

The New Man in Town

By Jayden Bates-Bland
(Photos courtesy of John Graham)

This year at Golden High School we have been experiencing some big changes, as we have said goodbye to our beloved principal, Brian Conroy, and opened up our doors for change with our new principal, John Graham.

Graham moved to Colorado from Austin, Texas, because he was looking for a change and wanted to finally work in a (high) school again. Graham has been working in education for about 22 years. It is something that he really cares about and has always cared about.

In an interview, he spoke all about how he decided to enter the education field and it was honestly amazing and showed his care for his students;

“I graduated from college with a history degree and I had planned to go to law school; and I wasn’t ready to just jump straight right into law school, so I decided to become a juvenile probation officer because it was kind of in the legal field and it still gave me the opportunity to do some things on the law side. But I had thought about briefly becoming a teacher, and so it allowed me to work with teenagers so this was a good opportunity. And then as I was working as a juvenile probation officer, I had a lot of students that I was working with that had made poor choices, which teenagers do sometimes. Even us as adults make poor choices sometimes, and I realized pretty quickly that there were a lot of times that when a student had made a poor choice, they just didn’t have the support. Either at home, or at school, or with friends, and stuff like that, and I was able to work with a school district and go and meet with students. I had an opportunity to work with an assistant principal there and he was amazing. You could see the impact, the positive impact, he had on the students who had struggled or made a mistake. If he was working with them, then there was a good chance that they were still going to be successful, even if their homelife maybe wasn’t very great.

“And I saw how quickly an impact that schools have, and I also saw the impact that schools could have



that's not so good, if we're not truly taking care of students and not giving them the right support and resources.

"And so I realized that was the work that was truly important to me and I realized that I wanted to do something that could make a positive impact on all students. I found that education was the best decision for everyone.

"You know, we all come from different backgrounds, we all have differences, but we can all learn to support, and help, and make sure that we're taken care of; and if a school is set up properly, then we can help students be successful. And so I went back to school and got my teachers certificate, and then I taught and I realized that the biggest impact I could have was being a principal because I get to impact every student that comes to the school, and so I went back and got my masters degree in school administration and I've been doing it for a little while."

Education is something that has been very important to Graham for a very long time and he plans to do his absolute best to make Golden the best place that it can possibly be.

As we know, Graham is very new to Golden so there are a lot of things we don't know about him including his family. Graham has a wife, Melissa, and their two kids who have both graduated from high school. He has a 24-year-old son named Seth who graduated from Texas A&M and has now become an aerospace engineer. He also has a 19-year-old daughter, Sydney, who is a sophomore in college at Texas State University. She currently studies elementary education in hopes of becoming a teacher.



Graham expressed his love for his wife and kids and their importance to him several times and it is very obvious that he loves his family very much. Also, Graham said that if anyone wants to meet his wife, they could likely find her at the school events as they have recently attended the girls softball game, and intend on going to many more school events.

Graham has not worked in a school for a very long time. He has made several comments about being excited to be back in a school and working with students. Since he has been back in school he has expressed a lot of excitement about being able to have time with his students and seeing how things are going. He said,

"It fills my bucket. I go home happy every day. Even when we have bad days, I go home happy."

Another thing that is very important to the student body at this school is how things are changing, so I wanted to see what Graham thought should be improved about Golden High School. He said,

“That’s a tough question, and I will tell you why it is. *This is not my school.* And so, when we talk about improvement at Golden High School, it’s not really what *I* want to improve, it’s what *we* want to improve. And so, I want us, the 1,460-something students that we have and the 100-something staff members and our community to figure out, ‘What do we want Golden High School to be?’ and what are the areas that we want to improve to make sure that we’re moving forward for the best of all students. And so, the one thing that I do want to see is that we start to ask those questions.

- What would you like to see at Golden High School?
- What would you want to improve at Golden High School?
- What is something at Golden High School that you don’t think we are doing well?
- What do you think we need to do better?

“Okay, of course, I see things and they make me wonder, but, if I improve Golden High School then it’s about me and it’s not about you as students, and it should be about what y’all need as students and staff to continue to be better.”

There are also a lot of things students have been attributing to Graham's arrival at the school, such as missing assemblies, dress code changes and new hallway rules, **so I asked him** to address the rumors and he has a response for every single one of them.

About assemblies, Graham stated:

“ I can tell you that I have not had a single conversation about assemblies. I know that we have normally in the past had assemblies and we did not have one this year that was a decision made before I even started,”

Regarding the dress code, he said:

“So I sent home messages about the dress code, just because Jeffco has a dress code. But I can tell you I have not stopped a single person in this school. spoken to a single student in the school about their dress. What's important to me is that each of you have a right to be at the school. And my job is to provide you with an environment where you feel safe and supported to learn... I don't ever want to take away your individualization and how you express yourself, how you communicate because you do communicate through dress and stuff like that. That's what's important.”

For the issues with hallways he responded:

“Everything I've done has been based on feedback that has been given to me. And one of the things that I have been told was, at times, there have been way too many students in the hallway and

it has become a disruption at Golden High School. And so based on that feedback, we haven't been rude or we haven't been disrespectful. But the expectation is either you're in class to learn or you're in a spot where you can't disrupt other students”

For anyone concerned about where to go on an off block, Graham recommends the library, cafeteria or outside. He is actively looking for and working with staff to find more spots for students to go, especially once it gets colder outside. He also wanted to make it clear that he is fine with people taking a lap around the school if they need a minute to calm down or slow down, as long as they are clearing it with their teachers and not disrupting other classes.



Change is something that can be very difficult to adjust to, but there are so many good things that can come from it. While we will definitely miss Conroy a lot, there are so many things that Graham can do for our school, and it is very clear that he cares so much about Golden and the students in this school. Now, we just need to

work with him and welcome him into our community so that we can make Golden an even better place to be.