

Smith named Walla Walla Superintendent

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian



Smith

Hermiston Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith has accepted the position of superintendent for the Walla Walla School District.

"It's bittersweet," Smith said Friday. "It was kind of surreal this morning. It's been a great experience in Hermiston, but this was too good an opportunity to pass up."

The Walla Walla Public Schools Board of Directors unanimously named Smith that district's new superintendent during a meeting Thursday night. Smith's last day with the Hermiston School District is June 30, and he will begin the Walla Walla job on July 1.

A first generation college student, Smith's career began as a chemistry teacher in the Long Creek School District before becoming a principal at Heppner High School. After two years as assistant superintendent for the Morrow County School District, he came to Hermiston nine years ago as an assistant superintendent.

In 2011, Smith, then assistant superintendent for support services, was named Hermiston School District's Administrator of the Year. That same year, he became the interim superintendent when Fred Maiocco was deployed to Kuwait for 18 months with the U.S. Army reserves.

"When you're looking for leadership and growth, there are only a few school districts in the region, so you can't pass up opportunities," he said. "This was a big family discussion before I even put my name in the hat, but my family is incredibly supportive. They understand this is part of working in education. The next adventure in our life started last night."

In addition to the Walla Walla position, Smith was also a finalist for the superintendent position in the Pendleton School District. The remaining two finalists for that position are Ontario High School Principal Andy Kovach and Pendleton School District Assistant Superintendent Tricia Mooney.

Michelle Monkman, the Pendleton School Board chair, said the board hopes to make a decision Tuesday whether to offer the position to one of the candidates.

Smith said either position would have been an "excellent" opportunity but the Walla Walla position is uniquely aligned with his skills and experience.

"I am going to miss the Hermiston community, the administration, but on equal footing is the excitement to assist Walla Walla doing some extraordinary things. I think the stars have aligned in that community with a board and a community ready to take the next step

and do something amazing," he said.

Smith will submit a resignation to the Hermiston School Board of Education, and Maiocco said the district will begin advertising for a replacement next week. The position will be for assistant superintendent; however, the district is still finalizing what specialization that position will be for. Smith was hired as assistant superintendent for human resources, and Maiocco said the position morphed with Smith's specific capabilities.

"No one will fill his shoes exactly — they are huge shoes to fill — but we are excited about this opportunity," he said. "Obviously, replacing Wade is going to be a very big chore for us, but I think Walla Walla will thrive under his leadership."

Smith said his family will move to Walla Walla, including his two children and his wife, Marianne, an art teacher at Hermiston High School. Maiocco said the entire family has been an asset to Hermiston.

"They (Walla Walla) could not have made a finer choice. I think it's an opportunity for Wade and his family. Marianne is an extraordinary teacher, and she will be just as hard to replace as Wade. They will be missed, but we wish them the best."

Contact Jennifer Colton at jcolton@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534

BRIEFLY

Kiwanis playground closed until further notice

PENDLETON — Pendleton Parks and Recreation has closed the Kiwanis Playground on Southeast Byers Avenue until further notice after staff discovered some cracks and missing bolts in the equipment.

Parks Director Donnie Cook said they fenced off the playground on Friday and contacted the manufacturer to replace any missing parts. There is no estimate of when they will be able to reopen.

"The main thing is we just don't want anybody to get hurt," Cook said.

The playground was first built 15 years ago. Cook said the work will help to make the area safer.

Snowpack holds steady after warm February

Despite a warm February, mountain snowpack remains normal for this time of year across northeast Oregon.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service released its March water supply outlook report on Friday, which shows the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Willow basins are at 101 percent of average snow-water equivalent — which measures the amount of water contained within snow. The Grande Ronde, Powder, Burnt and Imnaha basins are 104 percent of average, and the John Day Basin is 108 percent of average.

Most basins experienced some mid- to low-elevation snowmelt during warmer periods in the middle of the month, according to the NRCS. Higher elevations continue to retain snow for the time being.

With spring on the way, the NRCS predicts higher temperatures and rain on snow could result in significantly more snowmelt.

"Temperature will be the key indicator for March snowpack development and retention," said Scott Oviatt, Oregon snow survey supervisor.

"Eastern Oregon continues to see the best conditions in the state, due to cooler mountain temperatures."

For now, the NRCS predicts the median flow in the Umatilla River from April through September will be 161,000 acre-feet, or 105 percent of normal. Overall, water supplies in the basin are likely to be below normal to near normal this summer.

For more information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Public invited to discuss north Highway 395

HERMISTON — Members of the public interested in improving Highway 395 north of Hermiston are invited to a meeting of the Highway 395 N Committee.

The meeting will be Tuesday, March 8 from 4-5:30 p.m. at the Stafford Hansell Government Center, 915 S.E. Columbia Drive, Hermiston.

The advisory committee is a collaboration between property owners and Umatilla County that has been meeting for more than a year to discuss ways to implement an economic development study prepared by E.D. Hovee and Company in 2015. Ideas the committee has discussed for fostering economic development along North Highway 395 include road improvements, formation of a Local Improvement District, landscaping guidelines, infrastructure improvements and zoning changes.

Steve Watkins, committee chair and owner of Columbia Court Club on the highway, said members of the business community north of Hermiston have worked well with county officials during the process.

"This public-private effort has been very positive," he said.

Briefs are compiled from staff and wire reports, and press releases. Email press releases to news@eastoregonian.com

Educators 'play' to learn skills during workshops

By JENNIFER COLTON
East Oregonian

Ninety-three percent of Pacific Northwest schools with Playworks reported a decrease in disciplinary incidents; 93 percent reported an improvement in academic success, and 98 percent reported and improvement in school climate — all because of play. Friday, educators worked together to bring those skills to local schools.



EO file photo

Playworks 101, was one of four workshops presented Friday by the InterMountain Education Service District. The four workshops focused on innovative concepts in education.

social competence in children with autism spectrum disorder and "Growth Mindset," which focuses on non-cognitive skills such as resiliency, perseverance and self-management as key ingredients for engagement, motivation, social and emotional wellness and academic achievement.

At Playworks 101, participants covered the length of the InterMountain district, from Heppner to Helix to La Grande. They discussed benefits, rewards and challenges with recess.

"The big thing that I'm looking for is conflict resolution, so the incidents from the playground don't spill over to the classroom," said Carter Wells, superintendent at the Union School District.

The comment prompted discussion and strategies for smoothing the transition

between recess and class. On Friday, the educators both discussed the science behind play and took an active approach in hands-on game training. The educators played "band-aid tag," for example, a modification on the traditional tag game meant to keep all students engaged and involved instead of making one child "it."

"Tag can have the same amount of cardio as running a mile, but it's fun," Blasher said. "It's all about getting every child to play every day."

Participants in the workshop ranged from paraeducators to superintendents and from preschool through high school. Those ranges opened the door for discussions in modification and strategies to make play accessible and interesting to students at all

ages and levels.

The presenters also talked about what makes a "great" recess, such as having at least 20 minutes of time and not taking recess away as a punishment or for academic reasons.

Four school districts — Umatilla, Stanfield, Echo and Morrow County — have already expressed an interest in bringing training and Playworks coaches into the local schools. Playworks will host a three-day training and demonstration at Umatilla's McNary Heights Elementary next week. Blasher indicated that to fund a hub for Eastern Oregon would take about eight schools involved in Playworks coaching.

"Cost-wise, it's very reasonable," said Brandon Hammond, principal at Boardman's Windy River Elementary. "Culturally, if we're going to start this, I think we need to start off on the right foot. We want to create a culture."

Contact Jennifer Colton at jcolton@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4534



Processor, **Sierra Webb**
a valued member of our team!



Tim & Annette Terraberry's Dinner & Auction

**Sunday, March 13th
4:00pm
Hermiston High School Commons**



Tim is battling Cancer, so please help support this wonderful couple.

**Doors open 4pm • Tri Tip dinner buffet 5pm
Silent Auction • Tickets \$35**

Tickets may be purchased at the Hermiston Chamber, American West Properties and Oasis Vineyard Church. A table for 8 can be purchased for \$280.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please call or text Nancy Walchli at 541-571-1723.

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Blue Mountain Diabetes Champions

Topic: Your Guide to Sweeteners

★ Diabetes History
★ Newly Diagnosed
★ Know someone who has diabetes?

Wednesday, March 16th
Conference Rooms 3 & 4
2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Christine **Melissa**
541-278-3235 541-278-3249

2801 St. Anthony Way
Pendleton, OR
www.sahpendleton.com

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