

“I make sure I interact in some way with anyone who reaches out, because I remember what it felt like for me when I was getting started, and someone I looked up to actually responded to my tweets.”

Todd Nesloney

Principal

John C. Webb Elementary

Navasota, Texas

The Stats:

- Years as principal: 4

Education:

- Texas A&M, B.S., Interdisciplinary Studies
- Lamar University, M.S.A.

School Details:

- Grade span: Pre-K–5
- 85 percent minority
- 88 percent free and reduced lunch
- 16.8:1 student/teacher ratio

Connect on Twitter:

- @TechNinjaTodd
- #KidsDeservelt
- #TellYourStory
- #SparksInTheDark



The Toast of Texas

Principal connects through social media to develop thought leadership

While Texas principal Todd Nesloney has served as a principal for only four years, he has already made a big impact on the field. In addition to serving as the campus principal in Navasota, Texas, he has authored several books and has a whopping 62,000 followers on Twitter. Here's what he has to say about his journey of learning from people from all around the world.

On receiving great feedback on his first book, *Kids Deserve It*

Co-author Adam Welcome and I were just putting our hearts on the page. We had no idea the movement would become what it has become today or that we'd receive such a rabid following. I am so unbelievably proud of what we've created and how #KidsDeserveIt has become a rallying cry. It's incredibly humbling when so many people like something you worked so hard to create.

On writing his second book

When thinking about a follow-up to *Kids Deserve It* (2016), I wanted to write something different—something that hadn't been done before. After working in schools for years, one thing everyone always flippantly says is, "We should write a book about everything that goes on in a school." Well, I work with brilliant educators every day who don't get recognized nationally or even statewide for all the incredible work they do. So I thought, why not get everyone together and write a book together? That's just what I did. I wrote *Stories From Webb* (2017), but every chapter features stories from staff members such as the nurse, counselor, instructional aides, secretary, teachers, and so many more. It's full of heart, honesty, and great instructional ideas. It's built for anyone who works with kids—people whose hands are in the mix of a school every day. It's a book that we hope inspires everyone to tell their story.

On leading education in a rural school

Kids are kids, no matter where you go. Kids are filled with wonder, excitement, and joy. It's our responsibility to bring out the awesomeness that each child holds within him or her. Sometimes students from rural schools don't have access to the same experiences or resources as students who live in urban areas. I want people to know that my students hold the same hopes and dreams. They are creative, funny, smart, and believe they can change the world—and they will.

On staying motivated

Keeping motivated as a principal can be difficult some days. We carry a lot of weight on our shoulders, much of which we can never share with our staff. When I'm feeling down, the first thing I do is get in the classrooms with kids. That moment a kindergartener tells you he or she loves you and gives you a hug, or a fifth-grader stays after school to join your chess club, or you laugh at the same joke at lunch with a group of third-graders—those moments fuel my soul. I also make sure to surround myself with people who will remind me of who I am when I get lost in the negativity.

His advice to new principals

You can't do it all on your own. Learn to lean on those around you and relinquish some of the control. Make sure you have a support group you can turn to for ideas for resources, or just to vent. If you try to carry everything on your own, you'll burn out in Year 1. It's OK to say, "I need help!" 📧