Hermiston School District encourages registration

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

After announcing an online-only start to the 2020-21 school year, Hermiston School District is encouraging parents to keep their child with the district.

Students have two options with HSD if they return in the fall. In the first option, they can sign up for temporary distance learning, where they will be assigned teachers who would normally be teaching them in an in-person classroom to work with online, with the hope that eventually they will be able to transition into that teacher's classroom in person.

In option two, for families that decide they would prefer to keep their student home the entire year even if the district is allowed to return students to the classroom, students can register for Hermiston Online!, the district's virtual academy that it has been running since before the pandemic began.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

Laptops charge in a classroom at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston on Tuesday, July 28, 2020. The Hermiston School District will begin the year with distance learning.

Hermiston Superintendent Tricia Mooney told the school board on Monday, Aug. 10, that kindergarten registration is down from previous years, likely due to the pandemic.

However, the district is urging parents who would like to go with an online-only school year to register for Hermiston Online! instead of a charter school or other online option not sponsored by the district, so that those students can still have access to Hermiston School District's resources, including counselors, financial aid, extracurricular activities, special education, school meals, English Language Learner programs, libraries and school nurses.

During an update to the Hermiston City Council after the school board meeting on Aug. 10, Mooney said wherever people are on the political spectrum or what their life situation is, the community should be focused on doing what needs to be done to return students to the classroom safely.

"We know that our economy doesn't fully return until our kids are back in school," she said. "It is a huge impact on families across the community not being able to have our kids have face-to-face instruction, so it's critical we all do whatever it is we need to do, step up and do our part, to get our kids back."

The Oregon Department of Education's current guidelines are that a school of more than 100 students can only open if the county where the school is located has less than 10 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people over a seven-day period, three weeks in a row, and has a less than 5% rate of COVID-19 tests coming back positive for three weeks in a row.

For the week of Aug. 2-8, Umatilla County had 361 new cases per 100,000 and a 20% test positivity rate.

REGISTER YOUR STUDENT

For Hermiston Online! or the comprehensive distance learning through the district, parents must register their student. They can register from home by visiting the district's page, www.hermiston.k12.or.us, clicking the Parents & Community tab, and scrolling down to online registration.

They can also visit the district offices at 305 S.W. 11th St. in Hermiston from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Aug. 10-13 for on-site registration or to return the Chromebook they borrowed in the spring for maintenance and upgrades.

District announces staffing changes

HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston School District has announced that Maria Durón will serve as the district's new family engagement specialist.

Durón

Cortaberria

Durón already works for the district, previously in the position of communication officer and community relations specialist. Before she worked for the district, she also served on the school board.

In her new role, her focus will be on strengthening the district's relationship with its Hispanic families. In an email to media members alerting them of the change, she said helping families is her passion and she was excited to make the change.

Superintendent Tricia Mooney said the district decided to make the change as the pandemic "has brought a new light to areas that the district needs to strengthen."

"Now more than ever, the district wants to better communicate and engage our Hispanic families," she said. "Maria has built strong bonds with community members over the last couple of years. We are excited to expand that connection with our Hispanic population."

The responsibility of communications will shift to Briana Cortaberria, executive assistant to the superintendent and school board. Cortaberria handled communications for the district in the past, prior to Durón's employment. Cortaberria and Durón will partner with Graphics & Media Producer Roger Pope to form the district's communications team, according to a news release.

District close on new school name

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Hermiston School District has narrowed its finalists for a new elementary school on Theater Lane down to three options, and plans to send out a survey soon asking the public to help them choose between the three names: Artemisa Elementary School, Loma Vista Elementary School or La Senda Elementary School.

Superintendent Tricia Mooney told the school board Aug. 10 that a previous survey about what people wanted to see showed that 61% of participants thought the school should be named for a geographical feature, similar to the district's other five elementary schools. The district also heard feedback that the name should be representative of the district's increasingly diverse student body, which is why the final three names are in Spanish.

Artemisa means sagebrush in Spanish, while Loma Vista is roughly translated to "hill view" and La Senda means "the path."

When the options were first presented to the board, the first option was Artemisa Valley Elementary School, but board members disliked the mixture of valley, an English word, with artemisa in Spanish. There was concern about people being able to pronounce artemisa, but people also pointed out that people have learned to pronounce Armand Larive Middle School.

After the survey is released in the next few days, the results of the survey will be presented to the school board for discussion at a Sept. 14 meeting.

The new elementary school, paid for by the school bond passed by the community in 2019, will be on East Theater Lane at Northeast 10th Street. Construction is set to begin in the spring of 2021.