

StEP Program Looks for Solutions

By Jill Hult

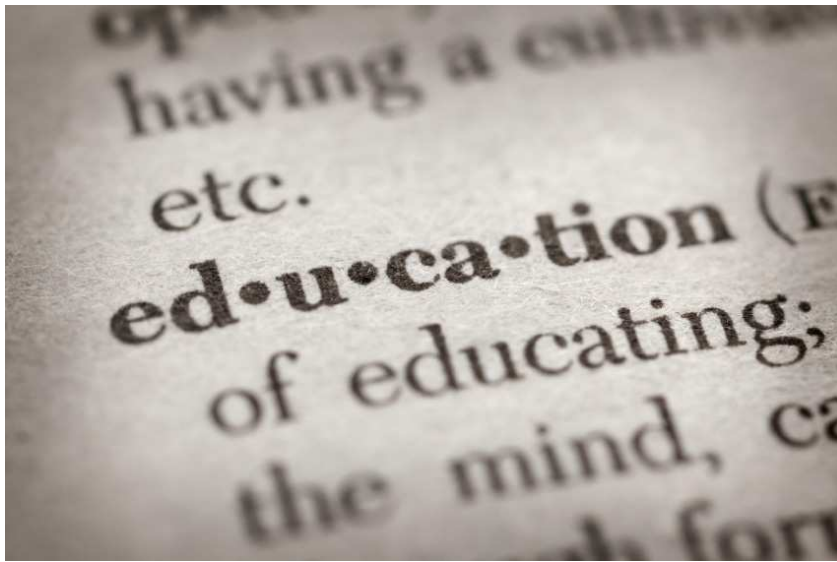
Vernonia School District 47J recently sought the guidance of Dr. George Copa, of Oregon State University, to develop a Strategic Education Plan (StEP) for the future education of our children.

The district reached out to form a committee consisting of community members, district staff, students, and parents to write this plan. The foundation of the plan has been built on the research work of Dr. George Copa, and Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox is leading the committee.

The committee meets every two weeks in four hour sessions to discuss and examine the context in which learning takes place, who is learning, expectations of learning, the learning processes to be used, the organization, the staff, partnerships, and the environment that impacts all learning.

In the first meeting held on April 24, 2007 the committee discussed the research of Dr. Copa and was given reading material that educated them on the statistics and direction of education in America. The committee has also learned about other school districts that have developed their own Strategic Education Plans. From these valuable informational tools, the committee discussed and formed specific and general data that could be used in the design process for our own school district.

One task was to look at the positives about Vernonia and Vernonia schools. Areas



of discussion also included concepts such as: cultural changes, learning results, being future oriented, improving self-esteem, and a design vision. The top two design vision choices the committee decided on were the focus on all learners and revitalizing resources.

The committee also looked at what were the learning context assets, challenges, opportunities, aspirations, and the learning audience and their needs relevant to the Vernonia School District. From this collective information, a survey was formed to present to Middle and High School students for their input as well.

The committee is very excited and working hard to present a workable and successful Strategic Education Plan to the School Board of District 47J for their review and approval.

The committee is dedicated to the positive force of change for the life-long education of our children within the Vernonia School District.

Vernonia Middle School Students Travel to DC

By Scott Laird

Eight Vernonia Middle School students recently got a unique opportunity, traveling to Washington, DC as part of a five day educational visit through their school Leadership Class. The trip was through a program called Close-Up, which hosted the students during their visit.

The students were part of about 500 students from all over the country, from Alaska to Florida. Highlights of the trip included the Washington Monument, the JFK Memorial, the WWI, II, Korean, and Vietnam War Memorials, and the Lincoln Memorial. They also visited the Smithsonian Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Air and Space Museum, Arlington National Cemetery, Jamestown and Williamsburg.

The trip cost \$1,530 for each student which included airfare, hotel, all food, ground transportation and admissions into places of interest. The students raised money for their trip individually by working, and fundraising and also raised money as a group with things like a rummage sale, dances, leadership scholarships, and candy sales. The class also received a donation from the Lion's Club of \$500.

Cathy Ward, the Leadership Class teacher said she thought the trip was good for the students because "...they get to travel outside of Vernonia, meet kids from all over the U.S., learn about government, and leadership skills."

One additional highlight of the trip was noted by eighth grader Rachel Brown who participated in the trip. "My favorite part was when we visited the Senate Building. We got to see the Senators on the floor at work, talking and discussing."

Close-Up is an educational non-profit founded in 1970, that works to promote responsible and informed participation in the democratic process through a variety of educational programs for middle school and high school students, as well as adults. Their goal is to motivate citizens to become an active participant in our democracy and strengthen knowledge of how our government works. Every year 20,000 people participate in Close-Up programs.

Students in the class said anyone who is given the chance, should go on one of these trips. "I think it is a place that everyone should visit at least once," said Miss Brown.

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