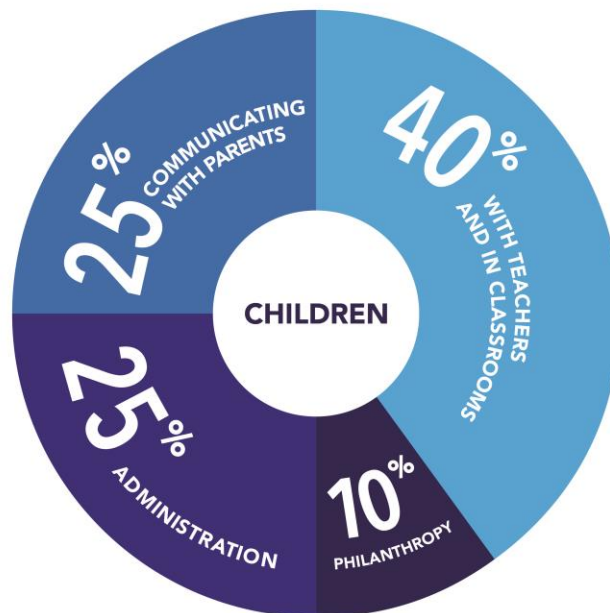


The 21st Century Administrator in the Christian School

We recognize that, in a small school, the academic administrator is also the Principal, Philanthropy Director, bottle-washer etc. Those in that position will have to read this article and translate it into their own terms. It is simpler to write about the academic administrator for whom that is their job title/description. You may be a Dean of Academics, a Division Director. Whatever your title, your job has changed.

Consider the following model:

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ACADEMIC LEADER



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In this model, the lion's share of time is taken up with being with teachers in and out of their classrooms. CMS's teacher professional growth, conversation, and compensation model identifies the first and over-riding responsibility of the academic administrator is to be in conversation with their teachers. Note the word conversation.

Conversation (Merriam-Webster):

1a(1) : oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas

... we had talk enough but no *conversation*; there was nothing discussed.—Samuel Johnson

Conversation is not a faculty meeting run and dominated by the administrator’s agenda and voice. Conversation is not the filling out of forms in a formal classroom observation. Conversation is not the administrator checking lesson plans to ensure conformity with state standards. All of those things come under administration. Conversation is a servant leadership attitude that is constantly asking ‘what do you need to be successful?’. Conversation is being with the teacher, providing data the teacher asks for, and engaging with the teacher in metacognition. In other words, conversation is the stance we take as administrators that models for teachers what we want them to model with their children.

40% of each week is to be spent by the academic administrator in and out of the classroom, supporting and in conversation with every teacher in the building.

Administration is a necessary evil – and takes up a quarter of the administrator’s time. It is necessary although the less that needs to be done, the better. But we are in a litigious society and filling in the forms is part of our due diligence in order to protect our teachers, ourselves, and our schools.

Parents are not a necessary evil! The time the administrator allocates for parents is a critical part of admission, family relations, retention, recruitment, parent satisfaction. They are our second most important client, second only to our children. The attention we pay them is an act of support to our teachers and ensures that most hard conversations with parents happen in the administrator’s office, not in the classroom. The attention we pay them ensures that each August/September, the teacher comes to a class that is full of children. Retention and recruitment is a crucial administrator function.

10% of time needs to be spent in philanthropy supporting the school’s Annual Fund.

This leaves out things that currently occupy a lot of academic administrators’ time as represented in this table:

	Whose Responsibility?	
	Teacher	Administrator
The Child (the progress of the child is the primary responsibility of the teacher, the single most important contact throughout the day and often at other times as well)	Yes	No
The Teacher (equipping the teacher to meet the needs of the child is the administrator’s primary responsibility through ongoing professional growth and conversation)	N/A	Yes
Curriculum (what to be taught is the responsibility of the teacher who has to deliver a course of study)	Yes	No
Pedagogy (how it is taught, administratively, means ensuring that each teacher has the tools to meet the needs of each child in the class)	No	Yes
Parent (while the teacher is the primary contact for the parent in learning how the mission is being delivered, the job of bringing the family in, educating the parent, dealing with issues, is administrative)	No	Yes
Discipline (It’s odd that we have discipline issues in our schools given the advantages we have; and yet only some have issues – that means the problem is not the child but the teacher)	Yes	No

When you become an academic administrator in the 21st century, you are not paid to teach the child. You move from being a teacher of children to becoming a teacher of teachers. And teaching holistically in the sense of serving, supporting, helping, coaching, holding accountable, advising, rewarding, offering, growing. Teachers faces enormous challenges as well as very high expectations. If they are not nurtured, supported, evaluated, compensated by expert academic administrators, they will not be able to sustain their work over a 40 year vocation/career.

When we talk to administrators, we ask you how you want to spend your time and how you actually spend your time. Almost universally, there is lament that you would like to spend more time with teachers but the amount of time in that stance is often less than 10%. Instead, our time is frittered away in items of less value dealing with outward issues instead of dealing with those issues at their source.

So the stance of the academic administrator is not crisis, discipline, curriculum, administration but teachers, pedagogy, and parents with administration and philanthropy thrown in. As academic administrators, we must see our tasks as primarily strategic and deal with root issues that take us away from them. When we do that, we will optimize the talents and gifts of our teachers on behalf of our children and improve our schools from a child's point of view.

Note: CSM's 2023 publication is **Teacher Evaluation and Compensation: Maximizing Each Child's Potential**.

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