

Dr. Melissa B. Rivers

South Ridge High School

2016 Rodel Exemplary Principal Finalist

Setting high expectations

“ I communicate high expectations to students and staff through example first. I have very high expectations for myself. If I did not, I would never be able to authentically ask others to reach higher levels. Specifically, I talk with students and staff about what is expected and why. Life is a process and I do not believe we ever reach a set point in learning or improving. It is essential to continue to grow and become better.

A tip for new principals

“ One tip I would give new principals is to be open. Be open to learning from others, including students. You have to be willing to be open to hearing others' views. Keeping your heart and mind open is crucial to building a community at your school. One of the most profound quotes I learned in high school was "The mind, like a parachute, only works when it is open" (attributed to many, including Frank Zappa). It really changed my thinking and has served as a mantra of sorts.

Learning from a mentor

“ One of the many lessons I learned from my mentors is that when talking to parents, listen. When parents come in angry about something with their child, more often than not, they want someone to hear them. It is easy to start a meeting off with you as a principal going over all of the facts, but let the parents voices be heard, then ask questions. It is a lesson I remind myself of often.



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South Ridge High School
The Leona Group, LLC

440 students in grades 9-12

Experience: 22 years in education including ten years as a classroom teacher which also included time as an athletic director and department chair, four years teaching undergraduate education classes as adjunct faculty, three years teaching graduate education as adjunct faculty, one and a half years as a curriculum coach/assistant school leader, and three years as a school leader

Degrees: B.S. in Physical Education from The King's College; M.Ed. in Curriculum Instruction from Arizona State University; Ph.D. in Curriculum Instruction from Arizona State University; 7-12 secondary certificate

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.