

It's Not About You.

“A LEAD alum explains his motivation to lead others.”



LEAD-ECI

Think for a second about the most successful and influential leaders you know. The similar thing you'll notice among them all is that they're not in it for themselves. Their devotion to a particular cause and empathy towards those they serve overshadows any sort of selfish motivation. They consistently sacrifice their time, resources, and energies when no one else will. And they tackle some of the most challenging problems in their communities.

East Central Indiana is lucky that we don't have to look too far to find leaders that exemplify these traits. They're in our own backyard. They're in our hospitals, our businesses, our universities, and our surrounding nonprofit organizations.

They're also in our middle schools. Meet Todd Terrill. Todd is the Principal at Northside Middle School in Muncie, IN, and is a LEAD Spring 2009 alum. While he probably wouldn't admit it himself, he exemplifies leadership qualities that all emerging leaders should seek to copy. Read on below to see for yourself.

LEAD-ECI: At the end of the LEAD program, participants make a personal mission statement. What was yours about?

Todd: My mission statement had to do with being focused on kids and doing what's best for them regardless of how it affects the adults in the workplace. Here at Northside, there's hard decisions made everyday that people don't understand and sometimes don't have all the facts to understand. If you ask any of the faculty, office administrators, counselors, or teachers, they may say they don't agree with what was done, but they do agree it was done because it was the best thing for the kids. If people can look at me at the end of the day and truly believe that I did the things I did and made the decisions I made because I believed it was in the best interest of the kids, to me, that's the best I can get. That is my goal.

About Todd Terrill - LEAD Spring 2009



Todd is currently the Principal of Northside Middle School in Muncie, IN. He is in his 7th year of school administration. Prior to going into education administration, Todd spent 10 years as a teacher and coach in Richmond, IN, Tampa, FL, and Memphis, TN.

Todd has degrees from Indiana State University, Ball State University, and Maranatha Bible College. He will be celebrating his 19th anniversary with his wife Christy in June, along with his two children, Caylin and Zachary.

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LEAD-ECI: What is the most difficult leadership challenge you face on a daily basis?

Todd: The most challenging thing here we deal with is the ever-changing expectations that are put upon us by the state, their requirements, and the other things they are asking. All the while, we have to balance these requirements within the community in which we live. The diversity in our building is fabulous. It's one of the reasons why I love Northside and the opportunities we provide so much.

But with that, we have kids that come from backgrounds that I can't even imagine. Trying to get them to value education enough to put forth the effort can be difficult. A lot of that comes from teachers assigning homework and expecting kids to go home and work. That's part of being in school. But we have some kids that don't know what they're eating for dinner when they go home or where they are sleeping. And so it's about trying to balance the increased expectations coming in with the increasing number of our students who find themselves in that position. It's about striking a balance somewhere in there where you're not so task driven that you neglect all the personal impact that goes along with it. Keeping that balance is probably the most difficult leadership challenge I have.

Todd: Can you identify a particular scenario you've encountered that you feel LEAD has better equipped you to handle?

One of the things at Northside that matched up perfectly with the LEAD training was that we were going through a school improvement process where I wasn't necessarily telling people, "this is what we're going to do and this is how we're going to get better because this is what I think." It was more a matter of trying to gain perspectives from students, community members, parents, and teachers, and then trying to bring all of that information together and layout a plan for us to follow. A lot of what we went through in LEAD about conflict resolution, learning styles, and thinking styles really benefited me in this task. There's a benefit in understanding why you think one way and another person thinks in another. I had an understanding of that before, but going through our school improvement process and getting our faculty on board lined up exactly with some of the concepts we were exploring in the LEAD class at the same time.

LEAD-ECI: If someone wants to lead others in their community, but yet lacks the confidence and is apprehensive to do so, what would be your advice to them?

Todd: You really just have to be willing to put yourself out there. One of the great things about LEAD is that it

forces you to because of some of the activities you participate in. The facilitators did a great job in helping you build those relationships with other people and then finding areas where you could plug yourself into the community. There are literally tons of opportunities that can result from this.

LEAD-ECI: Would you recommend LEAD to others?

Todd: I would. I just told one member on our administration team that LEAD was a great opportunity to network with some of the up and coming leaders in our community. Also, the activities and exercises conducted by the facilitators give you the opportunity to learn a lot about your own leadership style.

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After a short conversation with Todd, it's easy to see his motivation in leading others. He doesn't do it for personal recognition. And he doesn't do it for a paycheck. He leads Northside Middle School students, faculty, and staff because he wants to provide the best possible education environment for students.

East Central Indiana is lucky that individuals like Todd step up and tackle our community's most challenging leadership roles. No one promised Todd that his job was going to be easy.

But yet anything worth striving for usually isn't.