

Bennett MacKinney, Ed.D.

Echo Mountain Intermediate School

2016 Rodel Exemplary Principal Finalist

Sharing stories of success

“ Principals need to understand the power of narration. When we lecture people in an expository manner we activate one part of the brain. However, when we tell a narrative, a different part of cognition is activated and overall attention increases. When you need to make a point, tell a story. One powerful anecdote can communicate a more memorable message than a detailed 50 slide PowerPoint presentation.

A tip for parents

“ If I could give parents just one tip it would be this: parents need to be the ones constantly asking 'why' questions to kids. We joke about how kids annoy adults with these questions, but the truth is we need to capitalize on this curiosity for the world and push it further. While you're driving to school ask them why they think the weather got colder, when you are making dinner ask them why they think the water on the stove is bubbling, and so forth. To succeed with Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards, and to succeed with 21st century life in general, we must all become more practiced at thinking through why questions.

Making data-driven decisions

“ Data is like seafood. After three days throw it out. Perhaps that's an extreme metaphor, but it helps me not dwell on endless piles of AzMerit and AIMS reports. We need to collect data in a way that helps us drive instruction immediately, not months later. To do this we have divided our school year into 11 instructional blocks. Each block begins with a PLC. At this meeting we analyze results from common formative assessments in Math and ELA. Then we determine what instruction needs to follow. These common formative assessments are teacher-made, and we balance this with standardized progress monitoring assessments such as STAR reading. This gives us multiple data sources and informs deep discussions during the PLC. I also encourage teachers to discuss qualitative data sources.



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Echo Mountain Intermediate School
Paradise Valley Unified District

440 students in grades 4-6

Experience: 20 years in education including eight years as a principal, one year as an assistant principal, and 11 years as a classroom teacher in various homeroom, ELL and Reading Specialist positions; served on committees to redesign teacher and principal evaluation instruments

Degrees: B.A. in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences from James Madison University; M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from UNC Chapel Hill; M.Ed. in Educational Administration and Supervision from Arizona State University; Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation from Arizona State University

Rodel, in partnership with Social Venture Partners Arizona, developed the Rodel Exemplary Principal Initiative to recognize outstanding school principals and populate a pipeline of highly skilled school leaders for Arizona's most challenging schools.

The Rodel Exemplary Principals are selected for their demonstrated ability to lead high-need schools to success by inspiring their staffs to develop a campus that is high achieving, safe, orderly and welcoming.

Each cohort of Exemplary Principals provides professional development, field experience and mentorship to a class of Rodel Aspiring Principals. After learning from the best, Rodel Aspiring Principals are better prepared to lead their own high-need schools.

The 2016 Rodel Exemplary Principals will be announced on January 10 at www.rodelaz.org.