

Welcome to the Boones crew

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Boones Ferry welcomes five new teachers to the district and the BFPS family

The ranks of West Linn-Wilsonville School District teachers continues to grow as the community heads into the 2014-15 school year. The district added 29 full-time equivalent teacher positions during the last school year and created a budget for 2014-15 that allowed it not only to maintain those positions but also to add an additional 16 FTE.

Then, over the summer, increased enrollment prompted administrators to fund an additional six FTE, according to Kathe Monroe, the district's director of human resources.

Those numbers are impressive for a district like WL-WV, which is still recovering from cuts to teaching positions during the recent recession. The enthusiasm of the people behind those numbers, though, is even more impressive.



Photo Credit: SPOKESMAN PHOTO: KATE HOOTS - Five teachers at Boones Ferry Primary School this year are new to the West Linn-Wilsonville School District. They bring different levels of experience teaching and come from varied backgrounds. All of them agree that Boones

Ferry is a good place to be. From left: Whitney Sweet, Nicole Henderson, Amy Sebastian, Sue Bynum and Cris Davis stand outside the school they're happy to call home.

New faces — students and teachers alike — filled the halls and classrooms of Wilsonville schools as classes resumed at the primary, middle and high school levels Sept. 2. Five of the freshest faces belong to a group of recently hired teachers at Boones Ferry Primary School.

Sue Bynum, Boones Ferry's new PE/Wellness teacher, previously taught first and sixth grades in Pendleton, and she moved from there to Wilsonville, with her husband and two high-school-aged children, just a few weeks ago.

"We were looking for opportunities for our kids as well as ourselves, beyond a small town," she said.

After learning that her husband would be able to work at his job remotely, the family made a "top three" list of cities around that state. That list included Wilsonville. The next step for the family was to start looking at schools.

"I didn't have a job until two weeks ago, but we had to choose, and we chose Wilsonville," Bynum said. "I cannot believe I got this job so quickly. It's a dream job, especially in this district."

Bynum's children, a freshman and a sophomore, both will attend Wilsonville High School.

"We feel really lucky and excited to be here in the district," she said.

Second-grade teacher Whitney Sweet traveled from farther away than Pendleton to find his Boones Ferry job. He arrived in Wilsonville after teaching at an international school in Indonesia.

"It's a really hard place to leave," he said. "But I found a great place to teach."

A resident of North Portland, Sweet is excited to be working in Wilsonville.

"I'm really excited about this district. They really believe in caring about students," he said. "They match that with this idea of excellence. This district is doing exciting things — it's really inspiring."

Sweet was particularly motivated by the district's "growth mindset," he said, and he intends to carry that theme into his classroom.

"We can achieve things with determination and courage," he said. "Those things are really inspiring to me."

Sweet has set an inspiring goal for his classroom.

“It’s definitely a big goal of mine that at the end of the school year — and hopefully before then — all 21 of my students love school,” he said. “We can have whole classes that love coming to school.”

Sweet’s new colleague Cris Davis brings a different kind of international teaching experience to the job. Davis, a first-grade teacher, previously taught kindergarten for two years at a French immersion school in Portland. He feels comfortable making the switch from kindergarten to first grade. The bigger change for him, he said, will be switching from teaching in French to teaching in English.

“That’s been a bit of an eye-opener slash stress reliever for me,” he said.

Davis speaks Spanish in addition to French, and he anticipated using his language skills at Boones Ferry.

“I look forward to the opportunity to use my Spanish skills to support (students’) learning and to support their parents’ engagement in the school,” he said.

Davis lives in Portland, but he expects to become a part of the Boones Ferry and Wilsonville communities.

“Coming to a school that has such a community feel among teachers and staff will make me feel a part of it,” he said. “I’m committed to being a part of the school community, even though I don’t live here.”

Seven-year veteran teacher Amy Sebastian may be new to Boones Ferry, but she already is a part of the larger WL-WV community. The fifth-grade teacher has two children attending WL-WV schools, a junior at West Linn High School and an eighth-grader at Athey Creek Middle School, where her husband Joel is principal.

Sebastian said one difference between her previous school and Boones Ferry is the schools’ relative size.

“It’s bigger,” she said of Boones Ferry. “There’s a lot of support for teachers. The facilities are newer. This one is beautiful.”

Sebastian already feels support from the community, she said.

“I can see the difference,” she said. “We have PE twice a week and music and Spanish.”

Like her colleagues, Sebastian said that she is looking forward to becoming a part of the community.

“I’ve sent letters home to the parents and the kids,” she said. “I know they’re wondering who I am. I think relationships are the most important thing, with the kids and the parents.”

“The most important piece is building community,” kindergarten teacher Nicole Henderson agreed, “letting them know they have a place where they can be nurtured and loved on.”

Henderson recently received her master’s degree in teaching from George Fox University and accepted her first teaching position, at Boones Ferry. She lives in Wilsonville, where she moved recently, and already has come to appreciate the level of support she’s receiving on the job.

“I’ve had my teams around me, offering support and ideas,” she said. “Just that collaboration has been really good. It’s a little overwhelming when you first walk into it.”

She plans to similarly support and encourage her students.

“I can make myself relatable to them. This is new to me too,” she said. “That kind of vulnerability with kids is what establishes trust. I’m not going to throw rules and procedures at them. They’re going to be part of establishing that.”

All five of the teachers voiced appreciation for the support they’ve received so far from administrators. Even more important, they said, was the support shown for students.

“I feel really fortunate to work in a place where administrators, support staff and teachers believe everything is possible if you open their world up to them,” Bynum said. “I love that mindset of ‘set your goals high, don’t give up on your dreams.’”

A college basketball player, Bynum’s own dreams once included playing in the Olympics. She doesn’t consider it a failure that she didn’t meet that goal, because working toward it made her a better person.

“Goals help you achieve more than you would have without them,” she said. “You have to let kids reach as far as they can dream. I like that attitude around here.”

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