

WASD Advisory Council Holds Fall Meeting

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—BY WARREN HOWELER—



Wyalusing Valley Elementary School Guidance Counselor Yvonne Kelly talks about the district's Xello career program, which is demonstrated by sixth-grade student Storey Newell. Photos by Warren Howeler

Members of the Wyalusing Area School District's advisory council held their first meeting for the 2021-2022 school year on Thursday, Oct. 7 at the Wyalusing Valley Elementary School.

Wyalusing School Superintendent Dr. Jason Bottiglieri kicked off the meeting by discussing the district's desire to expand upon the relationships that it has with local businesses.

"We want to give kids career opportunities," he said. "We want to give them insight. We want to give them some experience."

At Wyalusing, a large percentage of students enter the career field after graduating from high school.

"Typically, more than 50 percent of our graduates go right into careers and then we have somewhere between 30 to 40 percent that typically go into that college focus area," he said.

The relationship that the district is working on with local businesses and the opportunities that those businesses provide

"really is crucial to our students," said Bottiglieri.



Wyalusing Area School Superintendent Dr. Jason Bottiglieri speaks about the importance of the partnership between local businesses and the school district.

“The employment scenario that currently exists in the state, in the country, and our area is at the most unique phase that I think I have ever seen,” he said. “So, we know that this relationship and this partnership that we are working to establish is even more crucial now than it ever has been.”

Bottiglieri noted that he still has a vision of creating a career counseling center at Wyalusing Valley High School “where businesses can come in and have a dedicated space to work with students, to talk with students, (and) to engage with them.”

From there, it was time to demonstrate the district’s Xello career program for those in attendance.

That demonstration was presented by Wyalusing Valley Elementary School Guidance Counselor Yvonne Kelly and sixth-grade student Storey Newell.

According to the information presented, Xello helps students create “their own unique roadmap for future success through self-knowledge, exploration and planning.”



Ethan Lewis

The program is used by students in grades six through 12.

“This is going to help match (students) to careers based on (their) likes and dislikes,” said Kelly.

The students also have an opportunity to update their data within the program throughout the next few years, according to WVHS Guidance Counselor Brock Edwards.

“We recommend that the kids do that because as you get older, things definitely change,” he said.

The next presenter was WVHS junior Ethan Lewis, who is working on integrating computer science in the district’s afterschool program for students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

“Computer science and tech is one of the most important skills in the modern world and is one of the (largest) growing careers today,” he said.

The program within the after-school initiative will begin in the winter semester.

“(With) the program, I plan on showing demonstrations of what programs can do, how computers talk to each other and showing the kids how they can make their very own block-based programs on the Massachusetts



Karen Long

Institute of Technology’s website Scratch,” he said. “Programming is so much easier than many think and to explain the basics at a younger age makes the more advanced skills come quicker.”

Matt Cobb gave the next presentation, which focused on the eighth-grade STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) class at WVHS that he has taught for the past five years.

Every eighth-grade student attends this program for nine weeks.

“It is not a lot of time, but it is enough time to give them three or four good projects with each group,” he said. “Every nine weeks, we switch to a different group of kids.”

The entire STEM class focuses on problem-solving, according to Cobb.

“For example, our first project that we always start with is a mousetrap-powered car,” he said. “Every year, there is a group of students where they follow the instructions. They build this beautiful car and ‘we’re going to win this competition to see whose car is going to go the furthest’ and they put it down, they let go and their car doesn’t move. That’s really when the whole problem-solving process starts.”



Wyalusing Valley High School teacher Matt Cobb talks about the school's eighth-grade STEM class. Photo by Warren Howeler

One of the topics that the students are discussing as part of the class is alternative energy.

“We’ve got groups of kids researching the pros and cons of different alternative energies, and the costs, and they’re going to be making models, whether it is a windmill or a geothermal model or a biomass plant,” he said.

Bottiglieri then provided an update on the upgrade project being undertaken at the WVHS library.

“The (initial construction) has been completed,” he said. “There are a few components that remain to this initial phase, some cosmetic things that we are waiting on because the supply chain has been impacted a little bit across the country. We’re waiting on one or two pieces of the mechanical (aspect).”

In the meantime, district officials have met with Hunt Engineers to develop new modules for the project based on the work that remains to be done.

“In that first phase, we took parts of module one, module four and module three to get all the cosmetic, all the upgraded lighting, ceiling tiles and HVAC work done and separated,” he said. “Now (Hunt Engineers) are breaking (the remaining work) into essentially two modules that they are going to come back in early November to the buildings and grounds committee of the school board and share that next step design.”

The library project has been funded to date through donations and contributions raised by the Wyalusing Area Education Foundation.

The HVAC upgrade of the library space was paid for by the district.

Finally, the district’s career coach, Karen Long, shared her plans for the current school year.

Among some of those plans is a college fair that will be held at the high school on Oct. 20.

“Currently, we have 23 colleges, trade school (and) military representatives coming to the old gym to talk to the eighth- through 12th-grade students,” she said.

Long said she is working to secure one more entrepreneur for a panel that will be held on Nov. 4 at the high school.

In addition, Long has begun planning this year’s career fair at WVHS, which is scheduled to be held on Nov. 18.

Other activities that are being planned to take place throughout the school year include a variety of mini-panels that focus on a specific career that is chosen through student interest; a “branches of the military” seminar that discusses careers in the military” and the mobile oil learning unit.