

# Good experience on student council

By Leslie Mitts  
Spilyay Tymoo

It may not be the largest form of government, but student council does take some extra commitment from those elected at Madras High School.

Three students from Warm Springs are filling important roles this year at the high school, as they serve on this year's student council.

Marissa Ahern, 14, is the vice president of the freshman class. Teryl Florendo is the president of the junior class, while LaTonia Smith is the junior class secretary.

To get elected to student council, the three girls had to gain the votes of their fellow classman.

Now they will serve on student council for the remainder of the school year.

Ahern said that part of the responsibility includes taking a leadership class. For her, the year involves mostly fundraising.

"The freshman class isn't really in charge of anything," she said. The other classes are all responsible for planning dances, Ahern added.

However, the freshman members of student council do help with the homecoming



LaTonia Smith and Marissa Ahern

committee. Ahern said she is responsible for the bonfire this year—something that involves calling the fire and police departments and organizing supplies and supervisors.

Smith said she's responsible for documenting what happens in meetings, and also for informing the junior class.

"I try to tell people what's going on, try to get them involved," she said.

Both girls agree that the responsibility of serving on student council has its benefits.

According to Smith, "It's nice being involved in something."

Ahern added, "I've met a lot of people doing it."

In her opinion, it's something that will help her out in the future. "You just kind of make a difference," Ahern said.


The girls both said it has helped them with learning how to communicate and reach out to people.

Both students plan to take their experience with student council farther and remain involved throughout high school.

Ahern, the daughter of Dan and Fran Ahern, plans to pursue a career in architecture.

Smith, the daughter of Leroy and Rachel Smith, is unsure of what she wants to study after high school, but she said she plans to find a degree that involves working with kids.

Florendo was unavailable for comment.



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# New high school needs a name

By Leslie Mitts  
Spilyay Tymoo

The new, alternative high school is lacking one very important element at this stage in the planning process: a name.

The design team is asking for help from the community to come up with a name that reflects the new school's philosophy. The theme of the school is "relationships, relevance and rigor."

Ideas for school names will be accepted until October 13. To submit ideas of names for the new school, e-mail Julie Lafayette at [jlafayette@509j.net](mailto:jlafayette@509j.net) or mail to Support Services, Attn: Julie Lafayette, 445 SE Buff Street, Madras.

### To open in 2007

Members of the design team met in September to discuss the plans and timeline for the school, which will open in September of 2007.

Julie Lafayette, project director and future principal for the school, said during the meeting that she believes community involvement and support is one of the key elements in creating a successful school.

Students will have an individualized learning plan and their learning will focus around real world work experiences—something that aims to make students ready for life after graduation.

"We want them college ready," Lafayette said. "For some students they may be the first student in their families to go to college."

Many students will also complete internships in the workforce in order to gain practical life experience.

These internships are based on the student's individual goals and interests in order to ensure that the student is passionate about the work they are completing.

That aspect of relevance is what pairs with the rigorous curriculum and strong relationships with faculty members to create an alternative academic foundation for students who are selected to learn in the new high school next year.

Julie McCann attended the meeting as a representative from the company that awarded a grant to fund the school—a grant worth \$400,000 from the Big Picture Company.

According to McCann, "The beauty of this design is that they're looking at these kids individually but they're also looking at their four-year plan."

"The kids learn how to learn, and that's the biggest gift we can give kids," McCann said.

She added, "All students can achieve. We strongly believe that."

While nearly 40 Big Picture schools are in operation across the country, the only other Big Picture School in Oregon is the Terra Nova High School in Beaverton.

"There are many aspects of this school that will be a first for Oregon," Lafayette said. Bill and Melinda Gates support the Big Picture Company, and Lafayette said that is because "They believe it is working."

The first Big Picture school began in Rhode Island, and Lafayette and McCann both spoke of the success other schools have seen.

Big Picture schools, for instance, typically have approximately 90 percent rates for student retention and graduation. Currently the 509-J district has a much lower rate—around 56 percent.

The teachers are the new school will play a large part in keeping students around.

These teachers' positions will differ from a typical teacher's job. At Big Picture schools, the teachers advise the students and develop close relationships with them. Lafayette explained, "We're hiring teachers but under this role we're calling them advisors."

The new school will also adopt a new method of evaluation: students will not receive grades. Instead, at the end of each term, the student will give a public presentation in front of school officials, teachers and parents to demonstrate adequate learning.

The students will save all of their work in a portfolio that can be shown to colleges in order to meet entrance requirements.

The lack of a grade point

average could create problems with the tribal trust fund system, according to Julie Quaid, director of education in Warm Springs. However, she said it is something that can be solved with a potential amendment to the trust fund resolution.

Enrollment information will be available this spring for students who wish to attend the school next year. The school will be temporarily located in a wing of Westside Elementary.



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