

Ep. 30 - New Principals

Transcript Export

<https://simonsays.ai>

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:10:10 - 00:00:46:21

Hello and welcome to the latest episode of The What's up APS? podcast I'm your host Frank Bellavia with school and community relations. It's been a while since we've chatted. It's been a busy school year so far but here we are with our new latest episode. In 2020 our first one and we're doing our new principals series that we've done the last couple of years and this time we're featuring David Horak With Abingdon elementary school. Jessica De Silva with our Long Branch Elementary School and Francis Legangeur from Fleet elementary school and we're here at Long branch I want to welcome all of you and thank you Jessica for hosting us today of course.

00:00:47:02 - 00:01:14:28

So as I said we did this new pop principals podcast series every year we talked to the new principals how their how their year is going so far and just to get to know the new principal so the community can know who are at the helm of our of our schools. So since Jessica you're hosting us today start right away with you. Just let us get to know you a little bit. Talk about your your background where you're from college family things like that.

00:01:15:29 - 00:01:18:03

Oh I grew up in Fairfax County Virginia.

00:01:18:05 - 00:01:55:15

So just down the street not too far from here I went to college I started off at Marist College and Kip's in New York on his division one basketball scholarship and then moved to Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg and finished up there and then I moved to Japan and taught English for two years to a Japanese middle school students and elementary school students and came back and started working at Fairfax County I started as a fifth grade teacher that moved to teaching sixth grade math seventh grade math eighth grade math. Then I became a math coach and then became an administrator at Fairfax County and then this is my first year as principal in Arlington County.

00:01:55:22 - 00:01:56:26

So I'm excited to be here.

00:01:57:00 - 00:02:02:03

Well welcome it sounds like you kind of been bouncing around a lot the last number of years.

00:02:02:07 - 00:02:25:15

Yeah yeah I think it's important to experience had lots of different experiences I've worked in super wealthy schools I've worked inside of one schools I've worked in schools in the middle of the road and just all of it has contributed to where I am today in the knowledge base that I have today. So I think it's important to move around and and have different experiences and. It makes you pay better. How was Japan. I was very tall in Japan.

00:02:25:17 - 00:02:33:00

I'm very tall. Yeah yeah. Everyone could see me coming from a long way away. It was great. I had a great time.

00:02:33:02 - 00:03:05:20

I was there for two years I did the JET program and I went in. So in Japan I was there in 2002 2004. So foreigners couldn't be the sole teacher in the classroom. So I was always the assistant teacher but because I had my education background allowed the teachers would defer to me to kind of lead the class and I did a lot of traveling. I've actually been all seven continents. I learned a lot. I studied Japanese in high school at Lake Braddock and so I want to continue learning a second language I didn't want to be someone who didn't know a second language.

00:03:05:25 - 00:03:45:03

And so. It was really it was really interesting it was interesting to see what education looks like in different countries. And because I have that education background that interested in getting to know people and you know through my travels it's always something that I talk about is with people as you know with education like here and how do you guys do this. How you do that. And I just I love talking to people and getting to know their stories. And I think that that helps me make decisions and and choose. Path that maybe work for more people than just work for a few that are going to open up with a commission one Kony to a Yankee Jessica I'm not going to turn hosting duties over to Francis to take over I don't really good.

00:03:45:09 - 00:03:49:24

He has a radio voice to tell me about Japan. FRANCIS

00:03:49:26 - 00:03:53:21

FRANCIS Well although to you next talked about your background and I know you've been in Arlington for a while.

00:03:54:28 - 00:04:26:01

Born and bred New Yorker. My family I'm actually the son of immigrants my family's from Haiti. Spence and I love New York went to SUNY Albany and played football as SUNY Albany moved to Detroit went to Michigan and then finally and in Michigan you kind of get over the cold. There's nothing like waking up with the weather man giving you a joke. It's a balmy zero outside to make it inside that ball Mesereau has to go.

00:04:26:26 - 00:04:57:10

So I move south to Atlanta where I spent 12 years as a teacher worked at a number I worked as a high school social studies teacher and a number of. I guess you could say title wonder no thought of it was tied to one until I became an administrator was just a school that you're working and work there. Then I became a furnace this week I would call it a social studies instructional lead for the county. Working with high school teachers on r

00:04:57:23 - 00:05:15:18

SL Well classes and not prep classes but I solo classes in increasing our our passing rate there received my doctorate at the universe West Georgia. And. Had the joy of. Meeting the mother of my two children and.

00:05:16:24 - 00:05:26:26

Then deciding to move back to Virginia a little bit moved not back to Virginia for me but moved to Virginia. So that just a little bit closer to family in New York City I started here

00:05:27:27 - 00:05:39:12

At Wakefield. Oh wow. It has been a. 2012. So time has flown into Wakefield as the assistant principal then moved to tuck a.

00:05:40:20 - 00:06:02:09

So that was kind of a sharp contrast from high school to elementary high school to elementary as it was mine. I guess you would say first real experience in the elementary classroom and just getting to understand the differences between high school and elementary and has a. Proud duty now to be the principal. Alice wistfully

00:06:03:13 - 00:06:07:18

Experience balmy 70 degree winters if only 70.

00:06:07:23 - 00:06:14:22

I did look at me in a couple of days ago I said you called me one week for the next few.

00:06:15:00 - 00:06:20:08

But when we do have those you know the polar vortex as I come down at least you know how to dress for it right.

00:06:20:15 - 00:06:31:15

I know how to dress for it. Naturally I talk to a few friends of mine who were there during the polar vortex. I asked and they said there's nothing like sitting in the house for five days. They didn't even intend to go outside.

00:06:32:16 - 00:06:39:02

So much of Southern California boy I don't need any coats. This is this is about as cold as I can dig.

00:06:39:18 - 00:06:56:26

Yeah. School doesn't close up there. When did they close. Well it had to pass minus 35. The snow is not an option. You always go to school. It was the temperature of minus thirty five fucking kids. It was a little too cold for the kid. Just look a little physiological.

00:06:58:19 - 00:07:02:29

So David let's talk about your background where you're from and I know you're also from Fairfax County.

00:07:03:23 - 00:07:05:00

Yeah well I

00:07:06:17 - 00:07:24:25

was actually born in Texas and my my father was in the army and then spent most of my life in Prince Wayne County that's where I graduate from. And then I went to a better Midwestern university in the university Notre Dame so unfortunately football game didn't go quite so well this year

00:07:27:03 - 00:07:49:10

and I will say in terms of the weather I will say that I have never I never want to hear the term lake effect snow ever again in my life. So I remember the first day in South Bend winter semester my freshman year I think the high that day was too. And and there is like three feet of snow on the ground and I thank goodness I had a big jacket. So

00:07:51:01 - 00:08:22:20

after college I went I actually did my grad through Notre Dame through a program called Lions for Catholic education. So similar to the Teach for America program I spent two years teaching in Mississippi and Biloxi Mississippi which I loved the wonderful area and then I came back to this area and I taught middle school social studies and then I became a equivalent of the Archie G resource teacher for the gifted but they call it events I can resource teacher then I was an IEP coordinator before I became an assistant principal

00:08:24:02 - 00:08:58:22

And I was assistant principal at two elementary schools before. Before I joined the had been in the community. And then you know kind of integral part of my story is I met my wife at the very first teacher train ever token Fairfax County so she was leading the training. And there was her first training ever as well so definitely love at first sight for because we're all new to our roles and all the sudden I walk in and met the instructor and been with her ever since. So. And she's also in education obviously she also has her page in gifted education so.

00:08:59:00 - 00:09:09:13

So we will have very enthralling slash boring conversations about gift education over the dinner table. We've literally created the handbook of gifted education for Fairfax County at the dinner table at least pieces of it.

00:09:10:21 - 00:09:19:19

So so that's so that's my background. Excellent. So you know we two of you have started to

00:09:20:28 - 00:09:39:26

Become principals of established schools. But Francis you have a unique start to the school year. Your your school moved and has a new building and a new name. You were fleet was formerly Henry just down the road and now you're in a new building with a new name. And how is that experience gone today.

00:09:41:02 - 00:09:54:20

You know I had the experience of working at Wakefield when we did the transition from old Wakefield to the new building. So I kind of understood the difficulty of the first year.

00:09:56:03 - 00:10:26:10

I don't think people really understand just how difficult it is to open a new building or really just to experience it. And we spoke about that early in the year to the staff before the school year even started. I told them this is probably going to be the hardest year of your professional career and it has nothing to do with the curriculum has nothing to do with the student. It is getting used to. Chess new everything. There's a new you're doing a new traffic pattern.

00:10:26:26 - 00:10:59:05

Your it's a new dismissal routine it's a new arrival. Everything is new so it just becomes a little bit more difficult. And at the same time when you are. Kind of moving into a new building one of the big is I think. The. Funny thing is that we had to do we had the name Art. We had to give ourselves a name. We had no mascot and no mascot no colors. We actually our first T-shirt that we ever produce is it's black and white.

00:10:59:19 - 00:11:30:04

The most bland color we could pick and so we couldn't. Kind of prejudice anyone to any particular color. So it was it was a fun and unique opportunity for the community to be involved. We set up a community voting for our colors for r r mascot and it was just exciting and it is one of those things that I was excited to be a part of and also to see that the Alice was fully family was so

00:11:31:20 - 00:12:03:12

Appreciative of the time and the thought that the staff took in just going about and honoring her in the building. So it's been it's been a joy but it comes with his kinks like anything new you get. There's some things you gotta kind of work out in Alice fully for those you don't know as a former Arlington educator and so she's had some historic your. Place in Arlington and that's why they chose to to rename the school after her

00:12:04:21 - 00:12:41:01

The mascot that the. Community chose out and the Falcons the fleet falcons and actually one of the great kind of. Ironic but just matches in the universe or crossing of stars are the colors that we chose were the ones that Alice wistfully loved in life which were crimson and white. So it just so happens that the community chose crimson and why it was a nomination from her family so they were even more static that another part of her exists in the building with the selection of our colors.

00:12:41:12 - 00:12:41:27

Excellent

00:12:41:29 - 00:12:52:13

Excellent. That's a great that's a great story. That's cool. Back to you Jessica. Talk about the long branch community and how it's been for you for the last few months since you got here.

00:12:52:29 - 00:13:42:18

Well we've had a great time getting to know each other. One of the really cool things about long Brad the long range beauty is that a lot of the current parents were actually former students from Long Branch and so they just have they really believe in in the branch and they really like they walk these halls when they were kids and so. You know they're they're just fun to talk to and listen to their stories and you know we worked together on lots of different things and I've just I felt very welcomed by by the community and

you know I see them every morning outside and we see each other in the afternoons for pickup and you know I've been fortunate enough to have lots of opportunities to talk with Adam and it's just it's really cool to be in such an established school in an established neighborhood where people are so passionate about about their school. That's

00:13:42:20 - 00:14:02:03

That's a really that's a fun feeling to have. And it's it's been. Really really hard using the word funding and ideas that the bunch. It's been a pleasure to be here and I'm really I feel like I haven't supposed to be here with them and we're on this journey together and I look forward to continue to work with them in the years to come.

00:14:02:29 - 00:14:06:21

David to talk about your community and how it's been going for you at Abingdon yes.

00:14:07:09 - 00:14:41:02

So one thing I learned about Abingdon is people really really love the school. It was the sense I got from the staff and the community was you know throughout the interview process and then my first few months of getting to know as it is how much how invested people are and in the school. I have never met a staff so many people on staff that live within walking distance. There's a number of staff members that live in that failing to neighborhood or very very close. And so I think that's a that's a nice compliment to the larger community of.

00:14:41:10 - 00:15:11:27

We have staff members who have children in the building. And so that's such a compliment to say you know I trust everyone else in this building to take care of my own children. And as you know I said my interviews of I want to go to a school that's in my own children to kind of build that school that you know I would sort of like the idealized school of what I want to send my my daughter and my son to. And so there's a lot of stuff and I was kind of living that that at the moment of you know what. Like. Oh you look just like Miss So-and-So.

00:15:12:04 - 00:15:28:14

Oh yeah that's that's like. So I've had a couple of those moments. Oh yeah of course that's that's who that is and so you know I like remember Labor Day we had our picnic. And so PJ had you know the course was meet the new principal right. And my family I remember how many people like literally walked from their house with their

00:15:29:29 - 00:15:40:26

trays of whatever. And that was kind of a neat experience to see how many people showed up on the day before school started and shaking hands and you know kids are playing with my kids.

00:15:40:28 - 00:15:55:22

I was just kind of need to see the community and I think probably to some extent both of your community. All three communities water walkers. Who who walked to school and so you see all those families out every day bringing their kids to school.

00:15:56:04 - 00:16:10:26

We actually have like the gentleman that watches the bus live for us keeps dog bones in his pockets to give all of the dogs that come with the parents and the families walking them to school. So it's you know it really is a community here and I love working in that in that kind of environment.

00:16:12:07 - 00:16:14:18

You have some similar stories about your community Francis.

00:16:15:13 - 00:16:46:24

It's been an honor to be come a part of the fleet community. We've had a we've established actually a new PTA and our PTA has been excited about just starting new traditions here fleet and some of the new things that we've done are just one of those many things you know when you say David that you have staff members who have students in the building. It's similar to our building. It's a great thing when you see our staff members are within walking distance.

00:16:46:26 - 00:17:27:26

We have a number of bikers and it's funny because I get to see our exemplary project teacher and our librarian every day they're biking to school. So you know they're five seconds down the road so to speak. And it's just been a it's been a pleasure. I've been embraced by the community. I feel that we have a lot of things that we are excited about next year doing especially around our sustainability. The teachers and the community are excited about how we can kind of be the ground zero tour for Arlington and talking about how we can make Arlington a more sustainable community.

00:17:27:28 - 00:17:59:17

So it's been exciting. I feel like I'm using that same word that use that that just says. But I think I try the word fun and I work for you. Well I've gotten away from the word phenomenal my AP has told me because I phenomenal but that's just how it's been it's been a joy and it's been it's been a ride of joy that you get to be a part. Enjoying such a strong welcoming and warm staff and community and get to quarrel with them.

00:18:01:19 - 00:18:15:01

Have you talked to Aaron and Brian up at Williamsburg in discovery about being on the same property together to schools there that how they or their relationship goes so you guys can communicate with Kiesha Jefferson.

00:18:15:12 - 00:18:47:17

Well I actually knew Kiesha prior to moving to the property so that was a welcome addition and I had a chance to meet Kiesha prior before the building opened and we walked the property and she kind of gave me a history of just the neighborhood and what to expect in terms really was a traffic conversation not really about but just everything and how the neighborhood is embracing you here and just the opportunity that we have to be closer.

00:18:47:19 - 00:19:10:07

We are one of the things that we are looking to really start out between our bull is she has an environmental club and we have one and the unique thing is many of the members of her environmental club we attended old Patrick Henry so there's already a synergy there they're working together with one of our staff members. So we're looking to have like almost a a bigger footprint in terms of our environmental club.

00:19:10:21 - 00:19:13:06

That's great. I know they have a garden out back too.

00:19:13:08 - 00:19:21:19

So yes there are a lot of opportunities there and we're going to be creating our own outdoor learning space that they're going to have a chance to access throughout the school day.

00:19:23:01 - 00:19:43:11

I want to ask you all three about your visions for the school and I know that all three are established schools have been around for a while and have a unique standing we talked about being part of the community but what are your visions for the school moving forward now that you've been in an intervention in the school for a little bit. Start with you David.

00:19:44:04 - 00:20:18:28

Yeah. So I think you know I guess I just kind of alluded to you know I really won't create the school that you know I want to make sure that my decision making as a principal is informed partly by my experience as a father. So I have a fourth grader and a kindergartner Emily and Matthew in and you know so what kind of school would I want them to be a part of you know and so what it comes down to is making sure that they love going to school. They're excited for what they learn that and that the teachers are you know responding to their social emotional needs just as well as their academic needs.

00:20:19:00 - 00:21:04:10

And so I think that's a huge piece of where I think all schools in the country need to move is how are we going to teach them really well how we gonna teach them literacy how we can teach them social studies or whatever else but also make sure that they're really good citizens at the same time and those two things go really hand-in-hand. You know so so far for Aberdeen you know like making sure that we're where they're coming in and students are welcomed in that they're excited to learn they're excited to be there you know and the other thing is making sure that all of our students our academic needs are met you know from the students that are struggling to the students who are high flyers how are we making sure that the instruction continues for them that they're you know at the end of the day every student at evidence should be learning something every single day.

00:21:05:03 - 00:21:10:25

And so for doing that and if and if they're they're excited to come to school I think we're doing our job well. Jessica.

00:21:12:18 - 00:21:19:18

I'm not sure you left anything. I'm sorry Frank. No I agree. I you know I want to continue to.

00:21:19:21 - 00:21:57:16

My vision is that every kid will come to school and get exactly what they need. Whether it's academic or social emotional I definitely my kids excited coming to school you know just to continue that journey I mean I don't think there's any school in the country that can say that there that they're there. I mean. So I want kids happy. I want them to feel safe. I want them to take risks. I want them to be collaborative. I want them to be you know productive members of the workforce because that's who we are. That's who

we're raising and we will make sure that kids are problem solvers and that they have those 21st century thinking skills and the ability to work with anyone no matter how alike or how different they are.

00:21:57:18 - 00:22:32:17

You know those are things that are really important to us here and making sure that kids really know that the teachers really know the kids and the kids feel safe that they have those trusted adults that they can they can confide in and they can have that relationship with you just continue to build the relationships between the school and the community and the staff and the community and the staff and the kids in the car. Yeah. Just that whole network be I agree with everything that David said that I want that for my schools to have any school you know the kids the schools that my kids go to and the schools that I'm a part of and the communities that I'm a part of.

00:22:33:21 - 00:22:34:06

You.

00:22:34:21 - 00:22:39:21

And with that just maybe part. We could say Oh

00:22:41:09 - 00:22:41:24

no.

00:22:42:27 - 00:23:20:16

You know I echo the same sentiments that Jess and Dave said with regards to what the vision of my school is. I want my students to come in excited each and every day about the opportunities that they're getting for learning. I want a staff that is excited coming into the building knowing that they're being supported and that they're their vision for how fleet is going to go forward is a part of the overall vision. I believe that's important that teachers have an understanding and a knowledge that they're what they're saying and what they're thinking is a part of my overall vision.

00:23:22:07 - 00:23:52:18

You know we are the second zero carbon footprint School in Arlington County and our biggest mission is to really educate our children about what that means and how they can reduce their own carbon footprint in the world. So. When they leave. We have already in our building and we speak to our children and we echo Alice was fleet's model but nothing and no one stop you.

00:23:53:12 - 00:24:37:22

That's a vision for. That I would like to impart upon them is that there should be nothing that stops you it does not matter quote unquote what label you are in society nothing. You know the dream that you have going forward do not allow anyone to stop you is just so telling that we lost. What is considered you know a basketball legend and Kobe Bryant recently but one of his. I guess the lasting legacy he would have is the quote unquote mom mentality which is that hard pressed mental you know strength and fortitude to push forward and to achieve your dreams and to dedicate and hard work.

00:24:38:05 - 00:25:15:05

And if you really truly look at your students that's the kind of thought process you would like for them is that they understand that it takes hard work to achieve greatness it doesn't come to you easily but that you don't have to allow anyone to crush your dreams let nothing and no one stop you. And you know at the

end of the day I would hope that in 20 years or 10 years you're the new Gretta Thornburgh is coming from Alice wistfully then they are pushing forward with the climate change and talking to Arlington Virginia and they're pushing for new legislation because that's who we are.

00:25:15:07 - 00:25:38:12

And I want our children to understand that so when they walk out of our building not only are their academic and social needs met but they are looking to become these community activists and pushing for these these changes in our society to make it better because it's clearly we have in our generation just hasn't done enough and I'm hoping that the children from our building are gonna push the conversation forward.

00:25:39:02 - 00:25:58:24

And you know you see that I said that's really well said he said a lot throughout. Throughout the schools although the different environmental projects that students do and take part in and come up with themselves so it's starting to. You're starting to see that with our students and you're right hopefully that they're the ones that take us forward and help us with that with the environment.

00:26:00:15 - 00:26:10:24

All three of you have come from the classroom at one point or another and now your leading buildings. Do you guys miss being in the classroom. Yes. Yes.

00:26:11:12 - 00:26:43:18

Well all I'll say is so one day I realized about Arlington is that so third and fourth graders just swimming. So I didn't mention this but I was. So we're all three of us are college athletes which I did not know that until you two had said. So actually I swam through college. And so you know I put on my calendar for June. I mean with your guy and now. Yeah. No I mean hopefully I'll get there soon. But but like I was so excited. Like that's something that you know like as a mentor I wanna make sure I bring kind of my you know like things about me I want kids and know that about me so.

00:26:44:09 - 00:27:04:04

I really hope that in June I make my schedule work so I can get out and teach them you know like I love swimming. I love teaching. Boy that's a big make. So I'd be a little you know I might be a little weird for kids that have their principal teaching and swimming but. But it's sort of my day also so. So hopefully I get that. But definitely classroom. There's there's there's sometimes that would be really nice.

00:27:04:12 - 00:27:13:16

Yeah I mean the best part of this job are the kids. I mean they may. Coming to work so much fun. I mean I've already I've taught math lessons this year. I've

00:27:13:18 - 00:27:43:07

I've been reading books the kids. I try to get into the classroom as much as possible because I do I do miss being a part of that energy that's in the classroom. I hang out in the lunchroom a lot. You know cause the kid kids are there why we're here. I mean they're why we are here. And I think it's important to stay connected to that and to to stay connected to why we come to work every day and who were doing this work for and how they could make me laugh. They say some really funny things no matter what kind of crazy day you're having.

00:27:43:13 - 00:27:57:05

I mean you just hang out with kids for about five minutes you're like Hey. Things are better. We're good. I'm happy again. You know I think that the one thing I've always said is you could be having the worst day

00:27:58:26 - 00:28:02:00

Walk into a kindergarten classroom five minutes later.

00:28:02:03 - 00:28:07:23

It is the best. I mean why a rock star classroom.

00:28:09:10 - 00:28:34:21

And you see true joy in learning you know a kindergarten classroom is the joy that you hope kids maintain throughout their career. I mean we know it doesn't happen but just that pure everything is so fascinating so new to them. You know they want to show you things that you know oh my gosh. Let me show you how to write are like let's do it.

00:28:36:11 - 00:29:20:25

But it's just the joy of learning to them. And it always picks up your spirit when you're in the cafeteria you're wandering into classrooms and just you know asking them what did what was going on today. What are we doing what are you learning. And the excitement they have. So when you're when you're an administrator you know I don't think anyone comes into education saying oh I'm going to be an administrator. You know I can't wait to be. You know we get an education because of the classroom because of the joy of being a classroom teacher and the energy and just and seeing kids you know there's nothing always the most difficult thing for a teacher is you don't see your reward for years but when you do see it you go.

00:29:20:27 - 00:29:50:06

That's why I said that's why I became a teacher. When that student comes back will you see that student randomly and you're like Oh my God and you're like Oh my God. And you can remember that sometimes you don't. But they remember you and they talk and you're like Hey what are you doing. What's going on in your life. And they can tell you things in your life. And they'll tell you things that you told them years ago and you're like Oh I did say thou gang. And he took it to heart. And so I miss it every day now.

00:29:52:14 - 00:29:56:27

All of you had experience at different levels middle school high school Orange School.

00:29:57:07 - 00:30:04:19

What are what are some of the biggest differences outside of age between the older kids and the younger kids right.

00:30:06:16 - 00:30:08:23

That's a terrible problem. I think that's

00:30:10:15 - 00:30:11:14

the biggest difference.

00:30:11:16 - 00:30:34:23

I mean one of one of my one of things I loved about teaching and still love about teaching is finding that passion and finding that joy in having the kids find it. So I don't think that's different between the different ages. I think it might look different. But I think that all kids still crave the excitement of learning. But I think like as the kids are younger it's more of a physical excitement. Like they literally wear you out like that.

00:30:34:25 - 00:31:04:11

I didn't not know how preschool and kindergarten and first grade and second grade teachers do it because they are physically excited about everything and as they get older I think their excitement becomes more internalized and maybe that's cool to show excitement but they are still excited. So I mean kids are kids across the board. They all want to learn they all love learning. It's just how you reach them and. I don't I haven't seen it like I taught middle school and have taught elementary school and you know it's just it's the relationship is so important.

00:31:04:13 - 00:31:13:05

Building that relationship between them and that doesn't change no matter what age you are even between adults the relationship is what's key. You

00:31:13:07 - 00:31:46:03

You know people ask because most of my experience was in high school. What is the difference that you see. And I would I would echo Jeff says there's no different if anything I think people. Forget how much high schoolers crave that trusted adult that person that they can talk to that person they can sit down with. And it's not to say that their parents are not that person in their life but they're looking for a different person someone who you know gets a get some or not punish them so to speak.

00:31:47:29 - 00:32:18:11

And they just want to talk and it's the same thing you get in elementary school where kids just they really want to just talk about what's going on and they want to know that someone is there and is always looking out for them and it's it's similar. The only thing is he says high school you know they're at your ankles too you know you're looking up at them even you just I thought well maybe in my middle school years you talked about that trusted adult.

00:32:18:17 - 00:32:31:14

Really something you're trying to do as a distraction whatever goal. One of the goals are our strategic plan is to have everyone have one at least one trusted adult at whatever grade level their own. So that's interesting you say that.

00:32:31:22 - 00:32:56:19

Oh can I interject something in there. I am very proud of myself when we did that school wide. I got one. So I was so proud of myself as a new principal. I got one so I got the student first consider and drew a picture of me with the tie on so I thought I'm going to frame that because that is awesome I just I just kind of share that I've shared that with Cynthia Johnson and atmosphere that people like that made me feel really good as new principals hey my fifth grader did it in front of Miss Johnson.

00:32:56:27 - 00:32:59:13

Of I got a credit card from the south side.

00:32:59:22 - 00:33:00:07

Oh yeah.

00:33:00:09 - 00:33:16:05

So excited I didn't pay I mean there or give him extra recess they where people can't see in because this is on there's no video in here as well. David was saying that Jessica was always smiling and thinking that she she had one too.

00:33:16:14 - 00:33:50:04

It's always good to know that you are someone that someone that anyone can go to but especially the kids and in any school you know there's something really because you have to work hard with middle school and high school as I think you have to work even harder to build that relationship with the kids. But there's something really rewarding when it comes to you to celebrate something or they come to you because they're having a bad day and they just they just come to you and that's that's really rewarding that's that's when I know I'm doing I'm doing the right thing is when those kids come to me you know we have.

00:33:50:06 - 00:34:21:20

You said trust that at home one of the programs that I was I was stunned and overjoyed to kind of identify that was at fleet we have a phenomenal counselor Aaron Upton and she leads our shining stars program. So as students in the building who just need a mentor. And it's great because you get a chance to. Really just build a personal relationship with your mentee and you just talk with them and you have lunch with them.

00:34:21:22 - 00:34:36:28

My mentor came up to me and said When are we going to sit down for lunch this week. I said you come any day you want to I know your lunch period out cleared off. And then he came and then we just sat down and the last time he got a cookie cause I had an extra cookie so he was looking around like where's the cookie.

00:34:38:13 - 00:34:39:22

I was like no cookies this out here.

00:34:39:28 - 00:34:50:14

Like we could talk but it's great where you get it just a chance to really just meet and talk to kids at their level and find out what truly does interest that.

00:34:50:20 - 00:35:21:19

Mm hmm. I have two fifth grade girls that I came up the idea for me to have lunch with them and with all the fifth graders and so they are literally in charge of my schedule. They they come to me and say All right Mr. Silva when are you free. We go over the times in the days and then they create a list. They make little invitations to give to the kids and say I'm working my way through a meeting sitting and having lunch with all the fifth graders. Then the fourth graders got wind of this. They're like That's not fair. So the fourth graders are starting to put together schedules to sit with Miss LaGuardia the assistant principal here at Long Branch.

00:35:21:21 - 00:35:26:01

So it's just something that's fun. And we get to hang out with them.

00:35:26:06 - 00:35:34:18

Yes I'm going to. I had it on my calendar. They're starting next week they we're going to I was going to be sitting with the fifth grader put kids in charge of it. Yeah.

00:35:35:03 - 00:35:58:26

I think we're going to have you know it's going to be a random lunch bunch every week to the end because we are a new school. I wanted to fifth graders to leave their mark and I wanted to ask them what their mark was going to be but I'm going to go and approach a couple of our more organized fifth graders. I have it in my mind who they are and I'm going to ask them. And I'm just going to sell them like hey I would love to find you guys to set the schedule.

00:35:59:12 - 00:36:13:01

Yeah it's been it's been a really. Some days it's the best part of my day. It's a sit down with those six eight fifth graders. It's a lot of fun and a good time. So now mostly we've been doing this for five and a half six months

00:36:13:29 - 00:36:21:18

Being a principal. What advice would you guys have for new principals coming up behind you at other schools.

00:36:23:14 - 00:36:31:14

My first responses get your sleep but but but that's kind of snarky comment. But in reality you know I think it's

00:36:33:10 - 00:37:05:23

there's so much as a principal that is new and that is hard and there's so much that's wonderful at the same time. It's. You have to make sure you schedule time to take care of yourself and your family because this is a job that. I could be completely overwhelming especially I think in your first couple of years. So I think first for me is as a reminder for me of scheduling time to take time for myself to do things I enjoy because that's gonna make me a better principal when I'm back in the building.

00:37:07:16 - 00:37:14:07

For me I would say two things one. Find your support system definitely or your family at home.

00:37:14:09 - 00:37:44:10

I have an amazing husband and two kids that definitely support me at home. But finding your support at school it's important to know who you can trust to share with you when you're having a rough day. Because there are some rough days every now and then as a brand new administrator and the second thing is to ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask for help like you're not going to know at all. No one expects you to know at all and people expect people want to help and that's what's been amazing for me is just I asked for help and they come flocking.

00:37:44:15 - 00:38:20:04

Like how what can we do what can we do to help you. They just let us know and that has been that's been an incredible joy that I did not realize was going to happen here and I think that's one of the really cool things about Arlington is that we are such this smaller close knit community that coming from a larger county just isn't possible to have people be so responsive. I think it helps them two minutes from side effects and the central office for them to come over but definitely that's part of that support to not be afraid to ask for help and to know when to not look at your phone.

00:38:20:06 - 00:38:35:27

And that's usually at least an hour before bedtime. Do not look at your e-mail so that you can maybe try to get any sleep but in normal times. And on the weekends maybe you don't look at it on Saturday. If it's an emergency people have your phone number and maybe just give yourself a day away.

00:38:38:16 - 00:39:04:10

I would definitely say pay attention to your family. Don't be afraid to disconnect and be with your family. They're the ones to keep you grounded. They're the ones who support you. A good day or a bad day. I know I have picked up my sons. From school and afternoon and my youngest is giving me a hug. Dad you look like you need a hug. And I'm like Thank you Dad.

00:39:04:19 - 00:39:29:21

Does that made me feel 10 times better if you have a family and you're a new principal don't ignore them that time is short. You know I always said. My former principal Mitch Pascale over at Tuck although we used to always say you know family time is short. He had two older children and a younger daughter.

00:39:30:06 - 00:39:46:09

And he said you'll be surprised how fast it goes. And then he said You really do need to take time for them. And I would advise if you have family take their time you know you can work after they go to bed. Give that time over to them and professionally.

00:39:47:08 - 00:40:10:18

Yeah you're not going to know at all you're going to make mistakes you're going to make mistakes. Own up to the mistake. It's easier to own up and just say hey I made that mistake then try to figure a way around them. They just own up to the mistake and know that the time you'll be better you know tomorrow. You'll be better than you are today. And don't be afraid of it.

00:40:11:04 - 00:40:38:20

No no. Jessica you mentioned. The help that you get from everybody. I think that's one of the few years we've been doing this new principal series that's been a common theme among all the new principals and studying the text string that that you're included in and that everyone's texting back and forth. You could pick up the phone and call. I think I'm. I'm sure you guys have the same thing where you can just pick up the phone call the principal and say hey I need help with this right now.

00:40:38:22 - 00:40:45:20

What are these two gentlemen by my side. Maybe have received phone calls or texts in the last few days actually

00:40:47:15 - 00:40:49:11

or anything from just Oh no.

00:40:50:03 - 00:40:52:01

You know we were on the phone for a while the other day.

00:40:53:04 - 00:41:05:06

So yeah I think that it's just admitting that you're human like Francis was saying like it's OK to make mistakes because you're going to just apologize and move on I think. Whether one of the things I read

00:41:06:22 - 00:41:38:19

in the tongue through book was like the worst mistakes or the mistakes you don't learn from. Those are the only bad mistakes that exist and I think just knowing people are human and a parent the other day tell me it's nice to know that you're human because it's something that we were talking about because a lot of times I think people look at and administrators and they think that there are these superhumans that are not emotional and they're not connected and I think it's important for people to see like the human side of you and to laugh. That's another thing. So my advice is just to laugh and have fun because

00:41:40:15 - 00:41:53:05

it's going to it is hard and it's not it's not easy it's good to have a support system it's good to have your families spend time with their family 100 percent but also just have fun. I mean you have to work hard but you have to have fun.

00:41:53:08 - 00:42:09:14

Same time. I know. I want to appreciate some of your time. You have to get back to your buildings to work out. But I do have one more question. We have a swimmer. We have a football player. We have a basketball player. Jessica you also play word.

00:42:10:06 - 00:42:17:18

I did. Were you a taller and gymnast. No. Now this is all for gymnastics.

00:42:17:22 - 00:42:50:14

No I played for the D.C. Divas which is a woman's when I played there were a women's professional football team I think they're all professional and team in the D.C. area. I played in 2002 before I moved to Japan. I was a tight end initially and then they tried me a defensive end and so I played both sides of the line for a few months. It was actually it was really cool. They came out we had an assembly in December with the kids and they came out and they talked about you know pursuing your dreams and how to balance your priorities and then they did some drills with the cast some light exercises with the kids.

00:42:51:08 - 00:43:03:14

I think it's really important for again going that's what Frances was saying like not let nothing stop you. When you think about people women playing football that's not when you hear about football player you don't ever think in your head that looks like a female.

00:43:03:28 - 00:43:20:07

And so I think it's it's a laugh and I keep my helmet my office actually I was gonna say I need this you know I have I have evidence I promise. But you have to Google my former name which is Bergner I'm not under just get this over Jersey for retirement Oh no it's not how you play long enough.

00:43:22:14 - 00:43:53:10

So I do have I did have a lot of fun doing that and I do like doing things that challenge the norm when it comes to choices I made in the past year living in Japan for two years when you're six foot two is a little bit different travelling the world you know my husband's Brazilian with my kids speak Portuguese at home and I try to teach in some Japanese to you know I think it's just it's important to have interests outside of work and that was something that I'm even though I play basketball my whole life as a swimmer initially but then I moved to basketball.

00:43:53:21 - 00:44:07:01

I'm most known for football which is interesting because I only played for a few months before I moved to Japan but I was on the radio I had newspaper articles written about me. So there is evidence I will show you Francis promise.

00:44:08:05 - 00:44:42:11

Well great. I want to thank all three of you for taking time out here today to join us and talk about your careers and your background. Jessica thank you for hosting. I will try to get pictures to post of of your your time as a diva football player. Again thanks everybody for listening to the WhatsApp API as podcast. You can find us on Apple podcasts Google Play stitcher tune in wherever you get your podcast. If you have a topic for a future episode send us an email at apsnews@apsva.us.

00:44:42:25 - 00:44:55:18

and the next episode we come out with will be a little different something changing in the works so you'll you'll see that the next time we download an episode for you. So again thanks for listening. What's up APS podcasts and have a great day.