

## SUMMER LEARNING REPORT

## Camps, Jump Start and Freshman Academy

By Trish Yerges

This summer provided some great learning experiences for our district students through a wide variety of summer camps, the Jump Start program and the Freshman Academy.

Tory Weimer, fifth grade teacher at Island City Elementary, served as the summer camp coordinator for the second consecutive year, and he said the operation went smoothly. The equipment was delivered efficiently where it needed to be, the paperwork came in as it should, and the communication between the district, the Parks and Recreation personnel and the camp leaders was really smooth and efficient, he said.

“A lot of the science and arts camps had extremely long wait lists, but that spoke to the popularity of it,” he said.

There were actually a number of very popular camps, including the woodturning camp and the cutting board camp, both led by Darren Hendrickson. “His two camps filled up and had waiting lists of 17 for one camp and 12 students for the other camp,” Weimer said. “That was a popular camp for seventh through twelfth graders.”

There were also middle school and high school Sound Tech 101 camps led by Stacy Shown. “The middle school had nine participants and the high school had three participants.”

At the elementary grade level, there were reading and STEM camps, which were enjoyed by students. There was also the K-2 poetry camp that had 20 participating students led by Stacy Shown. “She also taught the theater camp for the middle school and that camp had 20 participants, a full class,” Weimer added. “The Science and nature camps were really popular at all grade levels.”

The football camps were among the last of the camps for the summer program. Looking forward, Weimer said that he won’t know until later if the State of Oregon will fund camps again next summer, the way they have been, but if so, he would like to be involved in it again.

Superintendent George Mendoza shared that he was very pleased that LGSD school was able to carry out a summer camp and learning program that served students with summer opportunities. “We are thankful to our staff for being so invested in children that they were willing to give their time to provide summer learning opportunities.”

*Jump Start Program*

For the past two years, State funding has

been appropriated to initiate the Jump Start program at Island City Elementary School and the La Grande Middle School. It basically introduces kids in early August to the school environment in advance of the new school year, and it prepares their minds for learning.

At the La Grande Middle School, Principal Chris Wagner welcomed a good number of student participants to the Jump Start program from Mondays through Thursdays, August 1 – 18. “We had just about 46 incoming sixth graders, who are brand new to the school; 20 incoming seventh graders and 20 incoming eighth graders that wanted to get a jump start to the new school year,” he said.



**Duante races to base during the Jump Start summer learning program.**

The Jump Start program included math, English and an elective time that they participated in, which ran 9 a.m. to noon. The teachers designed things to be more project based versus paper or book studies. Students enrolled received breakfast and lunch and enjoyed about three hours of activity-based projects led by their teachers.

“They are focusing on hitting foundational concepts at each one of those grade levels in those areas, and then there’s the elective area where the teachers were asked to do some activity-based projects involving science, technology, engineering and math focuses,” Wagner said.

Wagner was very pleased with the good turn-out of students for the program, and the teachers were excited to see everyone.

The school will call parents in early June to give them an opportunity to enroll their children. Some children who are recommended to the Jump Start program by their teachers will be given the first opportunity to enroll, and after that, a general invitation is extended to the rest of the student body.

“This is just a good example of the district doing everything it can to support our students and community, and fill any needs that arise as

we see them,” Wagner concluded.

Jump Start for the elementary grade levels also went very well. Principal Brett Smith of Island City Elementary said, “We’re pretty excited about it. It’s the first time we combined all the schools with students from Central, Greenwood and Island City, attending at Island City Elementary.”

The turnout was very good with 165 students the first week of August and two teachers per grade level. Buses were arranged for kids who needed to attend, and kids received breakfast and lunch.

“It seemed like a mini school running here,” Smith said, “and the teachers had a lot of great activities going on. We dusted off the cobwebs with math facts, reading skills, physical education, and then we had give-away gifts at the end for kids attending.”

From August 1 – 18, teachers from every elementary school, plus para-professionals and administrators from each school building were present so that the kids saw familiar faces in the hallways at Jump Start. “We had a good kindergarten group—actually our largest group, and we also had students attending all the way to fifth grade,” he added.

Smith said the real emphasis for fourth and fifth graders was their math skills, working on addition, subtraction and the multiplication tables. Teachers used games and other activities to reinforce all those skills in the students. They also covered basic reading skills appropriate to each grade, and older students received a chance to read with an adult and dive into the facts of what they read.

“I’m grateful to the families for prioritizing this so their kids could attend,” Smith said. “I know, sometimes in the summer, that’s hard to do, but it’s going to be of great value to the kids on that first day of school. They’ll be going into school feeling a little more ready. I’m also grateful to our elementary staff that stepped up to organize and focus on this. It’s been a great thing for the kids and a value to the community.”

*Freshman Academy*

The Freshman Academy was held August 1-19, running Mondays through Thursdays at La Grande High School. This was its second year and three certified teachers ran the program for the 40 student participants. It was designed to help students make their transition to their freshman year this fall an easier one through advanced introductions and immersion into some career pathway classes.

At the Freshman Academy, the students were introduced to the La Grande High School



**Zion Devore and Anne Sweet at Adam Slippy’s welding camp.**

campus, and they met some of their teachers as well as fellow classmates.

“Ideally, there are several goals involved with the Freshman Academy,” said LHS Assistant Principal Eric Freeman. “We want to provide a broad overview of some different programs and pathways the high school has to offer the students. In doing so, the students are involved with a variety of activities and different curriculums.”

As a few examples, Freeman pointed out that students might explore some classes in math, English, or STEM subjects like programming and coding, an introduction to Spanish vocabulary and foods, and they might try culinary arts. “We offer hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, and medical pathways,” he said. “We wanted to give them some ideas on what they could do at high school and the classes they could take.”

As a bonus, when a student attends ten out of the twelve class days at the academy, they qualify to earn one elective credit toward their graduation requirements. Walking into their freshman year with an elective credit already in hand, can mean greater student success in the freshman year.

“In prior years, of the students who earned an elective credit in the Freshman Academy, 87.5 percent of them were on track at the end of the first quarter in their freshman year,” Freeman said.

Consequently, Freeman has been thinking about how this program might be expanded next year to benefit even more kids.

“This year we targeted it as a freshman academy,” Freeman said, “but I would consider offering a similar program to some of our sophomores, who might be in need of getting off to a good start or maybe they want to make up an elective credit.”

Freeman is confident that those participating in the Freshman Academy receive awesome learning opportunities and a jump start to student success in their freshman year at La Grande High School. If you have questions on if next year’s academy would benefit your child, please contact Mr. Freeman’s office for details.