

Schools: ‘It was needed coming into COVID’

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The Oregon Department of Education recently released data showing that 57% of ninth grade students during the last school year were on track to graduate, which was significantly lower than previous years for Astoria.

Along with adding several counselors, the school district turned to Newton, who taught at Astoria High School for over two decades.

Newton gave a presentation to the school board last week with a breakdown of the three-year implementation plan.

“The pandemic is really good at showing ... where the little scratches were, but now they’re big scratches,” said Newton, who recently got her doctorate in transformative studies. “We’re noticing things like anxiety. We’re noticing things like communication. We’re noticing that we want to be able to give students the ability to make decisions and move forward in their lives with some agency in that. These kinds of changes are under the umbrella of SEL.”

The five pieces of social-emotional learning, according to Newton, are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

“All of the things that have been complicated in the last two years are usually linked to either social awareness or relationships or good decision-making,” she said. “And all of that we’ve seen in the last 20 months. We aren’t as good at it as a whole as we thought ...”

Social-emotional learning is not replacing core academic subjects, Newton said, but is rather a mindset that seeks to engage students with material while meeting their social and emotional needs.

Newton plans to host a number of workshops for students and staff, including sessions on mindfulness, community building, equity and belonging.

Warrenton has also started to implement social-emotional learning into schools.

“It was needed coming into COVID. It’s all the more clear that it’s needed now,” Superintendent



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Schools hope social-emotional learning will help improve graduation rates.

Tom Rogozinski said.

Among other things, Rogozinski said, they will attempt to approach discipline with getting students the proper care and support.

The Knappa School District brought in a therapist to help students manage stress.

As for how they will measure results in Astoria, Newton referenced evidence from the Collaborative for Academic, Social,

and Emotional Learning showing that social-emotional learning improves several standards over time, including attendance, graduation, grade-point average and reading and math scores.

“Our ultimate goal is to get kids to graduate, and we’re hoping that this will help them meet the needs of themselves emotionally, so school will be a lot easier for them,” Hoppes said.

Bear: Reported sightings pop up every few years

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a true hibernation, but across most of their geographic range they do spend the autumn fattening up. They become more lethargic and remain relatively inactive through the winter.

Local police say Manzanita has never had a problem bear — a bear that repeatedly raided trash cans or became a threat to people and pets. This new bear seems to be no different. Wildlife officials are not concerned. If people secure their trash and keep pet food and other attractants indoors, the bear should move on.

Black bears, the only type of bear found in Oregon nowadays, are rarely aggressive.

“They are typically far more skittish than deer or elk ... unless they’re getting fed,” said Dave Nuzum, a state wildlife biologist based out of Tillamook.

Looking for food

Bears that find ready sources of food in neighborhoods or are being fed can become problematic. In extreme cases, wildlife officials may have to trap and euthanize a bear that has become too habituated to humans and poses a threat to people, property or domestic animals.

Black bears are not uncommon sights on Washington state’s Long Beach Peninsula and Clatsop County timberland owners and forestry workers may encounter bears on the land, or, often, the damage caused by a bear when the large animal peels away a tree’s outer bark to eat the sapwood layers underneath. The average North Coast resident has usually never seen a bear around cities like Astoria or Cannon Beach. That doesn’t mean they’re not there.

The Astoria Transfer Station off Williamsport Road once closed down for an afternoon after someone found a partially decomposed bear foot and mistook it for human remains.

In 2016, people reported seeing bears in Warrenton and Hammond. Police were able to confirm two of these sightings. The next year, a bear browsed through trash in a dumpster at the Hammond Marina.

Bear reports pop up every few years: on the Tillamook Head trail in Seaside; near a school bus stop in the Bayside Gardens area near Manzanita. In every instance, the bear appeared to be just as startled as the human.

In Manzanita, when people report bear sightings, they’re often near Pine Ridge, a gated community that backs up against Nehalem Bay State Park, or in the park itself.

The state park is located on a narrow peninsula. On one side is the Pacific Ocean, on the other side, Nehalem Bay. In the middle are campgrounds and a forested area intersected by a few roads and trails.

When park staff are told a large animal like a bear or a cougar might be in the area, they set out trail cameras.

Though people have reported bears in the park almost every year since park manager Ben Cox arrived in 2016, rangers have never caught any of the reported animals on the trail cameras.

The only recent confirmed bear sighting inside the park occurred two years ago. A park ranger happened to see a sow and a cub cross the park’s main road and head up a hill.

People see things moving around and they may think it’s a bear or a cougar, Cox said. “And I have no doubt that it sometimes is,” he said, “but also that it sometimes isn’t.”

Sometimes it’s just a dog or a coyote — the park sees plenty of coyotes.

‘This is their world’

Rangers have never had a report of bear-raided trash cans or camps. They encourage campers to take certain precautions to avoid attracting wildlife. Still, the problem animal park staff usually have in mind is an opportunistic raccoon, not a bear.

For Campbell, the sight of a bear in his backyard was slightly alarming. He has dogs and was concerned about them running into the bear while they were outside. He doesn’t feel like anything needs to be done about the bear, however.

Wildlife wanders down from nearby

Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain every fall. Deer and elk roam through yards and sample the landscaping. There are plants Campbell knows he shouldn’t try to grow. But this up-close-and-personal view of wildlife is one of the perks of living in a rural community, he said.

“This is their world,” Cox agreed. “We’re just guests here and we have to respect that and know that.”

One woman who saw the bear nicknamed it “Hope.”

As communities continue to face the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic and with housing scarce and increasingly more expensive for people who work in towns like Manzanita, Donna Miller said: “And here is a wild bear, free to eat our berries and apples, giving us hope that things won’t change too much!”

Firefighters: ‘Put a lot of their feelings aside’

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In addition, five new people decided to volunteer with the fire department, Alsbury told Balensifer. “So we added to our ranks,” the mayor said.

The overwhelming majority of the fire department is now in compliance with the state mandate, Balensifer said.

Alsbury told each of the volunteers that if they had doubts about the vaccine, let’s talk, according to a report by KMUN. He aimed to knock down misinformation with information and that helped.

“Our volunteers have put a lot of their feelings aside, and personal beliefs, and now we are 99% compliant with the state mandate and



Most of the Warrenton Fire Department is vaccinated against the coronavirus.

you know that 1% is possibly one person that still has not given me a commitment,” the fire chief said

last week.

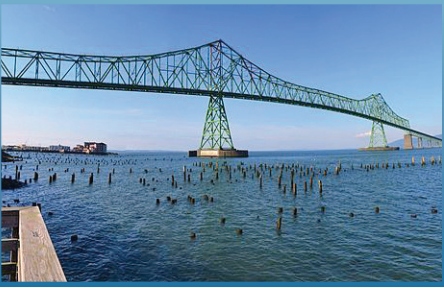
Brown had set a Monday deadline for health care workers, teachers and other school staff in Oregon to get vaccinated against the virus.

Both Balensifer and Alsbury have said they are vaccinated.

The mayor is “relieved, grateful and thankful to the sacrifice that our volunteers continue to make for the community,” he said.

“And I am heartened that the Warrenton spirit still endures,” he continued, “which is that, when an issue comes, people volunteered and stepped up.”

The mayor added: “We could always use more volunteers in our fire department. It’s a great group of people and a great place to volunteer.”



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