

Scott Garren

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<https://pleasecometotheprincipalsoffice.com/>

Educational Leadership Philosophy:

As a professional educator with over 25 years of experience at all levels of both public and independent education in the United States and abroad, I have found that when treated with respect, honesty, and compassion, all people react by giving the best of themselves. With that in mind, I believe that I am uniquely suited to serve as an effective educational leader because, in summary, my practice is founded on the following principles:

Vision

***Start with why.* - Simon Sinek**

I often tell others that I am unashamedly “unicorns and rainbows” when it comes to education, and that I think all great educators are inherently idealists. This is true of effective leaders too; they inspire those around them to see beyond themselves and commit not just to the common good but to the common best. People do not make these commitments based on the “what” or even the “how.” As Simon Sinek points out, they make them based on the “why.” A relevant, clear vision is the key for any leader and organization in this regard.

For me, the “why” is simple and uncompromising: students. I often refer to the fable of the man on a beach, moving one of hundreds of starfish washed ashore back into the ocean. When questioned by a passerby why he bothers, that he cannot possibly move them all back to the water before the rising sun dries them out, the man simply replies, *“That may be true, but tell that to this one.”* Excellence, therefore, is not measured in single moments (awards, test scores, or performances) but in the small, consistent commitments students and teachers make daily. The process outweighs the product, and our work as educators is to nurture the habits that transform individuals and communities over time.

Compassion

People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

- Maya Angelou

Servant, visionary, and inspirational leadership are all at the heart of my practice; because leadership, and schools, are ultimately about people. Great leaders and educators always remember that inspiring others requires truly knowing them: their needs, their wants, and their dreams. This happens best by first “seeking to understand” (Stephen Covey) and finding common goals and interests from which to build a shared purpose.

By taking the time to be fully present with someone and letting them know in that moment that they are the most important person in the world, a leader can forge relationships of empathy and trust in which both parties know that together they can be their best selves. Compassion is not a soft skill, it is the foundation of authentic partnerships that sustain both learning and leadership.

Action

***We choose to go to the Moon ... and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.* - John F. Kennedy**

I begin each school year by encouraging everyone to challenge themselves with a “moonshot goal,” one which might at first seem impossible but is still worth the effort. The result has been a community of educators and students modeling the practice of taking risks, valuing the process over the product, and supporting one another as they grapple to achieve the seemingly unimaginable. Big goals, however, are not achieved in a single leap. They depend on persistence, the small, often quiet habits of excellence that, repeated daily, become the foundation of transformation. Whether it is a teacher learning a new language, a student inventing an educational app, or a parent founding a new venture, the act of striving toward the “impossible” becomes a cultural habit. Leaders must create communities where risk-taking, resilience, and perseverance are celebrated as much as success.

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Inquiry

Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire. – William Butler Yeats

In today's world, where information is instantly accessible, the role of schools is not to fill pails but to spark curiosity, creativity, and courage. That belief has guided my work in building customized graduation pathways that respond to students' interests and needs within their cultural context. Whether in Business, Medicine, Entrepreneurship, Engineering, or other areas shaped by student aspirations, these pathways invite learners to take on ambitious challenges, explore authentic problems, and imagine bold futures. They are not rigid tracks but living laboratories of learning, flexible frameworks where students experiment, innovate, and connect passion with purpose. In doing so, they learn that education is not about collecting knowledge, but about lighting fires that can guide them to transform both themselves and the world around them.

Curiosity

Be curious, not judgmental. – Ted Lasso

One of my favorite television shows and characters of all time is Ted Lasso. I wrote a blog series about the show and the life and leadership lessons found in each of its episodes during the first season. Of all of those lessons, my favorite is this: People's judgements say more about them than they do about the other people they're judging. On the other hand, a strong sense of wonder and curiosity opens the door for learning, understanding, empathy, and growth. By approaching each person with a sense of curiosity I'm able to better understand their needs and find points of connection and synergy so that we can each benefit together. By approaching each situation with a sense of curiosity I'm able to operate from a place of growth and gratitude. By modeling this for others, I'm able to build teams of individuals whose collective efforts yield results greater than the sum of their parts.

Service

Be the change you want to see in the world. - Gandhi

As the Middle School Principal of Lincoln School in 2016, I created the CLAS (Character, Leadership, Advocacy, and Service) program to provide students an opportunity to engage with the local community in authentic programs targeted to the UN Sustainability Goals. Over time, we have partnered with almost twenty local NGOs to address issues of environmental sustainability, equity, and human dignity. As High School Principal, I extended this program to the upper grades, where students design and implement service projects that prepare them for the IBDP CAS program. Service, however, is not just charity—it is entrepreneurial. It is the act of finding and acting on opportunities to add social value. Whether through tutoring programs in underserved communities, partnering with animal rescue initiatives, or creating innovative solutions to human challenges, students learn that meaningful service combines empathy with enterprise. In this sense, service education becomes entrepreneurial education: equipping students to notice problems, design solutions, and transform ideas into impact.

Taken together, these principles, experiences, and accomplishments inform who I am as an educational leader and guide my interactions with families, teachers, and (most importantly) students every day. They are the reason I look forward to coming to work, and they are why I believe in my heart that I can contribute to making the world a better place for this generation and those to come.

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EDUCATION:

- Grad. Cert: DEI (2023)
Drury University
- EdS: Ed. Leadership (2009)
Nova Southeastern University
- MS: Social Studies Ed. (2000)
Nova Southeastern University
- BA: English Literature (1996)
University of South Florida

CERTIFICATIONS:

- School Administration
- English & Social Studies 6-12
- IB & MYP (various)
- Entrepreneurial Program for Innovators & Changemakers
- 500hr. Yoga Teacher Training

AFFILIATIONS:

- President of the AASCA
Principals' Conference (2x)
- Cognia Accreditation Team
Member

WORKSHOPS DELIVERED:

- Building Schools of Belonging
(a DEIB Induction Program)
- Entrepreneurial Programs and
Standards-Based Grading
- Building a Comprehensive
Service-Learning Program
- Supporting ELLs in the
Classroom
- Using Primary and Secondary
Sources in the High School
Social Studies Classroom
- Interdisciplinary Performance
Tasks in ELA and Social Studies
- Connecting Math and Social
Studies
- Close Reading Strategies

RECENT COURSES TAKEN:

- DEIB Executive Leadership
Cohort
- IBO: Head of School
- IBO: Leading the Learning
- IBO: Diversity & Inclusion
- Cognitive Coaching

EXPERIENCE:

6/15 – Present

Lincoln School, Costa Rica

High School Principal (2017 – Present)

Interim Director of Human Resources (2021, 2022)

Academic Director (2017 – 2020)

Middle School Principal (2015 – 2017)

I began my time at Lincoln School by leading the creation a middle school division before moving to High School Principal where I serve on the senior leadership team and participate in the overall management of the school. I am directly responsible for the day-to-day operations of the high school division (an IB MYP/DP school) as well as the alignment of programs across all four divisions. Major accomplishments include the creation of a robust service-learning program, the conversion to standards-based grading, the implementation of design-thinking methodologies, the adoption of the MYP, and candidacy for the IBCP as the first Duel Enrollment program in Central America.

1/15 – 6/15

Educational Consultant @ North Carolina Department of Instruction

As a State consultant, I developed professional development programs and curriculum support materials for social studies teachers K-12 across North Carolina, including a partnership with Dr. Lorin Anderson, co-author of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. In addition, I worked directly at the school level as well as with State legislators and officials.

8/10 – 1/15

Coordinating Teacher (Curriculum Coordinator) @ Wake County Public Schools

As a district-level administrator, I served as a Curriculum and PD Coordinator for the 15th largest school district in the United States. As a member of the Middle School Programs team, I authored and delivered professional development programs, community outreach programs, and curricular materials.

12/08 – 8/10

Classroom Teacher and Administrative Intern @ Wake County Public Schools

I served as a middle school teacher and team leader in both Language Arts and Social Studies. As an administrative intern, I fulfilled the responsibilities of an Assistant Principal and administered all aspects of the day-to-day operations in a year-round, public middle school.

3/97 – 8/07

Classroom Teacher @ University School of Nova Southeastern University

I served as a high school and middle school teacher of Language Arts, Social Studies, and Experiential Education. I was a grade-level and department leader and developed the school's character education programs. I also oversaw professional development programs, enrichment programs, and was a four-time grant recipient.

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Lincoln School Accomplishments:

Academics

- Led the HS (and coordinated with other divisions) in the development of a vertically-aligned, developmentally appropriate sequence of written curriculum, student-centered instructional practices, and assessment policies.
- Led the HS (and coordinated with other divisions) in the shift to standards-based/criterion-referenced assessment and grade reporting systems.
- Initiated and co-led the adoption of the IB Middle Years Program in grades 6 – 10.
- Oversaw the expansion of IBDP student enrollment to a more inclusive model that resulted in a 20% increase in students while maintaining excellent individual and system-wide scores.
- Used data-based decisions to realign the math scope/sequence based on student needs and performance resulting in MAP conditional growth scores in the 99th percentile in both 9th and 10th grade.
- Used data-based decision making to expand course offerings, including additional IBDP courses, arts electives, differentiated PHE courses, differentiated math courses, computer science courses, and an entire strand of courses in entrepreneurial thinking and design.
- Created the *Entrepreneurial Academy* matriculation pathway (now the IBCP), the first dual-enrollment program in Central America.

Accreditation and Strategic Planning

- Led the Cognia accreditation visit in 2019, earning overwhelmingly positive results (19/30 domains in the highest band, 30/30 domains positive, and an institutional score well above world average) while preparing for school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Co-led the IBMYP accreditation process (2018-2020).
- Participated in the 2020 Strategic Planning process, helping to develop KPIs and action plans across five domains.
- Led the IBDP re-accreditation process in 2022, resulting in no significant areas of concern.
- Led the Cognia accreditation visit in 2025, earning overwhelmingly positive results and no significant areas of concern.

Budget/Finance

- Developed and administrated the zero-based Lincoln School MS operating budget (2015-2017).
- Developed and administrated the zero-based Lincoln School HS operating budget (2017-present).
- Developed an austere budget (2019-2020) allowing for significant tuition reduction during the pandemic while cutting no teaching staff or salaries and increasing enrollment in the high school.

Communications

- Held regular parent coffees, focus groups, and town halls to communicate whole-school and high school initiatives.
- Created a podcast and Blog (www.pleasecometotheprincipalsoffice.com) to better communicate educational trends and school initiatives to parents and the community.
- Collaborated in the development of a guest speaker series that presented students and parents with inspirational and thought-provoking storytellers from a variety of backgrounds and interests.

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Diversity/Equity/Inclusion/Belonging

- Sponsored the first student women's group (The Alliance) and first student LGBTQ+ rights group (The QSA).
- Completed the Drury University DEI Leadership Graduate Certificate program.
- Participated in the DEIB Executive Leadership Cohort with Dr. Gay.
- Developed and led multiple workshops on DEIB for international school leaders.

Facilities

- Developed facilities plans for the opening of the Middle School division.
- Increased the number of HS classrooms by five, redesigned the HS administrative spaces and teachers' lounge, created six student study lounges.
- Participated in the design of a whole-school entrepreneurial hub.

Human Resources

- Oversaw all HS staffing requirements, including the hiring, evaluation, training, and retention of staff.
- Expanded HS staff from 50 to 60 faculty/staff (including the expansion of the college counseling office).
- Lowered class sizes from an average of 20 students to an average of 15 students per class without significantly impacting the operating budget or tuition requirements of parents.
- Authored a temporary teacher evaluation system (2018) and co-authored the whole-school employee evaluation program (2019-).
- Authored the Administrator salary scale in use PS-12.
- Authored the foreign-hire retention bonus plan incentivizing retention and professional development.
- Served as Interim Director of Human Resources in May-June 2021 and again in May-June 2022.

Professional Development

- Developed annual, whole-school kick-off events that guided ongoing professional development (The Importance of Why, Moonshot Thinking, etc.).
- Developed a sustainable professional development plan that trained all high school teachers in the MYP, Extended Essay, CAS, and subject-specific content workshops (MYP, DP, others).
- Delivered multiple professional development programs in entrepreneurial thinking with all teachers in Preschool through Grade 12.
- Delivered an ongoing series of PS-12 workshops focused on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Student Wellness

- Created the first middle school and high school advisory programs at Lincoln School.
- Instituted a positive behavior system emphasizing "Behaviors Supporting Learning" and a shift to proactive/reflective (rather than reactive) communications with students and parents.
- Developed the CLAS (Character-Leadership-Advocacy-Service) program and partnered with more than 20 NGOs to create "boots on the ground" service opportunities for MS students.
- Adopted a "CAS for All" approach to service-learning in grades 9-12, resulting in all students completing annual service projects aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.