

The Official Newspaper of the
City of Heppner and the
County of Morrow

Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES

U.S.P.S. 240-420

Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper
Published weekly and entered as periodical matter at the Post Office at Heppner, Oregon under the Act of March 3, 1879. Periodical postage paid at Heppner, Oregon. Office at 147 West Willow Street. Telephone (541) 676-9228. Postmaster send address changes to the Heppner Gazette-Times, P.O. Box 337, Heppner, Oregon 97836. Subscriptions: \$18 in Morrow, Wheeler, Gilliam and Grant Counties; \$25 elsewhere.

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Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Letters to the editor must be signed. The Gazette-Times will not publish unsigned letters. Please include your address and phone number on all letters for use by the G-T office. The G-T reserves the right to edit.

Use of test scores needs clarification

To the Editor:
In response to Mrs. Meg Murray's letter of last week's Gazette-Times regarding test scores, I believe some clarification is necessary if those statistics are to be used for decision-making purposes. First of all, one year's worth of test scores tell only how the schools stack up against the state average. They do not indicate if the scores have increased or decreased since last year or the year before. Without historical data as a point of reference, we have no way of knowing if the results are good or bad. Also, the numbers do not indicate if the drops and gains shown are significant. If some schools around the state are 30 points above or below the average, then a two point variance isn't much. On the other hand, if all scores land within a 10-15 point range of the average, two points are much more meaningful.

By my amateur analysis, the test scores looked to be all over the

board. To support the theory that a four-day week is the sole reason for a decline in test scores, one would expect all the schools to be on a similar downward trend. That did not appear to be the case, with several classes at various schools being above the state average. It would seem that other factors, such as teacher-to-student ratio and socioeconomic standing, might have more influence on the test scores.

I think that most would agree that testing is a necessary evil, but is not without inherent problems. Scores are only as good as the students taking them that day and many factors can and do cause scores to fluctuate. Making any meaningful decisions based on test scores should only be done after careful comparison and interpretation.

Sincerely,
(s) Anne Morter
Ione

Be there to decide children's future

To the Editor:
The decision will be made at the Monday, Feb. 10 Morrow County School Board meeting as to whether the district will have a four or five-day school week. Please mark your calendar, as parents concerned about their children's future-be it work, vocational school, or college-need to be there.

Saving money for the district is not the issue, as the mentioned possible savings of \$120,000 in a \$5,000,000 budget is very little compared to the potential for damage it does for all our children's futures.

With Boardman and Irrigon

schools below the state average even when weighted for population figures and Heppner's 10th graders a staggering -6 in reading and -3 in math, your children need your concern.

It is being said that it won't make any difference whether we are there or not, or whether we sign the petitions for five days, because the school board has already made up their minds. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy if you believe it and are absent. Be there for your children; it is the only thing that will count.

Sincerely,
(s) Meg Murray
Ione

Education will last a lifetime

To the Editor:
Four days or five? That is the question. The first question we must answer honestly and realistically is this: Can anyone accomplish as much in four days as he/she can in five, consistently (-I repeat consistently) day after day, week after week, month after month? If the health worker, the banker, the storekeeper, the home maker, the barber admit that they cannot do it, how can we expect our children to do it in their job of being students?

Those who oppose the four-day school week tell me that they fear that after a few years these children will have low test scores, have to do a lot of remedial work in college, won't be able to attend the college they choose and will be unable to compete on the job market. Then it will be too late for these children.

Maybe we need to think more deeply about what education means and what our responsibilities are. In all societies the adult community has the responsibility to teach the concepts of their culture to their young. In America we have agreed that will be from birth to 18 years. Graduation from the 12th grade is our culture's time for the "rite of passage." The knowledge, skills and values we have given them in those formative years can never be taken away from them and will guide them throughout their lives.

Though social status and financial success are obvious results of a good education, I submit that something far more valuable than high college grades,

high-paying jobs, fine houses, expensive cars, being a "big shot" et cetera is at stake. Far more important will be the quality of life they will lead every conscious hour they live. The educated mind notices things the uneducated or poorly educated one doesn't even see. It understands, enjoys appreciates the world around it that the poorly educated can't and doesn't.

We need to remind ourselves that ignorance leads to inability, mediocrity, bias, apathy and other forms of slavery.

We need to remind ourselves that knowledge and skill leads to confidence, good parenting, productive citizenship, creativity, self-motivated lifelong learning and other forms of freedom.

If we truly love our children and/or care about the future of our society, we simply can't give too much time or attention to providing a high quality education for them.

(s) Jane Rawlins
Heppner

P.S. You say "What about sports?" That's for another letter.

correction

A story in the Jan. 22 Gazette-Times, entitled "Chamber names citizens of the year" contained an error concerning the Chamber of Commerce business of the year. Pat Anderson's father was Walter Wright and Ned Clark's mother, Beth, was the daughter of Raymond Wright, not the reverse as stated in the article.

Students write letters to the Editor

Editor's note: The following letters to the Editor were submitted by Heppner Elementary School students in Jannie Allen's fifth-sixth grade language arts class.

To the Editor:
My name is Jesse Kempas. I am a sixth grade student at Heppner Middle School. I am writing in regards to people not taking care of their dogs. When I go to bed at 9 p.m I don't get to sleep until 11 p.m because of the dogs that bark all night. I hope that people see that it is annoying and will do something about it.

(s) Jesse Kempas

To the Editor:
My name is Doug Orwick. I am a sixth grade student at Heppner Middle School. I'm writing to you because of the possible selling or trading of public lands. Our good congressmen in Salem and Washington, D. C. are talking about selling or trading our public lands to private owners. This belongs to all of us not just Congress. We own this land just as much as any congressmen. If we allow this to happen we will be left with heavily logged, ugly forests and less land to enjoy. Please help us to keep our public lands public.

(s) Doug Orwick

To the Editor:
Hi. My name is Donald Adams from Heppner Elementary School. I think the school buses are unfair. I don't think it's right to prohibit food, drinks, and even gum on the bus. Plus when we sit in a seat we can't move even when the bus is stopped, or we will get a writeup. At least we could listen to music. I think kids would behave better if we had some privileges.

(s) Donald Adams

To the Editor:
My name is Tylynn Smith, I am a sixth grade student at Heppner Middle School. I am writing to say how much I like the fifth-sixth mix in classes. I think it is good that the school tries something new every now and then. I really like it and wish I didn't have to go to school at the high school next year.

(s) Tylynn Smith

To the Editor:
My name is Alicia Tafoya from the fifth grade at the Heppner Middle School. I want to encourage people to help others, especially the old people. If you live by an old person, help them out once in a while. I'll give an example. One day I was walking home from school and there was an old guy sweeping something off the sidewalk, and I said, "Do you need some help?" The guy said no, so I went on my way home. A lot of people need help once in a while. Old people need company and they enjoy you helping them out. I like old people. They are nice.

Sincerely,
(s) Alicia Tafoya

To the Editor:
My name is Adam Wright. I want to tell you something. I wish the school lunches were bigger because I eat a lot of food and I am still hungry after I finish my lunch. If it was bigger, my lunch bill would not be so high. Could you make it better with cookies and chocolate milk?

Sincerely,
(s) Adam Wright

To the Editor:
My name is Sheena Shank. I am a fifth grader at Heppner Middle School and I think everyone should read more. Reading is a great way to learn how to spell and a great way to learn how to write.

Right now at school we are having a reading program called "Time out For Reading." It started this week and lasts until Feb. 21. It's a lot of fun and encourages kids to take time out for reading.

(s) Sheena Shank

P.S. Once you pick up a great book it's hard to put it down.

To the Editor:
I'm writing to you about school lunches. They're too small and don't taste very good. Also, they don't have dessert very often. Sometimes I'm still hungry after I finish lunch.

Sincerely,
(s) Aaron Harris

To the Editor:
My name is Luke Murray of Heppner Middle School. I have been taking band since the beginning of the year. I have been amazed at how much I've learned in such little time. I am really glad to have Mr. Werner for a band teacher. He is always nice and teaches you quickly and in a fun way. More people keep on joining band. Just recently, we got nine more kids in band. I would encourage everyone to see and hear our spring concert and St. Patrick's Parade when we play. Everyone in band thinks Mr. Werner is an encouraging music teacher. He's just a great music teacher.

Sincerely yours,
(s) Luke Murray

To the Editor:
My name is Tracy Baker. I'm a sixth grader at Heppner Middle School. I'm writing to say what I think about the four-day school week. I know a bunch of people who like the four-day school. If company comes up to visit, we would have some time to spend with them. On Fridays, we can play with friends, do homework and school projects, have more time for chores, and a four-day week means one less bus ride.

Sincerely,
(s) Tracy Baker

To the Editor:
My name is Aaron Griffith. I'm writing about the Colt program. I like the Colt basketball and football because I like sports. You can learn a lot of things about sports and the basics of the games. The coaches who volunteer are good too. Many people donate a lot of time to the kids of Heppner so we can have these programs. All of the kids appreciate the coaches' time they give to us. I'm in the Colt programs and I really like them.

(s) Aaron Griffith

To the Editor:
My name is Tim Morris. I think we need more playground equipment at Heppner Middle School so people have things to do. All we have to do is walk around and play football at noon. Although I like to play football at noon, I think it would be good for others that don't like to play football. I think it would be nice to have swings, slides and monkey bars at HMS.

Sincerely,
(s) Tim Morris

Prefers four-day week

To the Editor:
I'm writing in response to the controversy over the four-day school week. I am a seventh grader at Heppner Junior High School. I would like to share my thoughts on this issue. Several people have argued that students of Morrow County have sunk to lower grades and learning levels. I return this argument by saying that I have maintained the same high GPA four days a week that I did in five days a week. I feel that I am learning just as much and maybe more at four days a week. Also, remember, we are going the same amount of hours, only at different intervals.

So far I really like the four-day school week and it has worked out for me. The extra weekend day really helps because I have more time to do homework. This extra day also allows me to have time to play school sports and get involved in extra-curricular activities such as 4-H and the Outdoor Club. Playing school sports on Friday is really a big help because then we do not have to leave school early and miss classes. This way we don't get punished for getting involved in our sports program.

One other thing that I will include is that my fellow students and I agree that it is easier to stay focused four days a week than it is five days a week. I believe that I speak for most of the students when I say this.

Sincerely,
(s) Shelley Rietmann
Heppner

Game night set at Stokes Landing

Game night and dinner will be held at the Stokes Landing Senior Center on Fri., January 30.

The meatloaf dinner will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. The cost is \$3.

Card games, Scrabble or other table games will begin at 7 p.m. Cost for the games will be \$1.

The Center is located on Main St. at Opal Place.

Everyone is invited to attend.

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