

2017 KAMSA Principal of the Year

Terrell Davis, Truesdell MS, Wichita



From Terrell's application, nominated by John Allison, Superintendent, Wichita Public Schools:

Mr. Davis has been an outstanding educator and administrator in the Wichita Public Schools for 16 years, and he works feverishly to make a difference every day while seeking to enhance student learning and grow his school community. Mr. Davis is a tireless advocate for our students and our community. After life-changing impact on students in the classroom, Mr. Davis joined our admin team as Assistant Principal and now serves as principal of our largest middle school with- over 1100 students in his care. His leadership helped turn this struggling school around, with academic achievement increasing and student behavior improving.

We expect our principals to be instructional leaders in their buildings. This is certainly a strength for Mr. Davis, as he leads and models exemplary instruction. Mr. Davis is a consistent presence in classrooms throughout his building and has developed a walk-through protocol and communication model, which drives teacher professional development, enhancing student learning and elevating achievement. He provides timely feedback to his teaching staff and following walk-throughs (same day) and his administrative team collaborated and calibrated on a daily basis.

Mr. Davis is a hands on administrator who encourages students to be successful today as they are developing for success at-high school and beyond. He maintains high expectations for himself, as well as for Truesdell student and staff. One of his staff members, Assistant Principal Kim O'Reilly commented: "Mr. Davis is fair, impartial and systematic. His approach to decision making empowers both adults and students when it comes to problem solving. In my opinion, Mr. Davis' leadership is unparalleled." Mr. Davis is making a mark, and making it hard to erase.

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Tony Helfrich, Liberty MS, Pratt



From Tony's application, nominated by Suzan Patton, Superintendent, USD 382 Pratt:

Some principals are managers, some leaders, and few are leaders and managers. Tony Helfrich is one of the few; his uncanny ability to know when and how to use his managerial and/or leadership skills creates and environment where students and teachers flourish.

As a leader, Tony has a vision for his building and works diligently to develop the unique positive culture at Liberty Middle School (LMS). Consistent student engagement, innovative teaching strategies using technology, and most importantly, a strong camaraderie between students and teachers is evident in the building. Every move made from staffing to scheduling supports Tony's fundamental beliefs: rigorous expectations, continuous learning improvement, innovative instructional strategies, and "family.")

The LMS family exists because Tony works incredibly hard to achieve his vision. Using a building leadership team for decisions and feedback, he has created a building where teachers love to teach and students love to learn. He created his own walk-through document that provides great feedback for teachers. Relying on data, he modified the student discipline program and reduced referrals by 64%. Tony looks for teachers who love kids and can relate to the very best or worst of them. Activities like lip-sync contests, lip-dubs, and talent shows are opportunities where staff connect with students. His consistent, thoughtful approach to student discipline is highly respected. He can reach difficult students or parents. In one case when a student wrote a threat in the school bathroom, he worked swiftly and strategically to talk with the student, even making a home visit to talk with the parents. Tony goes out of his way to work with families. He has an innate understanding of the unique dynamics of middle school kids.

The LMS family exists because Tony works incredibly hard to make LMS a great place for kids, teachers, and parents. In every aspect, he has demonstrated outstanding leadership skills; he is a model middle school principal. (Suzan Patton, Superintendent)