

Schools Update ~ VES is a Focus School - But What Does That Mean?

By Aaron Miller

As you may be aware, Oregon has been granted flexibility from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regarding several aspects of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) through a flexibility waiver. The waiver changes Oregon's response to certain ESEA requirements so that educators can put into practice bold education reforms for students that include:

- Designing locally-tailored solutions to help students achieve to their potential in place of uniformly prescribed interventions for all schools, and
- Emphasizing student growth and progress rather than measuring students against a fixed, inflexible standard.

Under the old system of assessing school effectiveness, Washington Grade School (WGS, now Vernonia Elementary School, VES) met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) every year. Meeting AYP was based solely on Student Achievement. Student Achievement is measured by the percentage of students meeting or exceeding benchmark scores on state tests. WGS state test scores were at, and VES's continue to be, above the minimum levels set by the federal government for Student Achievement.

Under the new system schools are not only "graded" on Student

Achievement, but also on Student Growth. While Achievement numbers have met state and national standards, the number of overall students, and economically disadvantaged students, meeting projected Growth targets at VES did not. These low Growth numbers were the reason VES was designated in 2012 as a Focus School in need of state support to help work to improve student outcomes.

This designation meant that the school would receive additional support and funding through the Oregon Department of Education to help with planning for, and working toward, improved student outcomes.

Teachers at VES began working last year to develop a plan to improve their knowledge of the Common Core State Standards, to develop a schedule that allows for more intervention time in reading and math, and to use student academic data more effectively to impact individual student growth and achievement.

While VES is just beginning the second year of their four-year Focus School commitment, the teachers' work and students' scores are already showing growth and improvement. Numbers in all categories of the Oregon school report card rating were up from last year. Categories are graded from Level 1-5 with 1 considered Poor and 5 considered Exceptional. From the 2011-12 school year to the 2012-13 school year VES went from a Level 3 to a Level 4 in Academic Achievement,

from a Level 1 to a Level 4 in Academic Growth, from a Level 1 to a Level 3 in Subgroup Growth, and from Level 2 to Level 3 for an Overall Score.

The VES staff is dedicated to continue meeting the challenges set forth in the Focus School progress, and to continue to develop academic programs that meet individual student needs with ever increasing effectiveness. We hope that you will join us in our efforts to move forward, model lifelong learning and work to provide our students with the best possible educational opportunities.

There will be a VES Parent Meeting on Tuesday, October 8 from 7:00-8:00 PM for anyone interested in learning more about our programs, and providing input so we can truly partner to meet the needs of your students. Childcare WILL be provided for this meeting.

If you have questions or concerns regarding Vernonia Elementary School's improvement work, please contact a teacher, or Principal Aaron Miller, at 503-429-1333.

Vernonia Students of the Month

September 2013

Jessica Whiteman Grade 5



Jessica Whiteman is known for being friendly and kind to her fellow classmates. She is always willing to lend a hand and volunteers to help others on her own time. "You can't help but smile yourself when she smiles at you," says her teacher, Mrs. Campbell. Jessica says her favorite subject is reading and she plays trumpet in the band. Outside of school she is in Girl Scouts and plays basketball. In her free time Jessica says she likes to make friendship bracelets and take care of her dog, Joe, her cat, Herman, her turtle, Fred and two new hamsters.

Zoe Kovelda Grade 7

Zoe has been very helpful at the start of the school year. School staff say she has volunteered to help, is quick to respond and has been very visible at the start of the school year, which is a big help to them. She is always polite and happy and always has a good attitude. Zoe plays volleyball and says she plans to run track in the spring. In her free time Zoe says she likes to draw and do art work and says her favorite classes in school are art and math. At home she likes to help take care of the family's two dogs, Trooper and Coho.



Summer Snow Grade 11

Summer is the Junior Class President this year and is very active in numerous school activities. She is in the Leadership Class and will do Wrestling Stats this winter. She has also been busy this year with fundraising for Prom. Summer says her favorite subject is Chemistry.



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OPPONENTS _____

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