

# THE WORLD IS THEIR OYSTERVILLE

Young scientists learn the proof is in the process

By **PATRICK WEBB**  
For EO Media Group

OYSTERVILLE, Wash. — There's been a whole lot of learning going on this summer at the historic Oysterville School House.

But students from the first class in 1907 likely would not recognize much of it.

Science has been on the agenda for the last three weeks as a dozen peninsula fourth-graders have learned about maps, tracking, coding and even space travel.

The Oysterville Science Academy is the brainchild of retired teacher Diane Buttrell, an eight-year peninsula resident. Her passion is encouraging students to learn about scientific content by grounding them in the best processes to conduct research.

Some 40 years ago in Port Huron, Michigan, while Buttrell was teaching third grade she became convinced that students would be better equipped if they learned process over content. "It is the 'how' of science. I taught it and I loved it, but the educational system was all about teaching content," she said. "But process is the basis of all learning — it's the acquisition of knowledge."

Three summers ago, she founded the annual Science Academy. "The opportunity to have a connection with youth



Patrick Webb/For EO Media Group  
**Visiting teacher Gwen Brake enthalls the students at the Oysterville Science Academy highlighting connections between mathematics and nature. Students pictured, left to right, are Veda Hudson, Avalon Hildebrandt, Maddie Wilkin, Carter Humphrey, Penelope Linbocker and Sage Smith. Find more photos of the academy online at DailyAstorian.com**

at my age is a real treat," she said.

Teacher Garrett Knoll, a master's degree candidate at Western Washington University in Bellingham, was hired to instill in the youngsters the six elements of scientific learning: observation, prediction, investigation, measurement, classification and communication.

### Scientist-approved

The curriculum is based on materials provided by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, designed to improve student achievement and literacy in science and math.

Each session began outside with a flag salute as students donned their scientist "uniforms" — white lab coats and name tags —

then spent four days each week stretching their analytical skills. Nutritional snacks and breaks for active games, including tag and hula hoop, were encouraged in the program, which is a collaborative venture with the Boys and Girls Club of the Long Beach Peninsula. Students attended free; parents and volunteers took care of transportation. The academy benefited from a major assist from the Ocean Beach School District, which provided lunches. All other expenses were covered through donations.

Buttrell commended the varied guest speakers who lent time and expertise. "This community is so unique in that there are people who have accomplished great things and they are eager to share what they know," she said.

Adults providing this enrichment included George Lupfer, Zachary Forster, Kim Patten, Tom Downer, Susan Raymond, Clayton Nichols, Steve Romero, Madeline Kalbach, Patrick McKibben and Frances Makowski. Field trips included Leadbetter State Park, Ocean Park Library and Jack's Country Store; in one highlight, Kristi Freese led

students on a tracking expedition which revealed evidence of porcupines and rabbits.

Another visiting teacher, Gwen Brake, challenged the students last week to think about the way their daily lives are coded. She showed diagrams of traditional shopping bar codes and QR (quick response) codes, those smudgy-looking square-shaped coupons that can be scanned with a Smartphone.

After speaking about fractals, which demonstrate how mathematics appears in nature, she rattled off the Fibonacci number sequence, 0-1-1-2-3-5-8-13-21-34-55, and asked if anyone could explain it.

Maddie Wilkin was quick to catch on. "Oh, I get it," the young scientist said confidently. "You take the first number and add it to the second, then add the second and third number."

Brake, a teacher with Ocean Beach schools' Peninsula Active Learners program, was suitably impressed. "Yes, and it is a way we can decode nature," she said, launching into an explanation with flowcharts and other visual aids.

### Student assistants

The program had an added dimension in its third year. Graduates from prior years were so keen to return that Knoll recruited a dozen of them as his teaching assistants; Buttrell added Friday sessions for the older kids to enhance their science learning.

Those taking part included Westin Billeci, an incoming fifth grader at Hilltop School. Returning to the program he enjoyed last year was a treat. "This is pretty cool," he said. "My favorite thing was learning about rocks, and making a birdhouse was great fun."

This year's dozen new students shared his enthusiasm. "I like the drawing best," said Jace Linthakhan. "I am learning a lot."

As sessions progressed, the walls of the schoolhouse were adorned with selections of student artwork — all pieces offering science as their core. These included self portraits, which began with students measuring the width and height of their eyes and applying that distance as a baseline to properly display their other facial features.

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**Happy Birthday Melissa!**

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## Is LNG Coming to Tongue Point?

I am paying for this advertisement to inform the public that the Port of Astoria is forever giving up public control of Tongue Point, a deep-water port with rail access at the mouth of the Columbia River. Port staff made this agreement in private, behind closed doors, and did not even include it on the Port's published meeting agenda to let the public know about it.

Once Tongue Point is taken away from public ownership, it is gone forever from public control, and free to be used for any and all private interests, such as an LNG facility.

This private, closed-door agreement to give all of the public investment and control of Tongue Point to private corporate interests is the very definition of crony capitalism. The fact that it was done without public notice to deny community input or scrutiny is disgraceful. If a private purchaser such as Hyak Maritime is so interested in fully operating Tongue Point, then why did they never ask for a public meeting, or openly ask to discuss public partnership options with the Port?

The Tongue Point giveaway was already agreed to in secret prior to the last Port meeting, then simply rubber stamped by a majority of the Port Commission without any honest public notice or involvement. Furthermore, the Port Commission recently changed its public meeting time to 4 p.m., denying our working class taxpayers the ability to attend and speak on Port matters and have their voices heard, taking away public transparency and accountability.

At no time did the Port Commission publicly discuss the many options the Port has regarding Tongue Point, including its legal right to purchase Tongue Point and forever keep it in public hands. At no time did Port staff publicly bring in interested third parties to discuss a potential partnership with the Port. At no time was the Port's legal counsel available to explain the Port's legal rights to Tongue Point. Instead, Port staff had already privately negotiated giving all of the public investment in Tongue Point to private corporate interests.

If the public is not outraged at the Tongue Point giveaway to private corporate interests, and being cheated out of your right to be heard, you should be. The Port Commission's next meeting is **Tuesday, August 22, at 4 p.m.** I realize that this time is difficult for many of our citizens to attend, but you can also have your voices heard by sending letters or emails to the **Port of Astoria, 10 Pier One, Suite 308, Astoria, OR 97103, [admin@portofastoria.com](mailto:admin@portofastoria.com)**. At a minimum, you should demand the Port to pay for an appraisal of Tongue Point so everyone can honestly know what the Port will be giving away to private corporate interests.

If anyone cares that the Port is forever giving up control of a public deep-water dock with rail access at the mouth of the Columbia River, and doing so to benefit elite private individuals, send your letters, emails, or show up and make your voices heard. Don't let the Port Commission cheat you out of your right to be heard, or cheat you out of the public investment and long term future of a public deep water dock with rail access at Tongue Point. I feel that as a public elected Port Commissioner, this transaction should be fully discussed by the taxpayers and citizens of Clatsop County, this is not a simple housekeeping matter, this is the future of the Port of Astoria.

**Commissioner Bill Hunsinger**  
Port Commission, Position 3

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