

SEBASTIAN

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Sam Fufts; he's also a peer tutor for the school's new AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, designed to help students get into college.

It's his favorite class. To be an AVID tutor, students must first be nominated by counselors and go through training.

"I interact with kids a year younger than me and they seem to have fun with me when I tutor them," Barajas said. "I feel good helping them, see them improve."

AVID teacher Haley Harkema said Barajas is "super dedicated. It's fun to watch him in tutorials. He takes it very seriously. The students love him."

A student athlete, Barajas plans to major in nutritional sciences in college.

It's what inspired his EA project, where he looked at athletic training as a career. He shadowed HRVHS trainer Chris Rogers and worked a hypothetical case study on an "unhappy triad" injury — or, in laymen's terms, a tear to the meniscus, MCL and ACL ligaments.

"I enjoyed going in there and learning something new every day," he said. "Chris made it fun for me."

He also spent an afternoon at Gorge Spine, learning how physical therapists treat knee injuries.

Now that his project is complete (although he would love to job shadow a dietician at Providence), he's on to another — that of assistant coach of the school's Special Olympics team.

"I'm the strongest guy in school, and Mr. (Hector) Ortiz, the ELD teacher, talked to me, would I like to come down and help him be assistant coach," he said. "It was a for sure yes."

"I've learned how to interact with kids who are special, to be around people I haven't talked to in my high school career ... It's kind of cool being assistant coach and saying, 'they're my athletes.'"

Though Barajas is a three sport athlete, track and field is his favorite. "I love track and field. Sometimes people

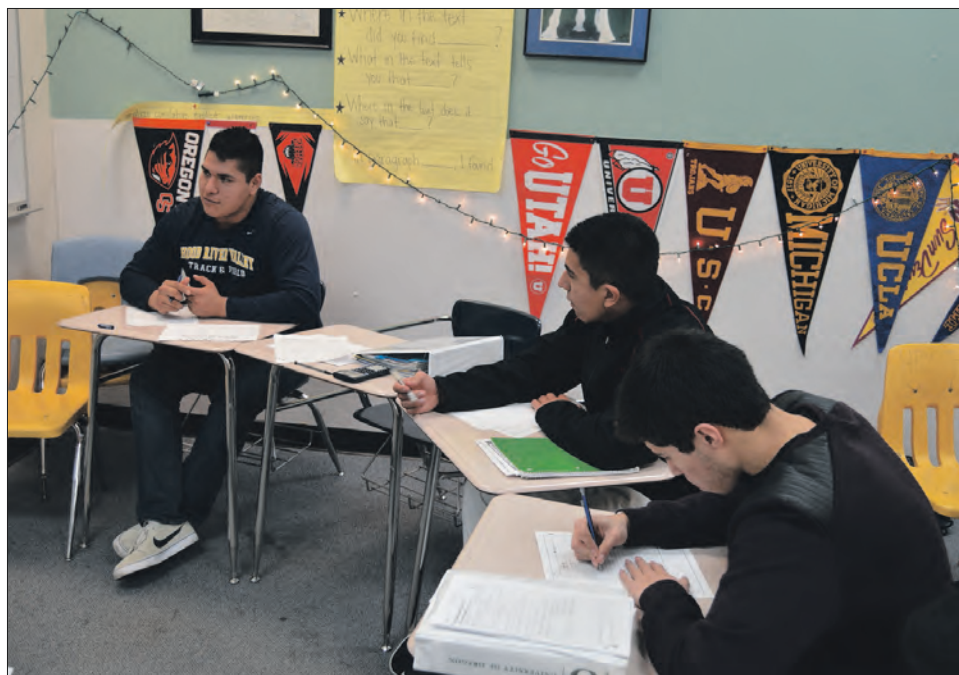


Photo by Trisha Walker

PEER TUTOR SEBASTIAN BARAJAS leads a small group, including sophomores Gio Dominguez and Ramon Evangelista-Vargas, during AVID, a new program designed to help students start thinking about — and be ready for — college. It's a favorite class. "I love to help people," he said. Barajas is one of five peer tutors nominated by guidance counselors.

say I'm cocky when I say this, but I always say, 'I didn't seek it; it found me,'" he said.

In the seventh grade, Wy'east track coach Steve Wrye came to his house one afternoon "and told me to sign these papers," he said. "The next thing I knew, I was on the track team."

Wrye had seen his talent in cross country and thought he would make a good shot putter. But the first thing Barajas grabbed was the discus.

"I fell in love with it the first time I touched it," he said. "It feels good, it feels natural each time I step into the throwing pit and let it go. I'm confident in what I'm doing — I've trained my body so long, it just knows what to do."

He used to practice by throwing the large rocks around his house. "I'd grab them and throw them for fun. When it got too light, I'd move onto a heavier rock," he said.

In the offseason, that involved throwing by the light of a car or just working on technique. His persistence paid off when he took first place in discus at the state tournament.

"I honestly didn't know what to do," he said. "All I knew was I was there to do what I loved to do, which is

throw discus." His competition was taller, stronger seniors. And he won. On his first throw, with a score of 156.9 feet.

His sophomore year was a rocky one. He wanted to go undefeated, but lost in two of his first meets. "I guess you have to learn to lose sometimes," he said. "When you lose sometimes, you come back stronger — and that's exactly what happened."

Rocky start or not, he won state with a throw of 155 feet. With an injured elbow.

"When I was competing, all that went through my mind is, 'here I am again doing what I love to do — just throw and don't think about it.' The next thing I knew, I was standing on the podium in first place," he said.

It's his work ethic that sets him apart from his peers, whether that's on the field or in the classroom.

"Sebastian is one of those kids that come along once in a coaching career," said Donnie Herneisen, track and field head coach. "He has a fair amount of physical talent, but where his work ethic is what really makes him stand out. I've never met a kid as disciplined, motivated, and respectful as Sebastian. He's the kind of kid who shakes his coach's hand every day after practice and

thanks the coach for working with him. Well, he's not just that 'kind of kid' — he actually does that."

AP U.S. History teacher Dave Case describes Barajas as "a grinder. He comes in for extra help and he's shown exceptional academic progress this year. I think that's how Sebastian approaches life — he understands delayed gratification, and he's willing to work to get results."

"One image that comes to mind when I think about Sebastian comes from this summer," added Case. "I came in to the school for a few hours in early August ... It was hot, over 100 degrees. The only car in the lot other than mine was Sebastian's dad's truck. I looked out on the field and there was Sebastian, throwing the discus, and his dad, helping him gather them up so he could throw some more ... That's what makes Sebastian better than the other throwers in the state — he's out there working when no one else is."

Barajas is the son of Santiago Barajas and Carolina Flores, of Dee; he has two younger siblings, brother Omar, 14, a freshman at HRVHS, and sister Jacqueline, 9, a third grader at Parkdale Elementary.

SCHOOLS

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school spending over the 2015-17 biennium.

Goldman said he will be in Salem Feb. 19 to lobby for increasing the education budget to \$7.5 billion, which Goldman said is the bare minimum needed by schools statewide. "We are barely treading water as it is," he said.

Meanwhile, the one school board member absent Wednesday was making the case at the capitol for increasing post-secondary spending. Mark Johnson, the State House District 52 representative in Salem, said Thursday. "The high cost of textbooks is pricing students out of a college education. We've seen study after study on how to reduce the costs of textbooks by creating open-source opportunities," according to a statement from his office. "It's time to put the studies aside and take some action. I will be working hard this session to find innovative ways to reduce these kinds of costs for students, which will help them stretch their limited funds and ultimately support their post-secondary success."

Johnson spoke to more than 500 Oregon students on the steps of the Capitol building as various higher education associations and advocates called for increased investment in post-secondary education. As the longest serving member on the House Higher Education Committee, Johnson outlined specific areas legislators will focus on this session to reduce costs for students.

The \$7.235 billion, according to Goldman, includes funding statewide for all districts to offer full-day kinder-

garten (which HRCSD has done for years). That will mean an estimated statewide increase of 25,000 students, and possibly as many as 28,000, up from an initial estimate of 17,000 more, meaning districts will each receive less funding. "We're sharing a pie that's of fixed size," Goldman said. "As the input goes up, you get less per student."

And the result for HRCSD will be "about a million dollars, as of right now," Goldman told the board.

In Salem, Goldman will meet with Sen. Richard Devlin, chair of the Senate Ways and Means committee.

"The \$7.5 billion is what we need to tread water. We've been treading water for a really long time," he said, calling the past decade of school funding "paltry." He cited Oregon's 49th place among the 50 states in overall school spending, and 50th place in the amount of instructional time provided.

"And we're all getting less and less of the pie," he said. "This is a continuing trend. It's discouraging to say the least. It seems certain that this will be a tough spring for us," he said. The district's first budget committee meeting will be April 6.

Rep. Johnson pointed out the irony that, as a state, Oregon collegiate athletic teams compete at the national level yet the state ranks 47th in post-secondary funding. He called on the Legislature to do more to correct this irony, and to give students the support they need to succeed.

The "Restore the Cuts" Rally was sponsored by Oregon Community College Association, Oregon Student Association, Oregon's public universities, SEIU, American Association of University Professors, and American Federation of Teachers.

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