

Meet Duke and Jen Marshall

Co-Founders of Academic Allies | 70+ Years in Education | Champions for Educators Who Answer the Call

We're Duke and Jen Marshall — the heart behind Academic Allies — and between the two of us, we've spent over **seven decades answering the call to education**. Our journey has taken us from classrooms to correctional facilities, from coaching teachers to leading campuses, and from California to Texas and beyond. We've walked beside teachers, students, families, and administrators across nearly every corner of this profession.

We know what it feels like to pour your heart into this sacred work and still wonder if it's enough — to balance impossible expectations, shifting mandates, and the relentless pace of school life, all while holding onto the reason you started in the first place.

But we also know this: **When educators feel seen, supported, and equipped, extraordinary things happen.**

Duke's Story: Leadership Rooted in Real Experience

Duke brings over 30 years of leadership experience spanning some of education's most challenging and diverse spaces. From correctional education programs to comprehensive high schools, from career and technical education innovation to district-wide reform initiatives, his journey has always centered on one guiding principle: **students thrive when adults lead with both high expectations and authentic care.**

His unique path through correctional education, traditional classrooms, district leadership, and national consulting has given him an unparalleled perspective on what truly works—and what doesn't—across the full spectrum of educational settings. Duke has led initiatives that raised both performance and morale, mentored hundreds of teachers throughout their careers, and developed frameworks that help educators navigate the complex intersection of compliance and calling.

As the author of "**Beyond the Lesson**" and its companion resources, Duke helps educators reconnect with their deepest sense of purpose while providing actionable strategies that work in real classrooms with real challenges. His leadership voice challenges systems to move beyond mere compliance and return to what matters most — relationships, integrity, and sustainable impact that honors both student needs and teacher sustainability.

Duke understands the pressures you face because he's faced them himself—and found ways to not just survive, but thrive despite them.

Jen's Story: The Heart of Elementary Education

Jen embodies the soul of teaching. With over 30 years as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, and mentor, she has built classrooms where every child feels seen, safe, and capable of remarkable growth. Her approach centers on the profound truth that **relationships are the foundation of all learning**.

Her superpower lies in helping teachers rediscover joy in the sacred messiness of learning and authentic connection. Whether she's guiding a struggling reader, coaching a veteran teacher through burnout, or designing professional development that actually energizes educators, Jen brings unmatched empathy paired with unwavering high expectations.

Jen's expertise in differentiated instruction, social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed practices comes not from textbooks but from years of loving students through their hardest moments and celebrating their greatest victories. She reminds us that at its core, education is about loving children well — and loving the adults who teach them.

She knows how to help teachers fall in love with their calling all over again, because she understands that behind every challenging behavior is a child who needs to be seen, and behind every struggling teacher is an educator who needs to be supported.

Why We Created Academic Allies

We built Academic Allies because we believe educators deserve more than shallow trainings, one-size-fits-all programs, or temporary pep talks. **They deserve resources that speak to their lived reality — and support that lasts beyond a single workshop.**

You deserve **relevant professional development, authentic encouragement, and relationships that honor the sacred nature of your work**. We don't just write about education—we're still living it. We don't just theorize about teaching challenges—we've navigated them ourselves. And we don't just offer advice—we walk alongside you with the wisdom that comes from decades of dedicated service.

Our approach is anchored in five core convictions that transform not just educator effectiveness, but educator fulfillment:

- **Reconnect to your calling** even when outside pressures blur your "why"
- **Embrace authentic learning**, recognizing that growth is often messy and beautiful
- **Build relational trust**, because sustainable change begins with genuine human connection
- **Protect your energy** with boundaries that allow you to serve from a place of health
- **Leave a lasting legacy**, not through position or title, but through daily choices that shape lives

What Makes Us Different

We've Been Where You Are: Our 70+ combined years aren't just time served—they represent real experience in real classrooms with real challenges. We've taught in overcrowded classrooms, worked with limited resources, navigated difficult situations, supported struggling colleagues, and found ways to thrive despite systemic obstacles.

We Honor Your Expertise: We don't come as outsiders telling you how to do your job. We come as fellow educators who respect your professional judgment and want to amplify your existing strengths while addressing your genuine challenges.

We Focus on the Sacred: We see teaching not as a job but as a calling—a sacred trust that deserves to be honored, supported, and sustained throughout an entire career.

We Build Relationships, Not Just Deliver Events: We don't offer theories disconnected from practice. We bring hard-earned wisdom forged in real classrooms, with real students, facing real challenges. We don't deliver professional development events — we build professional relationships that sustain educators for the long haul.

What We Offer

Whether we're coaching a first-year teacher finding their footing, equipping veteran educators seeking renewal, facilitating deep conversations with leadership teams, or partnering with districts for systemic transformation — **our mission remains constant: to build thriving schools by investing in the people who make them possible.**

We work with:

- **New teachers** finding their footing in their sacred calling
- **Veteran educators** seeking renewal and fresh perspective
- **School leaders** building cultures where both students and staff flourish
- **Professional learning communities** committed to authentic growth
- **Districts** ready to honor the humanity in education while achieving excellence

When Educators Thrive, Schools Flourish

When teachers feel seen, students feel empowered.

When leaders invest in people, culture shifts.

When campuses prioritize relationships, learning transforms.

This is the work we've devoted our lives to. And we are deeply honored to walk alongside the educators who carry this sacred trust every day.

Ready to Reclaim What Matters Most?

If you're searching for professional development that goes deeper — that honors both your experience and your humanity — we're here for you.

Let's talk about how Academic Allies can support your teachers, your leaders, and your district as you build sustainable systems, protect educator well-being, and reignite professional joy.

We promise to meet you where you are, honor the expertise you bring, and walk alongside you with the tools, encouragement, and unwavering support you need to thrive. We'll never minimize your challenges, oversimplify your work, or forget that behind every educator is a human being who chose to dedicate their life to serving others.

Your journey matters to us. Your calling deserves champions. And your impact—whether you see it or not—is changing the world one student, one day, one choice at a time.

**Because what you do still matters.
And so do you.**

Contact Academic Allies

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Let's build something beautiful together.