



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Brittany Mustoe discusses a math problem with a student during a lesson on Tuesday morning.

Highland Hills teacher of the year talks student success

Brittany Mustoe focuses on building relationships with students, making class like a family

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

In Tuesday morning math class, Brittany Mustoe moves around the room, checking in with students as they work, and high-fiving them when they get an answer right.

Mustoe, Highland Hills Elementary's teacher of the year, is working with her fifth-grade students to teach them order of operations, or which tasks to do first in a seemingly complicated math equation.

"Remember to break the story problem down into simpler parts," she said. "You're smarter than the whole problem."

A teacher at Highland Hills for the past four years, Mustoe was selected by the entire staff as the teacher



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Brittany Mustoe high-fives a student after she answers a math question correctly.

of the year, and honored recently at the Distinguished Citizens Awards banquet, along with several other teachers in the district.

She said she had always enjoyed working with kids, and that a teacher of her own

inspired her to get into the field.

"I had a teacher I really respected and looked up to, and I thought her job was really cool," she said. "That put me on that path."

Though Mustoe said it's

important to focus on the academics, she tries to make relationships the foundation of her teaching.

"I don't believe you can teach academics without building relationships, building trust, and having them want to work with you," she said.

Teaching fifth grade, Mustoe said it can be challenging to get that age level motivated.

"I think I do well with that," she said. "I can see that ripple effect as the year goes on, in how they talk to one another, in how they carry themselves. I'm proud of my class."

Mustoe said her favorite subjects to teach are math and science.

Highland Hills Principal Jake Bacon also noted Mustoe's connection with students.

"She's committed to doing a job well, she's prepared," Bacon said. "But the center of all her plans is what's going to help her kids learn best."

Umatilla High School gets Amazon grant

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla High School is one of more than a thousand schools across the United States to receive funding from Amazon, and will use the money to start offering computer science classes in the fall.

The funding will allow Umatilla High School to offer full-year courses in Intro to Computer Science and Advanced Placement Computer Science classes, including preparatory lessons, tutorials, and professional development for teachers. Students who participate in the program will also receive a free membership to AWS Educate, which gives them free access to computing power in the AWS cloud for coding projects, and allows them access to learn about cloud computing.

Superintendent Heidi Sipe said the grant builds on the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs that Umatilla has had for many

years. "This opportunity strengthens current offerings and provides a direct pathway to employment," she said. "Amazon is playing a large role in economic development for our region, and we are excited to see how these opportunities will assist us in better preparing students for workforce needs."

According to a press release from Umatilla High School, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by 2020, computer science-related jobs will outpace computer science graduates by about a million jobs, and that computer science is the fastest growing STEM profession.

Amazon Future Engineer was launched in November 2018, and is a four-part program, working with students from childhood to career. It plans to award 100 \$10,000 scholarships per year, provide computer science classes to 100,000 students, and offer paid internships with Amazon.

After 39 years, Echo city administrator to retire

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Diane Berry is retiring as Echo city administrator.

Berry has run day-to-day operations in the city, population 710, for 39 years. During that time Echo has seen the renovation of historic buildings, new businesses, new park amenities and the growth of annual events such as the Red 2 Red cross country mountain bike race.

As city administrator, Berry has led consistent efforts to maintain Echo's appearance, with public art initiatives, a Tree City USA designation and an abundance of floral displays that led to the city being a three-time winner of the small cities category of the national America in

Bloom competition.

The new city administrator will inherit several projects currently in the works, including a major upgrade to the wastewater treatment system the city is under pressure from the Department of Environmental Quality to complete.

Echo operates on a system of a paid city administrator, overseen by an elected mayor and six at-large city councilors.

The city has opened the search for a new administrator and will take applications until March 25. The starting salary listed is \$40,000 to \$65,000 plus PERS, paid vacation and other benefits. For more information see <http://echo-oregon.com/pub/flyer-administrator.pdf>.

Hermiston will add to end of year for snow day make-ups

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston students will end school three days later than planned and teachers will see a couple of schedule adjustments to make up for February snow days and delays.

At the recommendation of Superintendent Tricia Mooney, the school board voted to move stu-

dents' last day (except high school seniors) to Thursday, June 13, adding three days on after the original release day of Monday, June 11. The final day for staff will now be Friday, June 14, but the board also voted to add time to staff's Professional Learning Communities, small professional development groups that meet each week.

Graduation is still June

6 at the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

The board extended the school year so the district would meet the statewide minimum for annual instructional time, which Mooney said is about 990 hours — although there is a tiered system. Mooney said the proposed changes would put high school freshmen through juniors about six hours under the required

instructional hours. But she said there are exceptions, including using teacher professional development time to make up for those hours.

Mooney said she worked with Hermiston Association of Teachers representative Delfino Osorio Garcia to come up with a plan that would work for the staff, and that they went through several ideas.

They looked at having

students end on June 14 and teachers end the following Tuesday, but that would run into the beginning of summer school, which would be a problem for some families.

Mooney said they also looked at having students attend school on parent-teacher conference days, which will happen later this month. But that would have had teachers working long hours on those days, and

several teachers and families had already made plans for the end of that week, which is a non-staff and student day that precedes the week of spring break.

Garcia said in an email to the *Hermiston Herald* that a survey of teachers showed enough concern about the 48-hour work week and shortened spring break to agree to the three-day extension.

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