

# Sisters School Board snapshot

By Charlie Kanzig  
Correspondent

Here is a snapshot of the Sisters School District Board Meeting held November 3 at Sisters Middle School.

Board members in attendance included Chair Jay Wilkins, David Thorsett, Jeff Smith, Edie Jones and Don Hedrick.

• Middle School Principal Alison Haney reported that the earliest date for fifth- and/or sixth-graders to potentially return to in-person school will be November 30, which is looking less likely in light of skyrocketing COVID-19 cases in Deschutes County. The middle school is doing final work on their “blueprint” for reopening. Communication with parents will continue as the opening date nears.

Middle school students are also getting the opportunity to come into the school for some in-person learning, with hopes to expand with the new state health metrics allowing for more students to be in the school during a given week.

Haney also shared that students who have been underperforming or needing technology assistance have been invited into the school for in-person support, which has been very successful.

Haney finished with some very positive anecdotal responses from students on the theme of “belonging” and “what it means to be an Outlaw.”

• Business Manager Sherry Joseph reported that property tax revenue appears to be down about 22 percent compared to last year at this time, but she is waiting to see whether it picks back up over the next month. The state school fund balance looks healthy.

• Elementary principal Joan Warburg reported that in preschool through third grade there are approximately 230 students being

served in-person Mondays through Thursdays with Fridays on distance learning.

Fourth-graders are still fully on the Comprehensive Distance Learning model, but have been in the building for some limited in-person instruction, including a science project in which they completed science experiments involving solar ovens. She said that parents reported a very positive response in their kids’ demeanor over the opportunity to come to school even for a short time.

Fourth-graders are projected to return on Tuesday, November 10 with three classrooms.

• Sisters High School Principal Joe Hosang shared that quite a number of teachers have been inviting students into the building for some in-person learning, including some field work. Approximately 30 students went up in small groups for the Interdisciplinary Environmental Expedition (IEE) mountain trip last week.

Hosang explained that 12 freshmen who received incompletes for any courses in the first six-week “term” were in the building last week to complete courses under supervision and the plan turned out very successfully.

Staff has also made themselves available to students for emotional support following the tragic deaths of two seniors earlier this fall.

When asked by board member David Thorsett about how the students were managing overall, Hosang explained that with the six-week “terms” in which kids are carrying only two or three classes, students are able to focus better than if the school had chosen a different model in which kids would carry more classes at a time.

Sisters High School had hoped to bring students

back to in-person learning by November 30, but that does not look likely, unless the COVID infection rate decreases right away. Hosang did say, however, that the state allowing more limited in-person instruction as of last week will allow for more contact with students, which will help.

• Martha Hindman, special programs director, visits all three schools on a regular basis and has been heartened by the work being done with students in person. She announced the webinar being put together on Thursday, November 12 by the district’s counselors in collaboration with other agencies on the topic of grief and loss (see ad, page 6) and commended the counselors for all the work that they have been doing.

• Curt Scholl explained the work the district is doing to adjust to the new metrics as the hope of reopening for grades beyond grade 3 continues. Unknowns remain as the infection rates are spiking and Scholl said the district wants to be cautious since there are so many variables to be considered. Scholl noted the fourth-grade plan to restart November 10 and indicated that re-entry of other grades will be done gradually.

In regard to enrollment, numbers are steady, but there is a definite expectation that with all the local construction taking place, enrollment is almost certainly going to increase.

• The board adopted a resolution to support Patti Norris for election to Position #3 for the Oregon School Board Association (OSBA).

• Some board members will be attending the OSBA Annual Conference (virtual) on November 11.

• The next Sisters School Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 9, at Sisters Middle School.



PHOTO BY JACK TURPEN

Sisters students donated \$1,000 to Sisters FAN and the Kiwanis Food Bank, raised through apparel sales.

## SMS “Sisters Strong” donates to nonprofits

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Sisters youth donated a total of nearly \$1,000, generated through sales of “Sisters Strong” apparel by Sisters Middle School students. Funds went to the Family Access Network (FAN) and the Kiwanis Food Bank.

Led by Student Body President Holly Davis and Vice-President Jack Turpen the initiative provided \$470 each to the two nonprofits.

Turpen, an eighth-grader, created the Sisters Strong logo last year which has been used on T-shirts and stickers,

sold by the students.

According to leadership teacher Jeff Schiedler, “The initiative is still going on, although the focus will now be on raising money for the leadership group here at SMS. They are focused on student incentives and initiatives that will promote attendance, school spirit, and overall school motivation. The leadership group will continue to keep this as their main focus, especially if we remain in distance learning.”

Sisters Strong gear can be purchased directly at [www.sistersstrong.org](http://www.sistersstrong.org).

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