

Robotics: A 'sneaky way' to learn math and science

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Fish said she worked with WHS' technology department, which she's a student assistant for, on the design of the robot, tweaking many of the aspects as the team reached the final design it is taking to North Bend.

The Blue Rangers are facing off against five other teams in the Ranger class of the ROV competition, the highest for K-12 students and one step below the Explorer class, in which Clatsop

Community College and other colleges and universities compete. Warrenton's second team, S.S.F.D.R., is one step below in the Navigator class, facing off against 11 other teams; and Team Gold is in the entry-level Scout bracket with 16 other teams.

The mission represents only part of the ROV competition, with students having to create engineering reports and presentations to an industry panel.

The students of the Blue Rangers seem aware of the technical concepts in math

and physics they're using to design the robot, such as the physics of its movements through the water or the vector designs used in the creation of some of its parts.

"It's kind of like critical thinking," Watson said about taking concepts they learn in class and applying it to a real-world mission. "It's a lot more fun."

Teaching through STEM

"It's also a sneaky way of getting them to learn math

and science," Jannusch said of his mission to incorporate more practical applications into math and science education.

The Warrenton-Hammond School District has committed itself to spreading STEM through every level of school. Davis and Fish, in addition to their own robotics team, are mentors to a First Lego League robotics team — the Fishstickz — who recently competed in their own regional competition at Intel in Hillsboro.

Jannusch hopes to go for more advanced training with SeaMATE this summer and expand ROV clubs to Warrenton's middle-schoolers. If his high school teams prevail Saturday in North Bend, they can qualify for the MATE international ROV competition in St. John's and Labrador City in the Newfoundland province of Canada June 25 to 27.

Principal Rod Heyen said he hopes members of WHS' ROV teams will feed

into CCC's ROV Club, led by physics instructor Pat Keefe.

Keefe said his ROV Club, which has often placed well at regional competitions despite going up against more well-funded programs, will likely pull back from the competition this year. He added that the club is instead focusing its attention on working with a group of marine anthropologists to possibly explore the Beeswax shipwreck near Nehalem Beach.

Lessons: School's secretary steps up

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Districtwide review

The prank threat also created an opportunity to review security systems districtwide.

"You always review the individual buildings after something like this," Superintendent Jenny Risner said. She met with administrators and police April 20 to talk through what happened April 16. "We talked about different entry points and that sort of thing and look at what doors we do have that remain open throughout the day. ... Even internally, we're looking at how we could have streamlined communication."

Since the threat targeted Long Beach Elementary specifically, it was the only building that was supposed to go into full lockdown mode with kids and teachers secure behind locked classroom doors. The other buildings in the district were only supposed to go into modified lockdown, which is when just the exterior doors are locked. Along the way, that message was lost, and everyone went into full lockdown.

All the principals were in meetings at Ilwaco High School that morning, interviewing candidates for the middle school principal position.

Sara Ryan steps up

Long Beach Elementary Principal Todd Carper was on his way back to his building when he was told about the threat. In his absence, front desk secretary Sara Ryan was in charge of putting the school into lockdown.

She called 911, the early childhood center next door and then the district office. She contacted the students and teachers who were out at the park on the other side of the building and told them not to come to the school, but to cross the street and take shelter in the Chinook Observer's office. Then she made sure that all students, teachers and other adults in the building were accounted for and in locked rooms.

In the few minutes it took Carper to drive from Ilwaco to Long Beach, Ryan had put the school in lockdown and could account for every single student.

"I have to commend Sara Ryan," said Risner in a phone interview April 20. "She knew where every kid was." She knew, for example, which kids were down in Ilwaco practicing as a part of the band. "She just knew right away and we were able to identify where students were."

The band students and other

students caught out of classroom were hustled to the nearest areas that could be locked, which, in some cases, meant very cramped quarters.

"If the situation happened again, you'd do the same thing," Risner said. Students out on the grounds would not be marched across campus if there was a secure option nearby — the weight room or a closet, for example. "If there is a shooter, we don't want to parade kids around outside."

"Unfortunately," she added, "sometimes that's not comfortable."

Carper and high school Principal Dave Tobin said they were fortunate the lockdown did not last long, just short of two hours total. They didn't run into major food or bathroom issues, though the district is also now looking into ways it could provide for those needs in the future. Carper talked to police officers about a "go bag"-style option: a bucket kept in each classroom that is filled with emergency supplies and can also double as a bathroom if need be.

"I'm sure as we continue to reflect on it we'll come up with more things," Tobin said. But, he added, "Right now, in my mind, it's the communication piece that I want to be sure we shore up."

The district's Technology Director Tom Thompson is looking into mass communications options for the district.

Across the district, some students didn't take the threat seriously at first, and a few didn't take it seriously the entire time, but most did exactly what they were supposed to do. They got to a safe place and waited patiently and quietly, principals said.

Student response

Carper said teachers later provided him with a list of kids who hadn't taken the threat seriously.

"We didn't want to come down on them too hard because it was a stressful time for everyone," he said, but he wanted to make sure he and teachers discussed it with them later. The school's counselor was also around Friday, Monday and Tuesday to talk with any students who wanted to visit her or still felt scared.

On Friday, some kids stayed home from school. At Long Beach Elementary, Carper said close to 80 students were absent, though not all absences were due to the shooting threat from the day before.

"Certainly, it was much higher than normal though," he said.

Cameras: Bill's balancing test is similar to what is applied to other materials under state's public records law

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Officers must announce that a body camera is in use unless doing so would jeopardize the officers' safety or unreasonably impair a criminal investigation.

A defendant can have access to the video, but such recordings can otherwise be used only for law enforcement purposes. Agencies can use third-party vendors for storage, but the records belong to the agencies.

The bill does provide an exception if public interest in disclosure of the video outweighs the need to shield it. This balancing test is similar to what is applied to other materials under Oregon's public records law.

But requests must be "reasonably tailored" to

the approximate date and time of an incident, and the video must be edited to make all faces unidentifiable.

Disclosure is still barred if a judge orders the sealing of records in a specific case or otherwise puts the video off-limits.

On the committee vote, Republican Reps. Wayne Krieger of Gold Beach and Sherrie Sprenger of Scio joined all five Democrats in favor. Krieger is a retired Oregon State Police trooper, and Sprenger is a former sheriff's deputy.

Dissenters, both Republicans, were Reps. Andy Olson of Albany — a retired Oregon State Police lieutenant — and Bill Post of Keizer.

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Scotch broom: This year has been the quickest removal Chapman Point has seen

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dunes and spent approximately 100 hours uprooting the Scotch broom from the sandy soil and hauling it away. They also scoured strips of land on the east side of Oak Street.

The four men — Snodgrass; Dave Santos, the landscape foreman; and Miles Lawson and Ryan (last name withheld), both new crew members — covered about 21 acres of affected area, from Chapman Point to the Breakers Point subdivision boundary.

In all the years of annual Scotch broom removal, this is the quickest Chapman Point has been able to finish the job, said Snodgrass, a Chapman Point homeowner.

He figures that the new record is the result of the thorough work he and his team did last year, their first shot at the project. Before May, he will do a final walk-through of the area.

Staying ahead of it

If keeping Scotch broom in check was just a matter of spotting the bright yellow blooms and plucking the shrub from the earth, then that would be one thing.

But, because landscapers want to pull the broom before the plants blossom and scatter their seeds — which usually happens in mid-summer — many of the targeted plants are still relatively small, green and blend into their environment.

"When it's flowering, it's easy, but they're not always flowering all at the same time," Snodgrass said. "So you really need to be able to see the little foliage amongst the dune grass."

What's more, the Scotch broom, which elk like to munch on, is competing with at least 100 different types of vegetation, he said.

"You don't really see it until you get right up on it," said Santos, who worked on the project last year.

However, winter on the North Coast was so mild this year that "the plants are about six weeks ahead of where they would be in a difficult year," Snodgrass said, so the 7 Dees crew did their work a few weeks earlier than normal.

"We're trying to stay ahead of it," he said. "We don't want the seeds to spread."

Ecola Watershed Council busts Scotch broom

CANNON BEACH — Volunteers are gearing up for the fourth annual Cannon Beach Broombuster event at Les Shirley Park from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 2. Originally introduced from Europe as an ornamental plant and for erosion control, Scotch broom is highly aggressive and forms dense stands, which displace native plants and provide poor wildlife habitat. Many people are highly allergic to its pollen.

The Ecola Creek Watershed Council is a local stakeholder group that works to protect and restore wildlife habitat in the Ecola Creek watershed in Cannon Beach and Arch Cape. It is part of the nonprofit North Coast Watershed Association, which also manages the Nicolai-Wickiup, Skipanon and Youngs Bay Watershed Councils.

Even after spreading, Scotch broom seeds can lie dormant for many years — 50 or more, McQuhae said — before they germinate, so landscapers may not know until years after a project how well they did, Snodgrass said.

'Like wildfire'

When the homeowners association began the annual Scotch broom maintenance program back in 2003, the Scotch broom in the affected area was huge, "standing 10 feet or so," said McQuhae, who organizes the Scotch broom eradication and thereby earned the nickname "The Broom Master."

The trail from the Chapman Point subdivision to the beach was basically a tunnel through the broom's woody foliage, he said.

"It's a shrub that will mature into something more than a shrub," said Snodgrass, also a Chapman Point homeowner. "It can really get big if let go unchecked."

Scotch broom, which can be seen all along the Oregon Coast

from U.S. Highway 101, is "extremely aggressive, and it will just crowd everything else out," Lawson said.

Once the plant takes root in an area, "it spreads like wildfire," Snodgrass said. "If we let it go for a couple of years, it would again get out of hand."

Last year, Snodgrass thought he and his crew got rid of it all, but "it fooled me," he said. "You need to stay after this, ongoing, to interrupt that natural progression of new plants."

Though his task is Sisyphean, Snodgrass takes pride in protecting Chapman Point's oceanfront vista.

"I definitely get a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction out of doing it," he said. "I'm hoping that the neighborhood and the tourists all appreciate the efforts that are being done here, because that really does benefit everybody."

If the Chapman Point Homeowners Association will have him back, Snodgrass plans to take up the job again next year. "So I may be 'The Broom Master' at some point," he said, smiling.

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