

Meet the Principal: Donny Gunter, Leclaire Elementary School

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December 1 2020 11:18 AM



First day
of

men
school

Kindergarten



Meet the Principal

This school year marks the largest turnover in administrative positions the Edwardsville School District has seen. Most of these changes were due to retirements with a few administrators making moves to other districts. These new positions yield a number of new faces with whom families may not be familiar. Now more than ever, with the change in the educational landscape to hybrid schedules and remote learning, it is important for a community to know the people leading their teachers and children. Riverbender.com and EdGlen Today.com will be hosting a series titled “Meet the Principal” to help readers become acquainted with these new faces.

The administrative role is a crucial one and the strength of the building administrator is especially critical to the success of a school district. An administrator sets the tone for a building, builds its culture, and sets expectations for teaching and learning and the current team of administrators leading the helm in District 7 could not be stronger.

Donny Gunter, Principal Leclaire Elementary School

Many across District 7 may recognize the new principal at Leclaire Elementary School. Mr. Donny Gunter was a fun-loving, popular, 5th-grade teacher at Woodland Elementary for ten years before accepting the principalship at Leclaire. He was well-known for the personal connections that he made with his students. He would attend his students’ concerts and athletic events to develop strong bonds with his students and spend each morning allowing his students time to share what was important to them. Mr. Gunter knew the “person” *behind* the “student” and the influence he had on his students was nothing but amazing. Mr. Gunter recalls a time last year at the end of a very long day when he reflected on what had been accomplished that day. Wondering if the students would consider the day “a win,” or a day that would soon be forgotten, he looked out his window and saw ten prior students, now high school freshman, walking his way. They had walked from Edwardsville High School to Woodland Elementary just to reconnect with their favorite teacher.

Mr. Gunter brings that same zest for teaching and that desire for personal connection from Woodland to Leclaire. Donny knew that his initiation to Leclaire Elementary was not going to be easy as he had some big shoes to fill (The previous principal Dr.

Cornelia Smith had been at Leclaire for seventeen years), but he has made the transition flawlessly. Making those connections with his students, families, and staff has been his priority this first semester.

An avid golfer and baseball coach for his two sons, Donny is learning to balance his new role with his home life by prioritizing, staying organized, and making lots and lots of lists.

When asked what he loves most about Leclaire Elementary, Mr. Gunter replied, "Leclaire is a fantastic place to work! One of the things I noticed about Leclaire right away, is everyone's enthusiasm to work together to get the job done. The faculty and staff work tirelessly to make sure the school is safe and ready each day. I've really enjoyed getting to know the students and families at Leclaire."

"Air-hugs" and "Air-high fives" start each morning for Mr. Gunter. "The energy that kids bring with them is the best. I have felt accepted since day one and am thankful to serve in an environment as special as Leclaire Elementary."

