

To: Members of the Emerson Elementary School Community
From: Bridey Bellemare, Executive Director, New Hampshire Association of School Principals
Re: A Special Award for your Principal and your Community
Date: April 22, 2022

It is my distinct pleasure to announce that your Principal, Mrs. Lori Stevens has been selected, by our organization, as New Hampshire's Elementary Principal of the Year for 2022-23.

Members of the visiting selection committee concur that Lori is a school principal who truly embodies care in all aspects of her role. The sentiments shared by all stakeholders created this common theme - Lori cares deeply about the students, staff, and school community. She puts students first and supports staff to be the best they can be for the Emerson Elementary School community. She has a clear focus on students and staff in terms of happiness, wellness, and social-emotional health. She clearly follows the mantra that happy people work harder and she goes above and beyond to make sure that her staff and school community know how much she cares about them.

It is evident that Lori's relentless focus on improving school culture and climate play a major role in how strongly her students, parents, and staff feel connected and respected at her school. It was noted, on multiple occasions during our site visit, that Lori has no problem rolling up her sleeves and getting "down in the trenches with her staff." Our committee members walked away from our visit at Emerson Elementary School with a very clear message-"No matter who you are in this building, Lori makes certain you feel like a valued member of this school community."

Educators at Emerson shared that, "Lori is a visionary whose pedagogy remains grounded in addressing the wholistic needs of all children. She is enthusiastic, compassionate and inspiring...a natural leader. She is even-handed and fair and always encourages us to be our best selves." One staff member shared that "on a scale of 1-10 I would rate her an 11 as a leader...no matter who you are, or what role you serve (in our school) she makes sure you are seen, heard and valued. She makes you feel amazing." Lastly, this group expressed how deeply Lori cares for her students and families and how she has prioritized focusing on cultural shifts that have helped to unify the school community as a whole. One staff member shared that "Lori is an out-of-the-box thinker who possesses the ability to balance vulnerability with strength. She is the glue that keeps us all together."

The selection committee also met with a group of parents who shared that "Lori is always looking for new ways to create a stronger sense of community (in the school). She is visible and accessible to parents at all times and is always clear and concise in her communication with families."

Superintendent Lisa Witte and Assistant Superintendent Jeremy Rathbun shared that Lori's transition into this leadership role did not come without some challenges. Her transition from classroom teacher to school leader was a delicate dance. However, Lori embraced vulnerability and leaned into discomfort by affording every staff member the opportunity to voice their concerns/feedback about the changes they'd hoped to see under her leadership.

Lori openly embraced this transition as an opportunity to provide her staff with shared leadership, governance and voice. This course of action would only serve to strengthen Lori's relationships with her staff over the years. Superintendent Lisa Witte emphasized that "there is such a significant level of respect (for her) because of the hard work she has done in her building. At times, she can make unpopular decisions, when necessary, because people always trust she will do what is best for kids."

As this year's NH Elementary Principal of the Year (POY), Lori will be recognized in front of her peers and family members during a celebratory ceremony hosted by the NH EDies this June. Additionally, next October, Lori will be invited to Washington, D.C. by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) where she will be recognized for her outstanding accomplishment among this cohort of leaders at a national level. It is our hope that your community will also find a special way to recognize Lori for this exceptional achievement.

Congratulations, Lori! We are proud to have you representing the best of school leadership in the state of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,



Bridey Bellemare,
Executive Director



Lori Stevens, Principal
Emerson Elementary School, Fitzwilliam, NH
NHASP 2022-23 New Hampshire Elementary School Principal of the Year