Learning the ropes

Eighth-graders tour Baker High; sixth-graders get tips for Baker Middle School

Several school tours this spring were designed to help ease students into transitioning — from sixth grade to Baker Middle School, and from eighth grade to Baker High School.

As Malia Warner’s small group moved through the high school halls, led by juniors Kaeli Flanagan and Vicky Ortiz, she seemed a bit overwhelmed by the size of the school and number of students.

Prior to the visit, she wasn't too excited about moving to ninth grade.

"No — I told my mom I want to stay in middle school," Warner said.

But members of the BHS leadership class did their best to ease any fears felt by the eighth-graders. The tours took students through every hall, upstairs and down, and even out to the print shop where everyone was treated to package of Smarties candy.

In the library, Joy LeaMaster took a moment to greet the group, and give a little advice about high school.

"I don't know if anyone has told you the value of good grades your freshman year," she said. "Teachers are here to help — if you get behind, just ask."

After their hour-long tour through the high school, the BMS students gathered in the auditorium to hear from the panel of high school students.

"Take initiative, and do your work," said Khail Macy, a senior, who explained that he had to take a credit recovery class. "It's easier to pass the first time."

Austin Devore encouraged the eighth-graders to complete their foreign language credits in their early years of high school.

"It is awful to be the only senior in a class of freshmen," he said.

Kaeli, who had talked to her group about how much she enjoyed the aquaponics classes offered through Baker Technical Institute, said she suggests trying a variety of classes in high school.

"You have a lot of electives — use them," she said.

Kaeli also explained dual credits, which means some high school classes can also earn college credits.

"If you stick with that, you can have a year of college credits by the time you graduate," she said.

The high schoolers also emphasized that school isn't just about academics — they encouraged the incoming freshmen to get involved with Pep Night and Pep Week next year, and to
Helpful and happy
I want to shout out to Cathy Martin for everything she does for the district. She is always so helpful and happy.

Ben Merrill, technology director

A valuable coach
Mrs. Jandy Eskew has provided valuable math coaching to all staff at South Baker! Thank you for all you do, Mrs. Eskew!

Stacy Gambleton, South Baker

Amazing librarian
Shout to Chris Mahoney — not only is she an amazing librarian, but I also found her organizing and cleaning the staff room. Thank you for taking the time!

Mandi Rose, South Baker

Thank you, Oscar
I would like to say thank you to Oscar for his endless energy and positive attitude toward our endless mounds of ice/snow this winter! Crosswalk/ drop off and pick up is much safer for our kiddos with the paths he helps keep clear. Thank you, Oscar!

Debbie Wray, South Baker

Thank you, FFA
Haines Elementary and the Haines PTOCO would like to give special recognition to the Baker High School FFA for all their volunteer help they provided this year at the Chili Feed. Their work ethic is a testament to the kids, the organization, and to their supervisor, Bibiana Gifft. Some of the first to arrive, as well as the last to leave — a true gift to have them with us!!

Skye Flanagan, Haines principal

Store is a success
A HUGE shout out to Mandy Peterson and Mysti Ritter for their continued efforts in piloting our first year of the Brooklyn Bronco Store. The Bronco store has been a positive behavior incentive for our students at Brooklyn. Mysti and Mandy have organized volunteers and helped gather donations to maintain our store. Students and staff have absolutely loved this new opportunity at Brooklyn. Thank you Mysti and Mandy!

Phil Anderson, Brooklyn principal

Great job, 5th graders!
I would like to give a shout out to all our 5th grade students and teachers for successfully creating our first Expeditionary Learning Ecosystem Symposium. I would also like to give a shout out to Oscar for all his hard work in helping to set up the tables and gym for this event.

Jandy Eskew, South Baker

A true asset to Haines
I just want to take the opportunity to give a giant shout-out to Kathleen Christensen, secretary and jack of all trades at Haines Elementary. As with most buildings, the secretary is truly the lifeblood of the school. Kathleen is a wonderful ambassador for Haines. As the one who greets, organizes, plans, schedules, and comforts, she does it all with grace and a sly sense of humor.

She is all about the kids and the Haines family, and she is a true asset that we would be lost without!

Second Grade Teachers, Brooklyn Primary

Thanks, Sorbenots
Sorbenots is always supporting our school, including gift certificates for the school store, hot cocoa for the Glow Run, and coffee for various events. Thank you, Sorbenots, for being such a wonderful community member!

Mandy Peterson, parent

Thank you, Mrs. Rose
My son Austin and I were both nervous about him transitioning from only having five kids in his grade at Keating Elementary to four full classes of 6th graders at South Baker Intermediate this year. Amazingly enough this year has been fantastic in Mrs. Mandie Rose’s class!

Not only does the room take on a safe, supportive, family atmosphere similar to Keating School, but he is still able to explore the academics in creative ways...something that is harder to do with larger classrooms. Austin has always hated writing and today, on a day off from school, I found him excitedly writing on story he started in class. This was not even a graded assignment, but just a piece of fun writing to spark some interest. I still get all warm and fuzzy thinking about it — my son writing for fun!

Thank you Mrs. Rose for sharing your passion for academics and making this year better than we both could have imagined. You’re the bomb!!

Angie Hays, parent

Friday Academy offers great opportunities
I would like to thank all of the people who have worked hard to provide Friday Academy. I have had two children attend various programs and both have enjoyed them. When they complete the class, they always ask, "When will the next one be?" Friday Academy has helped expose my kids to learning opportunities beyond the classroom and home. It has provided an environment where they were able to choose what they wanted to learn about — something an elementary student doesn't always get the chance to do.

It has also helped my boys see that learning is fun and interesting. They both enjoy school, and their teachers have done a wonderful job showing them learning is fun. However, Friday Academy takes the pressure off being graded and freed up time constraints that are experienced with regular school. This change of pace has allowed my kids to dive into a subject of their choice in great depth with teachers who are experts in the subject, allowing a greater depth of learning.

I have one child who is not fond of writing. After much convincing, he chose to do the class "Become An Author" with Sharon Foster. During the course of this class, he learned that writing can be a fun process and doesn't require good handwriting! He now sits down at the computer and types out little stories, whereas before he wanted nothing to do with writing. I can't thank Sharon enough for allowing him to see writing from a different perspective!

I would also like to thank all of those who have taken the time to build the program and to those of you who have taught in the program. It has made been a fun experience and made differences for my children.

Kcia Fletcher, parent
Transition

Continued from Page 1

make friends throughout the different grades.
"It's way too much stress to isolate yourself," Khail said. "Just be friendly and talk to people. You'll be a lot happier. Try your very best to make friends."

At Baker Middle School, eighth-graders welcomed current sixth-graders for a two-hour tour of the school, and a question-and-answer panel.

This the second year in a row that the sixth-graders have come to BMS for a tour — in the past, the principal went to the elementary schools to visit with the incoming students, said Chris Carmiencke, BMS principal.

The transition day for sixth grade was held March 9. The morning session was welcomed by the BMS band, choir, and the afternoon group by the sixth-graders that the school is simply two floors — "one big doughnut" — the size still seemed intimidating.

"This time of year sixth graders are worried about the four-minute transition between classes, which gives kids a head start at college by allowing them to experience the test and learn which skills they need to improve," Silas said. "As freshman, they have a hard time with perspective," Silas said.

As Ethan and Hollie Mays led their charges through the hallways of BMS, some of the sixth-graders were worried about the four-minute transition between classes.

"Four minutes doesn't seem like a lot of time, but it really is," Hollie said.

Although Hollie and Ethan assured the sixth-graders that the school is simply two floors — "one big doughnut" — the size still seemed intimidating.

"I feel like I'm going to get lost. Or be late to every class," said Tristen Tritt.

When the tours were finished, the sixth grade classes divided into two groups, and each had the chance to ask questions of a panel of eighth-graders.

"I'm not as nervous because I know what to expect about using a locker and where to find my classes," said sixth-grader Tate Powell.

The purpose of these transition sessions is to help alleviate some of the worries students face as they head to middle school.

"This time of year sixth graders start to get nervous about moving to the next building," said Nanette Lehman, South Baker principal.

However, transition really began last fall.

"We have made changes to the sixth grade configuration this year in hopes of better preparing them for Baker Middle School and calm some of those fears," Nanette said.

Although the sixth-graders have a home classroom, they rotate through four different teachers each day for science, social studies, language arts and math — mimicking the move from class to class at middle school.

"Students had a rough first quarter as they struggled being accountable to four teachers in getting assignments turned into the right teacher, communicating effectively with those teachers, and making sure they had all their supplies in that navigation process," Nanette said.

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The BMS tours did alleviate some fears.

"I feel like I have a better perception of what middle school is going to be like and understand how it works," said Reece Hatfield, also a sixth-grader. "The students answered all the questions I needed answers for."

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Winning poem from Keating

Alex Wise, a fourth-grader at Keating Elementary School, has been announced as a winner in the Oregon Poetry Association's contest.

Alex entered his poem "Little Brown Bear" in Division II for grades 3-5.

A lesson on poetry was part of the curriculum for Alex’s class.

"The third and fourth graders worked on studying poetry and the elements of poetry,” said Amanda Wilde, head teacher at Keating.

"After that, the students wrote poems to enter for the contest.”

His was the only work chosen in Eastern Oregon across all divisions, from kindergarten up to grade 12.

This was the 19th-annual contest held by the Oregon Poetry Association. All submissions were due by Dec. 31, 2016.

Ten winners were chosen for each division, and each received $10 and a copy of "Cascadia: The Oregon Student Poetry Contest Anthology," in which all 40 winning poems will be published.

Little Brown Bear

Over there is a little brown bear,  
Sitting in a big green chair,  
He’s reading a book,  
Then he’s going to cook,  
That’s the little brown bear.

Over there is a little brown bear,  
With his spectacles on,  
He was reading a book,  
He was reading a book on how to cook.  
That’s the little brown bear.

Over there is a little brown bear,  
He was going to make a stew,  
A really big stew,  
A really big stew with lots of rice too,  
That’s the little brown bear.

— Alex Wise  
Fourth Grade, Keating School

BHS art students recognized at regional show

Six art students at Baker High School received Honorable Mention for their works entered in the annual Oregon State Elks Eye Injury Prevention Poster contest, which was held at the Nightingale Gallery at Eastern Oregon University from Feb. 24 to March 21.

The BHS winning artists were Luke Barnes, Erin Blincoe, Maggie Crabill, Kerrie Kast, Doug Nichols and Alexa Nickens.

More than 300 pieces from 15 schools were submitted into the regional show, which is an annual exhibition. Winning works were selected by artist Tom Dimond.
Cleaning up their world
Sixth-graders form Green Leaf Society to tackle trash problem

Tristen Tritt sprints across the playground, a plastic bag waving from her hand as she calls to her friends. "Over here! There's a ton over here!" she says.

Four other sixth-graders join her at the fence surrounding South Baker Intermediate School, where they sift through leaves to pluck out candy wrappers and other trash — their hands kept clean by plastic gloves.

Every lunch recess, the Green Leaf Society can be seen out on the playground gathering litter or in the library for a meeting or poster-making session.

The group originated as an idea from Cadence Penning, and soon the other girls joined the cause.

Tristen was impacted by an image of all the trash found inside a bird, and how sea turtles can't tell the difference between a jellyfish and a plastic bag floating in the water.

"We don't want this to happen to harmless animals," Tristen said.

On this Monday the five girls fill their bags with yellow strips of caution tape, assorted candy wrappers and whatever else blew in over the weekend.

"We don't want this to happen to harmless animals," Tristen said.

The students inspired people because they've been picking up trash," Tristen said.

Although Society member Lily O'Kane-Aguirre is moving to a new town soon, she plans to continue her work on the environment.

"I'm going to do it at my new school," she said.

And these sixth-graders, who recently toured Baker Middle School where they'll attend next year, already plan to don gloves and pick up litter there, as well.

But before they move on, they plan to talk to the other students at South Baker and hopefully get more involved in the mission.

"Hopefully they'll pass it on to the new fourth-graders," said Kalyn Busciglio.

In March, the Green Leaf Society members practiced public speaking when they gave a presentation to the South Baker student council to explain their mission and ask permission to hang informational posters in the hallways. The council also suggested they made a video to present at a future assembly.

"It was scary — I wish I'd practiced more," Cadence said with a smile.

"I was shaking," Tristen said.

But now their posters decorate the halls of South Baker, and they even have a few fundraisers in mind.

First on their list of expenses?

Rubber gloves for picking up trash.

Students, earn honors at state FFA convention

Baker High School students recently participated in the state FFA conference, and the following students and staff earned these honors:

- Oregon FFA State President for 2017-2018: Kourtney Lehman
- 1st Place Sheep Production Proficiency: Augustena Cook
- 1st Place Forage Production Proficiency: Gabriel Rosales
- Ag Mechanics Design/Fabrication Proficiency Finalist: Alec Slater
- 1st Place Agriculture Landscape Photography: Lexie Harrell
- 1st Place Agriculture Mechanics Photography: Tanner Ferren
- State Competitors in Agriculture Marketing: Bryson Thomas, Augustena Cook, Christina Maldonado
- 3rd Place State Extemporaneous Speaking: Kourtney Lehman
- HH Gibson Scholarship Recipient: Kourtney Lehman
- Bronze Secretary's Book: Augustena Cook
- Bronze Treasurer's Book: Duncan Mackenzie
- Superior Chapter Award: Baker FFA
- National Chapter Application Gold Ranking: Ashlee Brinton
- State FFA Degree Recipients: Alec Slater, Christina Maldonado, Alicia Maldonado, Gabriel Rosales, Augustena Cook, Duncan Mackenzie, Jake Bobo
- Administrator of the Year: Jerry Peacock
- Honorary State FFA Degree: Bibiana Gifft
Kindergarten students at Brooklyn Primary put their creativity to work in creating race cards made out of toilet paper tubes for the annual TP Derby.

During spring break 2017, a group of students from Baker High School, along with BHS vice principal Chelsea Hurliman and Baker Middle School teacher Nicole Sullivan, traveled through Italy, Monaco, France, and Spain. The trip was booked through E.F. Tours (E.F. stands for Education First). Hurliman and Sullivan organize international trips for high school students, and every other year they take middle schoolers to Washington, D.C. and New York City. The next middle school trip will be during spring break in 2018. Future international trips are Costa Rica in 2018 and a World War II tour in the summer of 2019.

Fifth grade students at South Baker Intermediate put their knowledge on display at their first Expeditionary Learning Symposium in March. Family and friends were invited to spend an afternoon at school listening to students give presentations about various ecosystems. Students chose to make display boards, dioramas, or game boards to showcase their understanding of ecosystems. Ryann Paulsen, pictured above, created a 3-D diorama of the grassland ecosystem.

Baker Middle School's Oregon Battle of the Books regional team included Adrian Allen, Salena Bott, Dani Taylor-Oberlander and Jose Arenas-Castillo. Also on the team was Karl Bowman.

Spotlights
Happenings from around the district
Welders take top spots in state, local contests

Paige Burchard was one of only three young women competing in the SkillsUSA competition at Linn-Benton Community College that drew more than 200 competitors from schools across Oregon in early March.

But facing a mostly-male field of competitors didn’t bother her — the Baker High School senior simply set about welding in the category of Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW), senior division.

Paige's work placed first overall in SMAW — despite the fact that she didn't have time to finish her sample.

"It was awesome," Paige said of the experience.

She first discovered welding during a "Introduction to Ag" class her freshman year at Baker High School. Now, as a senior, she spends two hours every afternoon in Advanced Welding through Baker Technical Institute — and she can be found out in the shop outside of class time, too.

"When you walk into that shop, it's just you, doing what you love doing," she said.

Also at the Linn-Benton competition, BHS students Isaac Futney placed first in Gas Metal Arc Welding and Aisaw Nelson was first in the underclassmen division of SMAW.

The Baker SkillsUSA team also put on an invitational welding competition at BHS on March 10, drawing 28 welders from Crane, Ontario, Treasure Valley Community College and Baker. Nearly all the top placers were Baker students:

• Ethan Miller, first, dual (SMAW and GMAW)
• Jared Rammer, second, dual
• Paige Burchard, third, dual
• Caistyn Brooks, first, SMAW
• Derrett Gwynn, second, SMAW
• Keyan Woodcock, third, SMAW
• Brandon Hughes, first, GMAW
• Curtis Colvard, second, GMAW

The contest was supported by Oxarc, Norco, Behlen, Marvin and Sears.

Long-range plan committee begins tours

Group of 25 is touring district buildings, as well as other schools in the region

By Kevin Cassidy
Baker SJ Board Chair

The Baker School District Long-range Facilities Planning process is underway.

We believe the school district's facility question has met its time for a solution. As you might imagine, a process to address this question will take some planning, effort, time and a lot of input!

In February, a committee comprised of 25 community members, including district staff, began meeting to review information regarding the state of our facilities and discussing what is in the best interest of our community to develop a Long-range Facilities Plan (LRFP). This plan will be an active document that provides information and structure to the district as well as a course of action for the next 10 years in regard to essential facilities upgrades and potential funding sources.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, the district has received a $25,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Education to help offset the costs of this endeavor and has contracted with Wenaha Group Inc. to help facilitate the process.

The committee will be meeting about twice a month for the next 10 months to review and discuss key data about the district, including population studies, student enrollment, building capacity, national standards and economic impact.

Members will also be taking building tours of Baker School District facilities, participating in site visits at other school districts and engaging in various meetings with staff, students and community.

In addition to the Long-range Facilities Planning Committee, the district has also started gathering information from building staff Site Teams. These groups are currently conducting site-based evaluations regarding current and future facility needs from their “boots on the ground” perspective as it relates to educational impact, student achievement and programmatic efficiency.

The goal of this process is to provide valuable input to the committee about what the needs are from most critical to best practice. These teams will also be touring Baker School District facilities along with outside district visits to help provide an informed perspective. Staff member groups will also be meeting several times over the next few months to help in prioritization of facility need and even assist with high-level conceptual planning.

Education is the foundation of our community and it is extremely important for us to foster an equitable and inclusive process that adequately represents our greater Baker community. We hope that you will watch our newsletter and website for opportunities to be involved in the discussion about the exciting transformations we can make at our facilities to better serve our students for years to come.

Workshop on poverty set for May 5

A workshop aimed to "Build a Strong Workforce and Reduce Poverty in Baker County" is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 5 at Harvest Church, 3720 Birch St., Baker City.

The program is sponsored by Baker Technical Institute, Building Healthy Families and the Department of Human Services.

Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP by April 25 by emailing christopher.m.evans@state.or.us or tammy.pierce@bakersd.org. There is no cost to attend.

Attendees will learn more about poverty and the ways it affects Baker County, including poverty-related demographics, trends and data.

The workshop format includes a "poverty simulation experience" designed to help participants understand what it might be like to live in a typical low-income family trying to survive from month to month.

In the simulation, some participants are "resource staffers" while the rest are individuals experiencing poverty who try to provide for basic necessities and shelter during four 15-minute "weeks."

Following the simulation exercise, participants will have a debriefing period to talk about the experience and what they learned about the challenges facing those living in poverty.

The workshop also includes developing action plans to address the impacts of poverty in the areas of employment, housing and services for youth.
A living, swimming science lab
Aquaponics program at BTI applied down to kindergarten

B urke Smejkal's students tend to peek outside the classroom, trying to catch a glimpse of the tilapia swimming around the numerous tanks housed next door, and the fresh vegetables that grow year-round in a system that uses fish waste as fertilizer.

That curiosity is just what Burke wants in his science classes, especially the aquaponics program he started four years ago that is now part of Baker Technical Institute.

"Setting up environments that provoke curiosity is essential," he said.

His goal with aquaponics, he says, has always been to integrate science, math and food security.

And he said it takes three components to really get a buy-in from students:

- Cross-disciplinary (applying multiple subjects, such as science and math)
- Part of a real-world problem (food security and how to grow food)
- Daily applications of hands-on learning

Add all those together and he said students are engaged and using science, math and engineering skills.

Students must be a sophomor or older to take aquaponics, so they have a background of biology and life cycles.

"Those are advanced concepts — then they can come out here and see it," Burke said.

He originally started with a purchased system and since has helped his high school students build additional systems, one of which is housed in Jason Todd's kindergarten room at Brooklyn Primary School.

Burke calls the system a "lab in action."

"That's a constant lab — you never have to boot it up," he said.

At the start of the year, Jason uses the tank to teach kindergartners responsibility with the job of feeding fish. Then, throughout the year he uses it for science discussions.

"It's like having a built-in science station that lives and breathes in my classroom," Jason said. "It is always abundantly providing awesome teachable moments.

In the spring, Jason starts up the growing bed along with studies of plants.

"We start talking about how the fish can benefit the plants, and how the plants can benefit the fish," Jason said.

They use the fish to inspire art projects, and the first leaves of lettuce feed the classroom pets.

"And when it all gets mature enough, we have a big salad harvest where we harvest, wash, dry, and make our own salads," he said.

Burke said the study of aquaponics can be made applicable to various grade levels.

"Every kid likes taking care of something that's alive," Burke said.

And aquaponics is just one program at BTI. Many of the programs are capable of being applied to young learners of all ages, to allow them to learn with their hands and develop passions for skills that lead to college and career readiness as they progress.

"The real reward comes when we hear from a former student who credits their success to something that sparked an interest in them that they were exposed to through our programs," Dalton said.