



3 Rigby juniors accepted into prestigious STEM program

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RIGBY — Three Rigby High School juniors are among 88 in Idaho who will take part in a special science program over the next few months, with a chance to travel to a NASA research center in California if they finish the course.

Britain Butler, Bridger Oswald and Carson Clayson were accepted into the Idaho Science and Aerospace Scholars program.

“It was just interesting to me because I’ve always been a fan of outer space,” Oswald said.

Clayson was encouraged to apply by his English teacher, Leslie Cheret, while Oswald was encouraged by his science teacher, Pamela Fox; Oswald then told Butler about it. They had to fill out an application detailing their interest in science, technology, engineering and math and their plans after high school, and write letters to their state legislators requesting that they be nominated.

The program, which has been around since 2010, consists of three stages, and the participating students get two college credits through Boise State University as well as one high school credit. The first is an online course offered through the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, which the students take when they have time outside of their regular classes. Idaho has a partnership with the NASA Johnson Space Center, which provides much of the course material, and the state also adds some Idaho-specific STEM elements, including webinars from scientists and engineers at Idaho National Laboratory.

“They take this online class for 16 weeks and then, at the end of the online class, we have three regional Capstone events,” said Peter Kavouras, NASA and Social Studies coordinator for the state Department of Education. “These are face-to-face, daylong activities.”

The one in this area will be June 12 at the Center for Advanced Energy Studies in Idaho Falls. There, Kavouras said, they can put some of what they have learned to use, meet with scientists and engineers and learn about careers in STEM fields.

“It’s really a good day for them to put a lot of what they’ve learned together,” he said.

Based on their performance in class, some of the students will make it to the third stage, Kavouras said. There will be two summer academies, one running from July 8 to 14 and one from July 22 to 28 — the students who make it can pick which one works better for them — where the students go to

BSU in Boise to learn more about STEM and will also travel to NASA's Ames Research Center near San Jose, Calif.

Fast Forward, a state program that provides funding for high school students to take part in various classes that offer college credit, pays for the travel costs. The boys don't know much yet about what they will be doing at Ames, but they have been told a simulation of a manned mission to Mars will be included.

Butler, Oswald and Clayson are all interested in pursuing careers related to what they will be learning. Butler wants to study something medical in college — he is leaning toward neurology or psychology now — but said he is open to doing something more directly science or math-related. Oswald, whose family owns the Broulim's supermarket chain, said he is interested in science but also in business, and ways to apply science to it.

"I'm more of a science-minded person who likes to do anything that has to do with STEM and other activities," he said.

Clayson is interested in biological research.

"There are biology teams at NASA working on stuff to get to Mars," he said.

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Britain Butler, left, Carson Clayson, center, and Bridger Oswald pose for a photo at Rigby High on Wednesday. The three juniors were accepted into the Idaho Science and Aerospace Scholars program. John Roark/ jroark@postregister.com



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