

Dear Principals,

As National Principals Month comes to a close, I want to take a moment to personally thank you for all that you do and for all that you continue to do, often without recognition.

As you know, the principalship can be a lonely calling. You may have a team of assistant principals, one assistant principal, or perhaps none at all, but at the end of the day, the weight of the building rests on your shoulders. Few truly understand what you experience, what you carry, and what you sacrifice to lead your school community forward.

Most people only see what happens on the surface. They see the hallway walk-throughs, the classroom visits, the assemblies, the ball games, the concerts, and the board meetings. They see you standing tall, smiling, and steady. What they do not see are the quiet moments behind the scenes, the late nights, the difficult decisions, the phone calls that keep you up, and the personal sacrifices that come with leading a school. Unless someone has sat in that seat, they cannot truly understand what it demands of you.

So this letter is to say thank you in the most honest and authentic way I can.

Thank you for the late nights when you stay at school long after everyone else has gone home. For the evenings spent at games, concerts, and community events, even when you have missed your own family's moments. For those nights you spend finishing up observations, preparing for a faculty meeting, or just trying to catch up on emails so your teachers feel supported the next morning.

Thank you for being visible, not because it is easy, but because you know it matters. You show up every day, everywhere, even when you are tired, even when your to-do list is long, even when you could easily stay behind closed doors.

Thank you for your tears, the ones no one sees. The tears that come when you question if you are doing enough. The tears that come when you worry about a child's safety or hunger. The tears for the teacher who is struggling or the student who is hurting. And the tears that fall when the demands simply feel too heavy, the observations due, the emails waiting, the parent who needs you right now, and the fire drill that somehow has to fit into the same day.

Thank you for your sleepless nights, the ones filled with racing thoughts and endless reflection. When your anxiety is high and your mind will not turn off. When you replay tough conversations, anticipate tomorrow's challenges, or wonder if you handled a situation the right way. You carry the heart of a school in your mind even when you should be resting.

But despite it all, you keep showing up. You show up for students who need your encouragement, for staff who need your guidance, and for communities that need your leadership. You lead through joy and heartbreak, through success and uncertainty. You lead when no one is watching, and that is what makes you remarkable.

So, from one principal to another, thank you. Thank you for your courage, your consistency, and your compassion. Thank you for believing in public education when it feels harder than ever to do so. Thank you for modeling resilience, grace, and hope for those you serve.

You are the heartbeat of your school, the bridge between dreams and reality, and the steady presence that keeps communities believing in what is possible.

Sincerely

Jason M. Johnson
2025 Wells Fargo North Carolina Principal of the Year
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