



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Amber Eaton moves from assistant principal at Dallas High to head principal at Lyle.

Lyle's principal ready to lead

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Amber Eaton, the new principal at Lyle Elementary School, is returning to what she considers her "roots" in her educational career.

For the last two years, Eaton has been an assistant principal at Dallas High School, but before becoming an administrator, she was an elementary school teacher.

"When I stepped out on my journey to become a principal — that was my goal to become a building principal," Eaton said. "I really wanted to return, sort of, to my roots."

Her detour through the high school wasn't the first in her career, or what she thought would be her career. Eaton has a degree in psychology, the field she originally wanted to pursue. After earning her undergraduate from Willamette University, she took a behavioral support position at an elementary school.

"I was working with elementary students and I loved it," she said. "I thought 'Huh. I think I want to be a teacher.'"

She had already applied

to the master's program in psychology when she began contemplating teaching instead.

"I did a quick change and was accepted into Willamette's Master of Arts for teaching," she said. "I spent the time in elementary, and it was just the fit I was looking for."

While she considers elementary education her home base, Eaton said her experience at the high school helps bring an end-to-end perspective to her new role.

"My last two years have helped to bridge that understanding, so now I can see where we want our students to end up through this journey," she said. "Last year, I had the opportunity to do transitional work. ... One week I was able to meet with the seniors to prep for graduation and meet our incoming kinders, so it was really powerful."

She said while the age difference in the students has to be considered, an educator's job is essentially the same at both levels.

"Our goal is to help them become that most successful adults that they can, and make sure that we're pre-

senting them with all the opportunities for academic, social and emotional support," she said.

Eaton spent her summer dodging construction — which will continue after school begins — and meeting the Lyle staff.

"A lot of it has been thinking about our mission and vision here at Lyle and what I can do to best support what staff does every day, which is working with those kids," she said. "I'm available, so if people want to come in here and chat about what we are doing at Lyle and visit, I would love to have that happen, too."

Eaton said she's excited to take on her new challenge — and the construction frenzy in her building this summer allowed for some unplanned team building among Lyle staff. Last week started with no power to the building and limited use of bathrooms.

"It helps us growth together as a community because it gives us things to laugh about," Eaton said. "We have to make the most of what we were given. I was just so proud of everybody because they really rose to that occasion."

Wildfang eager for year

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Ashley Wildfang has always known she wanted to be a teacher. It wasn't until she began mentoring them that she realized she wanted to have a bigger impact.

"Being a teacher, I think, is the hardest job ever, truly, and it's so important," said Wildfang, the new principal at Ash Creek Elementary School. "Stepping outside the classroom to get a different view of what's going on made me feel really passionate about looking at things from a different perspective."

Wildfang has fond memories of her third- and fifth-grade teacher, who made students feel loved and kept them engaged.

Fostering that engagement and love for learning in others is what keeps Wildfang passionate about education.

"The best thing about teaching is when the kids want to be at school," she

said. "When you build a relationship with kids and they believe in themselves — maybe it's when you can help them believe in themselves."

Wildfang said kids can accomplish whatever they put their minds to.

"So often, they feel like they can't do things, and they can," she said.

Wildfang has worked a variety of positions in different schools, and has collected children's books along the way.

Different books remind her of different students. A stuffed Pigeon, from the book series including, "Don't let the Pigeon drive the bus," sits on the bottom shelf of a bookcase in her office.

"I had a little boy last year who I adore," Wildfang said. "The only thing that got him to read were Pigeon books, so I bought a lot for my office, and then he started reading."

In her first post as principal, Wildfang said she is im-

pressed with her staff and teachers.

"The teachers here are hard-working, wonderful people, and they put relationships first," she said.

Wildfang believes the more connected the school is with the community, the better for kids.

"If we can engage our community more, it would be amazing for kids," she said.

Volunteers and parents are always welcome.

"I want parents to connect and be here," she said. "I want them to reach out to teachers as things come up and feel like they have voices."

The families, students and community have already been welcoming, Wildfang said.

"I'm excited for the year," she said. "I love to see all the energy. The staff is so positive. The community's so positive. I'm thrilled about our superintendent. I'm just ready for kids to come. It's going to be a good year."



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Ashley Wildfang is eager for students to arrive at the first day of school Tuesday. She is the new principal at Ash Creek Elementary School.

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