disappear into thin air because everyone is not reading their WhatsApp messages on the same time. |
|  | So then in terms of planning, so tell me about the micro and the macro planning of the school that ensures the curriculum is delivered successfully. |
|  | Okay, one of the deputy principals is the head of academics so she has her own way of doing things so again I have to trust that my subject head is up and running I also had a meeting with them on Wednesday where I said to them are certain things that needs to be in place, and that is what I am going to check, does each and everyone know what the ATPS and TREPS are for and are they teaching the correct work at the correct time, so the subject head has to print it out, sign it off as correct and bring it to me. SO it’s not possible for me to know did you do what you are supposed to do for mathematics because it is not my subject but I can check it against the ATPS and TREPS to ensure that the work schedules are in place, so we have to have a monitor type of system, that’s the only way that we will be able to tell whether people are doing what they are supposed to be doing so I have to rely on my subject heads because I am not a specialist of the subjects as the first person to ensure that everything is in place and after that I can monitor it with the HoD or whoever the case may be. |
|  | So your subject head is the go to person in terms of curriculum delivery and the teaching thereof. So then how does your academic head lead the staff in terms of curriculum development |
|  | If think about that, it falls back to the training that we receive from the district office. So the districts head of curriculum will liaise with the academic head of the school with training on curriculum development and delivery. The district office is the people that decides on when we will have meeting and training around the development and delivery of the curriculum. But the Academic head will assess our situation at our schools regarding our subjects and if there are issues, the academic head will speak to the subject advisors of the district and tell them listen we have a few issues with your subjects, we need guidance, the academic head will give a report to the advisor and tell them to speak to their people. Because the subject advisors are also supposed to give me feedback and guidance on the subjects because that is there job, so I call them in and tell them listen, Mathematics is struggling, this is the reports I received from the subject head and the head of academics, what do you suggest because I am not the specialist but I need to provide them with the necessary support. My point is, as the principal, I have to be in control to be able to say everything is well or we have a problem, what measures are we putting in place to fix this. |
|  | Ja, so by definition a novice teacher is a beginner teacher, however, they still have to perform the duties of a veteran teacher, so keeping this in mind, how do you monitor and support novice teachers in the delivery of the curriculum, ensuring that it is delivered successfully and effectively. |
|  | Shjoe, I also think we have our ideas around a novice teacher, urm if I think back when I was a novice teacher when I started out that was in Uniondale, I don’t know if you know where that is, but I was appointed for accounting and for business, but when I got there, they told me, oh by the way, you have to teach typing too and I only had typing for Grade 8 and grade 9 so I could not type. So then I had to make a decision what I am going to do with this and I took responsibility, that’s where I get back to values in schools because I have an ownership now of something and I must perform. So the same with the novice teachers in other schools, it’s easier for a novice teacher when there are more than one person on a team because they can ask around and I can ask also the subject head for guidance or the pace setter please take this person and make he or her knows what is going on but if you are the only person in the subject team that’s another story because again, the principal doesn’t know all the info on all the curriculum so it’s easier for me say, “hier gan dit reg” because I know I have more than one person that’s looking after that new teacher but in a school where there is only one person, I don’t know how they do that you must trust that person that he or she is doing the right thing. The only way that you will be able to see if something is not going well is if you look at the marks and no one is passing, so then you can know something is wrong. If there is at least 20% of the learners that can get 90%, it can be that he learners is the problem. But if the entire class gets 20%, hallo wat gan hoer an? So either the work was not done or the teacher was not capable teaching that specific subject. So there are different ways in getting information to monitor a novice teacher, it just depends on the situation, is it a big school or a small school. But the support system for a novice teacher is very, very, very important |
|  | So then would you say, because I hear you speak about the pace setter and the subject head, are you saying the subject head or the pace setter becomes the mentor of the novice teacher should you appoint a teacher fresh from university? |
|  | No, the subject head becomes the mentor, the subject head uses the pacesetter to provide the notes and plan of action for the grade, it’s not the responsibility of the pacesetter to check if you know how to teach. The subject head is, is there to make sure you teaching the right thing at the right time in the right way. But again, you have to do class visits to see this or you have to look at the results that the teacher gets from an assessment. SO you won’t simply know of the person sits next to you and drinks a cup of tea, jy moet n beitjie effort on sit and the sad reality is there is not always time for that effort because the subject head is also a teacher and has her own load of work that must be done so it really becomes difficult, no really. If I can go back to Uniondale, in my accounting class I only had 8 learners and I was able to sit with them around a table and monitor their progress, so I could attend to specific learners, it doesn’t mean I am a great teacher, but the fact that I could attend to your needs, helped you to develop and obtain a good mark. Now, you sitting with 43 learners, jy gan n moerse groot tafel moet he om dai kinders by te sit. SO how many of that learners do you really have the contact with, how many of them do you know what they know and what they don’t know and I have to complete the curriculum, soits either you are with me or not. That is one of the problems I have with education, no one asks us on the ground what is going on. Now they are trying to write a new curriculum, ok hello? Why do you want to do that? To cover up for Covid? But what are you going to put into there? Did you ask me with what I struggled? Uh-uh, nog nie een briefie gekry nie, so how can they know what is the problem. |
|  | So are you saying at times you have to be a bureaucratic leader because the department are forcing you to submit documents of compliance? |
|  | Yes, most definitely, that’s why I say, sometime during the year, you will see the leadership style comes through. But if I can concentrate on what I want to do, I will definitely be the transformational leader and the participative one. But there are times where I say, this is where I draw the line, government wants the following and it must be like this. Especially now, they said we are writing an exam, now they have changed it to tests and some people already started to set their exam papers. So now everyone is going on, jaaa wat gan an, then I have to be a bureaucratic and say hello, that’s the story from the government, so we don’t have a choice. Are you going to lay down and take it like a child or are you going to get up and see where we can salvage the situation? |
|  | So then how do you go about ensuring that the day-to-day functionality in and outside of the classroom are executed to improve and maintain academic success of learners. |
|  | Discipline. Discipline for teachers and well as discipline for learners. So if you send a child down to the office with a discipline problem, I will make sure that it stops here and not go further back to the class. We have a situation now with grade 9A1, there is 5 learners who is giving us headaches, they are suspended now, you won’t believe it, but it’s a completely different class. So there must be discipline, but I also have to discipline my teachers because they know exactly what I expect form them. And if they don’t do it, I have to tell them, listen it cannot continue like this because it’s not only you who is going to be influenced by this, there is a whole community out there who is influenced by what you are doing. And the other thing is, there must be structure. The timetables must be right, the times for the day must be correct, the work schedules must be right so I ensure that these are in place so that the teacher cannot point a finger I did not know. They are my most important resource. And to make sure all of these is in place I need to make sure my subject heads are all ready for the task at hand in their subject departments. SO I need to check their files and their files must be correct and that is why I randomly call someone just to check their file as a form on monitoring. Ad its not to catch you out but really just to check if everything is in place. And If it’s not, I will tell and, and you can fix it because you won’t know if something is wrong if your superior doesn’t have a look at it. And especially now that the TREPS that keep on changing, you as subject head must make sure that the ATPS are updated and the curriculum is adjusted accordingly. SO I told the subject heads I want to see the correct versions of their TREPS and ATPS with their signature and the stamp of the school because it changed so many times this year already. So it was easy in the beginning because we didn’t have Covid, the ATPS were the same, now it changes constantly. So it’s easy to drop information and no one knows about it, and now it comes to exams and we realise but a topic must be examined but it was never taught because I did not get a working document where this was scratched out and this was added and so on so the responsibility of the subject head is a great responsibility and I don’t think they always realise it. |
|  | I am listening to the way you speak and you make reference a lot to the subject heads plays a big role in the functionality of the academics of the school? |
|  | Yes, ja definitely. |
|  | Okay, we are almost done, so would you then say the principal plays a vital role in the academic success of learners |
|  | I think so because the principal is there to manage the structure. If I have the attitude if only coming here at 9 and leaving at 1, what is going to happen to the structure, the moment that your structure collapses then everything collapses. They know I am not someone that will walk in the corridors to look for something that is wrong but they also know that I am trying to keep everything in place and urm you must have a good relationship with your staff, the person that walk through that door in the morning must be a person that wants to be here if that is not the case, then very little will happen in the class which directly affects the academic success of learners. |
|  | Okay, then, how would you describe your relationship with the learners at the school? |
|  | The learners are very scared of me and I don’t know why. I think maybe it’s back to the energy thing, the way that I walk, the lipstick that I wear and that’s why I always wear dark lipstick that I wear because I want to make a statement like lions. They know that they can come speak to me but I also think they respect the fact that they know if the rule says so, that is what the rule says and that is what I am going to stand by. The moment I become the teacher the relationship also changes because I have noticed with all the classes that I have. I have a different kind of relationship with the learners that I teach. The others I don’t know me as a teacher and it can be that they read me wrong but they don’t take chances, so the respect between myself and the learners are definitely there. But if I look at when it was my birthday and the things that came up on social media and things like that, I think they are okay with me. They have a problem when they come in here and don’t agree with me but they also know that I am not going to put up a fight, I am just going back to the rule book, so ja, I also think it’s the way one handles them. I am a PT teacher if you don’t know because the principals must also teach a certain percentage of the day and I would really like to do accounting but I don’t have the time so I just help out if there is a need for me to do so. I love the teaching part, but I don’t have time for the admin part. So I teach PT and not one day did they wear the incorrect clothes or did not want to do PT because they know I stand with the rules so the respect is definitely there. |
|  | Okay, so do you think you create a positive learning atmosphere for the learners here at school? |
|  | Yes, I think so, with all the changes that has been done and the fact that they see whatever is going on in their lives in and outside of school is important to us. |
|  | I hear you used the word change and that is a very important word in my study as the framework revolves around a culture of change. So do you think that change was necessary to maintain the 90% pass at the school? |
|  | Yes, definitely, teams were introduced during the pandemic to maintain the results. The fact that the learners also lost their sports made it difficult because they did not feel that they belong anymore. No matric farewell and all of that. So we had to do something else to let the learners know that we are still a family, we have a challenges now yes, but we still a family. That’s why I asked the grade heads to submit the learners that are failing and I had all their parents in my office with them and had a cup of tea and we just chatted to understand where and why the learners went wrong and how are we going to save them from failing. This also helped the learners fell as if they belong. |
|  | Last question, is there perhaps a different approach you would use to improve or maintain the academic success of learners? |
|  | At this moment, no not really. Should my approach not work with upcoming grades, I will definitely change my approach. |
|  | Amanda, Thank you very ,much for your time. |