

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



Leadership Challenges

Heidi Smith, [Frank L. Huff Elementary School](#), Mountain View, CA: The biggest challenges for my school community would be to facilitate and ensure those crucial conversations about the achievement gap. And getting everyone to understand that by leveraging what we all have together for those who may not, for the good of the entire school community and our country, of course. The challenge is getting everyone on board with that cause, from the inside out, not on the surface.

James Heater, [Esther F. Garrison School of Visual and Performing Arts](#), Savannah, GA: the biggest challenge that I have faced as a school leader is making certain that folks understand that we are here for the students. And that's not just our teachers, not our parents not our custodians, not our lunch ladies, everybody, but knowing that we would not be here if it weren't for students. And that's one of the biggest challenges because we as human beings tend to look out for ourselves, and what we need to make certain is looking out for our children who are our next members of society.

Irma Trosclair, [South Crowley Elementary School](#), Crowley, LA : My greatest challenge as a leader is I think delegation or perhaps wanting to take everything on myself and not giving away things that other people certainly have the talent and the expertise to do. And I work with a wonderful staff who can do those things so I've gotten better with that. But also my greatest challenge has been to understand that not everything can happen overnight, that things take time and that it is a process.

Rosalba De Hoyos, [Achieve Early College High School](#), McAllen, TX: My biggest challenge has been not being able to assist the family with unforeseen situations. We're so close to the Mexican border, so sometimes they have to go back to Mexico or an unforeseen situation that takes priority in the student's life like an unexpected pregnancy or an un-renewed visa. But they feel that you know, it's over and they need to take another route.-

Jon Cerny, [Bancroft-Rosalie Elementary School](#), Bancroft, NE: I think effecting change in the school system is the most difficult challenge of any school leader. When you bring in something

innovative or new, there's always a little bit of reluctance, because people are comfortable with what they're doing and they probably don't appreciate the difference that that change might make in their students' lives, so getting people on board I think is always a difficult challenge for leaders.

Edna Coia, [Francis J. Varieur Elementary School](#), Pawtucket, RI: The mindset sometimes is difficult to change, especially when they will be seeing that this is the principal who came from a different country, who am I, to change? And that permanent, that fixed mindset that our students, sometimes parents, and sometimes teachers have—that is a challenge to me.

Janell Uerkwitz, [Murdock Elementary School](#), Lafayette, IN: I think the challenge is emotional. I think the challenge for us is—and I help my teachers grapple with this every day—some celebration that we've had for a child or some Aha moment that really caused us to realize that that child had embraced whatever concept we were teaching or whatever emotional behavior they had and then to realize that something in their life happened that caused that to fall apart. And maybe we can save a tiny glimmer of what we accomplished, but we might have to start over. But it's those little tiny steps that eventually cause us to realize that we made a difference.