

Schools Update: Becoming a Public Charter School

By Aaron Miller

In looking at ways to continue the Vernonia School District's (VSD's) rise from the flood, a steering committee has been convened to explore the potential benefits of becoming a Public Charter School.

This committee is made up of parents and community members, as well as school district business partners, board members and employees. The steering committee's task is to develop a charter school proposal for the VSD School Board to consider for approval in late March.

According to the Oregon Public Charter School Handbook, charter schools are created to:

- Increase student learning and achievement
- Increase choices of learning opportunities for students
- Better meet individual student academic needs and interest
- Build stronger working relationships among educators, parents and other community members
- Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods

The Charter School Steering Committee met Wednesday, March 4 in the Vernonia Schools Library. The two main topics on the agenda were developing

innovative program ideas for curriculum and instruction, and the initial drafting of a charter proposal to present to the VSD Board in March.

There are some potential concerns being heard from the community that are also being discussed by the committee. These include concerns about how staff contracts and agreements would be affected, as well as concerns regarding what type of curriculum will be used, and how academic programs will be changed.

The intent of the district is to maintain our current contractual agreements with staff. There may be some flexibility in having community and business partners help with instructional duties for certain classes or parts of classes, but this will not come at the expense of our current teachers.

Innovation in the classroom is a major component of any charter school proposal. A VSD charter would be looking to build on the good programs currently in place, while developing new avenues of instruction that will benefit our students' future educational and employment opportunities. We are not looking at implementing some crazy new curriculum. We are looking to implement strong academic programs that have a positive impact on our students and their futures. This will be a topic for discussion at the next

meeting on March 10th.

If this charter school concept will be beneficial for our students and community, I will lobby the board for its implementation in the 2015-16 school year.

If it is not the right fit, if the committee or board doesn't find this option to be of use for Vernonia, or it is not in the long-term best interests of our students, then we will look at the application process as an exercise in school improvement planning. If it works, it works. If it does not, we will use the input from the process to provide direction for improvement through our existing programs.

Becoming a charter school could be a great way for the Vernonia School District to continue to develop its academic programs, provide teachers with funding for improvement of instruction and help ensure the long-term financial stability of our local education system.

If you are interested in attending a steering committee meeting, or would like more information regarding the VSD's charter school exploration process, call Superintendent Miller at 503-429-5891. The steering committee's next meeting will be in the Vernonia Schools Library starting at 6:30 PM on Tuesday, March 10. The public is welcome.

Digital Arts Classes Offer College Credit

Vernonia High School is offering dual credit for students who enroll in either of two new Digital Arts classes.

Students can take Video Production I and Graphics for Multimedia with Digital Arts instructor Doran Lower and receive both high school and college credit simultaneously. College credit is through Portland Community College (PCC).

"The idea of these classes is, not only to have other electives available in our school, but also to provide our students with the opportunity to receive free college credits before they actually leave high school," says Lower.

According to Lower, both classes are being made available as part of the high school Career and Technical

Education (CTE) program. Funding to establish the program came from PCC and the Vernonia School District CTE Grant. The CTE grant purchased a new Creative Cloud 2014 Adobe Suite of software for Lower's computer lab.

Lower is an approved dual credit instructor through PCC. Once enrolled in the high school class, students can register for PCC credit and then have eighteen weeks to complete the work required for the ten week college course. Lower inputs grades for students into the PCC system.

Both courses are worth four college credits each. This year Lower offered Video Production I during the first semester with nine students, while Graphics for Multi Media is being

offered during the current semester and has seven students enrolled. Lower says he plans to offer both classes again next school year and is hoping to have more students enroll.

"I'm hoping to get more students interested next year," says Lower. "These classes might sound intimidating to some people, but they're not as intimidating as they might sound. There's a certain level of expectation but if someone wants to do it and put in the time, effort, and work they can be successful."

In Video Production I students learn about shooting with digital camcorders in full high definition, focusing on using manual focus, angles,

and exposure. They also work in editing using Adobe Premier software.

Senior Makayla Adams took the Video Production class last semester and used the skills she learned to help her complete her Senior Project. "I really enjoyed the class," says Adams. "We created our own video, filmed it, learned how to edit it, learned about different camera angles and lighting, and learned how to use the computer program to put it all together into a seamless video. I liked it because it felt professional and we weren't talked down to. We were treated like we were mature and would be able to get the work done. It felt like a real college class."

STARS of Vernonia

A VERNONIA COMMUNITY TALENT SHOW

JUDGED BY VERNONIA'S OWN "CELEBRITY JUDGES"

COMMONS AT VERNONIA SCHOOL

THURSDAY, MARCH 19TH, 2015 ★ 6PM UNTIL THE CURTAIN DROPS

AGE GROUPS: 0-4, K-3RD, 4TH THRU 6TH, 7TH & 8TH, HIGH SCHOOL & 18 AND OVER

ENTRY FEE \$10 PER CURTAIN

ADMISSION \$5 PER PERSON, INCLUDES SLICE OF PIZZA AND SODA

★ FANTASTIC PRIZES! ★

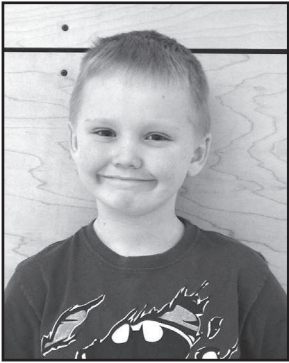
ENTRY FORMS CAN BE FOUND AT THE MAIN OFFICE AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE FRESHMAN & JUNIOR CLASSES

FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CONTACT MELISSA ZAVALAS AT 503-858-8221

Vernonia Students of the Month

February 2015



Riot Eriksen Grade 1

Riot is known as a hard working and all-around great kid. His teachers say he is an organized student who listens and follows directions and is also very respectful. Riot says his favorite subject is math. He plays T-ball and says he enjoys helping take care of the three family dogs.

Hailey Reynolds Grade 6

Hailey is a student who her teachers say always completes her work, arrives for class prepared, and has a great attitude. Hailey says her favorite subjects in school are math and phys ed. She plays soccer outside of school and enjoys playing with her dog Jack and her new puppy Monster.



Autumn Sorenson Grade 10

Autumn is known for being a responsible student who follows up on her commitments. She was also described as "kind," "thoughtful," and "congenial." Autumn is the Sophomore Class Secretary/Treasurer and plays volleyball and softball. She is also part of the high school leadership class. In her free time she enjoys hanging out with friends.

Sponsored by State Senator Betsy Johnson