

# Science: Teacher honored for motivating students to excell



**Left:** Oregon Science Teachers Association President Connie Robbins, left, presents the Teacher of the Year award to Dionne Marshall during last month's awards banquet in Eugene.

**Right:** Connor Moha tests his catapult while Marshall measures for distance.



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The awards recognize and honor the work of outstanding classroom teachers selected on their ability to motivate achievement and excitement in science.

Marshall was nominated by a parent who wrote, "Dionne is the best with children. She always gives them something to think about and to figure out. She's always striving to better our programs."

Marshall and two other teachers, Heidi Lent and former Librarian Diana Widows, started the underwater robotics club at the school. At a competition in Lincoln City last spring, Warrenton's three robotics teams swept the novice division taking first, second and third place.

This week, students in Marshall's classes learned to build catapults, measure the results of catapulting marshmallows and determine what materials and building methods were most successful. Other classes were testing liver enzyme reactions.

While some students may struggle in science, no one may give up.

"I'm new into this realm, but I'm a believer in the power of 'yet,'" she said. "For someone with a mindset that they can't do it, we'll turn it around and say they can't do it yet. We do a lot of baby-stepping."

She'll often give them examples of situations in which she struggled herself, but persevered and eventually mastered the task at hand.

"One of the most important things to do, though, is to get to know them as individuals. They'll try to excel if they know you're somebody that cares about them."

And, because the goal is molding young people into successful adults, her toolbox includes keeping routines, requiring students to know what's coming up and having them participate in hands-on lab activities.

Students often work in teams or pairs. Marshall manages the pairings and no one works with the same partner twice. They learn to work with people from varying backgrounds with different personalities and ways of approaching problems.

Each project is open-ended with goals students must think through to achieve.

"They're always in control of how they meet that objective."

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