

# Rebecca Vyduna

[www.RebeccaVyduna.com](http://www.RebeccaVyduna.com)

rebecca.vyduna@gmail.com  
60 Wadsworth St. Apt. 14f  
Cambridge, MA 02142  
(773) 600-3163

## PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

“Lifelong learning” may be a phrase found on virtually all of the prospective teacher applications this year. It is also the ubiquitous goal of myriad public schools. Yet, as I approach the role of School Principal, I recognize the hidden meaning of this phrase that must be unlocked in order to make this goal a reality. If children are to become lifelong learners, it rightly follows that educators must also be in perpetual pursuit of knowledge. I look forward to creating a culture of continuous improvement, where the faculty manage and benefit from a professional learning community that stretches thinking, challenges deeply held beliefs, and moves the complex work of teaching forward.

Since childhood I have pursued a passion for urban education, English language learners, and immigrant community organizing. My experiences living and teaching in Guatemala and in the immigrant communities of Chicago have furthered my devotion to equity in education. I believe fiercely in the abilities of public schools to close the “achievement gap” and work wholeheartedly towards this imminent future. Creating a culture of lifelong learning lies at the foundation of this difficult work. As educators, we must study, question, and discuss the systemic failures that plague our school’s most disadvantaged youth. While we must analyze and speculate over the local, district, and state performance data of our students, we must also turn that same microscope on our own practices and beliefs. Through this process another cultural element must emerge –

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that of sincerely high expectations. More than just words in a philosophy statement, this must be a core value that is a highly visible element of the school's mission. Teachers with high expectations design instruction that is truly rigorous and demands high quality performance. It is the school Principal's role to light this path by modeling a sense of urgency, an open-mind, and a deep respect for the school and community.

Teachers, students, and Principal are not enough to guarantee success. Strong family and community support must be engaged in a school's learning. I work tirelessly to authentically include families in the work and play of schools. In addition to school-based decision-making, I believe that families must be invited to share their valuable narratives with students in classrooms. These stories represent powerful lessons that make learning meaningful for children and further their belief in themselves as agents of their own development. For many families, it is difficult to visit the school. It is crucial that school staff make home visits when necessary and hold meetings outside of school grounds when feasible.

In a brief visit to my school, an observer would notice that I spend much of my time in classrooms, faculty know the names of all children and family members, and a welcoming atmosphere permeates. Core values of continuous learning, high expectations, academic rigor, and family engagement are a visible foundation undergirding our success. As school leader, I believe in building this culture and unlocking the lifelong learning for all.