



Silver Falls School District News CLASS NOTES

March 2017

Moving forward...together.

District Office • 612 Schlador St., Silverton, OR 97381 • 503-873-5303

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Working for the students

What an interesting winter we've had so far. I want to thank our staff members, students and families for their patience and flexibility through an unusually snowy season. After multiple "snow days," two-hour delays and a few early closures, I think we're all looking forward to a smooth Spring season with no additional school closures or weather-related disruptions.



Superintendent
Andy Bellando

To make up for the hours of missed classroom time, we have canceled all early release days through the end of the school year. We also have canceled the parent-teacher conference day on March 13, which is now a full instructional day. The revised calendar is on the district website – silverfallsschools.org.

Thank you, school counselors

National School Counseling Week was Feb. 6 -10 and I want to recognize our counselors for the tremendous impact they have in helping students realize their potential and achieve school success.

The needs of children and young adults nationwide continue to change and we must respond in the same way. There has never been a higher need for all students in our district to have access to counseling services. Please join me in thanking the SFSD counseling team for the important work they do everyday. They are such a critical part of the District's Mission, "Together, Cultivating Character and Academic Growth in Each Student. Every Day."

Funding for schools

As you probably know, an important Oregon Legislative session is currently underway. You may have read or heard concerns about adequate funding for schools for the next two school years. These are real concerns. We are again preparing ourselves for the difficult conversations of possible staff reductions, increased class sizes and reduction in services to support our students. Each year, we work hard to maintain high character and academic standards in the face of unpredictable and inadequate funding.

Our Silver Falls School District team continues to do an amazing job working with the challenges of funding programs, managing our older facilities and doing our best to meet the ever-changing needs of students. We ask that you pay attention to what's going on in the Legislature over the next several months and get involved in any way you can to ensure that education is a priority for our communities.

One way to be informed is by reading the results of the Oregon Rising survey conducted last year. Learn more about the education priorities shared by over 10,000 Oregonians, including many of you. Please visit the Oregon Rising web site at www.oregon-rising.org. Nothing has more impact on our students and their future than a high quality education.

As we look ahead to spring, I am grateful to live and work in a school district which places such a high value on the growth of each student.

Thank you for everything you do to meet our Mission..

Senior earns a seat at the table

Remember the name Dakota Parmley.

Not only is he on track to graduate with a 3.5 grade point average while taking advanced placement classes, he also will graduate with his associate of arts degree. That's right. After four years in high school he will have earned a high school diploma plus completed two years of college.

"I hope that education is my starting point in the world of change, policy, and government," Parmley said.

His energy and ambition already have him thinking of running for office, and one day being the president of the United States.

And this Silverton High School senior is on track to meet his goal of working in government. He was recently chosen as an advisor to the Oregon State Board of Education.

"From going to a parochial school in Missouri to a small elementary school in Oregon to Silverton High School, I have seen plenty of things



Silverton High senior Dakota Parmley is a student advisor to the state Board of Education.

that affect education," he wrote in his application. "That's why the opportunity to serve as an advisor to the State Board of Education excites me."

SILVERTON HIGH

Listening and understanding people is key, Parmley said, adding a person is never too young to get involved and lend a voice.

Parmley said being able to analyze today's current issues and proposals with education is an opportunity that allows him to start making an impact in the world.

"Education reform and the education system are things I have thought about for several years, and what better place to start that journey than while I am a senior taking college courses to graduate high school with my associate degree," he wrote. "Being able to be part of something so incredibly important as education would honor me."

Parmley shared education is more
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Science: learning to 'try, try again'

The third through fifth grade students in Pratum teacher Lisa Freauff's classroom know there are countless possibilities to create simple machines using textbooks, cardboard tubes, marbles, string, pulleys and more.

Challenged with the task of creating a Rikety Rube Goldberg machine, the students worked in teams to make a simple machine that would change direction and have a task at the end. They recently showed their contraptions to their peers and parents.

Rube Goldberg was an American cartoonist and inventor. A Rube Goldberg machine is a contraption, invention, device or apparatus that is deliberately over engineered to perform a simple task in a complicated fashion.

More than the challenge of creating the machine, Freauff said the students learned how to solve problems.

"When they were trying to design their machines, problems would crop up. The students would have to determine what needed to be done to solve it," Freauff said. "This is all about thinking outside the box and learning about the consequences when putting something together."

PRATUM



Pratum fifth-grader William Kuenzi makes adjustments to his machine.

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Finding joy in a return to the roots of a career in teaching



When Silver Crest fourth/fifth grade teacher Sandy McLean told her students they would be studying poetry, she heard a lot of groans and how poetry was “yucky.”

After a week, McLean said students shared with her that they think poetry is pretty cool.

That is just one example of how McLean engages her students to learn.

McLean started her teaching career at Silver Crest, where she taught second/third grade for 20 years. She then took a job teaching in the Salem-Keizer School District for 14 years, followed by three years teaching at Silver Crest as a volunteer music teacher, after retiring in 2012.

When the fourth/fifth grade teacher unexpectedly retired in the fall, McLean agreed to return to her roots for the remainder of the year.

“I was so happy to return to Silver Crest Elementary,” she said. “I feel like the school hasn’t changed since the day I first started here. It’s a wonderful country school and the kids are just wonderful. The staff is warm and friendly.”

Silver Crest Principal Mark Hannan said the institutional knowledge McLean has provided him and the rest of the staff is immeasurable.

“She brings knowledge and experience to our staff that is appreciated by everyone,” Hannan said. “I feel very fortunate

to have the opportunity to work with her. I’ve learned a lot about the Silver Crest community from her. Her students are the most fortunate of all, however, because they get to have her as their teacher.”

Laughing, McLean said she taught many of the parents of her present students.

“I have had several tall men who I remember as little boys ask me if I remember who they are,” she said. “I have been guilty of calling a student by his dad’s name only to be corrected.”

McLean believes being a good teacher is all about creating positive relationships with students.

“Every child has potential in something and to be good at something,” she said. “It’s our job as teachers to help kids find their potential. It’s interesting to see kids grow and change from September to June.”

She team teaches with Dan Feller, who handles math, while she teaches language arts.

Whether asking students to define a simile or an onomatopoeia in a metaphor, McLean incorporates fun ways for them to remember one from the other.

The role of teacher includes being an entertainer or performer, McLean said. It’s her responsibility to attract and keep her students attention and get them curious to learn more. While studying Greek mythology they played games.

“To the best of my ability, I try to teach in a way that captures the attention of each of the different individuals in my classroom,” she said. “Teaching students is all about how you approach them.”

What she enjoys about a kindergarten through eighth-grade school is the collaboration among the staff. Her goal is to make sure her students are ready for the next grade.

“I never want another teacher or a student to say I didn’t teach them this or that. I never want my students to have any gaps in their learning,” she said.

Fifth-grader Millie Leikem said Mrs. McLean comes to school with a smile. “She has taught us to always be kind to everyone and treat everyone with kindness,” Millie said.

Fourth-grader Joey Breitenstein said Mrs. McLean does a lot of activities for the class, making it fun to come to school.

“She taught us that strong people don’t let people down and that they bring them back up,” he added. Kendal Taylor, a fourth-grader, said she likes the way Mrs. McLean always has a smile on her face. Bode Leikem said she “always has something fun planned for us to do everyday.”

Even though her drive from South Salem is more than an hour, she doesn’t mind. Teaching is “exhilarating.”

“I think this is a very exciting time to be a teacher,” she said. “I have the best job in the world.”

Senior urges teaching focused on relevant skills

Continued from page 1

than taking AP classes and scoring high on the SAT.

“Knowledge is important to make the proper decisions, but the drive to make the changes that need to be made is even more crucial, and something that I have plenty of,” he wrote.

Silverton High School English teacher Grant Piros said Parmley is not only one of the strongest students he has worked with in the classroom but also one of the most conscientious students he has seen in regards to societal awareness outside of school.

In terms of being a student advisor, Piros said Parmley brings to the table a passion for learning and education that is unparalleled in a student his age.

“He constantly asks questions on teaching philosophy, specific strategies and school wide systems with the intent of deeper understanding,” Piros said.

“A few weeks ago, he began interviewing various teachers on their thoughts on educational improvement and through his questions, was able to gather some insightful questions and ideas that have sparked him to choose this as a research topic for his College Writing research essay.”

Beyond his skill sets, Piros wrote Parmley’s experience at his church and the ASB program prove that he is committed to both insightful thought and leadership to bring about change.

While Parmley understands instructional time is important, what he would like educators to know is students don’t feel like the information they are learning is rele-

vant. He said students want to learn information that will help them in life.

For example, students are required to take math courses where many don’t see when they will use what they’ve learned in the real world.

“They want to learn math that they will use in their jobs or in their lives,” he said. “When students don’t see the purpose in what they are learning, then they are not as motivated to learn it.”

He said he has pushed himself to finish two years of college in high school because, like many of his peers, he is concerned about the “ridiculous cost of college.”

Sharing he is adopted and he came from a troubled life in Missouri, Parmley said he has always been motivated to push himself to be “something more.” He loves learning and playing with concepts.

To make high school more relevant, he said teachers need to teach to the individual rather than the group.

“Teachers need to teach so students are learning rather than memorizing concepts for a test,” he said.

When he attended his first state education board meeting, he said a board member told him he was 17 going on 37.

“The adults were surprised I was taking this so seriously,” he said. “It was fun for me to engage in the discussions and to add my input. It was really cool to be involved.”

Assistant principal Therese Gerlits said Parmley isn’t afraid to be a leader.

“He has a focus and a motivation that you don’t see at this age,” she said. “Whenever he has an idea, a goal or a dream, he’s willing to work hard to make it happen.”

Rube Goldberg project teaches problem-solving skills

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Freauff is working with Butte Creek teacher Robyn Barkett on Simple Machine iSTEM, a collaborative project.

Freauff said it's important students learn when something doesn't work the first time, that they need to "go back to the drawing board with an attitude of 'well, this is an interesting dilemma' for any school subject."

Her hope is that her students can say, "Well, that writing piece didn't turn out so well. What can I do to fix it?"

If something doesn't work the first time, they will be able and eager to have another look at it, she said.

"Students need to learn that it's not the end of the world if something isn't successful the first time they do it. They need to be OK to try again," she said.

Third-grader Reese Dunn and fifth-grader William Kuenzi were having complications with their machine. The marble getting stuck on the duct tape.

Quietly, Reese suggested putting a pad in the tube so the marble wouldn't get stuck.

"Things don't always go as we planned," Reese said. "The marble is getting stuck and then it goes off the table in the wrong



Pratum students Carter Lanz, Jack Brown and Abigail Roth watch to see if the marble is on track to hit the dominoes.

direction."

William said working on the machine has been a bit frustrating.

"It has taught me lots of patience and with lots of patience you can probably fix the problem," he said.

Teammates fifth-grader Abigail Roth, fourth-grader Carter Lanz and third grader Jack Brown used paper plates, cardboard tube, shoebox, string, plastic cup, dominoes and an orange plastic track piece to create a contraption that eventually knocked down the dominoes.

Jack said adjusting the pulley so it worked each time was the hardest part.

Abigail said she and her team noticed their machine doesn't work every time the way they designed it.

"You fail a lot," Abigail said. "It teaches you to keep going and figure out what you need to change to make it work."

Fifth-graders Grace Wright and Hailey Smith and third-grader Ella Haury all said they made some mistakes in the creation process.

"But after several tries of doing different things, it worked out well," Grace said.

Besides learning science takes having an idea and seeing if it works and then trying again, Freauff said the students also learned it doesn't take a lot to do a science project.

"There is everyday stuff around their homes that they can use to make science," Freauff said.

No-homework policy reduces stress, not learning

Butte Creek Elementary School kindergarten teacher Rebecca Kuenzi has noticed a "huge sense of relief" from parents this school year.

And she understands because she is also a parent.

In September, the Butte Creek staff agreed to no longer assign homework to all its students.

"This is to encourage and support families to spend more time reading together, playing together, eating together and getting a full night sleep, every night," reads the note sent home to parents last fall.

Butte Creek Principal Kevin Palmer said research has shown families doing those four activities have a far greater impact on a child's growth and success than doing regularly assigned homework.

"Who wants to go home and do more work after working all day?" Palmer asked. "Kids work hard all day in school. They will only have homework if they don't spend their time wisely in school."

There also may be times when a student has a project such as building a covered wagon for the Oregon Trail project when he or she may have to do homework.

"But we feel this should be pretty rare. If kids use the time they have at school, their home time should be just that, home time," Palmer said. "We believe this change in philosophy and practice will benefit everyone!"

Palmer said the parents he has spoken with appreciate the no homework policy, sharing their time at home is less stressful.

"The no homework policy is working for us," Palmer said. "We put a lot of thought and discussion into it and we think spending time with their family is what is best for kids."

The mother of a second-grade student, Kuenzi said the new

policy has made a difference in her family's life.

"As a parent, it takes a massive weight off of my shoulders, not to have to fit homework into our already busy afternoons and evenings," Kuenzi said.

Like many children, Kuenzi said her daughter participates in after-school sports, riding lessons, piano lessons, church activities and having play dates with friends.

BUTTE CREEK

"Oftentimes, by the time we get home, it is only an hour until bedtime and we still have to eat dinner and take showers," Kuenzi said. "When would we have fit in an extra hour of homework? It is so nice to sit down and read with my kids before bed and know that was enough."

"On the days that we do have extra time, it is wonderful to be able to send my daughter outside to play and not have to worry that she is neglecting her homework in order to do so."

Butte Creek Middle School Math Teacher Dylan Uselman said the school's main focus is "character is what counts."

"The idea behind cutting or eliminating homework is to give students a chance to be more than just workhorses, and possibly give them more time to be just kids, along with spending time with family," Uselman said.

Uselman said he did wonder how he would restructure his math class that has almost always had homework. He took his usual assignment and shrank it by a third. Instead of giving 15 problems to solve, he would give 10. He has never assigned homework for the sake of homework.

"If the students use their class time wisely, usually about 20 minutes after notes are done, then they shouldn't have homework," Uselman said.

Realistically, he said, some middle school students socialize a bit too much and don't get classwork done in class.

He lets his students know his expectations. If they don't get their work done in class and it's due the next day, then it becomes homework.

"I'm glad to say that the difference between giving them 10 problems instead of 15, like I did from the year before, doesn't seem to have caused any noticeable shifts in achievement," he said.

Uselman said he believes Butte Creek has high expectations for students and prepares them for high school.

"I don't think my shrunken assignments are going to hinder their abilities or their work ethic," he said. "The students are rather adaptable, and they know when they go to high school things will be different, and things like assignments might be bigger."

Butte Creek teacher Stacy Boost said she thinks the no homework policy is good and initiated by wonderful values since it encourages family time and great health.

Boost said she has heard only positive things from families. She admits as a teacher she was worried that students would not have enough practice in the skills that are learned but improved with practice such as math facts, spelling and reading. She tries to allot classroom time for silent reading. The results?

"I have had the largest number of children meet their Accelerated Reader goals, and have had the joy of watching kids really get into a book of their choosing," Boost said.

"To address my concern about repeated practice and encouraging reading at home, I pay children for completing challenges. If they choose to participate in the challenges, families verify or participate, they have more classroom money to spend in our classroom store, no grade given, no negative consequence if not done, just an opportunity to earn more."

'I did it!' proves to be music to a PE teacher's ears

Robert Frost Elementary School physical education teacher Jacob Gerig likes to do things a little traditional and non-traditional.

Take a peek into one of his classes. He might be teaching traditional sports such as soccer or basketball... or he might be teaching nontraditional activities such as unicycling, slacklining or skateboarding.

ROBERT FROST

Realizing only 10 percent of students play on a competitive high school team, Gerig said his goal is to get his all students "excited about physical activity."

"Every kids in here deserves the opportunity to be physical active," he said. That means providing an array of activities for students to try. Each can decide what they like or don't, as long as they like something that gets them moving.

Gerig said he played team sports in high school but when he went to college, he wondered what activity was next. He started long boarding and skateboarding.

Whatever the activity, Gerig makes sure he not only teaches the skill but also the rules or etiquette. And teamwork.

One day in February, students were practicing riding a unicycle. While a few students were able to zip around the gym without spotters, most required a spotter on each side.

"Having a spotter teaches the kids that each has a job to do and each person is needed," Gerig said.

Learning a challenging sport such as unicycling also teaches them to be persistent.

At first, Gerig said, students about to learn how to ride a unicycle were kind of scared.

"I told them to trust in the process and that they will get better," Gerig said, adding most kids are used to instant gratification or mastering something quickly.

"Learning how to ride a unicycle pushes them to get better and to keep trying," he said, adding that's a skill they can use in the classroom and in life.

Gerig emphasizes every student has the ability to achieve success in a physical activity.

"I teach them to find an activity that is fun for them," he said. He also tells kids they are all built differently and what one student may be good at, another may not.

Fifth-grader Grace Smith said she was scared to try riding a unicycle. A softball player, Grace said Mr. Gerig gives his



Fifth-grader Grace Smith, left, and Robert Frost PE teacher Jacob Gerig, right, help fifth-grader Levi Edge with his balance as he rides a unicycle.

students the confidence to try new things.

"He's a really good PE teacher and he's really funny," Grace said.

Jackson Veith, in fifth-grade, said he thought learning to ride a unicycle would be too hard. He plays baseball and soccer.

"Mr. Gerig has taught us this is about trial and error," Jackson said. "You try and fall and then try again and do better."

Learning a challenging activity like unicycling has given him more confidence when he plays soccer or baseball, Jackson said.

Darby Ullan zipped around the gym without the help of spotters. She received a unicycle for her birthday last year.

When she was learning how to skateboard, she said she messed up.

"Mr. Gerig gives us the courage to try again. He gives us lots of motivation," Darby said.

Aidan Ross also rode without assistance, often catching Darby's hand and the two of them would ride in a circle.

"Mr. Gerig has all these ideas for us and then he shows us how to do new things," he said. "I have never had a PE teacher who has all these fun things and teaches us to play games that we have never done."

Several times during the class, a student would tell Gerig that they "did it."

"Hearing a student say 'I did it' are my favorite words," Gerig said.

The Bulletin Board . . .

Mandatory meeting

Parents of students who will be freshmen at Silverton High School in September, mark your calendar for a mandatory parent presentation on Monday, March 6 in the high school auditorium. Parents and eighth grade students will learn about graduation and diploma requirements for the Class of 2021.

The forecasting night starts at 5:30 p.m. for Silverton Middle School students and their parents, and at 6:30 p.m. for rural school students and parents. Forecasting sheets will be revised and turned in after the presentation. Counselors, office staff and administrators will be available to answer questions. There will be building tours every 15 minutes after the presentation.

Contact your school's counselor or student's teacher with any questions.

SFSD award winners

On Feb. 4, several staff members of the Silver Falls School District were honored at the Silverton First Citizen Banquet

Congratulations to classified members:
Jennifer Draper, Butte Creek Elementary
Carol Handley, Pratum Elementary
Lisa Roth, Silverton High School

And to certified staff members:

Brittany Zurcher, teacher at Mark Twain
Robyn Barkett, teacher at Butte Creek
Jeff Seiler, teacher at Butte Creek
Chris Blackburn, teacher at Silverton High

Dodgeball tournament

If you are thinking about dodging, dipping and darting, it's time to sign up for the annual Silverton Dodge Ball Tournament, a fund-raiser for the high school seniors' graduation party.

The tournament begins at 9 a.m. Saturday, April 8 at Silverton High School and ends when a champion is crowned.

Even if you don't want to participate, you are welcome to attend and support your favorite team. Admission for adults is \$5, \$3 for kids. There is a \$1 discount if you bring a food donation for Silverton Area Community Aid. For information, visit silvertondodgeball.com

Congratulations to...

SHS student **Ethan Budde** for attending the All-State Honor Band in Eugene. He and **Marah Christenson** both attended the All Northwest Band Concert in Bellevue, Wash.

On Feb. 11, the SHS Jazz Band took fifth place at the West Salem Jazz Festival.

SHS choir members **Sydney Bersin**, **Sarah Cleary**, **Austin Molloy** and **Ross Mackinnon** participated in All-State Choirs.

SHS athletic website

The SHS athletic website is silvertonfoxes.com. To receive real time alerts for SHS teams, go to www.vnnalerts.com to create an account.