

Schools Update: Making Adjustments for Overcrowded Classrooms

By Aaron Miller

Increased enrollment is a great thing for the vitality and diversity of our schools, as well as for the long-term, financial health of our community and school district. Enrollment is up this year, and we expect that trend to continue.

While this is very positive for our schools and community, it does come with some complications in terms of effectively meeting the needs of those extra students while still being funded based on lower enrollment numbers from the past. Fortunately, we have been able to work through these “growing

pains” with some additional hiring since the beginning of this school year.

In addition to an increase in our primary grade enrollment, we have also seen larger class sizes in third, fourth and sixth grades. The following staffing increases have already been added to help alleviate larger class sizes:

- One full-time Kindergarten-2nd Grade Teacher
- One full-time K-12 Behavior Specialist
- One extra period of math instruction at the Middle School
- Three middle school/high school teachers increased their schedule by one period per day, increasing their

hours to full-time

The following staffing increases will occur prior to the start of the second quarter to address the needs of larger student populations in fourth and sixth grades:

- Two part-time Instructional Assistants moved to full-time (one will help with the behavior program, and one will help with increased numbers in the intermediate grades).
- Three more middle school/high school teachers will add one more period of instruction to their day to decrease high 6th grade class sizes in Science, Math and Language Arts, as well as to decrease

numbers in our first period Middle School PE course.

These additions have already proven to help alleviate some of our issues due to large class sizes, and we are confident that the changes happening at the end of the first quarter will provide further relief.

We continue working hard to meet the needs of our students, while still living within our budget. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our increased enrollment and how we are addressing these changes, please call Aaron Miller at the District Office: 503-429-5891.

PTA PRESS

By Melissa Zavales

Leaves have fallen and so are the temperatures. But Vernonia Community PTA is still surviving!

We have enjoyed volunteering our time and innovative ideas to help with the 2nd phase of the playground. We are so grateful for the community's support. So far this year we have held a Bike-a-thon, a fall carnival with a haunted corridor, and an open house BBQ.

The Bike-a-thon was our first time attempting this event. It was a lot of fun and a great physical activity for kids of all ages. We partnered with the NW Bicycle Association and were able to provide free helmets to all who attended. We had over two dozen riders, some even on trikes! True Value generously donated a new bike to the winner. The winner was based upon the most

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

funds raised. This year's winner was 5th grade student Sadie Gump; congrats Sadie! Sadie's sponsorships totaled \$300. Finishing a close second was Remi Winningstad with just under \$260. Thank you to all the AWESOME sponsors that



Sadie Gump won a new bicycle for raising the most money in the PTA Bike-a-thon. The bicycle was donated by Vernonia True Value.

helped us raise \$1600. We would like to give a big shout out to Natalie Groshong and Jared Ames. They both peddled along for 20 laps. IMPRESSIVE! A special thank you to the Vernonia Lions Club for volunteering their time to help.

The very next weekend we had our annual PTA Fall Carnival. We had a terrific turnout. From the popular cake walk, to balloon creations, silent auction baskets, spectacular prizes, and a scary haunted corridor set up for all ages, it was a great family fun night. We are always looking for volunteers, new ideas, suggestions, and any donations to help the carnival remain a great success.

Lastly we decided to give back to our community at the Elementary School Open House. We hosted a BBQ and served over 200 hot dogs. It was exciting to see so many people and introduce them to our PTA and what we

do.

We are always asking for new members. We love people joining our hard working group. If you can't commit monthly then at least join us and help with a fundraiser or two. We want you! If you would like to become a member please contact our member rep Camrin Erryick at 971-258-9994.

Thank you, Vernonia! Please watch for some of our upcoming events: Holiday Candy Grams, Teacher Giving Tree, and Bring Your Parents to School Week.

We are currently accepting donations for the remaining phases of the playground. If you wish to donate please mail your checks to:
Vernonia Community PTA
c/o Vernonia School District
1000 Missouri Ave
Vernonia, OR 97064

Robotics Returns for 2014

Robots are alive and well in Vernonia with the start of a new school year. Over the last three years the LoggerBots have competed at the highest high school level available through the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) and have experienced success at both the state and regional levels. With the FRC program primarily targeting high school students, there has been a desire to expand the program to younger age groups to build experience and exposure to the technology around us.

To meet this goal, the program has grown in 2014 to include the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC). Similar in nature to FRC with aspects of design, programming, electronics and fabrication skills, it starts at a younger age and comes at a lower cost, which helps increase participation opportunities. The benefit of adding FTC as well is that it is complementary to the FRC program regarding timing as FTC runs September through January and FRC goes from January to April.

This provides students interested in science and technology a year-round opportunity to work hands on with technology and real-world challenges.

Even though this is their inaugural year, there has been enough interest in the program to sponsor two teams. The “Red Shirts” is the high school team (the name is a reference to Star Trek for those fans out there), while the middle school team has named themselves “Squirrel!?” Having two teams allows for design and programming collaboration as well as friendly competition as they build towards upcoming league meets. With over 165 teams in Oregon, they'll have stiff competition to get to state.

The challenges the teams confront are new each year and occur in 3 minute rounds with 4 robots on the playing field at one time. This year's challenge requires the robot to first release 164 whiffle balls of various sizes and then pick up and place them in various

size cylinders. The cylinders are intentionally taller than the robots to inspire ingenuity and creativity in completing the task. Additional points can be received by dragging these cylinders to various zones on the court. During each round there is an autonomous phase where the robot controls its own actions followed by a time where the robot is controlled by a human driver. With multiple robots on the field at the same time playing both offense and defense, it's always an exciting game.

The team continues to exist and expand only because of the support received through the community. They receive no funding from the school and rely exclusively on donations. Equally as important, numerous mentors supply their time and expertise to this program, which can equate to hundreds of hours individually over the year. The commitment from all to make this program happen is very much appreciated.

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