

Influential Women Spotlights Marlana Turner: Advancing Educational Equity Through Servant Leadership And Excellence

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Dedicated Principal Builds Strong School
Cultures, Supports Educators, and
Creates Opportunities for Underserved
Students

San Antonio, Texas — Marlana Turner is a dedicated educational leader and servant leader with more than 18 years of experience committed to improving student outcomes and expanding opportunities for underserved communities. Throughout her career, she has remained focused on one central belief: every child can learn, thrive, and succeed when provided with the right support, leadership, and opportunities.



Inspired by firsthand experiences working with families facing economic hardship, Marlana pursued education as a way to create meaningful and lasting change. Her passion is particularly centered on supporting African American children and other students who have historically been underserved by traditional educational systems. Rather than viewing challenges as limitations, she works to identify opportunities for schools, educators, families, and students to grow together.

Marlana has served in a variety of leadership positions across public and charter school systems, including KIPP Delta Public Schools, KIPP Texas Public Schools, and Compass Rose Public Schools, where she currently serves as Principal. Her career has allowed her to work across instructional, operational, and leadership functions while developing a hands-on approach that keeps student success at the center of decision-making.

Over the past two years, Marlana has been proud to be part of the continued growth and

success of Compass Rose Legacy. During her time with the school, Student Achievement increased from 48 to 70, School Progress from 52 to 77, and Closing the Gaps from 62 to 78. She is especially proud of the school's three 2026 TEA distinction designations in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. These accomplishments reflect the dedication of students, staff, and families and the school's shared commitment to continued growth and excellence.

As a principal, Marlana remains deeply connected to the day-to-day work of education. Her responsibilities include leading instructional rounds, coaching teachers and assistant principals, supporting operational strategy, and remaining actively engaged in direct student instruction. She believes that effective educational leadership requires leaders to understand what is happening inside classrooms rather than operating solely from an administrative perspective.

Her approach has contributed to measurable academic growth, including helping students achieve significant improvements in grade-level proficiency. Yet for Marlana, academic achievement is only one part of effective school leadership. She is equally committed to creating a school environment where educators feel supported, students feel valued, and families understand that they are important partners in the educational process.

At the heart of Marlana's leadership philosophy is the concept of team and family. She believes that educators spend an enormous amount of time together and that a positive workplace culture can make an important difference in how effectively they serve students.

Marlana describes her team as a family built on mutual support. Whether someone needs help with lesson plans, additional classroom support, or assistance navigating a challenge, she believes everyone should be willing to step in. Her own leadership style reflects that philosophy. She is willing to co-teach, collaborate, and share responsibilities when necessary because she understands how demanding the work of education can be.

For Marlana, creating this type of environment requires building a culture of respect, a growth mindset, and genuine family. She believes that when educators feel connected and supported, they are better positioned to show up for their students and for one another every day.

Another principle that has shaped Marlana's career is gratitude. She believes educators should begin each day by recognizing what is going well rather than focusing exclusively on what needs to be fixed.

In a profession where feedback and evaluation are constant, Marlana has learned the importance of balancing constructive criticism with recognition. She encourages educators to identify their "glows" alongside their growth opportunities. While there will always be areas that can be improved, she believes it is equally important to acknowledge the hard work that educators are already doing.

This philosophy allows her to maintain perspective and helps her teams remain focused on the

most important aspects of their work. Growth and improvement are essential, but they should not come at the expense of recognizing progress and celebrating accomplishments.

For young women entering education, Marlana emphasizes the importance of remembering their why. She encourages aspiring educators to continually reconnect with the reason they chose education in the first place.

Education, Marlana believes, is not a field that everyone can pursue successfully because it requires a deep sense of purpose, patience, resilience, and commitment. Many people enter the profession because of a meaningful personal experience or a desire to make a difference. When challenges arise, remembering that original purpose can provide the motivation needed to continue moving forward.

Marlana believes that difficult moments are inevitable, but reconnecting with one's purpose can make those moments manageable and remind educators why their work matters.

One of the significant challenges she currently sees in education is parent engagement in academics. While families are often highly supportive of school events, sports, and other activities, academic involvement can be more difficult.

Working in a Title I school, Marlana recognizes that there are numerous reasons families may struggle to participate academically. Some parents may not have attended college themselves and may not know how to assist their children with certain assignments. Others may be working two or three jobs and simply may not have the time available to provide academic support at home.

Rather than placing blame on families, Marlana believes educators must recognize the different circumstances families face and continue searching for effective ways to build stronger academic partnerships. She acknowledges that there is no single solution and that schools must remain willing to try different approaches.

Her long-term vision extends beyond her current role. Marlana is pursuing superintendent certification as she prepares to expand her impact within education. Her goal is to continue developing as a leader while creating opportunities to influence educational systems on a broader scale.

Integrity, respect, and honesty remain the core values guiding Marlana in both her professional and personal life. These principles influence how she interacts with students, educators, families, and colleagues and serve as the foundation of her leadership philosophy.

Ultimately, Marlana Turner views education as both a responsibility and an opportunity to serve. Her commitment to equity, instructional excellence, professional growth, and community partnership continues to shape the environments she leads. By fostering cultures where

educators support one another, students are held to high expectations, and families are treated as essential partners, she remains dedicated to ensuring that every student is seen, supported, and equipped to succeed.

Learn More about Marlana Turner:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Marlana-Turner>

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