



Steve Tillery shows children a trick — the boomerang hoola hoop — during recess on Thursday. He tosses the hoop with a spin on it, causing it to return to him.

IES principal leaving for post at Western Oregon

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Steve Tillery steps out onto the playground at Independence Elementary School and is bombarded by kindergartners.

"Look what I can do!" says Kenya Greene, putting a hoola hoop over her head and spinning it around.

She next challenges Tillery, 53, to jump rope with her, which he does, even though the rope was made for someone much shorter than himself.

This will be the last year Tillery will be principal at IES, a post he's held for the last seven years.

He has taken a job as Western Oregon University's director of clinical practices and licensure.

"The easiest way to describe that is overseeing student teachers and their placement and progress," he said.

Tillery will be working with principals in the K-12 system to see what qualities they are looking for in new teachers and how WOU can

help provide those qualities.

He also will help ensure new teachers are meeting the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission requirements as part of licensing.

As licensing requirements change, he will make sure the college matches those changes, Tillery said.

He is looking forward to the new challenge, including getting back to teaching.

Tillery will teach education majors — future teachers — for six credits each year.

With 32 years in education, Tillery could retire, but said he isn't ready yet.

"I have at least another 10 good years left," he said. "So I thought, what haven't I had the chance to do yet that I would still like to try."

Heading across Highway 99W from IES to WOU was not an easy decision, Tillery said.

"It's a people profession,"

he said. "That's what I'll miss most is the people — children, staff, relationships, parents."

Tillery said IES was a building with tremendous culture when he arrived.

"It's a family environment, one that we show love in all that we do — love for learning, love for each other," he said. "We instill hope."

Now, as he takes his experience in the trenches with him to Western to teach teachers, he would tell his new students to remember that it is an honor to hold that title of teacher.

"You have the opportunity to change lives," Tillery said. "Parents are entrusting their children to you. If you don't love what you're doing, you're doing a disservice to children, parents and future generations."

His parting words to the children of IES would be similar, adding that they have the world at their feet.

"Don't kick those doors of opportunity closed by making choices that will limit what you can do or what you can be in the future," Tillery said.



Tillery

Event helps expose students to what engineering is about

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Fidenicio Becerra explained to his daughters Kamila and Alexia how an arch is a more supportive structure than something that is flat.

He spoke Spanish, reading the information provided in both English and Spanish, stacking his hands and showing how it worked. This engineering station display provided a piece of paper and challenged families to lay it flat across two cans.

How many erasers can you stack if it's flat? Not even two. But when it's arched between the two cans, it can hold all 12 erasers.

"If you put it straight, the bridge can fall," Alexia Becerra, a third-grader, said. "If you bend it, it doesn't fall."

The lesson on arches was just one of about a dozen different stations during Family Engineering Night at Monmouth Elementary School on Thursday.

The program was paid for through a grant from the

Oregon Education Investment Board to increase science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning in pre-kindergarten through college.

"The point is for families to get the sense that engineering is all around us," said David Heil with the Foundation for Family Science and Engineering. "It's very different from the typical night at school, where they (parents) drop off kids and stand in the corner talking shop. They're going to play together."

Indeed, parents and children took to playing quite naturally and immediately. Students enjoyed playing with each other as well.

Kristen Ketcham, Rylee Johnson and Damian Bonacci, all in fifth grade, tested tone and volume of sound with tubes. Different materials were rubber-banded on one end. Students were asked to hold the tube up to someone's ear and tap lightly on the end.

"This one is the loudest," Kristen said. "It sounds like knocking on a door."

Rob Harriman talked about foundations with Kassie Bonacci, a second-grader, at a station set up with sand, pebbles or rocks. "Which one would be best if you were going to build a house?" he asked.

Bonacci said a house built on sand would sink, so the rocks were better for stability.

Heil said he hoped the night would help lower anxiety when it comes to engineering and increase confidence.

"We want to turn families into potential sources of engineers," he said.

The grant Central School District received for the program will bring Family Engineering Night to all three of the district's elementary schools, MES Principal Dorie Vickery said.

The grant also provided teachers with training in how to incorporate more engineering into classroom activities and into after-school programs.

"It's a very small shot in the arm to get us started with STEM," she said.



Fidenicio Becerra explains to daughters Kamila and Alexia why an arch is a strong structure at Monmouth Elementary School's engineering night on Thursday.

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