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HMK Elementary K-3 Secretary Baylee Flynn, Brixton Matthews (Kindergarten), HMK Vice Principal Libby Bailey, HMK Principal Jill Tatton and HMK Elementary 4-6 Secretary Michelle Bertuzzi. (Photo courtesy of HMK Elementary.)

Utah State University Moab has a long-standing tradition of being engaged with leaders in the Grand County School District (GCSD). USU Moab will continue its commitment to all levels of education in Grand County and beyond as GCSD welcomes new leadership.

“We are excited to work with the new leadership in the district, including Dr. Mary Marable at the high school,” said Associate Vice President Lianna Etchberger. “USU Moab’s administrative team is meeting with Grand County High School leaders to explore how we can help more local high school students attain post-secondary certificates and degrees to improve their employment opportunities and to strengthen their quality of life through meaningful careers.”

Some leaders in the GCHS have first-hand knowledge of the benefits of an education at USU Moab. Taryn Kay, the former principal at Helen M. Knight Elementary School, was recently named the GCSD Superintendent. Kay earned her master’s degree and administrative certificate at USU Moab while juggling her job as a teacher and as a single mother of two. Having a university in her backyard gave her the opportunity to seek her graduate degree while staying close to home.

“It is super important to have USU Moab here,” Kay said. “Without it, I wouldn’t have been able to go back to school, especially being a single mom with two young kids. It was perfect.”

As the GCHS Superintendent, as well as a member the USU Moab Advisory Council, Kay now helps students looking to further their education after high school. Being a descendant of the founders of Moab, Kay loves helping students progress in their studies, and recommends USU Moab to Grand County High students looking to stay close to home and continue their studies, or students who want to start taking college classes early. There are currently three students from Moab in the Elementary Education program.

“Students attending GCHS can seamlessly transfer over to USU Moab because of the concurrent enrollment programs and classes offered through USU,” she said. “The high school staff and counselors encourage students to take advantage of academic offerings through USU Moab.”

Kay’s successor at HMK Elementary, Jill Tatton, is another USU Moab alumna. Tatton worked as the vice principal at HMK before being named principal in April. Tatton earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education at USU Moab when she was 38, at the same time her oldest child was attending USU Logan. Finishing her four-year program in only two years, Tatton has always seen the value of education.

“One of the things we taught our children is to go to college and get a degree,” she said. “It is something that they could always fall back on.”

Tatton sees an exciting opportunity as USU Moab has broken ground on its new campus. Having been a part of the education program herself, she sees opportunities for current students to also join this program and have the opportunity to stay in Moab after they graduate.
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“Having the campus in town has brought us quality educators into our building,” she said. “The need for more teachers will be coming soon to our town and I’m hopeful some of our high school and non-traditional students will become teachers in the district. We want to grow our own in this community and keep them home.”

Etchberger is working with Kay and the GCSD to streamline teacher education and advancement opportunities in the district. She is grateful for the good relationship with the school district.

“I look forward to exploring ways to reduce barriers and provide better access to post-secondary education opportunities to our community,” Etchberger said. “Our partnership with the school district is central to our mission.”

Having mutual interests as well as good relationships built through experience and communication, the school district and USU Moab are excited to continue to work together.

“I appreciate the great partnership and the opportunity for high school staff and students to further their education here in Moab,” Kay said. “I look forward to the new building and working with Lianna to expand further programming.”

A degree in Elementary Education prepares a student to receive a Professional License from the Utah State Board of Education to teach in grades 1-6. Students interested in teaching kindergarten will need to complete the early childhood endorsement. USU’s program in elementary education is unique in that students have the opportunity to be in the classroom starting their first year in the program rather than waiting until their junior year, which is typical at other universities. For more information on USU Moab’s Elementary Education program, visit aggie.link/Moab-EL.

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