

## Compliance

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resources are scarce, the teacher said the responsibility falls on the teachers.

Heather Rookstool, county coordinator for My Future-My Choice, a sex ed curriculum that fills the gaps in the district's curriculum, told the school board she taught the curriculum to seventh- and eighth-graders at Grant Union during spring semester last year.

Ryan Gerry, Grant Union Junior-Senior High School principal, said at the middle school and high school level, the school is in compliance with state.

"We have an adopted curriculum that has been approved by the state, and this curriculum is implemented at both the middle school and high school level," said Gerry.

Grant School District Superintendent Brett Uptmor said the schools in the district would have a curriculum that meets the standards by the end of the school year.

Rookstool said My Future-My Choice is funded through a grant, and other schools would not have to pay her for the service.

Grant County Education Service District Business Manager Stacie Holmstrom said the program currently has about \$5,000 in funding.

Rookstool said, for many of the students, sex ed classes are the only place where they can learn and talk about the topics the curriculum covers.

"Seventh-grade kids have not received any sexuality education for a year," Rookstool said. "There needs to be a human sexuality curriculum every year."

According to Humboldt Elementary Principal Darbie Dennison, Rookstool will begin teaching a fifth- and sixth-grade My Future-My Choice class. Dennison said parents will be notified and given the option to pull their kids from the class.

Rookstool said it is rare that parents pull their kids from the course in the eight years that she has taught the curriculum.

"Most parents are grateful that we teach their kids about these topics," she said. "These are uncomfortable conversations for a lot of parents and kids, but at the same time they are necessary."

My Future-My Choice takes a "positive youth development" approach to teaching the curriculum where half of the course is taught by teens.

Fallen Bolman, a senior at Grant Union, has been teaching the curriculum for three years with Rookstool. Bolman teaches the portion of the curriculum that covers bullying prevention and healthy relationships.

As of the 2018-2019 school year, 20 school districts out of 197 school districts across the state self-report not having a sex ed curriculum that meets state guidelines, according to Grenier.

**In other Grant School District news:**

• John Day City Manager Nick Green asked the school district to consider partnering with the city, Grant County and John Day-Canyon City Parks and Recreation District on a cost-sharing agreement to build an aquatic and recreation center at the west end of the Seventh Street Complex. Green said the total construction costs would be about \$4.5 million. Green is proposing the four agencies apply for a 40-year loan from the USDA.

"We need other agencies to pull this off," said Green.

Green said the proposal could be

put on the ballot in November.

• Uptmor said the high school needs to hire a Spanish teacher, and the elementary school needs a math teacher before the start of the next school year.

• Gerry, also the high school athletic director, said the boys basketball team was recognized for excellent sportsmanship by the Oregon School Activities Association.

Gerry said the girls cross country team would be recognized for academic achievement at the high school's pride assembly.

• Uptmor submitted grant applications for repairs at the high school and elementary school this month.

At the high school, the district submitted an application for \$1.3 million for seismic retrofitting and new bleachers. For the elementary school, the district applied for a \$38,000 grant for new heating units.

## Mining

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"If you look at the population of Chinese residents [in Grant County], in the 1860s up through the turn of the century, there would be a lot of folks here," Rose said. "There's not now, and there's a reason for that."

The reason is the Chinese Exclusion Act, an 1882 law that prohibited the immigration of Chinese workers to the United States. It was the first law ever passed that was aimed at blocking a specific ethnic group's entry into the U.S.

Their mining claims were taken. Their property was seized, and they were prohibited from purchasing new property. Their towns and neighborhoods were torn down. Many moved to urban centers and many more moved back to China. Chinese Americans became a footnote in Oregon's history books.

Just because history is recent, doesn't mean it's remembered.

But if you know where to look — and Rose does — you can see evidence of Chinese influence all over Oregon. Chinese immigrants built the railroads. Their mines helped prop up the economy of Oregon. They worked in canneries and hop farms. They even changed the shape of the land they lived on, in dramatic ways.

"We have very little that comes from Chinese residents themselves," Rose said. "Archaeology is a way to capture that. The artifacts we find in the dirt? They tell stories about choices and opportunities."

Eventually, Rose followed the aqueduct to the site of an old mining cabin. A few rotting logs remained in a rough square shape. The site had been disturbed — probably by looters — so artifacts like glass, cans, nails and bits of shovel were strewn throughout the area.

This site was just for show. The actual excavation was taking place a quarter-mile away, but here, Rose's volunteers could see snippets of the sorts of things they might find: glass stamped with symbols that link them to companies in China, pieces of pottery, tins of food repurposed as sieves, water filters and mining tools.

When they arrived at the actual site, the excavation began. It was less Indiana Jones and more a meticulous documentation of each and every object in the area.

Rose's volunteers spread out, marking the location of every surface artifact with a flag. Then, they took metal detectors and placed a flag everywhere there was a beep. Eventually, the ground was covered with orange and pink flags fluttering in the



OPB/Erin Ross

**Volunteers sweep the ground with metal detectors, marking each hit with a colored flag. GPS coordinates will be taken for each.**



OPB/Erin Ross

**Miners would have brought pots like this with them when they traveled from China. The pots are delicate, and a lot of work to bring and maintain, but pieces of home were highly valued.**

dry wind.

Rose and a collaborator moved from flag to flag, logging the GPS location of each artifact before they ever began excavating. It took all day.

The next day, they dug, excavating precisely marked square plots. Anything the team found, they documented, photographing it in the ground before they removed it from the plot. Dirt was carefully scraped and brushed from the plot, layer by layer, and placed into buckets. Those buckets were then sifted through window screens to reveal even tinier artifacts.

Eventually, a portrait of a life revealed itself.

Katie Johnson, an archaeologist and GIS specialist on Rose's team at Southern Oregon University, has been documenting pieces of glass bottles found in a hearth.

"He had a lot of different oils and sauces," she said. "And some of these, I think, might have had alcohol?"

You can learn a lot about a person if you learn how they cooked.

Over the course of a week, Rose excavated a number of sites. Each piece, carried thousands of miles across the sea, and from there through inhospitable Oregon desert, can tell a story.

"We're looking at the types of things you would bring with you if you left home. Like, they answer, 'What does home mean?'" Rose said, holding up a small piece of blue-green china. "We find these breakable heavy tea pots that are just beautiful

things that someone carried with them."

It's those fragments of home that tell you who used to live there.

They find pieces of bone china: cups and plates and teapots. But not all of these artifacts are eye-catching; some look like trash, something discarded along the road. But the empty cans and food containers from midden piles can tell an archaeologist even more about how someone actually lived. Was the can cut open with a knife or just punctured? That can tell a researcher if it was used to store a liquid, or something large, like pears.

The most striking site had a massive stone wall, the remains of a hearth with the bones of animals the residents ate. To the side were a pair of rubber boot soles studded with nails — hob-nails — that Chinese miners would push through the soles of their shoes for traction.

These miners came from subtropical areas, Rose said, but they would mine all through the cold Blue Mountain winters, standing knee-deep in frigid water while they worked. The boots kept their feet warm and dry. They were lovingly cared for, probably carried by their owner over hundreds of miles. They were all that stood between the miners and frostbite.

There's an urgency to the work Rose and her colleagues are doing in the Malheur National Forest. The threat of wildfire is always present, and it's getting worse. The already fire-prone stands of ponderosa pine trees are under threat as climate change makes wildfires bigger, hotter and more frequent.

A grant to the Forest Service aims to mitigate those wildfires by thinning parts of the forests and doing controlled burns.

Don Hann, the heritage program manager with Malheur National Forest, said the Forest Service is obligated to protect any archaeological sites on its land.

"But we're talking about tiny pieces of clothing, milled wood, pieces of leather and rubber," Hann said. "Any fire, even

a small one, can destroy all that history."

The race against time is two-fold: These sites need to be documented before they're burned away. And they need to be located before they're destroyed by thinning operations.

There's a problem, though. There are no reliable records of the locations of Chinese mines. After the Exclusion Act, many worked off-the-books. But a few years ago, as part of a program to identify areas that are likely to burn in a wildfire, the Forest Service used a low-flying plane to get LIDAR images of the area. LIDAR is an imaging technology that maps the ground with incredible accuracy, catching differences in elevation of just a few inches.

For archaeologists, that's all they need. Because the Chinese miners did more than dig for gold: They shaped the landscape. Their aqueducts crisscrossed the mountains for miles. They constructed reservoirs that held and released water in the driest parts of summer. They built streams where there were none, and the massive rock piles left behind after excavations, called tailings, formed mounds as well as deep, miles-long ditches.

"Before, we thought we had maybe 1,000 to 2,000 acres of mining area. Now we're looking at 7,000 to 8,000," Hann said.

In recent years, a lot of misconceptions about the Chinese in Oregon have been corrected — the extent of the mining operations, who was running the mines. And even when historians began to acknowledge the role the Chinese played in Oregon mining, Hann said many still assumed that Chinese miners were laborers working for white-owned mining companies. But that wasn't the case.

They ran their own companies, and as many as 70% of the miners in the area could have been Chinese.

"The fact that these populations aren't represented now means that it's even more important for us to understand their historical contribution and acknowledge it," Rose said. "That's how we can start to own up, and make up for the wrongs that were done to these early immigrant populations."

Despite all those barriers, though, Chinese people thrived for a time in Oregon. They built infrastructure, established communities and funneled gold into the economy. And then, a suite of policies, targeting one ethnic group, erased much of their history. Racism and animosity did the rest. But it doesn't change their presence.

They lived and worked and made friends and built lives, Rose said.

"Their stories deserve to be told."

## Repair

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Plumbing, heating, electrical and fire protection are the highest costs for Humboldt and Seneca at \$404,000 and \$3 million, respectively.

For the high school, the cost is \$4.3 million, the second highest, behind roofing, framing and window costs, at \$6.6 million.

"Humboldt Elementary is high-priority due to safety concerns," said Higgins.

The electrical at Humboldt is from the 1960s and poses a fire hazard, he said.

Higgins added that Humboldt does not have a secured vestibule, a protected, single-entry front entrance, which is standard for most modern schools.

The study noted how the main doors at the school, which are wooden, are bent from years of water damage. The doors, according to a Humboldt teacher, cannot be securely shut. Additionally, Higgins pointed out stains from leaky roofs and multiple sealing leaks at Humboldt.

At Grant Union, the study showed deficiencies to the school's exterior to the roof, framing and windows.

According to Higgins, the wooden cabinets in the high school's cafeteria should be stainless steel, according to health standards.

According to the study, the three schools could be classified as historical landmarks because each are over 50 years old. Higgins said the state mandates an evaluation process and that might be a parameter the district would need to consider when making repairs.

In terms of a timeline and plan to tackle the repairs, Superintendent Brett Uptmor said the district is not committing to a single plan.

"The long-range plan will guide the direction on the next steps," he said. "The board will review the final project when completed and have a discussion."

In terms of funding the next steps, Uptmor said that Oregon matching funds are only available with the passage of a bond.

"Our district is eligible for \$4 million in matching funds," said Uptmor. "There are no funds that target deferred maintenance."

According to Uptmor, if a district determines from the long-range planning process to go out for bond to address the deferred maintenance issues, the matching funds can be used.

The next long-range meeting to discuss how the district plans to move forward will be in about a month, according to Uptmor.

"After another meeting, the plan will be consolidated and more definitive and will be sent to the state," said Uptmor.

Uptmor said last year Humboldt had heating and cooling units installed in seven of its 14 classrooms, and he sent out a bid request to have the other seven units put in this year. The district also completed two seismic retrofits: the first one at Humboldt's lower building and the second one at the south end of the high school.

The district applied for a grant to assess hazardous materials at the schools, such as radon, lead and asbestos testing.

"The idea is to address hazardous materials in our long-range planning," said Uptmor.

Many at the meeting said that services such as heating, electrical and fire protection should be high-priority repairs.

"We can't expect kids to learn in a freezing cold, or sweltering, classroom," said Humboldt Principal Darbie Dennison.

Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator Lisa Weigum said the district needs to make the case to the public that fixing these repairs benefits the whole community, especially those in the community who do not have school-age kids.

"A young doctor with kids might not come here if the schools are not safe," said Weigum. "That directly affects someone like me. I don't have kids, but I need a doctor."

The study also revealed the district's drop in students. Enrollment is down by 100 students over the past 10 years, and the total county population is projected to decrease by 600 people over the next 25 years, according to Higgins' presentation.

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