

# Stanfield to consider moving 6th graders to secondary school building

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

The Stanfield School Board tonight could decide if its sixth-graders are elementary students or middle school students.

The Stanfield School District has two school facilities on a shared campus. Students K-6 attend Stanfield Elementary School while students 7th through 12th grades attend Stanfield Secondary School. Tonight, the board will hear statements from the community

and may vote on moving the district's sixth-graders to the secondary school or keeping them at the elementary school.

The school board opted for a special meeting to discuss the proposal and hear feedback directly from the community. The board has discussed moving the sixth-grade classes since January, but a decision must be made soon, according to Shelley Liscom, superintendent and elementary principal.

"We're getting close to

the end of the school year, so for scheduling and staffing purposes, we need to know what we will be doing next year," she said Tuesday. "It's hard because we've got to do what's best K-12."

For parents, sixth-graders may seem too young to share common areas with high school students. In a recent survey, 58 percent of Stanfield residents opposed the sixth-grade move, and only 30 percent agreed with it. Most of the comment-

ers said sixth-graders were simply too young and immature.

"In my mind, there are many reasons to move forward with the move and only one reason not to — but it's a big one: the community is not in support of it," Liscom said Tuesday.

From the district perspective, moving the sixth-graders will clear up some blended classes — currently all sixth-graders are in blended classes where students from mul-

multiple grades have the same classroom teacher and will solve the financial concern of hiring another teacher. "Stanfield School District has declining enrollment, and when our enrollment is declining and we need to adjust to that, it's hard to justify adding staff," she said.

The move would also allow the district to even out students and have smaller class sizes at the elementary level. Stanfield Secondary has an average class size

of 20 students; Stanfield Elementary has an average class size of 26 students.

Sixth-graders are not strangers to the districts secondary school and middle school cluster. To help alleviate class pressure and provide grade-appropriate instruction in blended classes, sixth-graders this year have taken language arts and math classes at the secondary school.

The special meeting begins at 7 p.m. at Stanfield Elementary School.



Sunset Elementary fifth-graders brave cold stream water to search for macroinvertebrates during an outdoor school lesson Tuesday at Kiwanis Kamp above Mission in 2012

# Outdoor School program moving locations, dates

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

In about two weeks, fifth graders in the Hermiston School District will load up on buses with backpacks, bug repellent and sunscreen for outdoor school, an overnight, educational field trip into the mountains.

Outdoor School was revitalized in the Hermiston School District about 10 years ago, but this year, the longstanding program will celebrate some big changes: a new location, and, in the fall, the pilot of a new season for outdoor school.

Since its revitalization, outdoor school has taken place at Kiwanis Cabins on the north fork of the Umatilla River, but next month, the students will head to Meadowood Springs, according to Bryn Browning, Hermiston assistant superintendent.

The location move for outdoor school boils down to a common challenge for the Hermiston School District: enrollment. The Hermiston School District had about 475 fifth graders enrolled as of Tuesday. Each elementary school will send fifth-graders to outdoor school as a group; the smallest of Hermiston's fifth-grade classes, 75 students, is at Highland Hills. In addition to the students, all fifth-grade teachers and elementary principals will join the class at outdoor school, along with 20 high school counselors and multiple volunteers.

"The biggest reason for changing locations is with our student growth, we have simply outgrown Kiwanis Cabins," Browning said, adding students have stayed a mile away from the main camp, requiring busing in for the daytime activities. "One of the things that we're excited about with Meadowood is it's a different kind of space. Meadowood has a meadow, a larger pond for kayaking and paddleboats, a ropes and obstacle course built-in, trails built-in."

This year's fifth-graders



HERALD FILE PHOTOS

Caera Vernon and other Sunset Elementary School fifth-graders take a turn at kayaking at Outdoor School in 2012

could be the only class to attend Meadowood in the spring, however, as the district is also presenting a pilot program to move outdoor school from May to September. Like enrollment, the primary reason for the second change is also based on something uncontrollable — the weather.

"We're very lucky this year that there isn't snow at the time we want to go," Browning said. "We've had outdoor school with snow one year and then the next year it was 90 degrees at the same week."

Three years ago, massive snow melt also wiped out the road to Kiwanis Cabin three weeks before the camp began.

Moving outdoor school to the fall also frees time in the spring for the fifth-graders, who must juggle state testing, college introduction programs and readiness activities for the move to middle school. To help students be ready for outdoor school at the earlier time frame, the district is considering swapping the science curriculums for fourth and fifth graders. Currently, the fourth-grade science curriculum focuses on earth materials, ideas and inventions while the fifth-grade program focuses on water and the planet. Switching the programs will give students a base understanding before

attending outdoor school while still providing experiences applicable to the "earth materials" unit.

The district does not charge students any additional fees to participate in outdoor school, and the trip is open to all district fifth-graders. After rentals, transportation, fees and supplies, outdoor school costs the Hermiston School District about \$30,000 a year.

"Outdoor school is one of those programs that we're really lucky to have in the Hermiston School District because we don't receive anything from the state for it, and we don't charge the kids for it," Browning said. "Some of these kids have never been into the mountains before. This is putting into practice everything they learn in a classroom. They're in rubber boots wading in the creek, they're actually seeing animal tracks and the different types of mosses on trees. All the things they've been learning, they get to see it. It's an amazing opportunity."

# Deputies arrest 2 for vehicle theft

Two men were arrested last week for vehicle theft and drug crimes near Hermiston, though one of the men claims they thought the truck was already stolen and they were just borrowing it to get to the store.

The case started at 12:45 p.m. April 11, when a resident of East Theater Lane reported an abandoned white Isuzu flat-bed pickup near her house. She had noticed the vehicle the night before and contacted law enforcement. Another area resident also reported the vehicle and said the turn signal was on at 3:30 a.m.

Law enforcement investigated and discovered the vehicle was reported as stolen from Lone and also was suspected of being involved in a pursuit with the Hermiston Police Department in the early morning hours.

Law enforcement notified the owner of the vehicle because the ignition was "punched" — broken so the vehicle could be started with a screwdriver — and they needed assistance from

a locksmith to retrieve it. While the owner was making these arrangements, at about 5:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 12, the Theater Lane resident called again and reported that two men were driving away in the pickup.

Umatilla County Sheriff's Deputy Nathan Good spotted the vehicle near North-east Eighth Street and stopped it nearby, and arrested occupants Ronald Paul Johnson, 55, and Shane Verhey Springer, 27.

Springer told officers he and Johnson saw the vehicle and noticed that the ignition was "punched." He said they believed it was already stolen, so they decided to borrow it to go to the store.

Johnson and Springer were lodged at the Umatilla County Jail. Springer has been charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle and possession of a stolen vehicle. Johnson was charged with a parole violation, failure to pay fines, unauthorized use of a vehicle and possession of a stolen vehicle.



Johnson



Springer

# Mooney recommended for Hermiston schools post

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

Tricia Mooney, assistant superintendent for the Pendleton School District, likely will move back to the west end of the county.

Monday, Hermiston Superintendent Fred Maiocco announced he will recommend Mooney as assistant superintendent of human resources for the Hermiston School District, replacing Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith. Smith recently accepted a position as superintendent for Walla Walla Public Schools and will be leaving the Hermiston School District on June 30. Mooney would begin July 1.

A press release from the Hermiston School District

points out Mooney started her educational career in 1995 as a teacher in the Hermiston School District. In 2005, she took over as principal of Rocky Heights

Elementary School, and in 2007 she became principal at Armand Larive Middle School. In 2008 she was hired by the Pendleton School District to be its director of human resources, and in 2009 she was promoted to assistant superintendent. "I look forward to the next step in my career," Mooney said in a written statement.

The Hermiston School Board will consider Mooney's employment during its next regular business meeting, May 9.



Mooney

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