

Community Special Edition 2. Connections



Meet Mary Barfknecht: Gervais High School's Newest English Language Development Teacher

Gervais High School has welcomed an incredible new addition to its teaching staff this year: Mary Barfknecht, a seasoned educator with 31 years of experience. Originally from California, Mary's teaching journey has taken her across several states, including Oregon, Texas, and Arizona. However, Oregon has always felt like home, and she is enjoying her first year with the Gervais School District.

Mary brings a wealth of knowledge to her role, focusing on English Language Development (ELD) for high school students. She currently teaches ELD Levels 1 and 2, working closely with students who are building their English proficiency. In addition to her work



in the ELD program, Mary also leads an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) class, which helps students prepare for college and career opportunities. Mary's dedication to her students extends far beyond the classroom. She spends significant time tutoring after school, with a special focus on bilingual Spanish support. She recognizes the unique challenges faced by students navigating multiple languages and works hard to ensure they master their English skills, while also refining their bilingual abilities. For Mary, teaching is more than just instruction—it's about fostering a community of acceptance and empowerment. "Gervais has such a supportive environment," Mary shares. "Students are encouraged to succeed and feel accepted both culturally and academically." As someone who holds a deep appreciation for Spanish culture, Mary is grateful to be part of a district that celebrates diversity and offers robust support for students and families. Her classroom reflects this passion, serving as a welcoming space where students are encouraged to express themselves, share their stories, and dive deeper into learning.

With smaller class sizes, Mary

finds she can engage more deeply with each student, offering individualized attention that helps them thrive. For her, the joy of teaching high school lies in being part of her students' journeys into adulthood. "It's not just about teaching English," Mary reflects. "It's about helping students find their voices and preparing them for life beyond Gervais—whether that's college, a career, or something else entirely."

Mary's teaching philosophy emphasizes the power of communication and personal growth. She sees her classroom as a space for students to develop their language skills, build their ideas, and feel connected as they prepare for the next chapter in their lives. "Hope and support are essential parts of the learning experience," she says. "I want my students to know that they have the tools to succeed and the encouragement to be themselves." Gervais High School is excited to have Mary on its team. With Mary's guidance, students are not only learning English—they're building confidence, celebrating diversity, and gaining the skills they need to navigate the future with hope and purpose.