



TOP 10 FINALIST

# Diego Mahfouz Faria Lima

**BRAZIL**

**When Diego arrived to lead his school it was notorious for being the most violent and drug-ridden in the area with the highest dropout rates. Parents were afraid to enrol their children there and staff turnover was high.**

Teachers were discouraged and tended to punish rather than reward their students. He has transformed the school by involving students, parents, teachers, school staff and the community.

Starting with how students and their families see the school, Diego sought help to completely refurbish it, despite limited finances. He persuaded local businesses and nearby schools to donate materials. Parents, staff and students worked together to paint and maintain the buildings. The change was made public when in the first days of term all school employees greeted new students with welcome posters and coffee.

Diego has implemented many projects to improve the school. A student card system to track attendance has reduced truancy. The opening of the school library to the community, which has attracted donations from across the city, has improved student literacy. And he has focused on teaching standards and practice, stemming from his belief that “everyone in the school community is an educator and therefore learns and teaches.”

The school now has strong links with the whole community. Students feel they have a voice and are listened to and the majority of parents attend school meetings. Projects to mediate conflicts and violence and reduce absenteeism have worked. Most of all the school now has a place within the community and everyone knows they are welcome.

**SUBJECT:**  
School Administration



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