



# PROJECT 24

Executive Interview Series

Fall 2015

Spotlighting: Top-Tier School Administrator

## Dr. Tricia Patterson

**Employer: Cobb County School District (Georgia)**

**Position: Principal-Tritt Elementary School**

Dr. Tricia Patterson has been a fixture in the Cobb County school system for 11 years and was appointed principal of Tritt Elementary in June of 2014. "I live and breathe Tritt. I consider it my third child," she states. Patterson began her education career as a teacher at Big Creek Elementary School in Cumming in 2000. She moved to Tritt in 2003, where she has served ever since. Tritt Elementary School is a public school located in Marietta, GA. It's one of 71 elementary schools in the Cobb County School District and was recognized as a Blue Ribbon School in 2013. Dr. Patterson received her undergraduate degree from Ohio State and her Master's degree from Kennesaw State. She was recently awarded her Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Administration from the University of Alabama.



**"Active," "always-on-the-go," and "non-stop"** are words that best describe Dr. Tricia Patterson and

her family. Tricia, husband Bart, and their two children, Eleanor (10) and Cooper (7), spend summers cheering each other on in baseball, tennis, and swimming, and enjoy connecting over family dinners away from technology, work, and school.

Uniquely, Tricia and Bart are planning an upcoming, multi-city baseball park tour for son Cooper's birthday. An avid baseball fan and coach, Bart recently coached Cooper in the Dizzy Dean World Series held in Mississippi this past July, where they became champions.

**Q: How would you define your mission as a parent?**

A: "I'm a strong believer in leading by example. My parents have had a tremendous influence on my personal and professional leadership approach and I hope that Bart and I are able to influence Eleanor and Cooper in the same ways."

11 Years Married

2 Children

Favorite Family  
Vacation Spot?

Disney World



Everyone who remembers his own education remembers **teachers**, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system.

Tritt Elementary named National Blue Ribbon School 2013.

**Q: What are the biggest challenges you face in balancing demands at the office and home?**

A: Dr. Patterson is passionate about leading by example. She credits her parents with a servant-style leadership philosophy as she leads a team of 102 teachers and staff and 864 students. Dr. Patterson faces daily pressure to make the 'right' decisions at school, knowing hundreds of children's futures are in her hands and that often her choices will be scrutinized. "Being confident in one's skin is crucial. That doesn't mean I am not impacted by other's opinions, but it does mean I can rest knowing I make decisions carefully, thoughtfully, and professionally with the best interests of our students in the forefront," says Dr. Patterson. "Sometimes the best decision is not the most popular," she admits.

**Q: With so many different demands for your time in both your personal and professional life, how do you prioritize everything? Are there tips, techniques or habits you've developed to manage how you spend your time?**

A: Two words: alarm clock! Dr. Patterson is typically up by 4:30 a.m. for her morning run, email, and preparation for the day. In an effort to manage their busy lives, Tricia and Bart collaborate at the beginning of each week, scheduling and planning personal commitments into their calendar.

As part of 'leadership by example,' Dr. Patterson leaves the office by 4 p.m. to be home with family for dinner and evening activities, and she encourages the same of her staff. Additionally, teamwork and a strong support system are crucial to Dr. Patterson's success. She relies on the professional relationship she has forged with Assistant Principal, Kendall Keesling, who provides leadership, collaboration, and moral support as they lead a nationally-recognized team of teachers and staff.

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**“Sometimes the best decision is not the most popular.**

**Confidence in those decisions is key.”**

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The single **biggest**  
**challenge** in leading  
today's youth?  
**Entitlement.**

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**Q: What secrets can you share that have helped you both protect and grow your marriage while balancing career demands?**

A: Tricia and Bart support each other's passions as they juggle the daily stresses of work and home. Whether that means encouraging Bart in his love for playing tennis and baseball, or the long hours Tricia logged in pursuit of her Ed.D. at the University of Alabama, serving each other is critical to their marriage. With 11 years of shared history, they both know when it's time to get away from the kids and enjoy connecting over dinner or a movie.

**Q: What is the greatest challenge in parenting today's youth?**

A: One word: entitlement. Dr. Patterson sees it both at school and at home: "Today's youth get too many 'yes' answers to their wants and desires and far too few 'no's.' In some respects, Tricia believes that our children have been coddled and over-protected to the detriment of a strong work ethic.

**Q: If there's one "life lesson" you can choose to pass onto your children, what would it be and why?**

A: "The greatest gift Bart and I can leave Eleanor and Cooper is a strong faith and heart for other people," cites Tricia. In addition, her hope is that she and Bart have instilled solid values in their children with the expectation that there are no shortcuts to success. In essence, success in life requires hard work.

**Q: Are there any additional thoughts, comments, or ideas you would like to share?**

A: Dr. Patterson summarizes, "Leading a balanced life means knowing when to maintain focus in one area of life over another." There are times when working late one week needs to be prioritized in lieu of personal commitments, but the pendulum swings rapidly back in the other direction to balance lost time on the personal side. "Ultimately, genuine leadership is about serving others. My goal is to do that to the best of my ability at work and at home," Dr. Patterson concludes.

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**- Dr. Patterson**

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