

When board games are part of the curriculum

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
For Cannon Beach Gazette

For kindergarten students at Seaside Heights Elementary School, homework each week is profoundly simple: Playing a board game with their family.

Each kindergarten class has enough board games so they can be rotated among the students on a weekly basis as part of game bags, which also include procedure sheets, game instructions, and a reflection sheet where the students can provide feedback.

The practice, which was introduced this year, meshes with the school's goal of approaching each child as "a person first, and a student second," Principal Julie Wozniak told the district's board of directors during a presentation at their meeting March 19.

To introduce board games as a learning tool and age-appropriate homework, the school held a family game night in January. About 80 people, or 23 families, attended.

"It was a rousing success," kindergarten teacher Jocelyn Milliren told the board.

The program was initially sponsored by Northwest Parenting, and the school has since received other funding to ensure the kindergarten classes at the Heights have enough board games for each student to take home a different one each week. All the board games are age-appropriate and culturally responsive, with instructions in both Spanish and English so they're accessible to the diverse families served by the school district.

The benefits for the kindergarteners, the teachers believe, are numerous: supporting social-emotional learning, teaching students to express and manage



Katherine Lacaze/Cannon Beach Gazette

During a Seaside School Board meeting March 19, The Heights Elementary School kindergarten teachers talk about how using board games as homework for their students helps engage families, teach age-appropriate skills, and bolster social-emotional learning.

their emotions, encouraging them to engage in cooperative play, and introducing them to the concept of friendly competition. Board games also teach the students about following rules, taking care of materials, and maintaining focus on a task.

Additionally, the program encourages family engagement, and the students have responded positively.

"We've never had parents come to us and say, 'We love your homework so much, we're buying it for Christmas,'" kindergarten teacher Betsy Mahoney said.

The program was recently featured by The Tabletop Game Talk podcast as an example of how gaming transcends a sim-

ple hobby and can benefit classrooms and society as a whole.

In other news:

• The board approved to designate Gearhart Elementary School, Broadway Mid-

dle School and Seaside High School and their associated properties as "surplus" as of fall 2020, when they are no longer in use. Superintendent Sheila Roley said once district properties become surplus, staff is authorized to dispose of them — or in this case, work with a Realtor to sell them. Roley said

they aren't bound to a certain date, but the properties become surplus when "we cease to occupy them."

• The elementary schools' parent teacher organizations hosted a Bollywood dance night at Seaside High School on April 5 at Seaside High School. Prashant K a k a d , founder of the Portland-based company, and dancers Britnany Newton — who hails from Seaside — and Elliot Miller spent hours teaching more than 1,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade a dance routine. The students then demonstrated their routines during a community Bollywood Dance Night, put on at Seaside High School the evening of April 5.

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Kindergarten teacher Betsy Mahoney

SEASIDE SCHOOL BOARD

Meet the candidates on Tuesday, April 30

Cannon Beach Gazette

Jeremy Mills — have filed for the Zone 5, Position 1 seat.

Cannon Beach, Seaside and Gearhart residents will get a chance to hear what this year's school board candidates have to say about the Seaside School District's key issues. They'll be attending a forum on Tuesday, April 30, at the Broadway Middle School Library in Seaside.

District Superintendent Sheila Roley shared the importance of the role school board members serve. "We would really like our great community to have the opportunity to see the candidates and hear from them, their perspectives on how to lead our schools."

The American Association of University Women has always been involved with education, Seaside president Cindy Gould said. "If we have a strong education system, then we have a strong community," Gould said.

Board members make the community even stronger, she said.

"Part of our mission is women and girls, but education is our biggest thrust," the association's Karen Beck added. "It's part of our mission statement."

The event is organized by the Seaside Signal and the Seaside American Association of University Women, and will be introduced by Cindy Gould. Roley will offer remarks, along with members of the high school's Associated Student Body.

Signal editor R.J. Marx will moderate.

Two of three open seats will see competitive races in the May 21 election.

Three candidates — John Dunzer, Sondra Gomez and

Seaside's John Dunzer, a retired corporate executive, is now employed as a greeter at Walmart.

Jeremy Mills, a Seaside resident, has 11 years as an agent with State Farm Insurance. He is currently a member of the board of directors of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District.

Sondra Gomez is a local operations manager at Vacasa and served in the consulting office at the Seaside School District from 2016-18.

Shannon Swedenborg is the sole candidate in Cannon Beach's Zone 1, Position 1. Swedenborg filled the board seat after Patrick Nofield stepped down in Cannon Beach. Over the past two years she has been a substitute teacher at the Heights Elementary School and Broadway Middle School. She taught high school biology in the Renton, Washington, School District for 10 years.

Also in an uncontested race, Mark Truax, president of the board and holding 20 years experience with the school district, is running for Zone 4, Position 2, based in Seaside. He is a Seaside High School graduate and Astoria firefighter.

Gould said she hoped to hear ways in which board members could help meet the needs of underfunded schools and to value education locally.

"What I'm hoping for are candidates and board members, as we've always been fortunate to have, who are very focused on the best interests of all of our kids," Roley added.

The election takes place May 21.

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