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Talk about crushing words to hear. Now the two of us were crying in the hallway outside this classroom as Josh went on to tell me that after his dad died, his mom had to take on multiple jobs, which meant that he had to get his sisters fed, and then to and from school every day. No wonder he was always late, absent or missing detention. By the time our conversation was over, I had ripped up all of the referrals with his name of them, cancelled the detention hours he owed, and certainly did not suspend him. Instead, we built a relationship that solidified my why as a school leader and hopefully changed his outlook towards adults in the school.

I share this story as an example of the power of the principal. We, as school leaders, have an opportunity to eradicate adult-centered policies, procedures, and systems that have been in place for decades. We can either choose to perpetuate horrific, inequitable systems that continue to harm kids or we can build environments of hope, care, and unconditional love. I made a choice that day that has served as my unwavering pursuit to constantly push the status quo. The system won't change unless we all become student-centered. I hope I changed Josh's trajectory in that conversation; I know he changed mine.

I sleep at night knowing we have a state full of principals and assistant principals working hard to lead with relationships over rules. In the long run, those relationships will carry a forever and immeasurable impact. Just imagine a K-12 system focused on relationships above all else. I won't rest until this dream becomes reality. ■



Dr. Scott Seaman joined AWSP in the fall of 2013 after serving as the principal at Tumwater High School. In July 2018, he assumed duties as Executive Director.

Humor me!

Created by **David Ford**, Retired Washington State Principal

