

LEARN BY HEART

Spotlight on Principal Lori Graves

When Mrs. Lori Graves, principal at Bridgman Elementary School, reflects on the past few years, she notes that some good surprises came out of the pandemic. Affectionately referred to as “Covid Keepers”, Mrs. Graves has a handful of activities, events or processes that improved due to the required changes. An example is the student drop off process in the morning.

“Students now come in and have breakfast in the classroom, which is a great way for them to calmly start their day with their teachers,” said Mrs. Graves regarding the modified morning process. “We are also doing more outside, like when the high school seniors walk through the school with their caps and gowns. We hosted it outdoors last year and even the parents could come and watch. We just adapted and really relied on each other for creative ways to interact. We also held our dance-a-thon on the baseball field instead of the gym.”

She credits the invaluable administration team at Bridgman Public Schools for their support and leadership through the pandemic. Mrs. Graves is especially appreciative of her fellow principals at the middle and high schools, John Truesdell and Gerald Heath, respectively.

“I’ve worked with many very good administrators,” shared Mrs. Graves. “But I feel the current administrative team is the strongest I’ve ever worked with. John, Gerald and I have lunch together frequently, and we constantly bounce ideas off each other. We check in on each other often and offer encouragement and support. I’m also thankful for how Superintendent Shane Peters led us through the pandemic. Under his leadership we were able to stay face-to-face and this enabled us to have no loss of learning. He always put student and staff safety first.”

Students, parents and staff all think highly of Mrs. Graves as well. It’s clear through the many Learn by Heart thank you messages that carry a current theme: she is a great listener and is really there for her students and their families.



**LORI GRAVES, PRINCIPAL
BRIDGMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

“The last couple years Mrs. Graves has been a great support for my struggling child, she has been a listening ear, a friend when needed and a mediator at other times,” shared parent Cayla Westfall. “She has helped in stressful situations, listened to our concerns and offered help in any and all areas. I know dealing with parents isn’t always easy but she always manages to explain everything we don’t understand, offers solutions to issues and most importantly she offers support not just for my children, but for my husband and I as well. I honestly don’t know what we would do without her.”

Mrs. Graves shared that the community has played a big role in the success of the district along with the amazing PTO and their fundraisers. Pre-Covid, the community was really involved through classroom volunteerism, Junior Achievement, and welcoming the student walking tours.

“Our community is phenomenal and as the chair of the district’s Diversity Equity and Inclusion Relationship Committee, I want to see how the school can now help the community,” said Mrs. Graves. “Whether supporting an event at one of the local businesses, assisted living community or doing a park clean up, now it’s our turn to give back.”

With insight and focus like this, it’s no wonder Mrs. Graves is such a wonderful principal. Thank you for helping our elementary students Learn by Heart, Mrs. Graves!