



Meet The Principal: Dr. Duncan, Liberty Middle School, Edwardsville

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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 are hosting a series titled “Meet the Principal” to help readers become acquainted with these new faces.

Dr. Allen Duncan – Principal Liberty Middle School

EDWARDSVILLE - When some people think of their middle school/junior high experience, it may not always be favorable. Some of us might remember an awkward social encounter, not having anyone to sit with in the cafeteria, or just feeling unsure of whom you were. Dr. Allen Duncan, the new principal at Liberty Middle School in Edwardsville, works hard to make sure that the students in his building have nothing but positive memories.

Dr. Duncan started his career teaching Social Studies and coaching basketball at Edwardsville High School. After ten years at the high school level, he was assigned to an assistant principal position at Liberty Middle School. “My initial reaction was not a positive one because I had zero experience at this level. I didn’t think I had the patience it required to work with middle school aged students,” said Duncan, “Fast forward five years, and I’m not sure there is any other place that I’d rather be.” His experience as an assistant principal and now as principal has been “nothing short of amazing,” Allen said.

His middle school students have taught Duncan, a once quite serious basketball coach and Social Studies teacher, to not take himself too seriously. He witnesses daily his 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students participating in everything Liberty has to offer and jumping in with both feet. “They are not as guarded as the high school population. They don’t mind acting silly in order to have fun, and they are at an age where they still want to please their parents, their teachers and their administrators.”

“Keeping kids connected to the building has been my biggest challenge this year. The opportunities first semester were so limited due to COVID.” This drove Dr. Duncan on a mission to encourage his students to connect with the school; to become part of the Liberty community, in spite of the pandemic restrictions on schools.

His students can no longer roam the building, and they do not switch classrooms for content areas like Math, Science and Language Arts. The teachers move between classrooms while the students stay put. This model was put in place to limit the exposure that the students had with other children. “This model, although necessary, really restricts my students’ interactions with staff and peers, so I wanted to find a way for my students to engage with the entire school community without large gatherings.”

So a number of fun-loving events were designed, and Allen Duncan was smack dab in the middle of it all. He took pies to the face as a fundraiser, and lost (regrettably) a competition between Liberty and Lincoln Middle Schools. This loss required Duncan to wear Lincoln Middle School spirit wear (blue and orange rather than his own school colors of blue, silver and black) for the day. “Ms. Morgan, the principal at Lincoln Middle School, sent over a box of blue and orange clothes for me to wear and she was not kind in what she chose. It was quite embarrassing,” Allen shared.

Dr. Duncan also created “*Comfy*” Fridays. “It started out as a typical pajama day until one Friday I wore my *Comfy* to school – you know, the all in one, hooded robe you see advertised on TV. The kids thought it was hilarious and began wearing theirs, too. It was a *Comfy* revolution.”

Each day, Dr. Duncan chooses one class to read the building announcements. The class begins with a shout ‘Good Morning’ over the loud speaker and then Dr. Duncan asks three silly, random, questions that the students have to answer on the spot. The humor starts the day out on a great note.

“We’ve now evolved into also describing the lunch choices in an exaggerated manner with the kids embellishing the menu, making our cafeteria sound nothing less than a 5-Star restaurant,” said Duncan.

“My staff, every one of them, is the best,” boasted Duncan. “There is never a day when I don’t look forward to coming to work and it’s because of the people I work with every day. The opportunities that we are able to provide our students only happen because of the efforts of the people here. They keep life at Liberty Middle School exciting every day. This place was not the same when the kids were not here, and I am so glad we are able to take some steps toward normalcy again – teaching, learning and just enjoying middle school together.”





