

A Visit to the Principal's Office

By Eric Sheninger '97



For one graduate, the path from the biology lab led to the principal's office and eventually to national television.

During my years at SU from 1993-1997 my course of study was leading me to a career in the biological sciences. This path quickly changed as I found my calling in the field of education as I began to dabble in teaching as a graduate assistant in charge of instructing introductory biology labs. Coming from a family of educators, I pondered as to why I had written off this occupation choice early on when I had such a passion for working with adolescents. This epiphany has led me to what has been a fulfilling career as a science teacher, athletic director, vice principal and now principal.

Many people questioned my decision to leave the classroom and pursue a position as an administrator. As a teacher, I often wondered how I could put myself into a position to help more students, but the answer was quite simple. As an administrator, I would be able to have direct influence over all aspects of students' education in a school as opposed to just those enrolled in my classes as a teacher.

Becoming one of the youngest high school principals at the age of 32 in the State of New Jersey in June 2007 has been a dream come true. As an instructional and transformational leader at New Milford High School, I am constantly looking for ways to increase student achievement by establishing authentic-based learning environments in order to prepare all of our students with essential 21st century learning skills needed to compete and excel in today's global economy.

One of my main objectives is to provide my students with the best education and resources possible. During June 2007 I was approached about participating in a reality television show called *Schooled* that was sponsored by OfficeMax and featured a live performance by the All American Rejects. The show aired nationally August 5, 2007, on the CW Network. For participating in the show the school was awarded \$60,000 that was used to purchase computers, desks and other essential supplies.

Soon thereafter, in fall 2007 I was approached to participate in another television show called *The Principal's Office*. The premise of this show was to provide a depiction of what a day in the life of a principal is actually like. This series premiered nationally on TruTV during fall 2008. During the negotiations process for my participation in this series, I was able to secure \$10,000 for my high school that was used to purchase MacBook computers and a mobile iPod learning lab.

The Rachael Ray show enjoyed the series so much that they invited me on as a guest on September 24, 2008. On the show I was able to speak about not only why I decided to participate in the project, but also shed some light on the many challenges facing school administrators today.