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We get rid of all of the excuses

Q How do you help teachers create a positive school climate for student achievement?

We have to have our children as No. 1. It starts with that mindset. We have to get rid of all the excuses. Our professional development must be academic and child-centered. That's not the time for us to talk about how old the building is or how we don't get parental involvement or, 'I don't have enough chairs.' It's not gripe-session time. Let's get the data about where our children are, identify their greatest needs, and decide how to attack the issues as a school. No teachers here work in isolation. No one goes into the classroom, shuts the door, and then that's their world. Everything is transparent. Teachers' classrooms are constantly visited.

Then, people at the top have to be role models for how we interact with our students and our parents, even when, at times, those are difficult peo-

ple. Even when they are angry or frustrated, we can't act in kind. Leaders model, "This is how I expect you to talk to this child when this child is having a bad day." I'm going to show how I expect a teacher to deal with an at-risk child or a difficult child, to talk to them — listen to them.

When we look at the plight of our urban communities, we have to look at teaching the whole child and not just the three Rs. When I consider some of the negative things that have gone on in my community, I know we cannot just sit back, relax, and say, "Well, that's not my kid." If what's happening is a part of this city, a part of this state, a part of this country, then we have a stake and a responsibility to try to do something to improve it. Since I don't have any control over what goes on at home, I have to do as much as I can, as often as I can, when I have these children in school. When we put the whole picture together, any educator sees that responsibility. ♦

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