

## In life and in the classroom, coaching skills pay off for this Camas teacher

The same skills she uses as a “life coach” for adults, she also practices in her first grade classroom at Helen Baller. Teacher Colleen Hord couples the art of listening with the skill of “knowing how to ask the right questions” to help students and adults effectively

problem-solve issues and tackle challenges. “The very art of questioning is what has helped me be successful in the classroom,” she said. Hord says she focuses on higher level questioning and then listening to what the students are really saying. “It’s like listening between the lines so to

speaking - and building a strong trusting relationship,” she said. “I guess you could say coaching students is a lot about respecting the individual and knowing they want to succeed,” she added.

Helen Baller Principal Jerry Moss says Hord’s utilization of cognitive coaching in the classroom has translated to better, more productive and meaningful work for the students. “Since Colleen has implemented coaching into her daily classroom life, her first graders have learned to really ask and answer questions for themselves,” said Moss. “She coaches them through assignments and helps them to internalize the skill. It’s because of that her students own their work,” he added.

Hord has been teaching for 23 years and found she was utilizing many coaching strategies without even

realizing it! But for the past two years, she has been purposeful about using a professional coaching framework in the classroom, which she adapted from the International Coaching Federation. She has turned the successful framework into a

dynamic workshop that she teaches in the evenings and on weekends. She also received certification in a two-year coaching program that trained her to do group coaching over the telephone, mostly talking with women who are experiencing tremendous stress in their lives.

In her spare time, Hord also

works for neighboring school districts teaching instructional coaching and team building. Her focus is on health and wellness. “Teaching is a tough business, and teachers need to find ways to lessen job stressors and have a life outside the classroom,” she said. “I wish someone had coached me in the area of personal wellness and balance when I first started teaching.” To

share her strategies with her teaching colleagues around the globe, Hord is working on a book called “Unfrazzled,” which she is hoping

to publish in the very near future. “From individuals to corporations to school children, I believe coaching skills help people become more focused, motivated and productive in a variety of life’s situations,” she said.



*Helen Baller teacher Colleen Hord uses cognitive coaching skills in her first grade classroom to help students problem solve and achieve success.*

*“She coaches students through assignments and helps them to internalize the skill...” Jerry Moss, Principal*

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## Students to design stone sculpture for local artist

*Skyridge art students will provide the design specs for the carving of this stone by a local artist.*



Students at Skyridge Middle School are providing design specifications for a stone sculpture that will be carved by accomplished local artist Michael Monroe and then auctioned off at the Camas Educational Foundation auction next fall.

Teacher Gail Welsh said Monroe provided the students with a banded Alabaster stone, along with design guidelines. All the art students will be given a chance to design a 3-D stone sculpture, showing the best characteristics of the natural stone. Monroe will pick six finalists and the final decision will be voted on by the art students at Skyridge.

Earlier in the year, Monroe spoke to the students about being a “business-minded artist.”

## High school “Community Connections” March 29

Patrons wishing to take a behind-the-scenes look at today’s high school classrooms will get the opportunity the morning of March 29. That’s the day Camas High School will sponsor its third Community Connections program, where adults “shadow” students to their morning classes, participate in discussions and activities, and then debrief during lunch with the principal.

CHS leadership students are busy sending invitation letters and making phone calls.

Approximately 100 guests are expected to attend the event. For additional information or if you would like to attend Community Connections, contact Mary Weishaar at 817-4441, ext. 7212, or Lori Simpson at 817-4400, ext. 2016.



## Successful middle school philosophy connects students in a powerful way

Young teens embarking on their middle school experience are often

burdened with awkward insecurity, self-consciousness and vague ambiguity about the road they will travel in life. But at Skyridge Middle School, caring staff members and a core

value system help 759 young teens feel connected, focused and successful as they define who they are and what they want to become. Skyridge Middle School employs a proven philosophy that helps break the stereotypical barriers for teens and addresses their needs in a more personalized way.

According to Ray Bell, who is in his third year as Principal of Skyridge, several factors contribute to a successful middle school experience. At Skyridge, those concepts include core teacher teams that have a common planning time and take responsibility for the learning and

involvement of a specific group of students; small student communities

where teens feel like they belong and are recognized for their contributions and successes; and a shared leadership structure where all staff members have a say in the important decisions that characterize their school.



*Blake Mulholland enjoys quiet reading time in class. Pictured below is Deborah Sutton. Both students attend Skyridge Middle School.*

### Teacher teams assure personalization

This concept brings teams of four teachers together to teach the core subject areas. With names like Team Infinity, Team Olympian, or Mystery Islanders, the four-member teacher

teams become responsible for about 125 students who they supervise all year. The teachers have a common planning time to develop integrated classroom curriculum, meet with students and parents, and discuss improvement plans for those who might be struggling. “These teachers really become an

*Continued on inside...*



*“THESE TEACHERS REALLY BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE STUDENTS’ LIVES...” RAY BELL, SKYRIDGE PRINCIPAL*

## The middle school experience

*Continued from front page*

integral part of the students' lives," said Bell. The teams are carefully balanced, bringing together a variety of skills and teaching styles. "Sometimes it's a meshing of more traditional teaching methods with those who use more progressive practices," Bell explained. The core teams also work closely with the "Star" instructors who teach elective courses like band, choir, art and technology.

### *Student communities bring sense of belonging*

Each student at Skyridge belongs to a community – each named after a mountain. The students stay within those communities throughout the seventh and eighth grades, moving with the same groups of teachers and classmates. The purpose of the communities is to assure that students feel connected to school and develop a sense of belonging, pride and ownership. Bell said it was necessary to move teachers throughout the building to make the community idea work, but the trade-off was well worth the effort. "The communities and their names are definitely an established part of the Skyridge culture," said Bell.

### *Shared leadership guides decisions*

Except for budget and personnel issues, all teachers at Skyridge have a say in decisions that affect their school. Called Shared Leadership, the concept assures that at least 75% of the staff are supportive of a decision before it is adopted. Representatives meet every other week and take all agenda items back to their colleagues for feedback. Bell implemented the concept when he came to the school, believing it gives teachers more ownership, promotes higher staff

***"It takes a special person to connect with middle school students." Ray Bell, Principal***

morale and contributes to less burn-out among staff. "All criteria for making decisions points to what's best for the kids," said Bell. "There is no way we could accomplish all that we do without this total shared leadership philosophy," he added.

### *Choosing the right fit for middle school*

Bell says he believes his most important job is seeking out and hiring teachers "who feel truly blessed to be middle school teachers. Few people are qualified to teach middle school," he said. "It takes a special person to connect with middle school students – they are changing so fast



*Stephen Denton (left) and William Harvey care for the pet hamster who lives in their middle school classroom.*

and they don't really know what they want to look like or be like. You have to love kids that are not the easiest to love at this age," he added. Bell has personally hired about 60% of the Skyridge teachers and believes the staff is one of the best anywhere.

"They are professional, hard workers, supportive of one another, and highly skilled," he said. One of Bell's personal missions is to help improve the way people look at teachers. "I want people to know these teachers are professionals who have the answers to important questions," he said. "They deserve respect and consideration," he added.



*Mel Cardon, center, is flanked by fellow board members Casey O'Dell, John Hagensen, Dave Lattanzi and Marcia Johnson during a recognition reception for the 30-year veteran of the Camas School Board.*

## After 30 years of service, Cardon still committed to serving kids and community

Longtime board member Mel Cardon was honored in January by current and former board members, past superintendents and community friends who packed the Liberty Middle School library to offer their thanks and appreciation for his years of dedicated service. The recognition was a complete surprise to Cardon as was the presentation of a large, framed photo collage that included photographs of Cardon at various times during his service.

After each board member took an opportunity to share their feelings about Mel's service, Board President Marcia Johnson opened the floor for comments from the audience. A tearful and emotional Cardon listened as those with whom he has worked for nearly three decades spoke about his quiet wisdom and how his decisions and actions are always guided by what is best for Camas kids. Assistant Superintendent Tanis Knight praised Mel for "always being the anchor,"

admired and respected by parents, staff and community. Former superintendent Milt Dennison joked about Mel never being afraid to show his emotional side. "If I saw Mel with tears rolling down his cheeks, I knew I could get away with it too!" said Dennison. Former Board members Gail Gregg and Ted Morris and former superintendent Dick Mariotti also shared fond memories of Cardon. A Camas High School graduate, Cardon said his service through the years has always been driven by a desire to give back to the community in which he was raised.

### **WANT TO GET SCHOOL NEWS ELECTRONICALLY?**

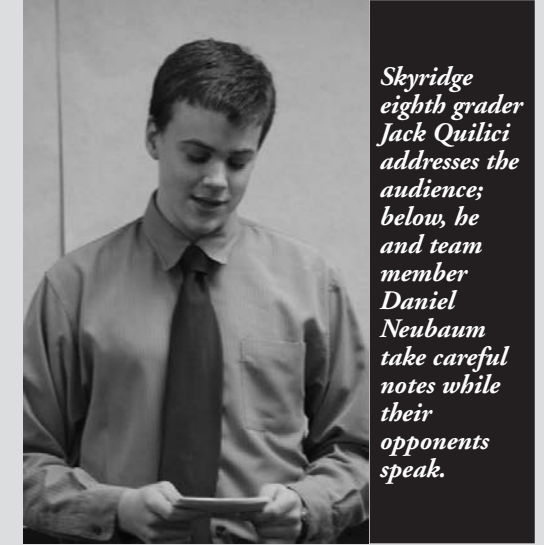
*It's easy to sign up for "Camas Connections," an electronic monthly newsletter from the Camas School District. Simply email [doreen.mckercher@camas.wednet.edu](mailto:doreen.mckercher@camas.wednet.edu) or check out the Camas website at [www.camas.wednet.edu](http://www.camas.wednet.edu)*

## Energetically debating energy

Wind, coal, oil, solar, geothermal or hydro? Which energy source is the most environmentally friendly, safe, and cost-efficient? Skyridge eighth graders debated the pros and cons of each source during the annual eighth grade debates. Teams of students spent more than three weeks researching various sources of energy and building their case that they would argue before a judge and a room full of their classmates.

According to Skyridge teacher Jeanette Manwell, who helped coordinate the debates, the students were well prepared and enthusiastic about the event. Many of the boys donned neck ties and the girls wore dresses and professional attire. Each team member was given two minutes to state their case, followed by "arguments" for and against various energy sources.

The debates have been an academic tradition at Skyridge for a long time. In fact, Manwell remembers debating when she was an eighth grade student at Skyridge in 1990!



*Skyridge eighth grader Jack Quilici addresses the audience; below, he and team member Daniel Neubaum take careful notes while their opponents speak.*



*"Each year, the level of preparation and student expertise become more evident and impressive," said Assistant Superintendent Tanis Knight. "The eighth grade debates are an example of an authentic performance assessment that really prepares students for the type of work they will encounter at the high school level."*

## Camas "grandmas" honored for years of service

Two Foster Grandparents from Helen Baller Elementary were honored in January for their longtime service in the program. Edna Janson



was awarded the President's Call to Service Lifetime Award. "Grandma Edna" has served in the program for 25 years, logging 5,934 hours!

Wilma McIntosh, also a Foster Grandparent at Helen Baller, received the President's Gold Service Award for contributing more than 3,112 hours of service. Claudia Dalton, Director of the Foster Grandparent Program at ESD 112 praised both women for their love of the children and dedication.

The program pairs Foster Grandparents with children, mainly in school settings, to help and mentor children of all ranges of abilities.

*Grandma Edna Janson poses with Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard at a recent recognition.*