

eVIEWS

An interview with Julie, School Principal. Australian accent.

GLOSSARY

point seven	(0.7) meaning 70% of her working time
point three	(0.3) 30% of her working time
allotment	allocation
to be privy to sthg	to have inside knowledge
to take a punt	to try, to gamble
to tackle something	to attempt or try sthg difficult
staff	workers, employees
to be demanding	to be complicated/difficult
rhetoric	hyperbole
core	main, principal
to be highly skilled	to be well trained and experienced
task	job
to misbehave	to not behave well
to snowball	to worsen, to get bigger and bigger very quickly
welfare	wellbeing
staff leave	workers' vacations/ holidays
to pretend	to feign, to act like
laughable	not serious
crowded	full
to be dumped on	to be left with sthg unwanted
to fit in	to find time for
code of conduct	rules of behaviour (often written down)
to lay something out	to communicate sthg clearly
to give time out	to take out of school (temporarily)
detention	period of temporary custody
strap	narrow strip of cane or tough leather, used to beat children as a punishment (and I can remember it!)
protocol	set of rules and established procedures
to grapple with something	to face up to, to solve sthg
rewarding	satisfying
to shape the vision of t	to design a plan for
Ballarat	a small city in rural Victoria (Australia)

COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

1. How long has Julie been doing her present job?
a) 2 years b) 3 years c) 7 years d) 1 term
2. How long was she assistant principal?
a) 2 years b) 7 years c) 3 years d) 1 term
3. She never had time to understudy the Principal's role because...
a) ...the principal was a very private person.
b) ...she spent most of the time available disciplining children.
c) ...she was applying for promotion.
d) ...she found the concepts difficult to understand.
4. Which of the following does she give as reasons she got the job? (more than one possible answer)
a) There had been a lot of different principals, and everyone was tired of the changes.
b) The staff knew her and would therefore accept her.
c) She was very experienced.
d) She was enthusiastic.
e) She had the support of staff and parents.
f) The previous principal had recommended her.
5. What does she consider to be her greatest strength as principal?
6. Which of the following does she also say she does well? (more than one possible answer)
a) Visiting classrooms.
b) Spending time with staff, doing courses with them.
c) Concentrating on individual successes.
d) Passing on new curriculum ideas.
e) Spending time with parents.
7. Which of the following does she say are areas that she finds more difficult? (more than one possible answer)
a) Organising her time.
b) Dealing with angry parents.
c) Delegating.
d) Making sure the whole organisation works as a team.
8. The school's global budget is about dollars.
9. What has she done to try and compensate for her lack of financial training?

- 10 She says, "The important thing is ...to...make sure that everyone in the organisation uses _____ _____ _____ _____ to make it the _____ _____ _____ that it can be for the children.
- 11 Which of the following does she say schools in Australia are responsible for? (more than one possible answer)
- a) discipline
 - b) drug education
 - c) bicycle education
 - d) health education
 - e) AIDS education
 - f) University selection programs
 - g) media education
- 12 Julie thinks...
- a) the balance of physical and emotional education, welfare and discipline is about right.
 - b) too much is expected of schools.
 - c) their code of conduct is adequate under the circumstances.
- 13 Which of the following can you do to discipline a child in Australia?
- a) detention
 - b) talk to the parents
 - c) shut the child up in a room
 - d) call the police
- 14 For Julie, the most satisfying parts of the job are... (more than one possible answer)
- a) ...working out the protocol
 - b) ...mixing with a broad range of people
 - c) ...teaching
 - d) ...parents expressing thanks
 - e) ...solving problems
 - f) ...working with other principals on the direction of education

COMPREHENSION EXERCISE ANSWERS:

1. 2 years
2. 1 term
3. She never had time to understudy the Principal's role because she spent most of the time available disciplining children.
4. There had been a lot of different principals, and everyone was tired of the changes.
The staff knew her and would therefore accept her.
She was enthusiastic.
She had the support of staff and parents.
5. Putting people first.
6. Visiting classrooms.
Spending time with staff, doing courses with them.
Passing on new curriculum ideas.
7. Organising her time.
Delegating.
Making sure the whole organisation works as a team.
8. The school's global budget is about one point eight million dollars (AUS\$1.800.000).
9. She's done training in that area.
10. She says, "The important thing is ...to...make sure that everyone in the organisation uses their strengths and talents to make it the best possible school that it can be for the children.
11. discipline
drug education
bicycle education
health education
AIDS education
12. Julie thinks too much is expected of schools.
13. detention
talk to the parents.
14. For Julie, the most satisfying parts of the job are...

- ...mixing with a broad range of people
- ...teaching
- ...parents expressing thanks
- ...solving problems
- ...working with other principals on the direction of education

LESSON PLAN

1. Students talk about the education system in their own countries. They could answer any or all of the following questions:
 - Is there compulsory education? If so, between what ages is it compulsory to attend?
 - Are there school fees? If education is free, do parents have to pay extras, eg. material, food...
 - What about uniforms? Are they compulsory?
 - Is there religious education? Is it compulsory?
 - What subjects are normal to study at primary level? Secondary?
 - Are foreign languages studied? Which ones? At what age are they introduced?
 - What status do teachers have in their country?
 - For adult students, in what ways have schools changed since they were there? For the better or worse? Do they think that their schooling prepared them adequately for life in the “real” world?

1. Go through the glossary. Check meanings and pronunciation.

2. Go through the comprehension questions. Predict the answers.

3. Play the interview. Students should check answers in pairs. Re-play and pause if and when necessary.

4. Taking into account some of their answers to the questions in no.1, what, if anything (does the perfect education system exist?), would they change in the education system of their country? What responsibilities (exactly) should schools have in the education of children in comparison with the responsibilities of the parents? ie. What should the main aims of schools be? Do students agree with Julie that school curriculums are “crowded”? Should parents participate more in the deciding of the school curriculum? Should teachers be allowed to discipline students more seriously?

5. Students can discuss one of the following in class and then write about their conclusions for homework.
 - Girls and boys should be educated separately.
 - Parents who choose to educate their children at home should be allowed to do so.
 - The value (or not) of school uniforms.

TRANSCRIPTION

- eV You've been doing your current job for how many years now?
- Julie Two, I picked up the Assistant Principal position, and in that role, I found it very difficult, because I had a point seven teaching component, so I had point three of my time allotment, to basically understudy the role of Principal, and I spent most of my time disciplining children in that point three that I had left. So I didn't really get to understand the concepts involved or... I wasn't really privy to the rest of the demands of a principal. So I had only one term doing that, and then the principal at that time, moved on to a promotion position. I decided that I would go to the general manager and say, "Look, would you let me have a go at acting as the principal, even though I hadn't had a substantial time at assistant principal? But I thought if they're going to put someone else in this school that had 4 or 5 changes prior to me coming, that it was something this school didn't need. The staff were tired of it, and I think they would have accepted me better than someone else coming in. So I went with that argument to the general manager and he had to approve the next acting principal, so he decided to take a punt and go for someone who was inexperienced, but was enthusiastic and willing to tackle the job, and I had the staff and the parents well and truly behind me. And that worked. So I had another term in the job, which would either decide for me, my pathway, because the parent body would decide they wanted me as principal, or "No she's not the person for the job". So after a term it was put up, as a permanent position, so I applied for that and won it.
- eV Is it the job that you thought it would be? Is it what you expected it to be?
- Julie No, it's a lot more demanding. I'd done my study, as I said, in educational administration, I had all the theory and rhetoric, but putting it into practice is just completely different. It is a real people organisation and if you don't put the people first, everything falls apart. And that's probably my greatest strength, I really do attend to the people. So I spend a lot of time visiting classrooms, being a visible leader, I think that's important. I spend a lot of time with the staff, we have regular staff meetings. Communication is a key aspect to success. Any professional development that the staff do, I do with them, because I want them to realise that I continue to be interested in curriculum which is our core purpose, and also I run P.D. for the staff. P.D. meaning Professional Development. As a curriculum consultant for 4 or 5 years I became highly skilled in some of the new initiatives with the education department, so I figure it's really illogical for me not to pass it on to my staff. So I've been running courses for them. So in terms of curriculum I think, the staff have a strong feeling that I have knowledge and skill in that area. The areas that I found most difficult are time management, because you can have a whole lot of tasks that you really need to get done in a day, but because there are so many people interactions, it might be an angry parent, children that misbehave, staff are unhappy; you get to half past four and feel as though you've done nothing, so everything snowballs, so that is one area that I've had to do some more reading and attend professional

developments in, activities in... That's an area that I still have to work on. The other areas are making sure that I really don't try and do it all myself, that I delegate and share responsibility and make the whole organisation work as a team, because it's just too complex to expect me to have all the knowledge or alternatively any one staff member, so that whole notion of managing diversity and looking for the strengths and talents in the staff and utilising those, is really important, but the other areas of making sure that you attend to the curriculum, the environment, that's just the physical environment of the school but also the tone of the school, and the discipline and the welfare, that's part of the environment. Obviously we're in charge of human resources and personnel management, so the whole computerised system of looking after staff leave, things like that, is now the responsibility of the school. The global budget was a real learning experience for me, because we are totally... we are given a global budget, every school, and ours is well over the million dollar mark. It's about one point eight million, so for me without any financial training, I'm a curriculum person that's had my whole education based on curriculum, to pretend to be a manager that has knowledge of finances is fairly laughable really, so that's an area that I've also made sure that I've gone off and tried to gain some training in, but that's something that I still need to work on. So I think that's the important thing, to acknowledge that you have strengths but there's areas that you have to work on, to improve yourself, and make sure that everyone in the organisation uses their strengths and talents to make it the best possible school that it can be for the children.

eV What about discipline? A complaint by parents is that their kids are uncontrollable and they say "It's up to the school to discipline the child" and quite often put a lot of responsibility on the school system, on the teachers, to not only discipline the child but try and establish good habits, good reading habits, good life habits?

Julie Well you've touched on a real problem that schools have because not only have we got a crowded curriculum, we have got to face the responsibility of being one of the agencies that provide education in... drug education. In Australia we're responsible for bike education, drug education, health education, good eating, all that sort of things but whether it be AIDS... whatever society's ills are, tend to be dumped on the school, and people... university lecturers, people being interviewed on the media often say. "Well the schools should have a program for this", and you constantly hear that, but how much you can fit into a day is also a problem for us, but we do take that responsibility seriously because, I mean when we look at the whole education of a child, if they're not going to be healthy; emotionally and physically, we do have to look at those areas, but I think that too much is expected of schools in terms of welfare and discipline, it's very limited in terms of... what you can do with children. We have a code of conduct, where we lay out very clearly what we expect of children, and what the children can expect of the staff, and what the consequences are, but you're very limited in your consequences other than... sort of warning a child, giving them some time out perhaps, maybe detention at some schools, and then perhaps a

phone call home. So they're very limited in relation to what perhaps we as school children remember when... I can still remember the strap: You're probably too young for that. Those sorts of things. I mean there's no way that you would touch a child or... Society is also very ready to come up and abuse schools for not treating their kids in the correct manner. So you have to be very careful about... even being in a room with a child on your own. So I would never be in a room with a male child, even as a principal disciplining a child I'd have a door open. There are expectations of the school, but then also the school has to really make sure they have their protocols well and truly in place, and one of those protocols is the welfare and discipline policy. I think society has lots of issues and problems that its grappling with and schools reflect that broad range of issues, and we do try and tackle it but as you know it's difficult to fit it all in.

eV What's the most satisfying aspect of your job? What do you enjoy the most?
Julie I think the most rewarding part is mixing with a broad range of people. I enjoy teaching students and I still do that occasionally. The job and the size of the school makes that fairly... limited in what I can actually offer in terms of supporting staff in that capacity, but being able to mix with the staff of a bigger school, and the parent body. I find that rewarding. The few times that parents come up and say thank you. that's rewarding. That's very rare. You often get more criticism than thank yous but sometimes, a parent is so happy that they'll let you know, and let the staff know. And I think making a difference on a larger scale, that I actually can be involved in policy, direction, shaping the vision of a school within Ballarat but also getting with other principals and talking about the direction of education, that I think I can make a bigger difference at that level than as a classroom teacher.

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