
National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

Reilly Elementary School
Austin, Texas

Video: 2020 Terrel H. Bell Awardee Corrine Morris Saenz

Hello everyone. I'm Corrine Morris-Saenz and I am the proud principal at Reilly Elementary in Austin, Texas. This Terrel H. Bell Leadership Award is humbling and beyond anything that I can imagine receiving. I truly believe that a leader is only as good as a team and at Riley, we have the best teachers and staff working with children day in and day out to provide them with the best possible learning experience.

As a school community, we believe all children can and will learn at the highest level and do so in two languages. Reilly is a person-only multilingual school in our district, all of our students are learning two languages, Spanish and English or Mandarin and English at high levels of rigor, earning us the National Blue Ribbon recognition.

In addition, we implement social-emotional learning in our instructional practices creating a safe learning environment in which our students can learn and thrive. Our approach to bilingual instruction embeds cultural proficiency awareness, and appreciation of all our students and families, valuing their language, culture, and heritage.

As a principal at Reilly, I've had the joy of creating a vision that focuses on the whole child. I'm honored to have a school community that supports this vision and has worked with me side by side to attain this. When I began my career as a teacher 18 years ago I wanted to make a difference in kids' lives. Never could I have imagined that I would impact an entire school community.

When I think of all the children that I have influenced throughout my career to value education, language culture, and to respect and appreciate people from all walks of life and the impact they could have on the world, I am humbled. For my parents and generations before me that made many sacrifices so that I could have the opportunity for a higher education, I am humbled. For my grandparents had dropped out of school early on because they were punished and challenged for speaking Spanish in school, I am humbled. I am still that little Hispanic girl from the poor side of town that had dreams of one-day helping people and making a difference. Never give up on your dreams and always prioritize how you can make a difference and impact change.

Lastly, I must acknowledge my family, friends, and three amazing children, Jonathan, Joan, and [Ellia] for believing in my work and aspirations. Thank you to the United States Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals for this prestigious award.