



First 30 Days as a Principal Guide

A Strategic Start for School Leaders: Build Trust. Shape Culture. Lead Forward.



BEFORE DAY ONE: SET THE TONE

Goal: Prepare mentally and logistically for leadership that inspires confidence and connection.

Do This:



Meet with your district supervisor — ask:

- What's expected in my first 30 days?
- What's gone well and not-so-well at this campus historically?



Review:

- Campus data (discipline, attendance, test scores, staff turnover)
- School improvement plan (if one exists)
- Master schedule, key events, and staffing gaps



Create your "Leadership One-Pager":

Includes your mission, leadership values, communication style, and availability. This will be shared in Week 2.



Prepare a 30-day calendar with themes and goals for each week



WEEK 1: BE PRESENT, LISTEN, OBSERVE

Theme: *"Seek to understand before being understood."*

Your Priorities:



Learn the building — literally and figuratively.



Meet people with presence and curiosity, not pressure.



Begin informal note-taking to spot patterns and pain points.

Key Strategies:

- Do a full-campus walk-through (cafeteria, custodial closets, hallways, playgrounds)
- Schedule 1-on-1 meet-and-greets with:
 - Assistant principal(s)
 - Counselor(s)
 - Office staff
 - Campus support staff (custodian, nurse, cafeteria lead)
 - Union/building reps (if applicable)

Conversation Starters:

- “What’s one thing you love about this school?”
- “If you had a magic wand, what would you change?”
- “What can I do to support you better this year?”



Host a short welcome circle or open-door drop-in event for staff to say hello



Start a private log: “Bright Spots,” “Quick Fixes,” and “Bigger Concerns”



WEEK 2: CLARIFY & COMMUNICATE

Theme: “*Clear is kind. Consistent is powerful.*”

Your Priorities:



Begin shaping expectations, norms, and routines



Share your leadership message



Set the tone for how you communicate — professionally, frequently, and respectfully

Key Actions:



Send a welcome email or newsletter introducing yourself

- ✓ Share your “Leadership One-Pager”
- ✓ Outline your expectations for communication (email, response time, calendar use)
- ✓ Create a shared staff calendar with events, deadlines, and PD dates
- ✓ Start hallway presence routines (arrival, transitions, dismissal)

Staff Meeting Focus:

- Frame your leadership with a story or value
- Reinforce norms: respect, transparency, high expectations
- Include a gratitude or celebration activity

🧠 Ask staff for feedback via an anonymous Google Form:

- “What should I know?”
- “What’s one small change that would make your job easier?”
- “What would you love to see from leadership this year?”



WEEK 3: BUILD SYSTEMS & ROUTINES

Theme: “*Culture is shaped by what we do consistently.*”

Your Priorities:

- 🔧 Reinforce daily systems and schoolwide expectations
- 👤 Start modeling walkthroughs and visibility
- 🌱 Begin shaping school culture through intentional, repeated actions

Key Actions:

- ✓ Start classroom walkthroughs (informal — leave a short positive note or send a follow-up email)
- ✓ Launch a weekly newsletter or staff update (include quick wins, tips, reminders)
- ✓ Meet with behavior teams, special education leads, and intervention staff to assess support systems
- ✓ Check discipline referral data from the first two weeks
- ✓ Attend team planning meetings (grade-level or department)

Culture-Building Ideas:

- 🎉 Create a staff shout-out wall or digital “wins board”

- 💬 Reinforce a core value each week — “Our focus this week: Responsibility”
 - 👥 Ask each team to define what one of the school values *looks like* in action
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WEEK 4: ALIGN & STRATEGIZE

Theme: *“Begin with the end in mind — and bring others with you.”*

Your Priorities:

- 📊 Begin collecting patterns and insights for strategic planning
- 🗺️ Share where we’re going — and how we’ll get there
- 👉 Build momentum for long-term work

Key Actions:

- ✅ Draft and share your **60-Day Leadership Plan** — this might include:
 - 2–3 focus areas (ex: relationships, instructional walkthroughs, discipline consistency)
 - A few initial goals or benchmarks
 - Support plans for teams or students in need
 - ✅ Meet with PTA/PTO or key parent leaders
 - ✅ Launch student listening circles or a simple survey
 - ✅ Check in again with your AP, counselor, and key staff for pulse-checks

Final Staff Meeting of Month 1:




- Celebrate small wins
 - Revisit your shared vision
 - Invite staff to co-create what success will look like in 90 days
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WEEKLY WELLNESS CHECK (for YOU!)

- ✅ Did I take time for professional reflection this week?
- ✅ Did I ask for help or clarity when needed?
- ✅ Did I step away from the office and get into classrooms?

- ✓ Did I keep my leadership aligned with my values?
 - ✓ Did I protect time for family, movement, or rest?
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Optional Add-Ons

-  *Weekly “Principal Priorities” Sheet* to narrow your focus
 -  *30-Day Reflection Template* for staff input
 -  *Quarter 1 Pulse Survey* for morale, clarity, and support
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Final Thought

Your first 30 days won't be perfect — and they don't need to be. What matters most is **consistency, presence, and people.**

“Start small. Stay visible. Keep your eyes on culture, your feet on the ground, and your heart with your people.” ❤️