

Award: Tech use evolving

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Those who nominated him and selected the winner of the 2017 awards felt otherwise.

"The use of technology is a natural, integral part of everyday life for all parties at LaCreole Middle School," wrote Dallas Superintendent Michelle Johnstone in her nomination letter for Richardson. "Mr. Richardson is keenly aware of the educational needs of our 'digital natives' and how technology has shifted the way they think, learn and process information, and one of his goals is helping learners engage and make real world connection in this digital age."

LaCreole has a "bring your own device" policy that allows students to use their phones and tablets for school work — and doesn't shun technology use during school hours. The school is social-media friendly, with a Facebook page and Twitter and Instagram accounts showing what students are doing during class.

"We're cautious, but we are not afraid of what the outcomes could be," Richardson said. "When I

look around, and what probably makes our school different, is we've gotten over that hurdle a little quicker."

Along with encouraging technology use, the school has put in place technology learning standards that stress creativity, innovation, communication and collaboration, critical thinking and digital citizenship.

Richardson said he and the school's teachers adopted use of technology slowly, incorporating it into the return of electives, which had been eliminated due to budget cuts during the recession.

"It gave us an opportunity to look at things differently," he said. "It been one of those things that has been really important to me, is how do get our kids a little more prepared to what they are going to face."

Richardson said the culture the school has created — which is ever-evolving — is in large part due to the teachers' willingness to try new ideas.

Using technology in the classroom isn't something teachers are necessary trained to do, so they are learning alongside their stu-

dents, he said.

NASSP noted his leadership of that effort in its award announcement.

Teachers and students describe him as an exceptional advocate for technology and digital-age learning and a catalyst for implementing technology, makerspaces, and project-based learning programs," the announcement read. "Richardson ensures that all teachers get time to learn and discuss technology integration and that, through social media, parents stay connected to the school."

Learning with technology isn't a separate class, but integrated into all disciplines — which is engaging students in ways Richardson said traditional teaching can't always accomplish.

"Any day, you walk around our hallways and it's full of kids doing creative things," Richardson said. "It can look they're goofing off, but in the end, they are going to have a product that demonstrates their learning in different ways. The kids get excited about it, and when the kids are excited, we know they are learning more."

Valsetz residents set reunion

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

VALSETZ — Former residents of Valsetz are gathering this weekend for a camp out reunion at the site formerly occupied by the town they once called home.

Organizer Ken Jeske said between 300 and 400 people show up every reunion. A yearly reunion happens in Falls City, but the town site camp out is only every three years.

It's a special journey for former residents.

"People are coming from all over," Jeske said.

Thirty-three years ago, Boise Cascade, which owned the Valsetz mill and the entire town, forced residents to move after the mill closed.

Remembering Valsetz

What: Third Valsetz reunion.

Where: Former Valsetz town site, located west of Falls City.

When: Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

For more information: or to register to camp: Ken Jeske, 503-910-5943.

Former residents are welcome to camp starting Friday and the reunion concludes Sunday at noon. Camping is only for former residents, Jeske said.

For those who can't be there the whole weekend, Saturday features the main event, a reunion barbecue at the site.

He said each reunion brings more former residents back, even those who have been reluctant to reconnect.

"Best thing that I see happen is those people who don't want to come to the reunion because they want to remember the town the way it was are being drawn out," he said. "It's not so much about the town as it is the people. That's cool to watch."

Once they left, Valsetz was torn down.

In 2011, former residents were granted permission to hold a reunion where the town once stood, and they returned in 2014 for a second reunion.

Graduation Day



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Western Oregon students file into McArthur Field during the university's graduation ceremony on Saturday morning.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer file

Students at LaCreole Middle School are encouraged to use devices during class, part of a strategy that teaches students how to use technology for work, just not play.

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