



Silver Falls School District News

CLASS NOTES

December 2013

District Office • 802 Schlador St., Silverton, OR 97381 • 503-873-5303

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Staff team effort equals success for students

Our school district staff members work like a team.

Like players on the court or on the field, its success is measured by results. The players include more than 400 of the finest educators around. They know their craft and they know the value of "working together" to get results.

What are the results?

There are many, but the ultimate goal is every student graduates from high school.

Our school board has clearly defined the value of this result. The seven committed volunteers understand the worth of a team to best meet the needs of each student.

While the diversity of our schools will continue to be a proud element, our work as a school district is more important now than ever. There are many examples to demonstrate this unified approach. Here are some examples:

- Completion of the public engagement processes which provided community members an opportunity to share their views about our schools. Recent focus groups, community forums and on-line engagement opportunities had good participation. The results of these processes will be shared with the community and used by the school board to plan for the future of the school district.
- Selection for state grants which provide money for additional opportunities. These include a mentoring grant for all new teachers and administrators in the district and a grant which provides additional student opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math. This grant is highlighted by robotics teams at Scotts Mills School, Silverton High School and Mark Twain Middle School. The district also was selected for a health and wellness grant which provides funding for multiple supports in this area and a collaboration grant for professional support.
- Active Violence Response in Schools training has been completed by all employees. The reality of the need for this training has been seen at too many schools across the country. This is another example of our efforts to make it a constant priority to keep students, staff members and visitors safe in our schools.
- Common Core State Standards are being implemented across the district. These rigorous standards in math and English/Language Arts are aligned to the highest measures in the world. They will prepare our graduates to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex global marketplace. Full implementation will occur by next September. Additional information about Common Core State Standards can be found at www.ode.state.or.us/go/commoncore.

Student achievement continues to improve as do the number of graduates from high school, our ultimate goal. Check out all of our results on the recently released school and district report cards. Click on the link from the district web page at www.silverfalls.k12.or.us.

Our efforts as a team are many and are effective. The school board recognizes the value of this unified effort to the success of each child. It is working and the results of this committed effort can be seen district wide.

Go team!



Superintendent
Andy Bellando

Tech learning serves community

Silverton High School senior Devyn Vandehey feels a bit like a hero whenever he goes on an assignment to one of the district's schools.

Walking in the hallways at Eugene Field Elementary School, Vandehey had teachers tell him they were glad to see him and asked if he has time to fix this or look at that on their computers, printers or projectors.

"I know teachers' time is so valuable and they have a lot to do so it feels great being able to go to the school and help them with a computer problem and the teachers always appreciate what we do," Vandehey said. "It feels great to be able to help people and to solve their computer problems."

Vandehey is one of 30 high school students in the computer desk support program providing technical assistance to the district's schools.

He also is a member of the high school's video program that records events from Silverton City Council and Silver Falls School District meetings and athletic events for Scan-TV to making CDs for school events like band and choir concerts and plays.

Silverton High teacher Gary Marshall heads the Technology Assistant Program, where students can choose between video and computer programs or do both.

Before he was hired in 1997, Marshall told the interview team that if they hired him, he would incorporate students into the technology department.

"That has been the objective from the beginning," Marshall said. "I am always trying to find new ways to get students involved."

Marshall attributes the success of his programs to having

SILVERTON HIGH

talented students who he can trust to tackle assignments.

COMPUTER PROGRAM

A 1999 graduate of Silverton High School, tech instructor Daniel Marshall is responsible for working with the 30 students in the computer program. On any given day, he receives an average of 40 requests for technical support from the district's facilities. The students are assigned job tickets and are responsible for going to the location and solving the problem. If they need assistance, they contact him via phone or text messages. He can also work remotely from the high school.

"The students are working in a real world environment where they are asked to be professional and tackle the workload assigned," Daniel said.

Given the district has computer equipment ranging from "ancient" to the most current models, Daniel said his students learn how to fix an array of equipment.

"The students are responsible for keeping our technology up and running in our district," he said. "What's exciting is the experience they are gaining in high school, they can apply when they leave here."

From the Dallas and Mount Angel school districts to the Willamette Education Services District and Chemeketa Community College, Daniel has employers contact him asking for recommendations of students who could go to work for them.

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Robotics teams math, science lessons

At one moment, Uzziel Beltran, Caitlin Fisher, Jack Nealon, Jason Orr and Levi Sanders are quite serious as they toil with red and black wires thin as spaghetti, contemplating where and how the wires connect to the motor. When asked what they are doing, Levi barely glances up from his task to answer.

"We are working on the wiring to power the motor of the robot," he said.

Uzziel said the motor has to connect with the computer programming so the robot will be able to perform required tasks for a competition.

"I like doing this because it is a challenge," Uzziel said.

Playing with metal channels, the students are giggling as they experiment with how they are going to design their robot and brainstorming on what tasks it will perform.

For the coaches in the room, watching the students work together, solve problems on their own and enjoy delving into a project with enthusiasm equals mission accom-

plished. Yet, they also acknowledge, there are many more lessons for their students to learn beyond constructing a robot.

The students are members of Mark Twain Middle School's Iron Teens robotics team, one of three teams in the district competing in the First TECH Challenge including Silverton High and Scotts Mills schools. This is the first year Mark Twain School has had a robotics team. The school received a \$2,500 grant from the Oregon Department of Education to start the team.

Volunteers Dana Smith and Brenda Harrington help guide the students in their work. The robotics club is part of the After School Activities Program (ASAP) at Immanuel Lutheran Church that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Harrington and Smith said the robotics team allows students to explore interests and learn by doing.

Smith said she wants her team members to be excited about experimenting and thinks the program makes science and math fun for students. She's proud one-third of the team is teenage girls.

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MARK
TWAIN

Second chance leads to finding true calling as teacher

When Justin Brill was in the third grade, his family moved from Wood Village to a 100-acre farm in Dayton.

“The farm was a mess with overgrown blackberry bushes,” he said. “My family had no background in farming. I think my parents always wanted to have a farm and they found a place they could afford.”

The oldest of five children – he has four younger sisters – Brill said many of the farming chores fell into his hands, since his dad worked for Southern Pacific Railroad.

“We did a little bit of everything from hay to wheat to cattle to pigs,” he said.

As a student at Dayton High School, he took agriculture classes from Mitch Coleman, who inspired him to join Future Farmers of America.

“Mr. Coleman is the reason I have a love for agriculture,” Brill said. “I like the sense of growing things and seeing the results of your work.”

And that love has transpired into Brill as being voted Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year. He accepted his award Oct. 19 at a ceremony at Oregon State University.

Bethany Charter School Principal Kathy Frank said she and staff members are proud of Brill’s accomplishment.

“He is the Mr. Rogers of the classroom,” she said. “He gets excited about what he is teaching and I will find him singing songs to his students. He is a hands on teacher and he’s responsible for our celebration days for agriculture.”

Brill’s journey to becoming a teacher wasn’t a straight path.

After graduating from Dayton High School, he attended Oregon State where he graduated in 1999 with a bachelor of science in general science and a minor in soil science.

“When I first entered college, I wanted to study soil because soil tells the history of the land.”

As he progressed in his college, he knew he wanted to



Justin Brill enjoys teaching elementary students at Bethany Charter School. He was chosen as Agriculture in the Classroom teacher of the year.

BETHANY CHARTER

become a teacher.

“I remember calling my agriculture teacher and telling him my decision and he knew that is where I belonged and that he even had a bet with another staff member that I would become a teacher,” he said.

Admitting he was a horrible student in college, Brill said his grades weren’t good enough to continue to earn his master’s degree.

His senior year, he and his wife became the parents of twin boys. Realizing he needed to provide for his family, he continued working in retail.

After his wife, Amy, received her nursing degree, they decided it would be a good time for him to return to college to earn his teaching degree. In the fall of 2008, he enrolled in the college and in 2010; he earned his bachelor of science degree in education and was granted his teaching license. He spent the 2011-12 school year teaching at Sand Ridge Charter School in Lebanon and then was hired to teach seventh and eighth grade at Bethany Charter School for the 2012-13 school year. This year, he is teaching first and second grade. Although he took a longer road to achieve his goals, he is grateful for the journey.

He has shared with the older students how he didn’t take school seriously and he couldn’t do what he wanted to do because of choices he made.

“I was lucky to have the opportunity to have a second chance,” he said. “Not many people get that.”

He enjoys incorporating agriculture into his lessons, including when his student counted seeds in pumpkins and hypothesized if a larger or smaller pumpkin would have more seeds.

“A lot of my students thought the insides of a pumpkin were called the guts but it is really called the brains,” he said. “I try to sprinkle in an agriculture fact each day in my lessons.”

One of the biggest lessons he tries to teach his students every day begins with himself.

“I want to be a positive role model and I want to make a difference in a student’s life,” he said. “I relate my personal stories about my children and my small farm with the two horses, two pigs, seven chickens, two dogs and two rabbits so they feel like they know something about me and then they will feel comfortable sharing something about themselves with me. My students know my pigs are going to have babies and I promised I would bring one in when they did.”

“I feel like this year I am in the right spot and where I should be,” he said.

Teaching with lessons from the best

Laughing at how things work out, Sierra Rysdam Kester said she is amazed that she has come full circle.

Enthusiastic and gregarious, Kester is grateful for the opportunity she has been given to be a physical education teacher at Butte Creek Elementary School, where she attended school.

Butte Creek Principal Kevin Palmer said he was able to hire Kester thanks to a grant from the Oregon Department of Education. Kester is responsible for teaching the younger grade students while Jeff Seiler is teaching upper grade students.

“By hiring Sierra, we are now able to provide PE for all students at Butte Creek every day,” Palmer said. “It’s a great thing for kids to be able to go to PE class each day. Not many schools are able to do this.”

Palmer is excited to have Kester on his staff because she knows the school and the Butte Creek community.

“There has been a trend in our district to hire Silverton High graduates after they have completed college,” Palmer said. “PE is an important class to have because it keeps kids moving and keeps them healthy. By students having PE that translates into them focusing more in the classroom.”

Rebecca Kuenzi has been teaching kindergarten for 11 years at Butte Creek, and this is the first year the school has been able to offer daily PE classes for kindergarten students.

“My students love their PE class,” Kuenzi said. “They are eager to go each day and come back from their PE time happy and refreshed.”

Kuenzi said she believes having the opportunity to learn how to play physical games in a structured manner is beneficial for her students.

“They learn to follow rules, play well together and to be good

losers sometimes, too,” she said. “I think these lessons cross over into my classroom and make my job easier. Every kindergarten class is unique but I can say this class comes back from PE ready and excited for their next classroom lesson. PE class gets the sillies out of them and allows them to be focused and energized for the rest of our class time.”

For Kester, she loves spending the time with students and enjoys participating in whatever activity she is teaching.

A 2008 graduate of Silverton High School, Kester was a member of the cross country, track and basketball teams. Kester, 24, graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in human development and family science and education in 2013.

“PE classes give students an outlet after sitting in class,” Kester said. “Being active helps wake up a student’s brain and being physically active makes it easier for them to focus in school.”

When she was a student at Butte Creek, one of her favorite teachers was Mrs. Oblack, who taught second and third grade. Oblack died in a car accident when Kester was in the fifth grade. “She is the main reason I wanted to become a teacher,” Kester said. “She was so inspirational and she was one of those teachers who related to her students. Even when I wasn’t in her class, I would go say hi to her and she would ask about my activities and how I was doing.”

Kester said she lived near where the accident took place and when she drives by it, she thinks of Mrs. Oblack and all she taught her. “She let her students explore and figure things out,” she said. “She made learning fun and made it rewarding.”

As one of her professional goals this year, Kester said she wants to make sure that she provides positive feedback and input to her students.

“Everything that Mrs. Oblack said to her students was positive



Sierra Rysdam Kester enjoys teaching PE at Butte Creek Elementary.

and because she did that her students listened to and respected her,” Kester said.

As she works with her students, she not only keeps the lessons she learned from Mrs. Oblack present but also from “Mr. Atwell and Mr. Seiler.” “I want to be like those teachers because those are teachers every kid loves to be around,” she said.

Most importantly, she wants to make a difference in her students’ lives, whether it is learning how to correctly throw a football or realizing they don’t have to be the best, but to just give it their best. She hopes her students learn that being physically fit is a lifelong activity and each student finds an activity he or she enjoys.

“I want the students to learn no matter what they are doing whether it is PE or a classroom assignment that they should always give their best effort,” she said.

Robotics *From page 1*

As she observes her team, she knows one lesson they will need to learn is how and when to ask for assistance, especially when the resources are available.

“They need to be able to listen to the advice of more experienced people on how to design and build the robot,” she said.

“That’s all part of the process,” she added. “When they are going in one direction and learn what they are doing is not working, they need to know how to turn around and figure out what will work.”

Mark Twain Principal Dandy Stevens is excited to be able to offer the opportunity of being on a robotics team to her students.

“This partnership between ASAP and Mark Twain shows the power behind teaming with multiple agencies to help our students grow into productive citizens and have experiences that as a school, I am not able to fully offer due to budget and staffing constraints,” Stevens said. “We are hoping that by working with the Scotts Mills and high school teams that students will continue to participate in high school and gain even more valuable experiences in science, math and technology.”

Smith said her team is part of the First Tech Challenge Robotics program. The students are working to create an autonomous robot that can perform tasks on a themed playing



Jack Nealon, Levi Sanders and Jason Orr work on the wiring for the robot and its design.

field. There are three challenges the students must design and program their robot to complete by the qualifying tournament at Evergreen Air & Space Museum in McMinnville in February.

Olivia Meyer and Hayden Wallington are the strategists, responsible for creating the basic design concept of the robot and what it will do and giving those ideas to both the programmers and the build team. Alexa Hall and Grace Wallington meet with all the work groups and document what they are doing.

The documentation they create is a critical piece when the team competes.

Matthew McWhorter, Steven Buchheit, Payton Doud and Michael Denning are the computer programmers, writing the code for the robot to perform its tasks.

CJ Dyer is a mentor and volunteer for the ASAP program. As he watches Matthew, Steven, Payton and Michael work on the computer programming, he knows when to step in and offer assistance and when to step back and let the students learn from their

mistakes.

“I think team building is a major part of the First Tech Challenge,” Dyer said. “Plus the students get to have fun.”

Despite the seriousness of their work, it was apparent they enjoyed being together.

“This is a lot of fun to do because we get to create our own robot and we get to use our imagination,” Jason said.

While each group has an assigned task, Hayden said all the groups must communicate with one another so they work as a team.

“We have to listen to one another on what works and listen to the advice given by each group,” he said.

What all the students enjoy is being able to play with the materials and discover what happens. “We have a lot more freedom to figure out how to do things on our own and we know if it doesn’t work, that we can take it apart and try again,” Olivia said.

Alexa is excited the project gives her the opportunity to explore science and math.

“It has been really cool to do this,” she said. “I have never done anything like this before and it’s a lot of fun. What’s exciting is when we work together, we can build something incredible.”

Tech team *From page 1*

“What I am most proud about my students is even if the school day is done, they will stay late at a school and work until they have fixed the problem,” Daniel said.

“These students want to be in this program and they appreciate what they are learning.”

He estimates his 30 students do the work of four full-time employees, or the equivalent of an estimated \$200,000 worth of work.

Daniel also takes pride in how the older students mentor the younger ones. When the students go to a job, he often assigns an experienced student with a newer one.

“The students are learning life skills that they can use in any profession. They are learning communication, problem solving, collaboration, discretion and how to be a professional,” he said, adding he consistently receives positive feedback from district staff members about how impressed they are with the students’ professionalism and knowledge.

Besides himself, Daniel said SHS graduates Brett Milliken, Joseph Larionov and Vasily Snegirev work in the tech department.

VIDEO PRODUCTION TEAM

Silverton High senior Celeah Norris is the video production manager. Her responsibilities include filming events, editing film and making sure events are covered. Her love of video production started when she got a video camera in junior high. Her decision to be part of the school’s video production team started her freshman year when she broke her ankle and couldn’t be on dance team. She is

planning to pursue a degree in cinema studies at the University of Oregon when she graduates.

“What I enjoy about the program is there is a lot of creativity and the ability to learn new things,” Norris said. “Being in this program is a major advantage for me because when I go to college I will know the basics plus more.”

Tanner Rosenberry, a junior, jokes he could adequately explain how the city of Silverton’s budget process works since he spent last spring filming every budget meeting. Holding a full cardboard box, Rosenberry shows the DVDS that he recently completed for Community Roots School’s Historic Halloween program.

Marshall said his video production students film 250 events a year from athletic events to community celebrations.

They were recently asked to film Orville Roth’s memorial at The Oregon Garden. Marshall appreciates having Allison Newton and 2012 SHS graduate and Chemeketa Community College student Abby Bennett working with him. Both women contribute valuable skills to the program and assist students in their learning.

Both Rosenberry and Norris appreciate everything Marshall has taught them about video production. They acknowledge they know Marshall puts a great deal of trust in them to cover an assignment plus be responsible for valuable equipment. Because he trusts them, they said, they honor him by doing what is expected of them and more.



Students in the video production program are responsible for filming more than 250 community events including athletic contests, civic meetings and theater productions.

Marshall said his students are responsible for running three cameras, the editing machine, making sound checks and getting announcers for the high school’s boys and girls home basketball games.

“I can go home and eat dinner knowing they have it covered,” he said. “Since this is hands-on learning, there will be some mistakes, but they also know how to problem solve and when to ask for help.”

Vandehey said being in both programs gives him the freedom to learn what he wants to learn and to get the hands-on experience. As the program manager for the tech department, he enjoys working with his peers and coaching younger students.

“There is a lot of team building that we do,”

he said.

Along with Norris, Rosenberry and Matthew Newton, he has filmed the home football games.

“I have never been that much into sports,” he said, “but filming football games has drawn me into the game. I am looking forward to filming basketball games.”

He encourages other students to look into either the video production or computer tech programs.

“Being in the programs has taught me so many skills from how to trouble shoot to team building,” he said. “I love solving problems, helping people and learning something new every day. That’s what makes it exciting.”

Child-driven learning grows charter's enrollment

More than 100 years ago, Dr. Maria Montessori developed a method of learning that changed the face of education. The Montessori method stresses development of a child's own initiative and natural abilities, allowing children to progress at their own pace. While there are thousands of Montessori schools worldwide, there are only four public Montessori schools in Oregon, including Community Roots School in Silverton.

Community Roots School is a public Montessori school within the Silver Falls School District. It started in 2009 with 32 students at Monitor School. In 2011, Community Roots School relocated to the former high school campus on James Street.

Today, the school has 76 students. Nearly 10 percent of these students have moved to Silverton from out-of-state, helping build not just the school community but Silverton as well. The school is currently working with the Silver Falls School District to find a permanent home that can accommodate the enrollment growth.

Montessori schools have a distinct look and philosophy. Some of the key components of the Community Roots School are:

Mixed age classrooms. There are two levels of classrooms – Lower Elementary for students in first through third grade and Upper Elementary for students in fourth through eighth grade. Younger children are welcomed into an established community and are constantly stimulated by the work their older classmates are completing.

The older children in each class take on leadership roles and model independent mastery of the materials for the younger children, which helps them in their own progression through the concepts. Each child can see what they will be learning in the future, and also how what they are learning fits into the larger picture. This arrangement also creates and strengthens a community of learners who spend years together and care about each other.

"If the teacher is busy, the older kids help us out. We also get to be a role model for the younger kids," said a fifth-year student.

Small group and individual instruction. Teachers work with children in groups of two to four students and one-on-one based on the child's own educational journey and unique learning style. A glimpse inside the classroom reveals a quiet buzz of activity, with students working independently with purposeful and developmentally appropriate Montessori materials.

"Students go at their own pace – not the pace of a text book," Lower Elementary teacher Hilary Conroy said.

Having an assistant in each classroom allows teachers to circulate and ensure each child is progressing. Students progress through the lessons at their own speed as they master the material.



Children at Community Roots School learn at their own pace. While one student may be working on one task, another student may be working on something entirely different.



COMMUNITY ROOTS

"During individual or small groups you can see mastery and move them along quickly, or you get to see their challenges and adapt to meet their needs," educator Mary Riker said.

The school also ensures the material is aligned with the state Common Core State Standards.

Focus on fostering children's natural curiosity. In a Montessori environment, independence, self-motivation, and a true joy of learning are fostered.

"In a Montessori classroom... questions matter more than answers, and a child's natural curiosity is welcomed, not shunned. In fact, a child's curiosity is often what drives the lesson forward," Montessori advocate Daniel Petter-Lipstein

explained. "Today's students will have 10-14 jobs just between the ages of 18 to 38. Some of those jobs don't even exist yet. Preparing for this future demands that we encourage and inspire them to ask good questions and teach them to explore those questions for themselves."

Respecting and encouraging a child's natural curiosity ensures a lifelong love of learning.

"It is such a joy to see a child that has found their passion, and then discovered their own ability to explore it to their fullest potential," school administrator Miranda Traeger said.

Interested families are encouraged to visit the school and observe the Montessori classroom. Contact the office at 503-874-4107 to set-up a time.

Visit the school's website at crmontessori.org to learn more, and/or contact administrator Miranda Traeger at 503-874-4107 or traeger_miranda@silverfalls.k12.or.us

Mark your calendar

Silverton High Theater

The Silverton High School theater invites community members to: *Steel Magnolias* at 7 p.m. Dec. 12, 13 and 14 and *Improv-A-Java* at 7 p.m. March 6. Auditions for *Seussical the Musical* are Feb. 4 to Feb. 7. For more information, contact Doug Ousterhout at 503-873-6331; ext. 3778.

Project Graduation for Class of 2014

The graduation for the Class of 2014 is 7 p.m. Thursday, June 4 in the Silverton High School gymnasium. Volunteers are needed for the all-night grad party. Meetings are the first Monday of each month at Cote Chiropractic, 951 N. Second St. Contact Jill Kraemer at kraemerj@yahoo.com for information.

College Preparation Help Offered

The programs listed below are at Silverton High School, 1456 Pine St.

Senior Scholarship Night: 7 p.m. Jan. 27. Parents and seniors can learn tips on how to apply, complete and organize scholarship materials. Guest speakers from local scholarship committees will be on hand.

Sophomore Step-up College Prep Night: 7 p.m. Feb. 3. The goal is to expose sophomores and their parents to college entrance requirements and resources that are available. On Feb. 11, sophomores take a field trip to Clackamas Community College.

Silverton High FFA fundraiser

The Silverton FFA Chapter members will sell poinsettias and lemon cypress trees that they have grown in their greenhouse. The plants are available after Dec. 9. The students will sell Christmas trees at Wilco starting Nov. 29. For more information, contact Scott Towery or Sarah McArthur at 503-873-6331 at extensions 3792 or 3863.

Winter Break

Students will be out of school for winter holiday from Dec. 23 to Jan. 3 and return on Monday, Jan. 6.

District Early Release Days

Early release days are Dec. 16, Jan. 13, Feb. 3, Feb. 24, March 17, April 7, April 28 and May 19.