
National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Ceremony

November 6, 2017

Presentation of the 2017 Terrel H. Bell Awards for Outstanding Leadership

Hello everyone. My name is Melody Arabo. I'm a third grade teacher at Keith Elementary School in West Bloomfield, MI and currently serving at the U.S. Department of Education as a Teacher Ambassador Fellow. I'm so honored to be here to celebrate your achievements as National Blue Ribbon schools. Your work as exemplary teachers and inspired school leaders is some of the most challenging, yet important and rewarding work anyone can do. You and your community partners shape the future every day by preparing students. Our nation's future doctors, builders and most importantly leaders. To realize their gifts and use those gifts to persevere through challenges and seize the opportunities ahead.

Over the years we've learned that great leadership is critical to National Blue Ribbon School excellence. Strong, hard-working and visionary principals and administrators set the tone and direction for their entire schools. They inspire creativity and hard work in teachers and students. They embrace families and their local communities and use resources wisely to enrich each student and fulfill a shared vision of success.

No one understood this better than the second U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell. Shortly after Secretary Bell established the National Blue Ribbon Schools Recognition Program in 1982, he created the distinguished principal's award now named for Mr. Bell himself. The Terrel H. Bell Award recognizes outstanding school leaders and their vital role in guiding their students and schools to excellence, often under challenging circumstances. Most principals will modestly attribute their school success to a stellar team of staff, faculty, parents and community members. And they are right. But it is the principal who shapes the vision, sets the tone and targets the energy of the many people who run a school. The principal is the one who inspires and models the excellence he or she knows the school can reach. The Bell Award is a small token of our appreciation for this essential work.

This award is presented by the U.S. Department of Education together with the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Association for Middle Level Education, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals in memory of former Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell. Secretary Bell held education as its highest priority trusting that all students would find it their personal key to success as he had. The Terrel H. Bell Award honors Secretary Bell's memory and celebrates school leaders who have realized his vision of great American schools. Before we recognize our Bell Award recipients, I'd like to take this opportunity to honor all 2017 National Blue Ribbon School principals. Will all principals of the National Blue Ribbon Schools please stand? (Applause).

Thank you so much for your hard work in leading your schools to this recognition. At this time, I would like to invite Assistant Secretary Jason Botel and our friends from the Principal

Associations on stage to present these awards. I would also like to call up our Bell Award recipients to the stage and I will recognize you one by one.

Congratulations to Mrs. Ursula Annio, P.S. 748 Brooklyn School for Global Scholars, Brooklyn, NY. (Applause).

Congratulations Mrs. Jo-Ellen M. Connolly, Collier Primary School, Colliers, WV. (Applause).

Congratulations Mr. Paul Covey, Valle Verde Early College High School, El Paso, TX. (Applause).

Congratulations Mr. Michael Fiorello, Berkeley Avenue Elementary School, Westwood, NJ. (Applause).

Congratulations Ms. Kristen Hughes, White Street School, Springfield, MA. (Applause).

Congratulations Ms. Sophie Lee, Sunset Elementary School, San Francisco, CA. (Applause).

Congratulations Dr. Robert McBride, Neuqua Valley High School, Naperville, IL. (Applause).

Congratulations Mrs. Glenda McFadden, Nashua Catholic Regional Junior High School, Nashua, NH. (Applause).

Thank you so much for creating strong and thriving cultures of learning and high achievement that have enabled excellence in your schools. You are all true leaders. Thank you