

Schools Update ~ State Testing

By Nate Underwood

This year's graduating seniors (class of 2014 and 2010-11 Cohort Group) are the first group of students required to demonstrate Essential Skill Requirements (ESR) in all three areas:

- Reading—Read and comprehend a variety of text
- Writing—Write clearly and accurately
- Math—Apply mathematics in a variety of settings

Students prove that they have mastered these Essential Skills by earning

at or above a cut score on one of the approved district categories. Categories we use are Statewide Assessments (OAKS), Other Assessments (SAT, ACT, PSAT, etc...), and Work Samples.

Seniors that have yet to pass their State OAKS (Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skill) are in jeopardy of missing the mark on diploma requirements. Steps that VHS is taking to address this requirement include:

- Remedial classes designed to increase skill set prior to retesting.
- Specific Advisory classes focusing on

subject matter.

- Use of technology and online resources.
- Implementation of Student Work Samples.
- Training in State Work Sample Scoring in reading and writing. This will give multiple teachers in various curriculums and grade levels the same training to assist kids.
- SLG (Student Learning Goals) for all students. District wide teachers are submitting student learning goals that target measurable growth for all students. Many of these goals are focused on the

Essential Skills.

- Continued professional development in best practices for effective instruction.

It is imperative that your student take these requirements seriously. Regular attendance, active engagement in class, good study habits, and positive family support are a few things that will help all students achieve. 2012-13 test data was sent home at the beginning of the year. Students will begin the first round of testing at all grade levels in the coming weeks. Please contact the school if you have any questions.

Vernonia School Board Report

At the November 13, 2013 Vernonia School Board Meeting:

Board Discusses New Oregon Report Cards-The Board discussed the new annual Oregon Report Card for 2012-13 issued by the Oregon department of Education. The district received four reports for Vernonia Elementary School, Mist Elementary School, Vernonia Middle School and Vernonia High School. Schools are graded on Academic Achievement and Academic Growth. Vernonia High School is also graded on Graduation. Overall Vernonia High School received a rating of 4 on a scale 1-5, which falls between 44% and 90% of schools in Oregon. Vernonia Middle School received a rating of 3 which falls between 15% and 44% of all schools. Vernonia Elementary School also received a rating of 3. According to the report card, the overall rating is based on a combination of factors that includes standardized test scores in reading and math and represents a limited view of student performance. Other aspects on the report are designed to put the rating in a proper context. The report card also provides information about student progress, achievement and gains over time and provides a breakdown of outcomes and performance scores of numerous student groups in comparison to all other Oregon schools.

School board member Jim Krahn raised concerns that the School District is finding itself teaching to achieve test scores as opposed to teaching what a student really needs and asked whether the numbers on the report have real value? High School Principal Nate Underwood replied that passing the tests is required for students to graduate and so it is important to teach students the skill set to pass the tests. Elementary Principal Aaron Miller expressed concerns about the whole assessment and evaluation process. Miller also noted that Vernonia Elementary is currently a Focus School because of poor test scores and has received additional funding which has helped with professional development for teachers and administrators.

Later in the meeting, when the School Reports were brought up again, Superintendent Ken Cox clearly stated that, "We do not teach to the test. "I think that anyone of our teachers and our administrators would emphatically state that. We are concerned about the test scores and we are trying to improve the way we teach to improve those scores, but that is not the pur-

pose of our teaching. The purpose of our teaching is to improve student learning. Student learning is more important than student achievement."

Financial Report-Dawn Plewes reported that she is closely monitoring the financial picture and that the bottom line is moving closer upwards toward what was budgeted for the Unappropriated Ending Fund Balance. Plewes reported that there has been some unanticipated miscellaneous revenue. Plewes reported that student enrollment is down sixteen from what was budgeted for at the beginning of the year.

Grant Updates-Aaron Miller reported that the District received \$15,000 more than they had budgeted for in the Collaborations Grant, which will be used to implement the new evaluation system, hiring a Sustainability Coordinator and a Volunteer Coordinator, and some additional staff time.

Miller also reported that the District has applied for a \$250,000 Career and Technical Education (CTE) Grant from the state to help implement the current shop, digital arts, forestry and engineering programs. The grant will provide funding for upgrades to the shop facility, purchase of equipment for the digital arts program, and internship programs with community partnerships at Stub Stewart State Park and the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and with the School Maintenance Department. Miller says the District expects to hear about the grant in the beginning of December. According to Board Chair Bill Langmaid, this grant would answer some of the concerns the Board has raised about how the District can help prepare students for technical trade careers.

Board Discusses Volunteer Policy-Superintendent Ken Cox presented the Board with an update to the District Volunteer Policy. Cox has added a paragraph which requires the Superintendent to follow a Criminal History Conviction Matrix guideline in the event that the background check for a potential adult volunteer shows

any kind of criminal activity. The Board took no action on the policy change.

Superintendent Report-Superintendent Ken Cox reported to the Board on several items.

Cox updated the Board on the Spencer Park construction. Cox told the Board that he is working on a final proposal to present to the City of Vernonia for work that is scheduled to take place in spring of 2014.

Cox told the Board that student Bridger Steward has completed his Eagle Scout project which included painting the goal posts at the football field and cutting flow through vents in the grand stands, which brings the football stadium into compliance with FEMA. Cox thanked Steward and everyone who assisted with his project.

Cox noted that the new front entrance window in the school lobby has been completed as well as remodeling for the Spencer Health and Wellness Clinic.

Cox told the Board that he has talked with State Representative Brad Witt and Witt offered help with finding upgraded used technology equipment for the schools.

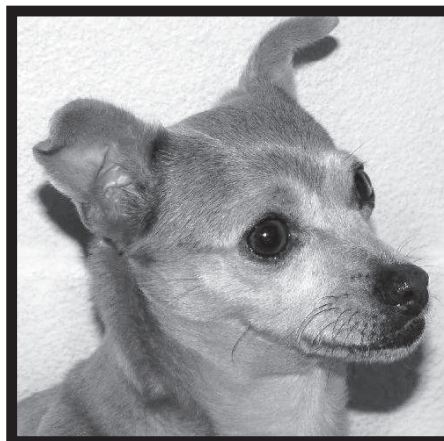
Cox mentioned that he learned at the recent Superintendents meeting that Oregon is considering approving a free, online textbook program, or paperless books, for next year, which would be a great cost savings for the District.

S.H.A.W. Spencer Health and Wellness School Based Health Center

Clinic staff will be available on
Tue. and Fri. 7:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Columbia Humane Society Featured Pet

"Martie"



2084 Oregon Street,
St. Helens, OR 97051
Phone: 503-397-4353

Email: info@columbiahumane.org
Web: www.columbiahumane.org

Martie was a mama dog that came to us from California with puppies. We don't know what her past was but she is a little shy and warms up to people slowly. She would likely do best in an adult only home and we are hoping for someone who is willing to give her the time she needs to settle in. She is very sweet once she gets to know you. She was in foster care with her puppies and her foster mom loved her! Martie is a Chihuahua mix that is approx. 2 years of age. Her adoption fee of \$165 includes her spay, vaccines, microchip and free vet check.



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