

509-J Schools in Action!

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Leadership Corner A Message from Rick Molitor



Recently, I've received many questions and concerns about the decision to reassign MHS principal Sarah Braman-Smith and I am hoping to shed some light on the process that led to this change. I'd like to begin by saying that Sarah has provided Madras High School with the leadership needed to bring us to where we are with improvement efforts. Although we still have work to do at the high school level, the data proves that her leadership has taken us to a much better place and has helped to move us in the right direction.

With the upcoming retirement of the Warm Springs K-8 Academy principal, we have an opportunity to utilize Sarah's expertise to integrate educational improvements into our K-8 system. Although this has not been a popular move in the eyes of some of our Madras High School stakeholders, it is designed to help our entire district move forward.

When the School Board voted to provide Sarah with a continued contract with 509-J, the decision was made to utilize Sarah's skills where we need them most at this time, and that is in Warm Springs.

While changes like this are never easy, I hope to have support and cooperation from our JCSD community. Please know that I appreciate your interest and feedback and will continue to welcome your engagement. I look forward to our journey in making our schools a better place for students/learners.

Rick Molitor
JCSD Superintendent



Teacher Mary Dennis shares a smile with her 3rd and 4th grade students at Warm Springs K-8 Academy.

Warm Springs teachers & staff show strength during change

Teachers and staff at Warm Springs K-8 Academy have been reaching above and beyond to make their new school a great place to learn and grow. While it hasn't been easy with many changes in staffing, new reading and math curricula, and the blending of middle school and elementary students under one roof, the team continues to work hard to create a positive learning environment for kids.

"There has been a lot put on their plates and they have been working very hard with the kids and making nice progress," said Warm Springs K-8 Principal Glenna DeSouza.

Working together

With 14 new faces joining the team of seasoned Warm Springs teachers, there has been a lot of collaboration underway.

"The teachers have been gracious to open their hearts because there has been so much change," said Instructional Coach Michelle Zistel. "We've been working together to build a culture of honor, respect and caring."

According to Zistel, first year teachers at WS K-8 receive 90 hours of instructional coach support during their first year and 25 hours the second.

"It's a blessing to have a coach to help us incorporate new methods of teaching and engaging students," said Mary Dennis who teaches math and science to students in grades 3 and 4.



Assistant teacher Wanda Calica wraps up library reading time with Kindergarten students at Warm Springs K-8 Academy.



Kindergarten students at Warm Springs K-8 Academy enjoy reading time with Librarian Gena Pla.

"I've never worked in a school like this. I drive an hour every day to be here and I just love it. There is no way I would miss this experience. Everyone has the best interest of the kids at heart."

According to DeSouza, the new school has created more opportunities for middle school students to participate in afterschool activities and teachers to interact with parents.

"Teachers can reach out more to parents, and parents don't have to travel to Madras to connect with teachers," said DeSouza.

Is it a worm or an insect?

Warm Springs K-8 Academy students in grades 3 and 4 are learning about life cycles with help from mealworms and teacher Mary Dennis. Each student is responsible for a mealworm to watch and care for as part of an ongoing science project.

"We learned that they are not really worms, they are insects!" said Damien Fuentes, grade 3. "It turns into a beetle!"



Third graders Damien Fuentes, Felix Wall and Josiah James explain what they are learning about lifecycles and mealworms.



MHS alumni Dr. Joel Neilson, Ph.D. (right) works with a colleague at Baylor College of Medicine.

Where are they now?

After graduating from Madras High School in 1992, Joel Neilson went on to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology from the University of Washington, a Doctor of Philosophy from the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at Stanford University, and received postdoctoral training at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Today, Dr. Joel Neilson, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor at Baylor College of Medicine, has published 33 research papers and reviews, and has been named a Research Scholar of the American Cancer Society.

"What I enjoy about my work is that it is one of the only jobs where I can say 'I wonder what would happen if I did this today' in the shower in the morning and then have the ability to go to work and find out," said Dr. Neilson.

According to Neilson, his experience at Madras High School was a major inspiration for his success.

"I was exceptionally well trained in my understanding of the sciences by Nick Kezele...I found all of my teachers at MHS exceptionally talented and dedicated...Walt Ponsford, Matt Henry, Steve Hillis, and Steve Rankin really challenged us to think and analyze rather than just memorize in subjects such as English, History and Civics. I still even use lessons taught to me by Colleen Fletcher and Irene Conroy when I write a manuscript and make figures. The fundamentals that these teachers provided me with have served me well as I have progressed in my career."

Dr. Neilson lives in Houston with his wife and five-month-old baby. In his spare time, he enjoys movies, playing soccer, and snowboarding.

JCSD Alumni: Where are they now?

Do you know a JCSD alumni who has moved on to college and/or career success? We are looking to feature our graduates in future *Schools in Action* updates. If you know of a former student, drop a note and photo to Superintendent Rick Molitor: rmolitor@509j.net.

Iron Chef Jefferson County

Jefferson County Middle School students Shantel Hernandez, Aiden Ruiz, Kylee Abendschein, and Josslyn Wolfe earned first place in a recent Iron Chef competition organized by Oregon State University. The competition against Culver Middle School students followed a seven week cooking program. The JCMS team earned a spot in the finals with a chicken and rice dish topped with a cream of celery base. Sweet potato was the secret ingredient. Congratulations Iron Chefs!

Calendar

April

- 1 Early Release
- 10 No School: End of 3rd Quarter
- 14 School Board Meeting/Location TBD
- 22 2-hour Early Release

May

- 13 2-hour Early Release
- 25 No School: Memorial Day

REMINDER: LAST DAY OF SCHOOL IS JUNE 11TH



Former JCSD students save a life during fire rescue

Two JCSD graduates were recently recognized by Jefferson County Fire District #1 for search and rescue work that helped save a life.

With back up from their engine crew members, Lieutenant Sam Scheideman and Firefighter Isaac Fisher entered a burning building and found and removed an unconscious fire victim.

In a letter from Fire Chief Brian Huff, the crew was recognized:

"Due to the actions and team work of the entire crew of Engine 1721, the fire was quickly knocked down, search was performed, and a rescue was made. All tasks were performed quickly and without hesitation.

Although it is not uncommon for firefighters/EMTs to save a life during a day's work, it is uncommon to save a life in this manner. It does not go unnoticed. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to this fire district, and for representing us with professionalism and unmatched service excellence. I could not be more proud."



Isaac Fisher



Sam Scheideman