

Cheryl Ault

Elementary School Principal

Kingsborough graduate Cheryl Ault has always had an immense passion for education and children. As the current principal of P.S 81, The Thaddeus Stevens School, located in the heart of Bedford Stuyvesant, Ault has committed herself to turning around the negative reputation of the school and making it one of success. It is her priority to challenge herself as well as the community to becoming more involved in the educational process as well as in student/parent support.

With the essence of her educational philosophy being the core belief that “every child can learn, grow, and achieve,” Ault’s strength, dedication, and perseverance are effectively changing the school’s direction into a positive one. Her example has proved to be one of great commitment and leadership.

Born and raised on the beautiful tropical island called the Republic of Guyana, Ault always found herself surrounded by people of influence and great motivation. With members of her family that have served in the mayoral office in Guyana as well as having relatives within the education field, achievement and success was nothing new to her. She states that her family was “education oriented.” Education was always stressed to her as a priority in her household and she knew that for her there were no other options.

Ault realized that she had a great passion for the field of education early on in her childhood. She always loved to read books. She was the type of child that you would be able to find with a book in her hand at all times. She enjoyed it so much that she realized she had this overwhelming desire to share it with others... especially little children. Ault states, “I used to like to read to the children. I loved storytelling! I would re-dramatize all the stories.”

As a child, Ault showed amazing signs of organization, management, and entrepreneurship. Due to her love for reading and learning, she began buying books from her community library. She decided that she would use those books to create a library of her own. She created it under her house and the neighboring children would come to visit. They would borrow these books and Ault would give each book a due date. Whenever a child was late with their book, she would charge them a penny. She would then take that penny and run back to the community library where she would purchase more books. It was her passion. Ault understood the importance of a book. She understood the power that it offered her and she respected it.

Outside of reading books, Ault had a vast enthusiasm for science as well, primarily biology.

“I knew I would have done something that dealt with people, and at one point, I thought it would be in Nursing or as a High School Biology Teacher,” she said. “

She took the test for both in Guyana.

“I would have taken either field but this opportunity [Education] was afforded to me first. I haven’t regretted it.”

Sometime after arriving into the United States from Guyana, Ault decided to continue on her quest of achievement and success. Desiring to complete her pursuit of education, she decided to enroll into college. She thoroughly researched Kingsborough Community College’s course offerings and services. After some thought, she took the test and enrolled into the college to pursue an Associate’s Degree in Biology.

Ault looks back on her times at Kingsborough with complete fondness.

“I had a voice.” Ault stated. “If something did not go right, there was always someone there to listen to me in terms of getting it done.”

She recalled having extremely helpful counselors and professors, people she learned to appreciate more once she left Kingsborough and entered Brooklyn College. “The professors really cared about their students learning. They cared about my learning. If I needed any questions answered about my major, my counselor was always there to sit with me, share with me, and have me speak with people in the field. So, that one on one was there at Kingsborough.

After graduating from Kingsborough, Ault attended and graduated for Brooklyn College. She was well on her way to success. The path led her into the field of Education as the Assistant Principal of P.S 81. She was in this position for a year and three months before she stepped up into the position of Principal of the troubled school. She describes the experience as “a real journey”. “When I came in, our school was a school in need of improvement. The behavior was outrageous. I wanted to quit and go back to my former position. That’s how it was. I’ve never seen, in all my life, children or parents so disrespectful, and overtly disrespectful. And that really took a toll on me.”

Believing that because she “knew better” that she “could do better,” she became determined. Instead of bailing out on the school and its students, she continued in the position of Assistant Principal to the best of her ability and decided to take control of the reins as Principal, guiding the school into the right direction.

Ault has opened the doors of communication between herself, the faculty, and the school by creating a multitude of workshops, helping teachers with their lesson plans, and increasing parent volunteering. Since she has become principal, there has been great visual and tangible improvement in P.S 81. The overall school grade has gone up to an “A”, and has managed to maintain its “A” for the past few years. Student outcomes have been steadily improving and parents have been more active in volunteering, government, and in creating their voice.

According to Ault, that is one of the major variables that have impacted the positive growth in the building.

Ault's take charge attitude and determination has led her to many achievements. She has been inducted into the Cahn Fellows Program for Distinguished New York City Principals as well as the Kingsborough Wall of Fame in recognitions of outstanding achievement. She has been a recipient of the Brooklyn College's Joseph J. Cohen's award for excellence in education and was also a mentor for new Assistant Principals Affiliated with New York City Leadership Academy.

Proving herself a force to be reckoned, Ault is nowhere near done. For her it's all about the community and working together towards greater results every day. There are no doubts as to what she can accomplish.

"I lead by example. I have had great mentors, especially from Kingsborough, and it has impacted my life positively," she said. "I'm hoping that I'll be able to reciprocate the same in my school community, where parents are not seeing me as do as I say, not as I do. I play an intricate part in the building. I speak to parents. I sometimes model lessons for teachers. But most of all, I lead."

Interview completed by Kingsborough Student, Natalie Johnson