

Staff Bids Farewell, Says Thank You to Superintendent

Editor's note: School News Network invited Godfrey-Lee Public Schools staff to comment on David Britten's impact on the district. Following are some of their responses.

“Dave has given to Godfrey-Lee a sense of purpose. He has done many wonderful things for the district. He has given to me over the years the ability to question my methods as a teacher, to ask myself, ‘How can I help the kids of Lee High learn?’ He has always put the focus on the learner. He is a hands-on learner and educator. The kids of the district know Dave Britten; you cannot say that for every superintendent. Mostly what I cherish is that I can call Dave my brother. He is more than a friend and boss. He has been there for me in great times and during the not-so-great times.” – Thomas DeGennaro, social studies teacher

“His involvement in the community was second to none. The passion he has towards learning and the success of the kids here at Lee will be remembered forever.” – Marcus Bradstreet, district assistant finance director

“I love how Dave substitute teaches in different classrooms, chaperones the senior trip, and chaperones band camp. I'm so impressed that he knows so many of the students personally.” – Sue Prins, choir accompanist

“Mr. Britten doesn't merely work for Godfrey-Lee, he embodies it. His love for all things community, advocacy for social justice, and passion for this area and the families in it truly make him one of a kind. He has been a part of this community since he was young and his retirement will leave a big void. We have been blessed to have someone of his vision, character, and devotion.” – Justin Noordhoek, East Lee High School teacher

“Mr. Britten has devoted his years at Godfrey-Lee not only as superintendent but as teacher, principal, historian, and as an engaged leader who has brought deep changes to the educational culture, leading the district from a traditional educative system to a human-centered design. He has planted a seed that will, with time, give abundant fruit.” – Susana Chapa, Godfrey-Lee interpreter/translator

“Dave is invested in kids. His sharing his love of running has impacted many students who otherwise would not have pursued this sport. His sense of humor and genuine love for the kids was evident to all who know him. He loves technology and encouraged our students to learn new skills, and for teachers to have a better understanding of social media.” – Susan Sheets-Odo, Early Childhood Center teacher

“I think the thing I appreciate the most about Dave is his outstanding ability to see the strengths in Godfrey's teachers, students, and community as a whole. His belief in and commitment to Godfrey is contagious, and I've been very thankful to see that in my superintendent.” – Kelsey Koetje, elementary special-education teacher

“Mr. Britten hired me to work at Lee Middle School 15 years ago. He offered me the chance to live out my dream of becoming a teacher, and for that I am forever grateful to him. During his time here I have watched him completely change the face of the school. He was always the first one here and the last one to leave. His dedication has remained unwavering. He would give of himself mentally and financially without asking for anything in return. He has been a pillar of strength and support to the staff and community and will be greatly missed.” – Janene Parney, second-grade teacher

“He ‘gets’ the job of school social worker. He understands the whole child, and has listened to and acted on suggestions given to him by non-teaching staff. He always made me feel that my opinion was valuable, I will miss his presence around the district.” – Kristie Boone, social worker

“He is active in our district. I always see him in the halls. He takes the time to get to know our families and our staff. He trusts and allows us to think outside the box so we can best serve our families.” – Carol Jewell, Godfrey Early Childhood Center teacher

“Dave has been selfless in his devotion to all of the students in the Godfrey-Lee community. His calm, personal approach to solving problems and interacting with students, parents, and staff have been so valuable throughout his many years here. I know he gave up many nights, weekends, and parts of his summers to support our students. He encouraged his staff to be innovative and take on new challenges. He was always motivating, encouraging, and ahead of the curve. Our entire community will miss him.” – Tom Wier, Godfrey-Elementary teacher

“I have to say I have never been to a district where the first-grade students know who the superintendent is. Throughout my years at Godfrey-Lee, I have seen Dave walking the halls and visiting classrooms countless times. ‘Mr. Britten is here!’ my students shout when he walks in the door, eager to share with him what they are working on but not before giving him a big hug.” – Deedee Stasiak, Early Childhood Center teacher.

“There are so many times that Mr. Britten just showed up at events where you are not surprised that he was there, but it helped out so much, like a united front. It didn't matter what the cause was, he was there or he was on his way and would be there shortly. My favorite memory of this happening was the Burton Street Sweep, that had staff and student members going up and down both sides of Burton Street cleaning up and sweeping the sidewalks.” -- Scott Prater, East Lee High School teacher

“He brings a history from growing up in the area and has instituted Rebels for Life. This is a term used for students who have gone through Godfrey-Lee Public Schools kindergarten-12th grade. It has brought a pride to the district.” – Charlene Walsh, Early Childhood Center teacher

“I am thankful to have had the opportunity to work with Mr. Britten. I always admired his passion for our kids, families and school community. He always raised the bar high for our students to make sure they are equipped for life after high school.” – Nazlhy Heredia, Kent School Services Network community school coordinator

“Toughest boss I have ever had to work for. I wouldn't want to work for anyone else.” – Kevin Gabrielse, band teacher

“Mr. Britten has shown a dedication to our district that has gone above and beyond anyone's expectations for a principal and superintendent. He has always led by example and has shown kids and families that he worked for them. His position wasn't ever for personal gain but for the impact he could have to help kids and families have the best experience possible in the Godfrey-Lee community. I have always appreciated and respected his genuine yet straightforward nature.” – Chris DeMaagd, eighth-grade teacher

“Mr. Britten is an extremely visible advocate for Godfrey-Lee, both for staff and students. His support, knowledge and tenacity will be missed by the entire Godfrey-Lee community.” – Lynn Velthouse, Board of Education treasurer

“Dave has inspired the Godfrey-Lee community to look to the future. He always saw what our schools could be and wanted to make sure everyone in the district was going in that direction. He was a great motivator and leader. He was also part of the success being at most events to show his support. We are going to miss him dearly.” – Kara Jones, Early Childhood Center teacher

“It is very difficult to identify any part of our kids' lives that David hasn't impacted in one way or another during his tenure. Mr. Britten has been a strong and consistent leader within the district, well before I arrived 12 years ago. He not only encouraged our kids to develop their minds, he also challenged everyone to take care of their bodies through exercise and athletics. I first met him when he was coaching and working to rebuild the historic Lee High School cross-country tradition. David seems to frequently be at the forefront of an issue, whether it be addressing childhood obesity, integrating technology into instructional methodology, and most recently working to transition public education from the outdated factory-worker version to one that prepares our kids for jobs in the decades to come.” – Steve Rierson, high school science teacher

“David is a lifelong champion of all things Godfrey-Lee. He is devoted to the people of the district, whether they be students, staff, parents, or neighbors – past or present. He is so proud of Godfrey-Lee and its history, and his loyalty and advocacy have helped our city, our neighborhood, and our school community create pride in Godfrey-Lee too.” – Carol Lautenbach, assistant superintendent

“Mr. Britten is a unique individual who is the heart and soul of Godfrey-Lee Public Schools. We may not always see eye-to-eye, but his heart always remains in the right place: the students.” – Maria Baker, middle/high school guidance secretary