Principal for a Day program

Advertising manager ‘returns’ to his elementary

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CIRCLING BACK — Principal Jo Glidewell, left, explains the process for reviewing and disseminating report cards to former Coleridge student and Principal for a Day, Justin Little.

COLERIDGE — Two decades after successfully completing his elementary school career at Coleridge Elementary, The Courier-Tribune Advertising Manager Justin Little circled back to shadow the school’s current principal, Jo Glidewell, as a participant of the Principal for a Day (PFAD) program.

Now in its fourth year, PFAD is facilitated by the Asheboro/ Randolph Chamber of Commerce’s Business and Education team, which includes representatives from the chamber, Randolph County School System (RCSS), Asheboro City Schools (ACS), Communities In Schools of Randolph County, and local businesses.

and organizations.

PFAD visits take place in elementary, middle and high schools within RCSS and ACS. The target week for the visits is during American Education Week, which is being observed Nov.13-17 this year. Community members, typically representatives from the business community, are paired with local principals for a half-day visit. As of Monday, there were 18 principals and community leader pairings in the works for this year.

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Principal

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Little arrived at Coleridge Elementary shortly after 7 a.m.—in time to greet students during arrival on Monday. He was “anxious to see what (the school) looks like today” as well as reconnect with teachers he had when he was a student.

Glidewell explained that staff are stationed on the sidewalks and throughout the building to welcome students each morning. Upon arrival, students also have the opportunity to select breakfast items from carts in the hallways through a universal breakfast program that enables the school to offer free breakfast to all students.

“I expected more to have changed in 20 years at the school, but it was pretty much exactly like I left it—except for the addition of a few trailers in the back,” Little said. “I was able to see and speak with a handful of the teachers I had so many years ago and even meet a few folks I knew from high school who are actually working at the school now, which was nice.”

Little’s visit was Glidewell’s first experience hosting a PFAD guest. She was looking forward to working with Little, “especially since he’s a former student seeing (elementary school) from an adult perspective.”

“The PFAD program is designed to increase awareness and understanding among community members of the strengths and challenges of our schools, as well as form ongoing partnerships between businesses and schools,” RCSS Public Information Officer Tim Moody said. “The overarching objective of the program is to build relationships between the education community and the community at large.”

PFAD visits are designed to be informal. Principals may involve guests in the school day as much, or as little, as they see fit. Guests may make morning announcements, visit classrooms and even engage with students.

After greeting students and visiting classrooms, Little spent time in the office as Glidewell prepared report cards for distribution. On their way back to visit more classrooms, the two stopped to welcome a family enrolling two new students.

Soon after, however, Glidewell was pulled away from the tour. Little spent the rest of the day with a principal intern from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

“I didn’t expect all the interaction in the classroom. The principals I remembered only came in class if there was an issue, but now they make classroom visitation a daily priority. We visited with every single classroom in the school,” Little said. “Those other two were math. I always felt like math was a strong suit for me, but the way I learned multiplication and division is extremely different than the way it is taught today.”

Tish Jones of Sav-A-Lot Flooring participated by shadowing Principal Michael Oder of Southwestern Randolph Middle School on Monday.

“I have gained a new appreciation for the people I entrust with my child’s education and safety. I saw firsthand how this administrative team is genuinely concerned about doing all they can do for their students and teachers, which includes trying new ideas using certain class periods to initiate students and teachers to think about ways to encourage more hands-on learning,” Jones said. “I walked away with a better understanding of how involved the staff and administration at SWRMS is in educating and caring for their students and their future.”

Jones was grateful for the opportunity and wanted to encourage other business owners to participate.

“Feedback from PFAD guests has been overwhelmingly positive,” Moody said. “It is common for guests to comment on how pleasantly surprised they are to see the great things happening routinely in our schools.”