DHS, business leaders want to collaborate

Editor's note: This is the final story in a series exploring Dallas High School's career and technical education program. This week we hear from the education and business leaders who are guiding its growth.

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — If the education and business leaders developing Dallas High School's career and technical education program have their way, all the work done in the last year is just the tip of the iceberg.

Superintendent Michelle Johnstone's vision for the programs is make to Dallas an example for other school districts with its partnership with Chemeketa Community College to offer classes to students. Instead of trying to replicate CTE facilities in programs offered in bigger school districts, she pursued the collaborative model.

That allows the district to quickly adjust to market or student needs.

"Going this direction gives us a flexibility, too, so we aren't tied into a facility," Johnstone said. "If we start seeing kids moving toward engineering and continuing to get that feedback, then we can be a little bit more flexible in the programs that we offer."

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer
Kelleigh Ratzlaff instructs students during a cooking course at Dallas High School.

By the time Tim Ray, the DHS CTE coordinator, was hired, Johnstone already had an idea of the direction she wanted to go. Ray started working on the partnerships to make that happen.

"I toured Chemeketa and was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the main campus," she said.

In her mind, the high school didn't need to replicate what was already available in the region — or even across the DHS parking lot at Chemeketa's Polk Center.

Dallas and Chemeketa worked out a unique way of paying for the instruction the community college provides.

"Rather than paying per credit, we are doing something a little bit different where we buy the instructor's time," Johnstone said.

That makes the classes significantly less expensive for students, she said.

Glen Miller, the director of the center, said the partnership is working well. He said students have adjusted quickly to taking on college classes.

"What we've found is that we aren't getting a lot of students over here just testing the water," he said.

"They've expressed an interest and are really starting to get that focus. I've talked to all our instructors who have taught classes this fall term, and they think the students are absolutely fantastic."

Miller believes next year should include more students. This year, the courses taught by Chemeketa in business, engineering and health science were not available until after students had began setting their schedules.

"We've talked about somewhere in January or February, before (student schedule) forecasting to start looking at what other programs might we be able to pull in based on student interest," Miller said.

Ray, too, is looking ahead to next year. He's planning to introduce two new programs in the 2018-19 school year, education and theater arts. He said the district doesn't have to design the programs from the bottom up because components of CTE programs are offered in current classes. They just need to be refined.

Teacher assistant classes can be redesigned to have students co-teaching with middle and elementary school teachers and the theater program already has a class in which students produce a show, he said.

Lyle Elementary to name gym after Jim Dent

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Lyle Elementary School's gym will soon be named after Jim Dent, a longtime teacher, coach and Rope Busters leader in the district.

Monday, the Dallas School Board approved the naming of the gym in Dent's honor on a unanimous vote. The approval was based on recommendation for a committee of citizens, district staff, a board member and a superintendent designee.

The committee evaluated the district's naming criteria, which asks five questions:

• Why is this person noteworthy?

• Was the person unusually dedicated?

• Did the person's contribution extend over a relatively long period of time?

• Who will or has benefitted from this person's contribution?

• How does or did this individual demonstrate ethical conduct, excellent character, reputation and citizenship?

One of his jump rope club members submitted a comment in support of the naming, saying "Over the past 12 years, he has taught me not only about jumping rope, but of how failure is a part of the process called life. He would stay, 'You're going to hit the rope, but don't make that the reason you don't do the trick. Be confident!' He not only teaches them rope skills, he also builds the kids' confidence with each encouraging comment."

Dent began his teaching career in 1967 and retired after 30 years and teaching approximately 2,350 students. Twenty years later, he's still a substitute teacher. In his early years with the district, he coached basketball and volleyball and still coaches the Rope Busters jump rope club.

"In the years that I've been here, this may be one of the highlights of the duties I've been assigned," said Assistant Superintendent Dennis Engle, who served as Superintendent Michelle Johnstone's designee on the committee.