

IN-PERSON: School has seen success with program

Continued from page 1

our parents are happy and our staff is happy,” she said. “I have seen a deep appreciation in our students for being able to be in school learning. They come to school with smiles on their faces, eager to engage in the day.”

Sisters Elementary School is technically considered to be operating under the state’s “Hybrid” model since students are in class in the building Monday-Thursday and do Comprehensive Distance Learning on Fridays.

Kindergarten through third grade have been back in school since late September and fourth-graders returned last month.

After being away from in-person instruction since last March, Warburg reports, teachers have been working to overcome some learning gaps that resulted from distance learning — but she says the most visible change has been in students’ social and emotional well-being.

“The biggest thing we have noticed is the almost immediate transformation in our students’ socio-emotional well-being once they enter our building,” she said. “Students who were really struggling in the CDL environment are thriving in the in-person environment. We have also noticed a dramatic decrease in the number of discipline incidents

compared to previous years. The school is a peace-filled and happy place for our students and staff.”

Warburg acknowledges that the success has not come easy and not without times of unease.

“Our entire community has had to make huge adjustments in systems and procedures in how school functions this year in almost every activity,” she explained. “We had to consider all of the logistics of school and plan completely different scenarios than what we have ever done before.”

Some of those logistics include planned bathroom breaks, students eating lunch in their classrooms and having recess with only their own cohort, and highly organized protocols for entering and exiting the building.

Warburg reports a tremendous amount of positive feedback from parents. “Parents are so grateful for our team and the work our staff has invested to teach their children in person and they have shown amazing support for our school staff,” she said.

The herculean effort to be open and stay open is not lost on Warburg.

“It is important to give credit to our success to our entire support team,

including those people who work in maintenance, nutrition services, and bus driving for investing hours to ensure that all of the COVID requirements are met,” she said. “We could not have opened without their expertise.”

Warburg also has high praise for her educational staff.

“Our teaching staff is passionate about doing what it takes to provide our students with a quality education in the midst of so many obstacles,” she said. “Every SES team member has brought their innovation and creativity to create the absolute best learning environment for our students that we can.”

Warburg appreciates the efforts by parents and the school nursing staff as well.

“The key to remaining open has been the investment by our entire community to adhere to the guidance protocols,” said Warburg. “Parents are exercising an abundance of caution and keeping their children home for even minor symptoms and are quarantining proactively. They are communicating with our nursing team to ensure that they are doing their part to support our health and safety. Our district nursing team is doing a great job in following up

with each family when students are absent, and communicating and supporting their children with what they need.”

While counting all the blessings of being open, Warburg acknowledges that there is a constant, underlying concern, about keeping everyone safe and healthy.

“Honestly, for me as the school leader, there is also the weight of responsibility over the health and safety of our students and staff,” she said. “This is why we have been such sticklers about the minutiae of the guidance from ODE. We want to ensure that we have done everything possible to keep each person in our building healthy.”

That concern has obviously increased recently as infection rates for COVID-19 have skyrocketed in recent weeks, putting Deschutes County in the “red zone,” which could mean a return to distance learning in January if that trend continues (*see related story, page 22*).

Warburg hopes that with broad, concerted effort by the Sisters community and the

“It is my hope that we can bring our Sisters numbers down for the well-being of all of us.”
— Principal Joan Warburg

county at-large, the infection rates will slow, because she believes that children being out of school can have long-lasting, negative impacts.

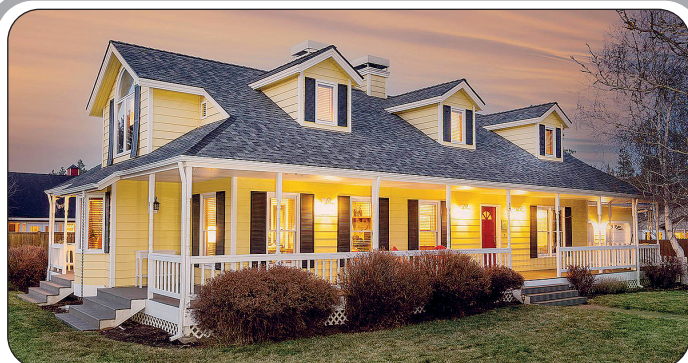
“My greatest fear is that choices made by the greater community in our county, by people not connected to our school, could ultimately create a situation where we will have to close our school and move to distance learning,” she said.

She continued, “I feel that the real losers in this COVID crisis are our children, so I encourage our families to continue to practice safety measures by limiting exposure whenever possible, wearing masks, and washing their hands. It is my hope that we can bring our Sisters numbers down for the well-being of all of us.”

SUDOKU SOLUTION

for puzzle on page 21

6	1	8	5	7	3	2	4	9
5	2	9	6	4	1	3	8	7
4	7	3	9	8	2	6	5	1
9	6	4	3	1	7	5	2	8
2	8	7	4	5	6	9	1	3
3	5	1	2	9	8	4	7	6
8	4	2	7	3	9	1	6	5
1	9	5	8	6	4	7	3	2
7	3	6	1	2	5	8	9	4



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