



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY 27

7:00 p.m. Board Meeting  
District Office Conference Room

### MARCH 2

LMS Wrestling Tournament  
in Boardman at 9:00am

### MARCH 7

Greenwood Family Fun Night  
5:30-7

### MARCH 13

Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m.  
District Office Conference Room

### MARCH 14

DFY Ski Trip at Anthony Lakes

### MARCH 19 & MAY 23

LMS Choir Concert at LHS 7:00pm

### MARCH 25 TO MARCH 29

Spring Break

### APRIL 2

First day of Track

### APRIL 11-12

K-12 Conference

### APRIL 18

Greenwood 4th & 5th STEM Night

### APRIL 19 & 26

Career Day for 6th Graders

### MAY 8

6th Grade Open House for  
incoming 6th graders, 6-7pm

### MAY 13-17

LMS Greenhouse Sale (Tentative)

### MAY 15-17

6th Grade Outdoor School

### JUNE 1

LHS GRADUATION

### JUNE 3

Last day of school. Early Release



# Strategic Plan Team Sets Goals

By Trish Yerges

The La Grande School District's Strategic Planning (SP) team met Feb. 5 to select three strategic goals that the district will work to achieve over the next five years.

The SP team is led by contracted facilitator-consultant, Jerry Colonna, whose expertise is guiding Oregon school districts through a structured process of setting goals and implementing strategies to achieve them. He is supported by La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza and Administrative Assistant Gaye Young from the district office.

The volunteer members of the La Grande School District's SP team include school district staff and community members:



The Strategic Planning meeting convenes once a month at the district office and is facilitated by Jerry Colonna (second from left) with the leadership of La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza (center back).

Donna Beverage, Union County Commissioner; Deputy Cody Bowen of the U.C. Sheriff's office and School Resource Officer; Carol Byron, Special Education Director; Stacey Candlish, U.S. Bank Manager; Scott Carpenter, LGSD Director of Educational Programs.

Ian Gregory, Para Educator at Greenwood Elementary, OSEA Union Representative; Erin Lair, Director of Teaching

and Learning, IMESD; Chris Leavitt, Music Teacher, LHS and LEA Union Representative.

Alex McHaddad, Executive Director at United Way of Eastern Oregon; Mika Morton, Executive Director at Art Center East; Joelene Peasley, RN and parent; Wendy Roberts, Senior Director Administrative Services at Grande Ronde Hospital.

Chris Wagner, Assis-

tant Principal at Central elementary and La Grande Middle School; and Danelle Wilson, school board member.

## Accomplishments to Date

Since last August when the SP team had its first meeting, it has accomplished five steps of the overall strategic planning process. First, the team created 12 focus groups that did

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## The word on Enrollment...enrollment numbers as of February 12, 2019

Central Elementary

501 students

Greenwood Elementary

321 students

Island City Elementary

314 students

Middle School

547 students

High School

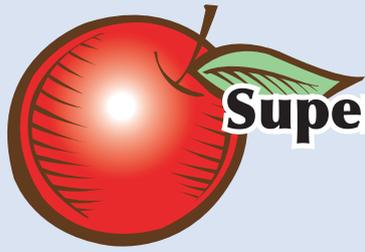
642 students

Total Elementary

Enrollment 1,136 students

LGSD Total Enrollment

2,358 students



## From the Superintendent's Desk ...

### Welcome to 2019!

Our school district and school board continues to focus on providing a high quality, cohesive, state of the art, academically relevant and impactful education for our students. To this end we are getting closer to wrapping up our Strategic Plan.

The focus of the plan has been to listen and learn from many stakeholders in our community including students, staff, parents, EOU, business and industry as well as community service groups.

We used focus groups to gather information for a focus group report, which in turn helped us to develop our Values, Mission, Vision, Goals.

We are nearly complete with our strategic plan and I will be excited to share with our community the long term goals we will be focusing on for our school district. I appreciate your involvement and feedback in the



**George Mendoza**  
LA GRANDE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SUPERINTENDENT

process.

This Newsletter serves as a platform for the district to share the many good things, stories and events taking place in our school district. To that end I hope you enjoy learning and better understanding the many initiatives, student activities and district and statewide accomplishments of our students and staff.

Should you wish to contact us about stories in our newsletter, my phone number is 541-663-3201; email: george.mendoza@lagrandesd.org

## SUCCESS STORIES

# Youth Transition Program

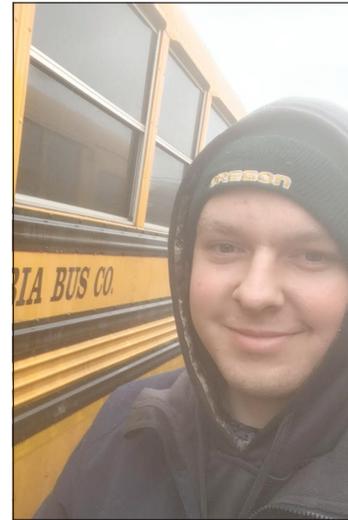
By Trish Yerges

Helping special education students build life skills and job skills is a primary focus of the Youth Transition Program (YTP) in the La Grande School District.

YTP is a grant program administrated through the University of Oregon and their appointed technical advisors. Among them is Terry Falkenstern, technical assistant provider for Central and Eastern Oregon. She has worked in education for 30 years and many years as a YTP specialist. Another technical advisor is Lon Thornburg, transition network facilitator, who works with the school districts and regional agency partners to build strong collaborative relationships.

Located at La Grande High School, Corey Ackerman is the Youth Transition Program specialist in the La Grande School District.

"The program is a vocational program that works with the district, vocational rehabilitation and other agencies to give support to students who have barriers to work," said



Ackerman.

Ackerman works with students who are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan, and they have a barrier to work.

"It is the school's responsibility to give students transition services," said Ackerman. "I work with students to find their interests and skills and help connect them to agencies that give them support through their IEP."

Ackerman connects students, who qualify for the Oregon Disabilities Services, to agencies that are giving support for vocational rehabilitation training. He goes out and assists the students in getting these experiences.

One important part of the program is the pre-employment training offered to the

students through La Grande High School.

The high school has two on-campus businesses where the students can gain employment training, the coffee shop and thrift store. Here they can practice their business skills so they have employment skills before they graduate. Ackerman also coordinates job shadow opportunities for the students, "and we help them find employment."

The Youth Transition Program is proud to share some of their success stories.

"Jonathan Marvel is one student who works for Brent Clapp Media Services where he works with videos. If you have VHS that you want converted to a DVD, he does that for Brent Clapp Media. He's been working there for the past four years and doing really well."

Marvel started out working part-time, two days a week, and now he's working five days a week.

Another gentleman worked at Burger King and Walmart and now he's washing dishes at Bud Jackson's Sportsman Bar and Grill.

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## CELEBRATING HIGH ACHIEVEMENTS

## Graduation Rates on the Rise in La Grande

By Trish Yerges

The La Grande School District is very pleased to announce that their graduation rate increased from 80 percent to 86.4 percent.

“One of the big wins was that all of our sub-categories, whether that is special education or students of minority status, were above 80 percent for the first time ever,” said Scott Carpenter, director of educational programs.

He had a few other sub-category statistics that also demonstrated encouraging improvements.

“Our students who struggle with poverty, their graduation rate rose from 68 percent to 85 percent,” he said, “and our male students’ graduation rate rose from 75 percent to 89.5 percent, a 14.5 percent increase.”

For whatever reason, the male population hasn’t been as successful as the female population, but in this last year, that has changed.

“I think, in part, it is because of our Career and Technical Education program,” said Carpenter. “More males per capita partic-



Metro Creative Connection

ipate in that program. I know that each class has a different appeal and power.”

With our special education students, the graduation rate has gone up from 67 percent to 80 percent. It is traditionally difficult for special education students to graduate with regular diplomas, so this is an outstanding achievement for district families and

staff to celebrate.

“I attribute these increases to our high school team, which is very focused and likes to help kids graduate. There’s a lot of support to help students meet their needs and help them graduate. I think that’s the number one reason for their success. I applaud them for their work,”

The La Grande School District’s gradu-

ation rate is above the state of Oregon’s rate of 78.7 percent.

While the district is focusing its funds toward the goal of helping more students graduate, the students themselves are investing more into their education by pursuing their passions through the career pathways program. Likewise, there are teachers in the special education program that are help-

ing their students find connections through transition services with community businesses and being involved in things they are interested in.

“Students see that effort and those connections and are moving forward toward graduation,” said Carpenter. “I think they are connecting with their passions outside the classroom as well.”

## KEEPING OUR STAFF HEALTHY

## District Receives Wellness Grant for Staff

By Trish Yerges

Last October, the La Grande School District applied for a \$16,000 grant with a 50 percent match through the OEA Choice Trust, and they were just notified that they received those funds.

“Nine different school districts in the state of Oregon won the grant this year,” said Scott Carpenter, director of educational programs. “These schools are focusing to some degree on staff wellness. Most of us have come to recognize that we have to do more to support our faculty and staff so that they stay with us and stay healthy.”

Carpenter is managing the grant process, reporting obligations and the distribution of those funds.

“All of the funds will be used for staff wellness,” he said. “The 50 percent match has already been met by the district as we are already supporting yoga, mindfulness classes, in-building walking events, cooking classes, and Weight Watchers. There will also be prizes and incentives to encourage wellness activities.”

The district will

partner with EOU on their family wellness nights. The first one is scheduled for Feb. 15 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Quinn Coliseum, and more will be going on throughout the year. There will be vendors there, a rock-climbing wall and many other activities all free of charge. The Oregon State University Extension Service will have a healthy food demonstration at this event.

The grant funds will help us design a webpage listing resources for at home wellness activities and recipes. Not everyone feels comfortable working out in public, so they can have access to activities from their home. For those who do participate in classes outside the home, child care will be provided while they are participating.

The yoga classes will be held three times a week, and “we’re hoping the cooking classes will be held at least once a quarter,” said Carpenter. “There will be lots of other activities and ways to participate.”

Now that the district has received funds for the first year, there are some reporting

obligations, and when the district has accomplished its goals, the district can get additional funds for years 2, 3, and 4.

Carpenter is in the final stages of making some budget adjustments, and will present this good news to the

school district board at its next meeting.

The district wants to show their concern for the well-being of their staff because they pour out their energies for the kids, day in and day out, and before this, there wasn’t a wide variety of support

activities to help the staff stay healthy.

“This grant will allow us to show how much we appreciate them and are invested in them, to make them feel supported and that their health is our concern as well,” said Carpenter.

## GOOD THINGS IN LA GRANDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Energy Upgrades in all Schools  
Redoing the Gymnasium at Island City  
Upgrade the LHS Gymnasium  
New Central Elementary School Built  
New Building for Career/Technical Education  
Emergency Action Plan practiced routinely  
Parking Lot Expansion at LHS  
HVAC Upgrades Completed at 3 Schools  
LED Energy Saving Lights in all Buildings  
Beneficial Modular Classrooms at LMS  
Four New Tennis Courts  
Resurfacing all Asphalt Parking Lots  
Energy Efficient Windows Installed  
Wrap-Around Services Help Students  
Free Kindergarten Jumpstart Program  
Addition/Face Lift to Island City School  
New Bus Routing & Parking at Central  
Two New Asst. Principals in District  
New Athletic Director  
Director of Educational Programs Selected  
New Food Service Management Begins  
Start 5-Year Strategic Plan for District

New STEM Initiatives Begin  
Laid New Blue Track  
Track State Championship 2018  
Football League Championship 2018  
Volleyball League Championship 2018  
Girls’ Soccer League Championship 2018  
Students Taught “Growth Mindset”  
Teachers Use Social-Emotional Learning  
District Staff Wellness Grant Awarded  
Literacy Initiative—Read Together La Grande!  
Graduation Rate Rises 80 % to 86.4 %  
Special Ed Grad Rates Rise to 80.77 %



## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

## HVAC Project and Energy Upgrade Completed

By Trish Yerges

After supervising the heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) and energy upgrade, district facilities manager Joseph Waite announced that the project is ninety-nine percent finished and all that is left is some fine-tuning as minor issues surface.

Waite gives us the run-down on all the HVAC accomplishments.

### La Grande High School

The 1950s wing had a complete replacement of the fan coil units up in the attic space. The old steam system was converted to a hot water system. In the 1970s section of the building, the district replaced the variable frequency drives on the fan units to increase energy efficiency. The fans now have additional controls on the fans, replacing the former high-low functions to the newer low-medium-high functions.

### Greenwood Elementary

“We went into all the classrooms and replaced the unit ven-

tilator heaters’ steam traps with all new equipment,” said Waite.

On the hallway radiators the steam traps were replaced with thermostatically controlled valves. This replaces the old pneumatics control system.

Contractors installed condensing units to all the classrooms, and those are ready for the warmer months.

### Island City Elementary

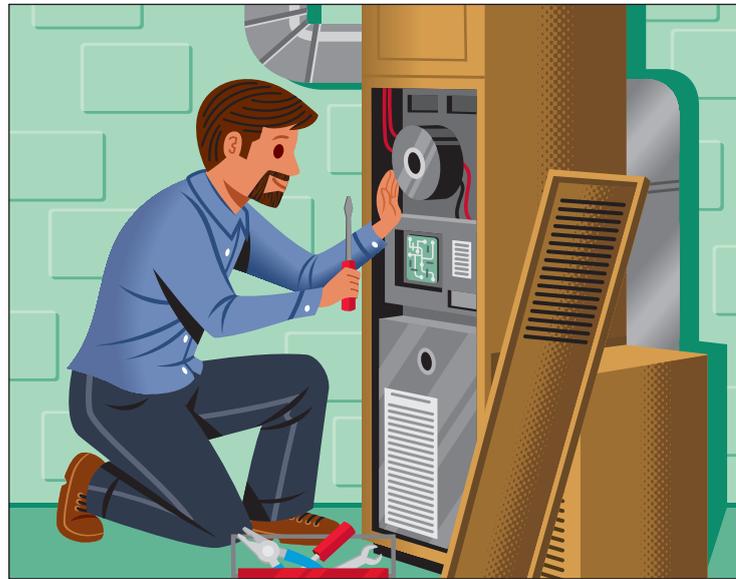
“We replaced the inline coils with new condensing units on the roof to all the classrooms with heating and cooling capabilities,” said Waite.

Also, the new siding that was put on the school building is more energy efficient because it is better quality siding than the former siding.

### LED Lighting Upgrades

New LED lights and fixtures have been installed throughout all building interiors.

“OTEC will give us about \$130,000 in rebates right off the top, and with that our calculated return on investment was about 3 to 4 years. So they start paying for them-



selves right away,” he said.

With the heating systems, there will be a net decrease of about 28 percent in heating costs. For the electrical systems, including the LED lights, there will be a net decrease of about 41 percent.

Going forward, we are now contracted with Johnson Controls Inc., a guaranteed energy contract where they come in and monitor our energy use. If the system doesn’t perform within their given parameters, then they guaranty any cost overruns.

“That contract is good for 10 years, and the district can cancel that contract if it is deemed no longer necessary since we do have to pay for Johnson

district office. HVAC performance can be easily monitored and adjusted from the district office.

“We can log in, see room temperatures for rooms and areas that have thermostats, and we can reach into that software. We can turn things off or on and adjust temperatures,” he said. “Temps are set at 68 degrees and the system allows local adjustment of 2 or 3 degrees either way.”

When the building isn’t occupied by the majority of staff and students, the district turns off the HVAC systems but it maintains temperatures above 60 degrees, and in the summer in the areas where there is cooling, it is kept below 80 degrees.

The control software is programmed to match the school calendar, including holidays, but whenever there is a special event like a basketball game or snow day, Waite can manually adjust the system to meet the temperature needs. The flexible features of the new HVAC software makes it energy and cost efficient.

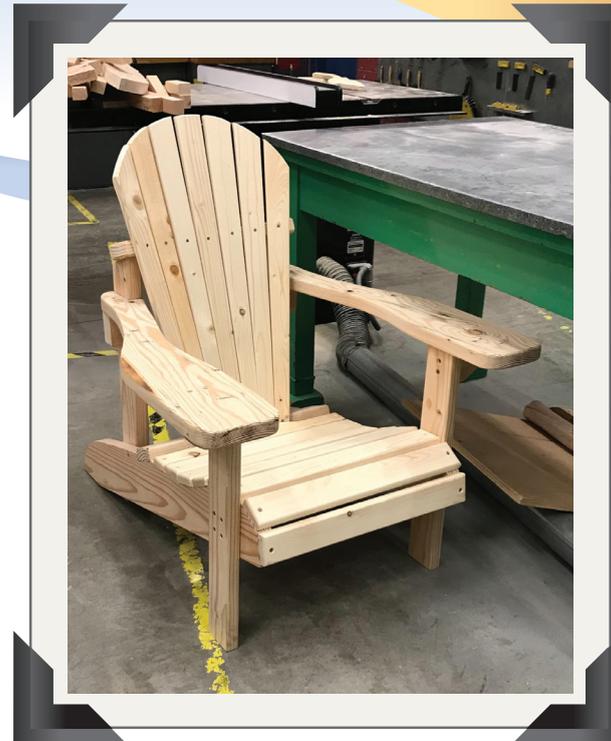
Controls to come out each year to do those measurements,” said Waite.

The district has an existing maintenance contract with Johnson Controls, so that will remain in force even if the energy guaranteed part of the contract is terminated. Service reps from Kennewick and Spokane will deal with the district on a regular basis.

“We’re dialing in the system, doing several rounds of commissioning and air balancing to make sure we’re running at full optimization,” said Waite. “Those things are behind the scenes.”

The district has an integrated software system that remotely controls HVAC for all the buildings from the

# Scrapbook



Adirondack chairs La Grande Middle School 8th graders are making in woods shop.



Mrs. Gooderham's 2nd Grade class celebrated the 100th day of school at Central School. They wrote 100 reason why they love their school.



Thank You to PTO and district for finishing up the installation of 5 new water stations in the middle school.

## WINTER SPORTS UPDATE

## Strong Girls' Basketball Ranking; 2nd in League

By Trish Yerges

First year Athletic Director Darren Goodman has been working hard with his team coaches during the winter season after a very successful fall season for the football, volleyball, soccer, and cross-country teams.

"The fall season ended with the football team losing in the quarter finals and the girls' soccer losing in the semi-finals," said Goodman.

The winter season has been promising. "Girls' basketball is 10-4 overall, and 2-1 in league. They are in second place currently," he said. "We're very excited about what the future holds for them."

Boys' basketball is 4-10, and they are 1-2 in league and third place in league, right now.

Wrestling is first place in their league and ranked high in the state," said Goodman. "In mid-January, we honored our male swimming athlete of the week, Garren Dutto. He's our OSAA swimmer of the week."

Goodman has a positive outlook for the sports team this winter season. "Overall, the athletics for the winter season were very com-



petitive, and our kids are working hard."

As a sneak peek at the upcoming spring season's activities, Goodman an-

ticipates excellent rankings among the teams.

"The spring season is a strong season for us," said Goodman, "and

we're following up on two championships last spring in boys track and girls softball. We anticipate being very strong

in those sports again, as well as in baseball. We're really looking forward to the spring season."

# Singing Your Praises---Kevin Durfee, choir director

By Trish Yerges

If accomplishment is music to your ears, then meet Kevin Durfee, distinguished faculty member and director of the 40-member La Grande A Cappella choir at LHS.



Durfee

Durfee has been teaching in La Grande since the 2007-2008 school year and has taken the choir to state competitions every year since 2008, earning five state championships and three second-place honors since then.

The choir is comprised of sophomores, juniors and seniors, and Durfee has been teaching them to sing a cappella, which is singing without instrumental accompaniment.

The Italian words a cappella mean “to sing in the style of the [Sistine] chapel.” The Sistine chapel boasts the oldest a cappella choir in the world. When one thinks of an a cappella choir, a chapel choir or a barbershop quartet comes to mind. The singers are often given the first note of their music perhaps by a chromatic pitch pipe or a piano, and they go from there without further instrumental support.

Traditionally, it’s

the director’s role to motivate and direct the musicality of their voices, drawing out their greatest potential. But Durfee explained that in order to help his choir, his duties encompass a lot more than one might think.

“My role is the motivator, dream painter, artistic director, rehearsal technician, fixing what’s not right and making a culture in which they can succeed,” said Durfee. “In the beginning to get the program to where it is now, it’s just really about trying to sell the idea of what excellence is and what they could do.”

Like most directors, he often stands in front of the choir when he directs, but not always.

“There are two different kinds of competitions,” he said. “For state championships for choir, I, as the director, have to stand in front of them and direct the whole time. I had a state champion men’s quartet last year and a few years before that I had a state champion large mixed ensemble, and when you’re competing in the ensemble contests, you can’t have a director.”

From his experience, Durfee believes that a good a cappella choir is the product of a 50/50 effort. Fifty percent

is the director and the other 50 percent is the singers’ skills, talents, work ethics and their character in the class.

“If you’re in this room watching the kids, you would see them during lunch hour actually working on their parts. They teach each other and self-coach,” he said. “There’s a lot of leadership in the choir room of the kids. They spend a lot of time on their own, making sure they are learning the music so they can teach others.”

A cappella choirs sing a body of music that falls under the concert choir repertoire, and Durfee draws music from that to go to competition districts and to state competition.

“That doesn’t mean it will all be old music,” he said. “There is stuff that we do that has been composed as recently as last year or this year.”

As far as competitions go, Durfee claims no superstitions about the state choir competitions and what it takes to win a championship. It is highly subjective and depends on the judges’ opinions on what they like and what they don’t, much like other artistic competitions.

“Really, the choir that sings the prettiest and

**You’re Invited!**  
**Next Concert at LHS auditorium 8 p.m. –**  
**March 19**  
**Competition at EOU McKenzie Theater –**  
**March 20**

that draws an emotional response from the audience and the judges is the choir that is going to win,” said Durfee, “but any year we’re in the top three, I think has been a good year.”

Durfee and his wife Kascie work as a team. Kascie will be doing the preparation work for the next all-day competition held at EOU McKenzie Theater on March 20. There will be 10 to 13 choirs competing in the 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A and 5A concert choir divisions, and they will be adjudicated by four adjudicators.

This is where Durfee’s 50 percent becomes most evident. In his favor is a stacked resume of education and work experience. He started his schooling at Treasure Valley Community College for two years, followed by Portland State University, where he majored in piano and graduated in 1995. Then he went into a special accelerated liberal arts program at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, where he earned his master’s degree in 1996.

“I took my first job in my hometown of Nyssa,

Oregon and taught there for 8 years,” he said. “Then I worked for the army full time. I was a band master for the Army National Guard (commander of the 25th Army Band Boise Idaho from 2003 until Oct. 2018). Then after these years, I wanted to go back to education, so I started in La Grande in 2007.”

Since then, “the Kevin and Kascie team” have formed lasting bonds with their students, some of whom have spent seven years in Durfee’s music and concert choir program.

“By the time they graduated, these kids felt a lot like family to us,” said Durfee. “My wife and I feel pretty close to them and their families. It’s a gratifying experience to get to know people so well and share those magic moments in the classroom and on the stage. I’m just so lucky to have a career that I love so much and also get to experience it with my family as part of it.”

*(Superintendent’s Note: The Distinguished Faculty page will become a regular feature of our newsletters, introducing readers to our many talented faculty members who teach our children.)*

## READ 20 MINUTES A DAY WITH YOUR CHILD

# Promoting Literacy---It takes Everybody!

By Trish Yerges

Reading to your child from infancy is the greatest gift parents can give their child, and the benefits go beyond academics.

La Grande School District's faculty have joined forces with the La Grande Literacy Alliance to get free books in the hands of children as they promote "Read Together La Grande!" to district families.

The campaign's central theme is to read together for 20 minutes a day.

Dr. Carol Lauritzen is chair of La Grande Literacy Alliance, which is a group that organized about a year ago to promote literacy in the La Grande School District.

"Our motivation is to bring together all the other elements of La Grande that are promoting literacy," she said. "The school district is a major part of that, as well as the La Grande public library, Mountain Valley's Reading Council, Head Start and other supporters."

The Literacy Alliance team supporting Lauritzen includes: Scott Carpenter, Director of Educational Programs, Ryan Westenskow,

principal of Greenwood Elementary, Sharon Bullock, third grade teacher at Central, Robin Maille, school board member, Carrie Bushman, children's librarian at Cook Memorial Library, Elizabeth Becker, president of Mountain Valley's Reading Council, Debbie Mills, retired reading specialist, Robert Kleng, director of Head Start, and "lots of other people who support and assist."

The group has a mission statement: "La Grande Literacy Alliance is committed to developing a community of readers in La Grande."

Lauritzen said the Literacy Alliance aims to unify support and propagate all literacy efforts in our community, promote early childhood literacy and the love of reading and encourage families to read together daily for 20 minutes.

"It's called an alliance because there are lots of organizations, individuals and agencies that certainly have the same kind of goals, and we want everyone to see each other as allies working toward achieving those goals," said Lauritzen.

The Alliance is setting manageable, realistic goals, and supporting or continuing the work of their literacy allies. One of those efforts involves continuing what the Mountain Valley Reading Council has been doing, distributing books to kids who might not be able to afford books for themselves.

"That's been an important part of the work of the Alliance," she said. "We've handed out promotional cards that say, 'Read Together La Grande!' and on the other side it tells why that's a good idea."

The Alliance has handed out many of these cards at parent-teacher conferences and downtown Trick-or-Treat events. At the public library, the Alliance is supporting their "Beanstack" literacy program for kids and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

"That's all part of this alliance of different groups with programs. We're trying to bring all those together and be a unified voice and a clearinghouse, trying to have a uniform effort and not overlapping efforts," said Lauritzen.

It is amazing, she noted, that a child who reads 20 minutes a day will be exposed to 1,800,000 words in a year. A child who reads 5 minutes a day will be exposed to 282,000 words a year, but a child who reads only 1 minute a day is exposed to only 8,000 words a day. Those kids who read 20 minutes a day will gain so much academically, but there are other valuable benefits besides that.

"People forget the power of reading," she said. "When you read together, it builds family relationships and it's a positive thing you can do with your child. You will have conversations that you may not have otherwise. Not to mention the academic boost it gives the kids."

When reading aloud you can read things a little more difficult than the child can read themselves and that continues to build vocabulary and more elaborate sentence structure and give them content that they wouldn't be able to read for themselves. Parents who read to their child, set a great role model for them.

"You can read to your

child from newspapers, magazines or voter's pamphlet or whatever," she said.

"The idea is you are demonstrating to the child that reading is a part of your life, and you want to share that with them."

A parent doesn't have to be a super good reader to read out loud to their child. If a parent can't read at all, using a picture book and talking to the child about what is illustrated can be a great introduction to reading for the child, arousing interest in books.

Understandably, cutting out the time to read to your child daily is challenging. A parent may be working more than one job to support the family or the kids may be going off to piano lessons, sports practice or dancing lessons. By the time they get home, it's time for homework, dinner and getting ready for bed.

But just as these activities are important to a child or family, so is reading, and it requires commitment.

"If we want to be good at sports, you spend hours doing it. If you want to get good

*continued on page 11*

## STRATEGIC

*continued from page 1*

the work of gathering information from the community. The information reveals what the community wants the district to look like in five years, in terms of improvements.

Second, this community information produced 359 pages of community ideas and opinions which were condensed into an edited report produced last November. This report will be used as the basis for the selection of about three strategic goals for La Grande School District.

December was a productive month for the SP team as they started the process of formulating a preamble, their third accomplishment. They created the tagline “Love, Care, Serve”.

As their fourth accomplishment, “We finalized our (four) chief core values for the district,” said Colonna.

**Safety and Caring** - “We strive to create high quality, integrity-driven, equitable educational experiences by providing safe and caring environments in which to learn and grow.”

**Social Emotional and Individual Well-being** - “We focus on the well-being of all students and staff members. This includes addressing

social and emotional needs as much as academic needs.”

**Relationships** - “We aspire to have effective communication, extensive collaboration, and respectful relationships in all District interactions.”

**Real World Education** - “We believe exceptional education creates life-long learners, develops students to their potential, builds positive character traits, and provides involvement in meaningful community service and beneficial partnerships.”

A fifth accomplishment by the SP team was “two fold”, the first draft of their mission and vision statements. The mission statement is “Empower La Grande’s learners to learn, staff to thrive, and our community to prosper,” and the vision statement is “Prepare all La Grande students for their brightest future.”

### Where Are We Now?

After all their hard work to date, the bulk of the Feb. 5 meeting was “centered around choosing a few really challenging and important strategic goals for the district. The goals need to be very clear and understandable, fairly brief and memorable, measurable and challenging but not to

the point where they are unrealistic,” said Colonna.

It is the task of the SP team to determine from the focus group report, which are the most important goals because the district has limited resources so they can’t do everything, Colonna said, but they can do some things.

“They have to decide what can we do really well, maybe even better than any other district in the state,” said Colonna. “So we have to narrow down the goals and stay with them over the next five years.”

Colonna recommended to the team that they choose a few goals rather than many because he’s learned through experience that districts with too many goals do not accomplish them. So for the greatest success, choosing just a few goals and doing them really well is better than choosing many goals and not accomplishing any of them. Focusing energies, commitment and resources to just a few goals will result in more successful outcomes.

Taking the lead at the Feb. 5 meeting was Superintendent Mendoza, who presented three goals for the team to consider and discuss. Ultimately, after an interchange of comments, the group decided upon

the following three goal statements: (1) Ensure all students are ready to learn; (2) Foster Increased Academic Success; (3) Develop Engaged Life-Long Learners.

To prepare for the next meeting on March 5, Colonna asked each member of the team to write what they think is the most important

performance indicator for each of the three goals. These statements will have the SMART components: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely. The team will spend the March meeting discussing and selecting the best performance indicators for each goal.

## YOUTH

*continued from page 2*

“Ross Leavitt is a student we worked with, and he is now a bus driver for Mid Columbia Bus Company here in town,” said Ackerman. “He was a substitute driver up until two weeks ago, and now he has a full time position. He passed his CDL and became a bus driver with a regular route.”

Presently, LHS has 16 kids working in the school’s coffee shop and at the thrift store. The district is committed to making sure students with disabilities are receiving the experiences in a regular workforce to develop life skills and work skills so they can become productive members of the community.

“The coffee shop has been running since 1996 (23 years), and the thrift store has been going for

four or five years in a classroom in the high school,” said Ackerman.

The coffee shop will soon be relocating across the street. LHS will partner with a youth organization, which is constructing a new youth center.

The new building will have an area in it to accommodate the student-run coffee shop. Ackerman and the students are very excited about this new development.

Parents are also excited when they see their children doing things that they enjoy and will help them prepare for employment after graduation. To learn more about YTP and what it offers your child, parents may talk to their child’s special education case manager during their IEP meetings, usually around the student’s junior year.

**READ**

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at anything, you have to spend time doing it,” said Lauritzen.

Reading with your child builds family ties, starts important conversations and strengthens adult-child bonds.

“That one-on-one time in the family is so precious because it is very personal and very close with someone who loves you,” said Lauritzen.

The Literacy Alliance has a couple of projects they want to work on during this school year. One of them is to make and install “Little Libraries” around town. One Little Library will be available at the Middle School this summer and another in Island

City for kids who don’t have ready access to the public library.

“We are looking for some volunteer carpenters to build some more,” she said, “or this would make a nice (woods) shop class project.”

The Alliance will be promoting “literacy baby showers” that will focus on expectant parents and talk to them about reading to their babies from the very beginning. Parents will be helped to get library cards and access to free books.

The Literacy Alliance welcomes donations of new or gently used children’s books and you may contact Lauritzen by email at [clauritz@eou.edu](mailto:clauritz@eou.edu) or call 541-962-3557.

Next time you go to the theater, watch for the pre-movie ad, “Read Together La Grande!”

**READ**  
**20 MINUTES**  
**A DAY**

STUDENT 1 reads at home	STUDENT 2 reads at home	STUDENT 3 reads at home
20 min/day	5 min/day	1 min/day
1,800,000	282,000	8,000
<b>WORDS PER YEAR</b>		

**THEY WILL HEAR**

- ✓ Improves your child’s attention span.
- ✓ Engages your child’s curiosity.
- ✓ Starts important conversations.
- ✓ Builds family ties and strengthens adult-child bonds.
- ✓ Leads to a lifelong love of reading!

*Additional Resources for Families:*  
<https://cityoflagrande.beanstack.org/reader365> for Beanstack app  
<https://www.vroom.org> for easy literacy strategies on the go  
<https://imaginationlibrary.com/usa/> to access free books for you child

**PRIDE POST-ITS**  
LA GRANDE SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Scott Gover in the kitchen at the high school is continually jovial and welcoming. I see him daily connecting with a variety of students. He has been a positive addition to the commons and the lunch and breakfast line. He is an important part of students feeling connected to LHS, particularly within the commons.**

**Josh Wright, LHS**

## FEATURING ASPIRING STUDENTS

## “The Promise of Oregon” supports public education

By Trish Yerges

“The Promise of Oregon” is an initiative that started in Nov. 2014 as a public education support campaign to acknowledge and feature K-14 students throughout the state who aspire to achieve their academic goals.

“The campaign aims to create a groundswell of public support for K-14 education, in hopes of lifting student achievement and graduation rates and assuring full and sustainable education funding,” states the Oregon School Board Association’s (OSBA) website.

“Every year the Oregon School Board Association makes ‘Promise of Oregon’ campaign visits to about six different school districts around the State at which we interview young people, generally at one elementary and one high school and ask them to finish the sentence, ‘I am the Promise of Oregon because...,’” said Alex Pulaski, the Oregon School Boards Association’s communications director.

Last summer at the summer board conference at Bend, Pulaski had an opportunity to



“I am the Promise of Oregon because I want to be an author and give the gift of storytelling.”

— Lucas Hudson,  
Central Elementary, La Grande SD

meet and talk to La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza.

“I was impressed as I talked to him,” said Pulaski, “and I’ve heard very good things about your district, so I thought it would be a good opportunity to feature the kids from La Grande. It’s important as we do this campaign, that we keep in touch with rural areas and school districts east of the Cascades and not just on the west side.”

As a result of his conversation with Superintendent Mendoza, Pu-

laski came over to the LGSD with contracted videographers, and he talked to about 20 kids at Central Elementary School.

“It was a thrill to come to La Grande and meet young people such as Lucas Hudson, a Central Elementary student who talked about his aspirations to become an author and give the gift of storytelling,” said Pulaski. “Ultimately that is also what the Promise of Oregon campaign is all about, giving students a voice to tell their stories so that the public

can see the amazing things going on in our state’s public schools.”

The idea of “The Promise of Oregon” campaign is to create public support for kids in the K-14 education system and let people see the amazing things the young people are doing and the great dreams that they have,” he said.

Since its inception, the OSBA has been advocating “The Promise” campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and they have gained 7,036 Facebook fans, generated 69,200 en-

gagements and 11.5 million impressions across the three social media formats.

Building on the campaign’s successes in the 2015 and 2017 legislative sessions, the OSBA website stated that “the campaign will continue to advocate for ad-

equated and stable education funding. It will also support the efforts of the ‘Oregonians for Student Success’ campaign to achieve revenue reform in 2019.”

To help achieve that, the OSBA and its contractor, Blue Chalk Media, created a dedicated website and social media channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As schools feature their own “Promise Kid” of the day or week, it will help support advocacy for sustainable public school funding.