

# Vernonia School Board Report

## At the May 14, 2015 Vernonia School Board Meeting:

**Board Approves Charter School Agreement** – The School Board approved the proposed Charter School Agreement, which was approved and submitted by the new Charter School Board prior to the regular School Board meeting. The Agreement legally authorizes the establishment of the Charter School and establishes its rules of governance and operation, and authorizes it to operate and conduct affairs. The members of the Charter School Board are Chair Susan Wagner, Vice Chair Sharon Bernal, Steve Riley, Katie Cole, and Maggie Peyton. The Charter School Agreement and Proposal will now be submitted to the Oregon Department of Education.

**Assessment Report** - High School Principal Nate Underwood updated the Board on the first year of the new Smarter Balanced performance and assessment testing currently being conducted. All students in grades 3-8 and grade 11 are taking these tests, which assesses math, reading and writing skills. According to Underwood and high school teacher Juliet Safier, who has been studying the time required for testing, it is taking an extremely long time for students to complete the testing. Safier told the Board her students are losing as many as ten or eleven days of class time in order to complete the testing. The State of Oregon requires that students must pass the tests in order to graduate from high school.

Parents can choose to have their student op-out of the testing and the students are then required to complete an essential skills standardized task provided by the state. Saffier said she has embedded these essential skills tasks into regular student classwork, so it will already be completed, in case the students experience the predicted high failure rate on the Smarter Balanced testing.

School Board members Jim Krahn and Bill Langmaid were outspoken and critical of the testing. Krahn suggested that pressure be applied to state elected officials to dismiss Smarter Balanced testing. "I don't see us just sitting back and continuing in this process as an effective way to use the time that our students are in school," said Krahn. Langmaid agreed with Krahn and questioned the testing process

which removes teacher's opportunity to judge their student's ability. "I do not think that the Smarter Balanced test is smarter or balanced," said Langmaid. "I feel it does leave children behind. It does not create a level playing field for all students and I don't think the data is going to show it does. And we're not empowering our teachers."

Underwood closed the discussion by stating that instructors are encouraging students to do their best on the testing and are using the results as feedback to affect future instruction.

**Staffing Changes** – Superintendent Aaron Miller updated the Board on numerous staff changes for the next school year. The Board later approved all of these changes.

Laura Blacker will remain on staff following a temporary assignment teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade. A Vernonia resident, she previously worked in the district as a student teacher, temporary teacher and is the current VHS golf coach. Blacker will most likely teach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Theresa Dee joins the K-2 team from the Baker School District with twenty-two years of experience.

Kendra Schlegel also joins the K-2 team from Hillsboro and is a Vernonia resident and parent of an incoming kindergarten student in the Vernonia District.

Rachel Wilcoxon has served as part-time Dean of Students for K-5 this past school year. Her position will expand to full-time with a K-12 focus.

Michelle Eagleson, a former K-2 instructor, will become a full-time Instructional Coach working with other K-12 instructors.

Charlotte Gilbert served as a temporary K-5 Behavior Specialist this past year. Her position has become permanent and will expand to K-12.

Eric Urban, the K-8 Life Skills Teacher, submitted his resignation.

Melissa Zavales, a MS/HS/ Instructional Assistant, submitted her resignation in April and is no longer working in that role.

Jan Dyer, a MS Instructional Assistant on a one year leave of absence, has resigned.

Robyn Richmond, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher on a one year leave of absence, has resigned.

Natasha Ligouri, a part-time food service worker, has submitted her resignation.

**Board Approves Instructional Calendar** – The Board approved an Instructional Calendar for the 2015-16 school year which increases Student Days to 157.5, increases teacher Contact Days to 175, and increases hours to 1003. A major change in the schedule eliminates early release Fridays; school days for students will now be Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 3:10 PM. The first day of school for all students will be September 9 and the last day of school will be June 10. The schedule includes a Thanksgiving Break from November 20-27, a Winter Break from December 18-January 1, and a Spring Break from March 18-25.

**School Board Speaks Out About Vandalism** - Board members were visibly upset when they received reports of several acts of vandalism in the boy's locker room and boy's restrooms around the building.

Board members Ernie Smith, Jim Krahn and chair Bill Langmaid condemned what has been a series of destructive actions.

"We put a lot of effort into making sure those locker rooms were top quality," said Smith. "This really irritates me."

The most recent acts of vandalism included damage to fire cage covers in the boy's locker room, the team room door vent (made of heavy steel) was kicked in and will need to be replaced, a ceiling vent was removed and damaged, holes were poked in the ceiling with a vent lever that was removed from a door, milk and food was thrown at walls and damaged lockers, and ceiling tiles and light covers were removed in the basement hallway near the locker rooms.

In addition, door stops were removed, special screws that require a special driver were removed from the partitions in a boy's restroom, vent covers were damaged in all boy's restrooms, graffiti was found in boy's restrooms and desks have been broken.

"This is ridiculous, it's insulting and it's malicious," said Smith.

Board member Krahn echoed Smith comments. "It's extremely disrespectful to the whole community and to the other students in the school."

"Their parents need to take some responsibility and they need to know this is happening," added Langmaid.

High School principal Nate Underwood was in attendance and told

the Board that he and Athletic Director Gordan Jarman are in the process of interviewing students and are also considering placing cameras at the locker room and restroom entrances to help identify potential vandals.

"Every boy in the high school is using those facilities," said Smith. "They all need to understand that we've tried to provide them with the best and it only stays the best if they take care of it."

When contacted following the School Board meeting, Superintendent Aaron Miller said that interviews had revealed the name of at least one individual responsible for the actions. Miller said the student would be disciplined and subject to paying restitution for the damages.

**Budget Committee Meeting** – The School Board Budget Committee held a budget meeting and approved the proposed Budget. The School Board will hold a Budget Hearing and are scheduled to adopt the Budget at their June 11 meeting.

Significant changes to the proposed budget included:

- Aaron Miller will serve as full-time Superintendent under a single contract but will continue in the role of Acting Elementary School Principal.
- An increase in transportation costs of approximately \$100,000 that indicate inflation costs, actual expenditures and cost of living adjustments in the contract with Curls Transportation. The District is reimbursed 70% of transportation costs from the state.
- An increase of \$17,000 for an upgrade of internet services. The District will be reimbursed through a program called E-Rate.
- A reduction of expenses by \$40,000 for fundraising services from Met Group.
- An increase of the Shop teacher position from .28 to .68 FTE.

**Y.T.P. Report** – Beth Kintz provided the Board with a report on the Youth Transition Program (Y.T.P.). The District has received a two-year grant to expand the program. The program is designed to improve post school transition outcomes for youth with disabilities and documented barriers to employment by preparing them for employment and career related education and training. Students work with a Transitional Specialist and a local Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and receive

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