
National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

Ridgecrest Elementary School
East Puyallup, Washington

Video: 2020 Terrel H. Bell Awardee Michelle M. Fox

My name is Dr. Michelle Fox. I am the proud Principal at Ridgecrest Elementary located in Puyallup, Washington. Ridgecrest is home to approximately 450 students and 60 staff members.

I am incredibly humbled and honored to be the first Washington State recipient of the prestigious Terrel H. Bell award for outstanding school leadership. This award affirms the collaborative and transformational school improvement efforts I've had the privilege of leading at Ridgecrest over the past four years.

As a leader, I've discovered that a positive, trusting and caring school culture is the foundation for achievement and success. When students and staff feel not only welcome but wanted, not only valued but honored, not only trusted but empowered, they will not only succeed but they will thrive.

I have found that having the right systems in place makes all the difference in the world. Our work is focused on promoting positive behavior and increasing academic achievement. In addition, we continually analyze student data, identify discrepancies and come up with plans to remedy inequities, remove barriers and close gaps.

Being a school principal is one of the toughest but most rewarding jobs that one could pursue. My advice for new leaders in education is to always keep the best interest of your students at the center of decision-making. Stay focused on what matters most. Respect, support, and empower your team and lean on the strengths of those around you. This will help you inspire your community to move forward with passion and purpose.