

Schools Update: Graduation Rate Increase

By Nate Underwood

In February, the South County Spotlight featured an article on graduation rates using data recently released by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). The statewide graduation rate for four-year graduates came in at 73.82 percent. Four of the five high schools in Columbia County saw improvement, with Vernonia increasing by the greatest percentage! "Graduation rates in

the Vernonia School District increased by the greatest percentage, reporting an 84.8 percent graduation rate in 2015-16, up from 69.8 percent in 2014-15, and 64 percent in 2013-14," stated the Spotlight.

Cohort Graduation Rate

A cohort graduation rate follows the students who are first-time high school students in a particular year and determines the percentage that graduate within a given time frame, such as four years. An

extended rate, allowing one additional year for completions, is also tracked and reported as the 5-year Cohort Graduation Rates.

Dropout Rates in Oregon High Schools

Dropout data is collected in the Annual Cumulative Average Daily Membership (ADM) Data Collection each year at the end of the school year, which identifies students' enrollment dates and status as of the last day of enrollment for the year.

Congratulations to all students,

staff, and community. This increase can be attributed to supportive parents, dedicated and hardworking staff, and conscientious students. We still have a long way to go and are always looking for ways to improve. Continued focus on Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), college and career readiness, CTE programs, and dropout prevention will no doubt help more students graduate prepared to reach their goals!

School Board Report

At the March 9, 2017 School Board Meeting:

Board Approves Snow Make-up Day – The Board approved a request from Superintendent Aaron Miller to extend the school year by one additional day to make up for the cancelation due to snow on Monday, March 6. The last day of school will now be Wednesday, June 14.

Board Approves Administrative Contract – The Board recessed into Executive Session under ORS 192.660 (2) (I) "to review and evaluate the performance of...any public officer, employee or staff member..." and also under ORS 192.660 (2) (b) "to hear complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or agent..."

After returning to Open Session the Board approved Resolution 1617-06, extending the administrative contract for Nate Underwood. The Board took no further action.

Board Approves Budget Calendar – The Board approved the Budget Calendar as presented for the 2017-18 FY. Budget Committee meetings are scheduled for May 2 and May 11 with a public hearing and adoption of the budget scheduled for June 8. There are still several opening on the Budget Committee for anyone interested in serving.

Two Appointed to Budget Committee – The Board approved the appointment of Christina Loope and James Loope to the Budget Committee.

Board Accepts Employee Resignation – The Board accepted the resignation of David Suhrbur, who has been teaching middle and high school science, effective June 30, 2017.

Board Approves Instructional Calendar for 2017-18 School Year – The Board approved the proposed instructional calendar for the upcoming school year. According to Principal Nate Underwood, who presented it, the calendar is very similar to the past year. There are a total of 157 Student Contact Days. The first day of school is Wednesday, September 6 and the last day of school is scheduled for June 8. High School Graduation would be held on June 2 and 8th grade promotion on June 5. There are four snow make-up days built into the calendar. Christmas Break will run from Friday, December 22 to Monday January 8. Spring Break is March 26 through March 30.

Board Approved Employee Donation of Personal Leave

The Board approved a request from the Vernonia Education Association (VEA) that would allow the transfer of up to three personal days from one employee to another. These transfers are on a voluntary basis and would be done to assist an employee that may need to take a temporary medical leave and does not have enough sick time accumulated to cover the total leave. Employees receive three personal days each year and any unused days are paid to the employee at the end of the year, so there is no change in financial impact to the District with this approval.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board that Columbia County Superintendents were successful in accessing a grant through CareOregon to implement Trauma-Informed Care and Averse Childhood Experiences programing and teaching methods.

Miller told the Board the District has accepted a grant for \$11,748 from the Nike School Innovation fund that will allow the school to continue implementing Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Miller told the Board he is working on a Youth Transitions Program (YTP) grant application. The grant would pay some of the salary for the program supervisor and provide training and transportation for students in the program.

Miller told the Board a proposal has been submitted for year two of the Oregon Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (OFAST) grant to give teachers and administrators more training to embed these learning strategies into everyday lessons.

Miller told the Board the District has applied for, and expects to receive, a grant through the Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES) to fund a 10 day Kindercamp in August for all incoming kindergarten students. Miller said the program was a pilot last year and was a huge success.

Miller told the Board that the District's Bond Measure has a title, Measure 5-265. He told the Board that the funds to pay for the construction debt are in the budget for the next fiscal year, but if the Bond passes it would make available approximately \$238,000 in the District's General Fund that could be spent to hire additional staff or add student contact days next year. He said if the Bond does not pass there would need to be

major cuts to the operations budget the following year.

Miller told the Board that Marci Murry has been added to the staff and will take on duties in the Opportunity Room and provide point of service support for the Mealtime tracking service. Murry has been a longtime sub in the District.

Public Comment – Sue Whitton, who is organizing graduation night activities for the senior class, asked if the high school was planning to hold the SKID program this year. SKID (Stop Kids from Impaired Driving) is a traffic safety and underage drinking prevention program. Whitton was told by Principal Nate Underwood, that staff is concerned about the amount of school missed this year due to weather and the need to complete mandatory testing, but will be meeting with members of the Vernonia Fire Department to discuss logistics and the possibility of hosting the event.

Building Reports – Vernonia Elementary School Principal Aaron Miller told the Board that teachers at VES, Mist and VMS have been working on the Oregon Formative Assessment Grant for Students and Teachers (OFAST) and that a grant application has been submitted to continue the work next year.

Miller told the Board the K-2 team has successfully implemented Golden Award assemblies which recognize individual students of the month as well as classrooms that follow rules.

VMS and VHS Principal Nate Underwood provided the Board with a detailed written report on activities in the schools. Underwood noted that March 5-10 is "Classified Employees Week" and recognized these many valuable employees for their dedication and commitment to students.

Underwood discussed the increase in graduation rates at VHS, which saw the largest increase in the county. (See article on this page.)

Student Reports – Brook Naron from the leadership class updated the Board on activities around the high school and discussed the end of winter sports and the start of spring sports, robotics competitions, and the AVID program.

MacKenzie Fassold, Noah Rylans, and Brandon Johnson told the Board about a Career Day they attended and discussed the value to students. They all encouraged the Board to continue funding these types of programs.



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