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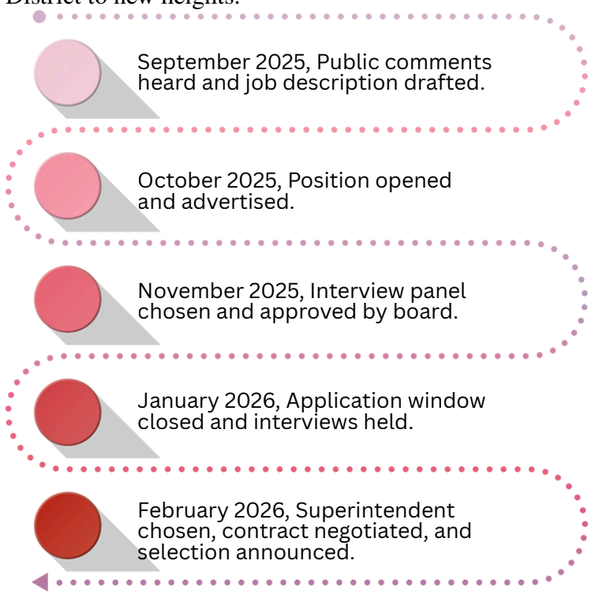
The Search for a Superintendent

Have you found yourself wondering what Grant School District 3 will do without Superintendent Mark Witty? You will be thankful to know there is a plan, and the school board is currently advertising for the position!

In 2023, Witty agreed to come out of retirement, accepting a three-year contract with Grant School District 3. With 33 years of experience, including 12 years as Principal of Grant Union High School and five years as Superintendent for Grant School District 3, Witty returned to bring stability to the district. "I have genuinely enjoyed coming out of retirement to serve Grant SD #3 over the past three years. This work has given me the meaningful opportunity to reconnect with students, staff, and community members—both past and present."

While many staff and students have been hoping this third year would never come, the search for a new superintendent has begun. The board began the process by opening the September board meeting to public comments regarding what qualities, qualifications, and duties people would like to see in the next superintendent. This information was then used to create a job description, widely advertising the position. A panel of parents, staff members from each school, and local community members has been formed in order to help the school board sort through applications and conduct interviews. This panel includes Mitch Wilson, Renee Hollowell, Kristal Hansen, Brad Armstrong, Stacy Durych, Andrea Combs, Janine Attlesperger, Mike Shaffer, Shanna Northway, Bryanna Gabbard, Bree Waley, and Gary Vanderstelt.

Applications will be accepted until early January, at which time the panel will meet to review applications, making their recommendations to the board. Interviews will be held with both the screening panel and the school board, as well as a tour of district facilities, student interactions, and a meet and greet time, followed by an executive session board meeting to determine the top candidate. The board will then negotiate a contract and introduce the next superintendent in February. Witty is excited for the future of Grant School District 3. "Our board and staff remain dedicated to fully implementing the Grant SD #3 Strategic Plan, and I am confident that the next superintendent will continue advancing the District to new heights."



PROSPECTOR PRIDE

December 2025/January 2026 *Volume 3 Issue 3*

A publication of Grant School District 3, Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, Humbolt Elementary School and Seneca Elementary School

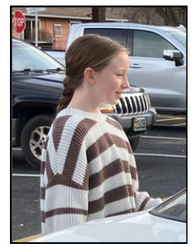
Humbolt Elementary Student Ambassador Program

We're excited to introduce the new Student Ambassador Program at Humbolt Elementary School, available this year for all fifth- and sixth-grade students. Each month, six students (two from the fifth grade and four from the sixth grade) are nominated by their teachers as Student Ambassadors of the Month. These students are recognized for consistently demonstrating strong leadership skills and serving as positive role models for their peers.

As part of their job description, each Student Ambassador supports our school community by acting as peer mediators for younger students during recess, greeting staff and students by name as they arrive in the mornings, and assisting in the cafeteria. October Student Ambassadors included: Elliana Griffin, Carmen Mollineux, Cleome McKnab, Riley Hansen, Devine Seton, and Sydney Reitz. In addition to their daily duties around campus, Hanson and Seton found themselves recording ads at local radio station KJDY, promoting bus safety awareness and inviting local veterans to the Veterans Day Assembly.

November Student Ambassadors included Owen Armstrong, Gene Fisher, Daniel Palmer, Graham McCosker, Ginny Clarry, and Ava Pattee. In addition to their daily duties around campus, these ambassadors joined the Grant Union Jr/Sr High School leadership team in hosting the Veterans Day Breakfast and Assembly on Monday, November 10. The entire Humbolt Elementary student body arrived by bus in time to participate in the assembly.

The Student Ambassador program is going very well, preparing fifth- and sixth-grade students for independence, responsibility, leadership, and serving as role models. They practice important work skills, including time management, checking in with supervisors, and customer service, as they each follow a weekly schedule and report to their assigned shift. We are excited to see what opportunities present themselves around campus and the community for the next ambassadors. It's a great day to be a Prospector!



Left: Ginny Clarry welcomes students to school in the morning, Right: Gene Fisher and Owen Armstrong clean the cafeteria tables after lunch.

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Shout out to Mrs. Hunt

Thank you, Mrs. Hunt for your smile and those cute facial expressions that greet me every morning and throughout the day!

-Grandma Mary, Humbolt Reading Group Volunteer

GU Announces Students of the Month!

Congratulations to the September students of the month: Sawyer Hunt, Rhett Cox, Summer Berry, Rayne Thomas, Abril Ceja, and Benjamin Finley. Thanks for your hard work and perseverance!

-Grant Union Staff

Parent Swap Day

Thank you to all the parents who participated in our Parent Swap Day in Mrs. Anna's math class, stepping into their students' shoes, taking guided notes, tackling problems, and experiencing what learning math at GU is all about! Your energy and enthusiasm made the day unforgettable!

-Anna Field, Grant Union Math Teacher

Shout out to Mrs. Lamb

Thank you, Mrs. Lamb for being so willing to listen and try ideas for the sake of the student!

-Grandma Mary, Humbolt Reading Group Volunteer

Team Achieves Academic Success

The Prospector volleyball team was honored as one of the Oregon School Activity Association's (OSAA) 2025 Academic All-State Qualifying Volleyball Teams for 2A. These student athletes completed a rigorous volleyball season while still maintaining an average GPA of 3.71. We are so proud of each of these students and continue to be amazed by their grit, determination, and the ability to not only meet but exceed challenges. Congratulations Lady Pros!

-Coaches Mariah Moulton and Mandie McQuown

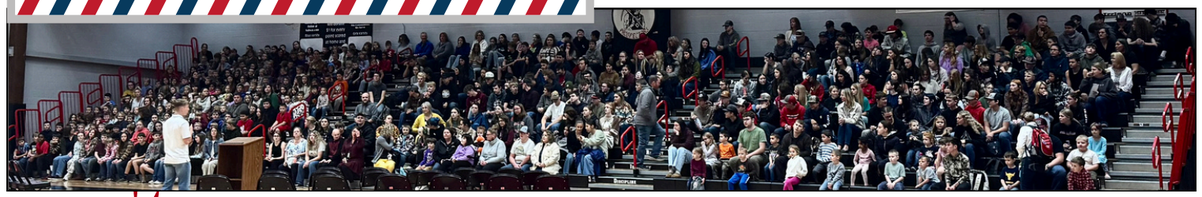
A Big Thank You to Beth Spell!

We are so grateful to Beth Spell for generously donating pumpkins for our 1st graders. Your kindness brought big smiles and a lot of excitement. Thank you for making their day extra special!

-Mrs. Houpt and Mrs. Boethin, Humbolt 1st Grade

We are so thankful for the veterans who took the time to join us for our Veterans Day breakfast, assembly, and classroom meet and greet on Monday, November 10th. We are truly grateful for your service, sacrifice, and the example you set for our students and community. Your presence made the day even more meaningful and reminded us all of the courage, dedication, and selflessness it takes to serve our country. We deeply appreciate you and everything you have done to protect our freedoms.

With heartfelt gratitude,
All of us at Grant School District 3



Shout Outs

Send a shout out to staff, students, or community members, by sending an email to shoutout@johndaysd.org.

AVID Program Helps Students Succeed

As parents and community members, we all want to see our students succeed. We want them to graduate from Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, not just with a diploma, but with the skills, confidence, and a clear plan for their future. That's exactly the mission of a powerful program we're implementing here at Grant Union called AVID.

What is AVID?

You may have heard the name, but what is it really? AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. It's a nonprofit, in-school program with a single mission: to close the opportunity gap by preparing all students for college, career, and life. It is not a remedial program, nor is it one for just top-tier students. AVID is designed for students who have the potential and determination to succeed but could benefit from a structured support system to help them reach their goals.

The AVID system provides a continuous path of support from seventh through twelfth-grade. The path grows with the student from middle school through graduation, but the skills learned will follow them beyond the classroom.

For Our Middle School Students (Grades 7-8):

AVID is all about building a strong foundation, helping students make the challenging leap from elementary school to the more demanding world of secondary education. For our seventh- and eighth-grade students, we are offering AVID strategies in two class periods. All seventh- and eighth-grade students have a class called Academic Success and a 5th period advisory class where they get subject-specific help or acceleration in problem-solving and study strategies. Some of the strategies we are focusing on are:

- Learning How to Learn: Students are clearly taught skills like note-taking, how to study for a test, and how to use a planner to manage their workload.
- Building Confidence: The classes provide a safe, environment where students are encouraged to ask questions and support each other.
- Connecting Actions to Goals: Students begin exploring their interests and learn to connect the work they do in class today to the future they want tomorrow.

For Our High School Students (Grades 9-12):

For the high school students, the focus shifts from foundation to future. Our goal is to ensure students not only graduate but have a practical, step-by-step, individualized plan to succeed in the path they choose. The 5th period advisory class is one pathway we use to implement AVID strategies.

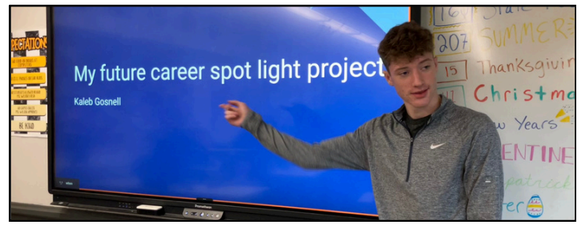
Our teachers receive training opportunities to learn best practices from AVID and the school-wide expectation is that these strategies will be implemented in our classes. AVID also supports the district's vision statement for our schools. We encourage students to:

- Access Rigorous Courses: All students are encouraged to take more challenging courses, like dual-credit classes, and their 5th period class provides the structured support they need to succeed in them.
- Actively Enter College and Career Pipeline: The program walks students and families through every step of the post-secondary process. This includes:
  - Researching colleges and careers.
  - Getting hands-on help with college and trade school applications.
  - Assistance with financial aid and scholarship applications (FAFSA).
- Improve Life Skills: Students practice public speaking, build resumes, conduct Socratic seminars, learn how to participate in a professional discussion, and hear from guest speakers in various career fields.

AVID is an Investment in Our Students

By teaching determination, self-advocacy, and the specific skills needed to succeed, AVID is changing lives. It gives our students the tools to navigate challenges and the confidence to seize opportunities. We are proud to watch our students build their own futures at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School.

For more information about the AVID program at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, feel free to contact Sonna Smith, acting AVID District Director, at sonnasmith@johndaysd.org.



Sophomores Genessa Ledbetter and Kaleb Gosnell present their future career goals to their class.

Alumni Spotlight: Isaac & Michelle Stinnett, Class of 1999

Michelle (Forsman) Stinnett, daughter of Rick and Barb Forsman, moved to Grant County in the 5th grade and quickly became a proud product of Grant School District 3. She attended Humbolt Elementary School, Blue Mountain Junior High, and Grant Union High School, where she spent eight formative years surrounded by dedicated educators and opportunities that helped shape her future.

Michelle says, "I had so many amazing teachers in my eight years of school in Grant County!" Several of her favorites stand out vividly in her memory: Mr. Houk "encouraged me to challenge myself, not be afraid to try something new or daunting, and then to work hard." Mr. Jones was "always so patient and truly cared about his students." Mr. Kimball, who "empowered me to be more confident in math and in all aspects of life." Mrs. Reynolds, who imparted a deep understanding of the English language that later served Michelle well in her legal career. Mr. Edigar, whose hands-on science lessons, from dissecting lobsters to sharing an extensive bug collection, fostered a lifelong love of learning and appreciation of science. Michelle also remembers how he always encouraged his students to exercise sound judgment, inside and outside the classroom. "Decades later, I can still hear his voice reminding me to 'Stay free and clean,' which is what he told all his students as he dismissed class every Friday."

Michelle was highly involved at Grant Union, participating in cheerleading, basketball, track, Science Club, student council, Travel Club, and FBLA, while also staying busy with planning for Homecoming and Prom each year. "I took advantage of every opportunity to be involved," she says. "That continued into college, law school, and even now as I participate in school activities for my children, serve on boards in my community, and grow my law practice."

Her high school years also included unforgettable travel experiences. As a sophomore, Michelle visited nearly a dozen European countries with a small group of Grant Union students and chaperones, including Hank and Roxie Lissman. "We made lifelong memories, and the trip sparked my desire to travel the world." Another highlight was traveling to Chicago for the national FBLA competition after winning a state event. "Traveling halfway across the country helped me appreciate small-town life but also fueled my desire to explore new places across our great country." Another fond memory was the Science Club trips. "Mr. Edigar planned some very memorable trips, including a spelunking trip to the Oregon Caves."

Serving on student council as a class representative and then student body vice-president also left a lasting impact on Michelle. She recalls one of her biggest life lessons—losing the race for student body president during her senior year. "I worked hard on my campaign and was devastated when I lost the election, but I learned that it's okay to try and fail, to learn from past failures, and to keep trying. I ended up serving as student body vice-president and enjoyed the role more than I believe I would have enjoyed serving as president. Everything happens for a reason; sometimes you need to be patient and wait for the right opportunity. Never give up."

Michelle is grateful for the many opportunities GUHS offered its students. One of her favorites was earning a scholarship for flying lessons, which was offered to one Grant Union student each year. She spent countless hours her senior year at the Grant County Airport learning to fly. "On the morning of my high school graduation, I took my first solo flight, with all of my family there to watch and cheer me on." She also enjoyed the opportunity to work part-time for local attorney, Dan Cronin, who sparked her interest in the legal profession and inspired her to pursue a career in the law.

After graduating from Grant Union in 1999, Michelle attended Southern Oregon University, where she continued cheerleading and earned a Bachelor of Science in Communication. Inspired by her high school trip to Europe, she spent a semester studying abroad at Winchester University in England. She graduated with honors from SOU in 2003 and returned to John Day, where she coached cheerleading at Grant Union for two years and remained active in the community.

During this time, she reconnected with Isaac Stinnett, son of Frank and Kathy Stinnett. Isaac also grew up in John Day, attended Humbolt Elementary, Blue Mountain Junior High, and Grant Union High School, graduating in 1999. He was involved in yearbook, wrestling, football, and assisting the cheerleading squad with stunts. The two married in 2005 and shortly thereafter moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where Isaac serves in the United States Army under USASOC. He looks forward to retiring soon and moving back West.

Their families blended even more when Isaac's brother, Elijah, and Michelle's sister, Jackie, later married as well, making family gatherings even more exciting!

Michelle worked as an insurance agent for several years before pursuing her dream of becoming a lawyer. She attended the University of Notre Dame Law School and graduated with honors in 2013. Today, she is a partner at a law firm in Southern Pines, North Carolina, practicing real estate law. She and Isaac have two daughters, Lillian (10) and Isabelle (8). "We all love coming back to Grant County about once a year to visit family!" The values, lessons, and relationships they built in Grant County continue to guide them both personally and professionally. Michelle and Isaac are both proud to be graduates of Grant Union High School—GO PROSPECTORS!

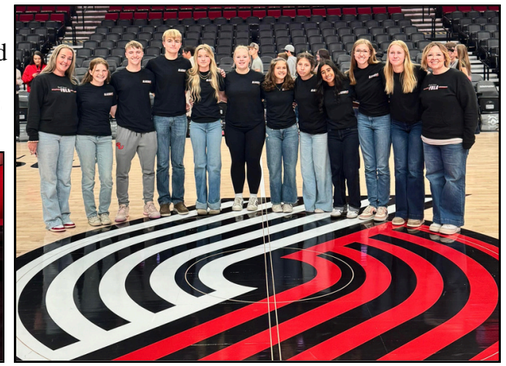
Around Campus at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School

Student Blog About Life on Campus

The Grant Union Jr/Sr High School website has a new feature. A student-run blog called The Mining Report is being published by the yearbook staff, communicating school news with a fun, humorous approach. Staff includes Jenna Chappel, Rhyis Conn, Mathew Delano, Erin Donathan, Ember Dutcher, Oden Elliott, Makenna Forrester, Kara Hansen, Addison Hatley, Bradlee Hunt, Ari Montwheeler, Daizie Reynolds, Jordan Ross, and Lily Botts. Curious about the legend of the ghost janitor? Wondering where teachers go when they aren't at school? Perhaps you want to know more about Homecoming Week! We invite you to follow along on the Grant Union website or following the QR code.

Sports Business Day

Grant Union's Future Business Leaders (FBLA) recently attended the Trail Blazers' Sports Business Day. Students met with the Trail Blazers staff, toured the Moda Center, and shot free throws on the court. The highlight was attending a Blazers game!



An Invitation to our Christmas Programs

Humbolt Elementary School
(Kindergarten through 6th Grade)
Monday, December 15, 5:30 pm
At the Grant Union New Gym.

Grant Union Jr/Sr High School
(7th-12th Grade Band and Choir)
Wednesday, December 17, 6:30 pm
At the Grant Union Old Gym

A Timeless Seneca Christmas
Thursday, December 18
Open dress rehearsal at 1:30 pm
Evening performance at 6:00 pm

Alumni Return to Scrimmage Against Football Team

What do you do when your football game is canceled? You play football anyway! On October 24, 2025, the Grant Union football team found themselves without an opponent due to a forfeit. With an unexpected Friday night off, the Booster Club jumped in to organize an alumni team flag football game. It was fun for players, alumni, and fans!

Around Campus at Humbolt Elementary

Introducing our Book Vending Machine

We are thrilled to announce that our Book Vending Machine is now fully stocked with exciting reads! But here's the twist—these books aren't for sale! Each month, students who are selected as Academic Excellence or Character Trait award winners will receive a special token to use in the vending machine. It's our way of celebrating their hard work, positive behavior, and love for learning.

The first students to receive tokens were the September Academic Award and Character Trait winners for the month of September! These students showed outstanding academic achievement and consistently demonstrated what it means to show respect—to their peers, teachers, and school community. The October Academic Award recipients and Character Trait winners for the month of October (which was safety) also enjoyed choosing their books from the vending machine. Great job demonstrating academic excellence and responsibility! Here's to growing readers and plenty of amazing adventures ahead!

Kindergarten Class of 2025-26...

... Future Graduating Class of 2038!

Superheroes for the Day!

Mrs. Robyn Miller and Mrs. Kristal Hansen's third-grade classes created their own superhero character, assuming the identity to compete in challenges.

Humbolt Running Club Partners with Grant Union Cross Country

We had a fantastic turnout at this year's Gold Rush Kids' Race! The kids did great, ran with smiles, and had a blast—and the spectators brought the energy. Huge thanks to everyone—runners, families, volunteers—for making it such a memorable event. And thank you to Grant Union Cross Country Team and Coaches for hosting the event!

A Timeless Seneca Christmas: Our Living Story at Seneca School

By Stacy Durych, Seneca Elementary School

When I first walked into Seneca Elementary School, something inside me shifted. The light streaming through the wide windows, the echo of children's voices, and the feeling that the building itself was alive with stories—it all washed over me at once. I remember thinking, 'This feels like home. Not a workplace, not a building, but a home. A place with a heartbeat.'

That feeling has only grown as we've embarked on our Historical Timeline Project, our ambitious and creative effort to tell the continuing Seneca story from 2000 through 2025. By the spring of 2026, our hallway will transform into a living gallery lined with student-painted canvases and historical placards, each piece sharing a moment in time and incorporating Paiute language words that honor our community and the land we stand on.

This project also blossomed into our upcoming holiday program, "A Timeless Seneca Christmas," on Thursday, December 18, with an open dress rehearsal at 1:30 p.m. and an evening performance at 6:00 p.m.

Our students will share five original skits: three from Seneca's past, one from the present, and one imagining the future we dream for our school.

My co-teacher, Raney Anderson, knows this building in a way only someone who walked these halls as a child can. She attended Seneca from kindergarten through eighth-grade before going on to Grant Union High School. Watching her reconnect with the school as an educator, and watching her share her memories with our students, is like watching the past reach into the present to guide the future.

Our field trip to the Grant County Library and the Grant County Courthouse Recorder's Office brought our research to life. At the library, the scent of old paper mingled with excitement as students flipped through bound newspapers. One student found a 2003 article about a Seneca talent show that featured another student's mother performing a hula-hoop dance, a perfect moment of past meeting present. Another newspaper revealed the school's long-loved stick-horse rodeo, complete with hay bales and music. We still have those same stick horses, and we used them again this past June at our end-of-year celebration. I'm deeply grateful to Chris, the librarian, who opened the library on her usual day off just for us. Her generosity made that magical day possible. At the courthouse, Joleen gave us a behind-the-scenes tour of beautifully bound records documenting Seneca's history. She even helped us locate materials from 2000–2025 to support our timeline work. Seeing time literally written and preserved before us was unforgettable.

Our community continues to wrap around this project in remarkable ways. Longtime rancher Jack Southworth offered us his copy of the original timeline book, filled with photos, interviews, and research. Former teacher Adele Cerny, who taught at Seneca for 33 years, welcomed me with warm spice cake fresh from her oven and gifted us her entire digital archive. Meeting with her felt like a moment when past and present sat together at the same table.

That same sense of continuity lives within our staff. Skip Ryder, our custodian and cook, feels Seneca is home—the place he hopes to retire from. His fiancée and her daughter both attended Seneca, another beautiful circle completed. Lacey, our secretary and educational assistant and a Seneca alum, fills our hallways with creativity through her imaginative bulletin boards and displays. And Principal Dr. Janine Attlesperger, now in her fourth year leading our school, is helping us build something beautiful—strengthening connections with the Paiute community and supporting our efforts in Paiute language revitalization, which will be woven into our historical timeline and curriculum.

This November, we again hosted our beloved Feast of Gratitude on Tuesday, November 25. Students, teachers, and PTA members cooked and served a Thanksgiving meal for families and community members. It's one more example of Seneca's time-honored traditions and the way we show appreciation for one another.

Every day, I'm reminded that we are not simply documenting history—we are living it. We're researching it, painting it, performing it, discovering it, and passing it down. We're not just teaching; we're helping preserve a legacy, one built by everyone who walks through these doors. This holiday season, I invite you to come be a part of our living story—where history, heart, and hope come together in one timeless celebration. Join us for "A Timeless Seneca Christmas," on Thursday, December 18, with an open dress rehearsal at 1:30 p.m. and an evening performance at 6:00 p.m.

Seneca Elementary students investigate history at the Grant County Library and the Grant County Courthouse.