

**National Blue Ribbon Schools  
U.S. Department of Education  
2015 Terrel H. Bell Awardees  
Video *Conversations* Transcript**



***Advice to a New Principal***

James Heater, [Esther F. Garrison School of Visual and Performing Arts](#), Savannah, GA: First and foremost, they will never prepare you for all the things that you are going to have to do in this job. That's the first and foremost. Trust your instinct. Second thing is, always have a support system that you know that you can go to. The third thing is always keep your focus on your students and most importantly, if you're not having fun, you're in the wrong profession.

Rosalba De Hoyos, [Achieve Early College High School](#), McAllen, TX: My advice to a new principal will be to stay balanced with work and with their personal life, to always incorporate those who you work with, and to always remember that an individual might have blind spots. And so when you incorporate a group, you're notified by them of things that you haven't thought about, or plans that you haven't created. And so keep this team mentality that we are here to make a difference for the school. And also be flexible, be understanding, be respectful, don't forget to celebrate others, and most of all try to be one of the staff.

Irma Trosclair, [South Crowley Elementary School](#), Crowley, LA : I think to a new principal I would I would tell them to ignore the naysayers, the ones who tell you that it can't be done, the negative talk. It can be done regardless of the current situation sometimes you just have to be creative in the way to get things worked out. Number two would certainly be to not think it can be done overnight. Don't try to do everything at once. You need to prioritize things and focus on those things one at a time. And thirdly, not to love your children into failure. We have a saying at South Crowley, "we love our kids, but we don't love them into failure." And that means that we're tough on them, we know what lies ahead for them as far as secondary education, post-secondary education, so we're really tough with what we expect. We set very high expectations.

Janell Uerkwitz, [Murdock Elementary School](#), Lafayette, IN: Stand firm in your convictions, roll up your sleeves, don't be afraid to work. You're going to be involved in every aspect of the school. Cheer the kids on, be supporters for your teachers, analyze and study what needs to be said but the bottom line is make sure that the people that you work with, both children and adults, know how much you love them.

**Jon Cerny, [Bancroft-Rosalie Elementary School](#), Bancroft, NE:** One piece of advice I'd give a new principal is to understand the importance of—the impact that they have on the culture of the school. Those people are looking at you every day, and do you want them walking around on eggshells, or do you want them out there, you know, beating the drum and getting the kids excited? So you have to set the tone for those people every day. And even if you're having a bad day, you gotta be—for the staff and the students' sake—you've gotta be at your best.

**Heidi Smith, [Frank L. Huff Elementary School](#), Mountain View, CA:** Take the time to listen and observe before acting. Identify the strengths in everyone around you and take the time to figure out how you can put that all together to make the magic happen. And don't forget about balance, balancing life and work so that you can present yourself, your best leader, your fully expressed leadership, every day.

**Edna Coia, [Francis J. Varieur Elementary School](#), Pawtucket, RI:** For me, the new principal is a tree full of fruits. The new principal has so much fruit in that tree and she has to offer those fruits to everybody who comes to her. And my advice to the principal is: Save the sweetest fruit, save the largest fruit, for the hungriest or the most hungry child. Because that child needs that best fruit. Sometimes being fair is not equal.