

# Innovation: Dos and Don'ts

Keep the process of cultivating a mindset of innovation simple by following this list of dos and don'ts, which was brainstormed by the NAESP National Panel on Innovation at the July 2015 annual conference in Long Beach, California.

## JOE MAZZA

*Innovation Coach*

*@Joe\_Mazza, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education*

**DO** take advantage of every face-to-face opportunity with staff to model innovation. Test out online tools and new approaches even if you are not an expert. Be the person who breaks the ice and exposes new ideas.

**DON'T** feel like you have to be perfect or that you need to be an expert. You can be an activator by simply exposing new tools and approaches that others can build upon.

## BRAD GUSTAFSON

*Eighth-Year Principal in Suburban School*

*@GustafsonBrad, Greenwood Elementary School, Minnesota*

**DO** make innovation a priority. Start by dedicating a portion of your budget to bring a new opportunity to your students. You might select a 3D printer, drones, robotic droids, or MakerSpaces. Prioritize innovation by investing in it.

**DON'T** think that traditional past practice is automatically the pedagogy that is best for today's kids. The world is changing and schools need to be responsive to the needs of the 21st century student.

## AMY FADEJI

*Fourth-Year Principal in Charter School*

*@MrsFadeji, Penngrove Elementary School, California*

**DO** look for magical moments on your campus every day and share them. Go out of your way to connect your students and teachers with other educators so they can learn, take risks, and grow together.

**DON'T** forget to take time to reflect on the things you're doing and why you are doing them. Don't worry about having all the answers. Instead, try to model a mindset of innovation by learning out loud.

## TODD NESLONEY

*Second-Year Principal in Rural, Title 1 School*

*@TechNinjaTodd, Webb Elementary School, Texas*

**DO** make yourself vulnerable by being honest and real about what's happening in your school and profession. Share the successes, failures, and things that are personal through blogging and Twitter.

**DON'T** get discouraged if anyone disagrees with you, your beliefs, or what you're sharing. Commit to sharing a message of positivity and hope.



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## BEN GILPIN

*Sixth-Year Principal in Neighborhood School*

*@BenjaminGilpin, Warner Elementary School, Michigan*

**DO** remember to make all your decisions based on what is best for kids. Too often budgets, adult needs, time, and space drive decisions. Remember why you are in education and focus squarely on students.

**DON'T** view disagreements and pushback as a bad thing. Change your perspective and look at different viewpoints as opportunities to learn. The best learning takes place in moments of adversity.

## THERESA STAGER

*Music Teacher Turned Private School Principal*

*@PrincipalStager, St. Mary Rockwood Elementary & Middle School, Michigan*

**DO** reach out to colleagues who can help you. Start with people you know. These colleagues will be your cheering section when you need encouragement. The silence from the isolation in the principalship can be deafening. Find your song.

**DON'T** stop. It sounds silly, but as soon as you stop you've given up. Look at failure as an idea that didn't work and that leads you to the one that will.

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