

Schools Update: Food Support for Students

By Pete Weisel, David Spackman
and Superintendent Aaron Miller

In an effort to provide needed services for students, as well as to try and bolster regular student attendance, the Vernonia Middle School (VMS) is developing a food support program for families currently in need of additional food resources.

The school knows that students sometimes experience food instability on weekends and holidays due to school meals not being available, and also knows that healthy kids learn better, and attend school more regularly.

This program is being funded through a NW

Regional Education Service (NWRES) Grant, thus not impacting the Vernonia School District's (VSD) general fund budget.

This temporary pilot program aims to provide food support for ALL VMS students and their families who currently have a need. If successful we hope to expand it to other Vernonia schools for a longer period of time. Forms to apply for food assistance through this program have been sent to ALL VMS students and their families.

If families are interested in receiving food support, they are able to fill out a form and return it to their school counselor. These requests are also able to be made via phone by calling their counselor at school:

David Spackman at (503) 429-1351, or Pete Weisel at (503) 429-1352.

If you, as an interested parent and/or community member would like to increase the number of families we can support through this program, please contribute to the nonperishable food drive at the Vernonia Schools office.

Thank you so much for your help and participation as the VSD continues to work to be an effective partner with parents and community members to provide the best education possible for our students and patrons.

Any questions should be directed to Mr. Spackman or Mr. Weisel at the numbers listed above.

School Board Report

At the December 13, 2018 School Board Meeting:

Board Approves Alternate Bid Requirements – After holding a Public Hearing to take comments from the public, of which there were none, the Board voted to approve an exemption for the District from competitive bidding requirements and the use of a design/build method for procuring a contractor for construction of the new metal shop building. The exemption allows the District to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in order to pre-screen potential bidding contractors prior to issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Audit Report – The Board heard a report from Tara Kemp of Pauly, Rogers and Co, P.C. on the annual financial audit for the year ending June 30, 2018 that was prepared for the District. Kemp reported that the District received a clean opinion with no reservations, and with no exceptions or issues.

Board Votes No on OSBA By-Law Changes – The Board voted 4-2 against a proposed By-Law change from the Oregon School Board Association (OSBA), a vote they had tabled at their November 15 meeting. OSBA Resolution 1819-04 would have created a new voting seat on the 23 member elected Board of Directors for the OSB Members of Color Caucus. The OSBA Board of Directors is made up of members elected from regions around the state; Vernonia School Board Chair Greg Kintz is the elected member from this region, representing Columbia, Clatsop, and Tillamook counties. The stated goal of the caucus is to “promote quality education for all students, focusing on the needs of students of color.” Caucus leaders have said that establishing the seat would allow them to meaningfully express their agenda and begin to engage at the regional and national level through the National School Boards Association.

Vernonia Board Chair Kintz said the proposal was unique in that no other group has ever been allowed to have a voting seat on the OSBA Board. He noted that there are several open seats on the Board and that members of color could be elected to represent their regions. Board member Steve Whiteman said he could not support the change, stating, “There are thousands of competent and talented people of color who are leaders and legislators and I can’t see that they need this extra lift. They are not at any disadvantage.” Board member Stacey Pelster questioned whether other special interest groups would want a special seat on the Board if this was approved. Kintz stated there are no other caucuses of special school board member groups

currently meeting as part of the OSBA.

Vernonia Board members Brittanie Roberts and Melissa Zavales voted in favor of the change, while Kintz, Whiteman, Pelster, and Katie Cook voted against it; Board member Susan Wagner was not in attendance at the meeting.

Board Accepts Lindauer Retirement – The Board voted to accept the retirement of Food Service Director Gretchen Lindauer, effective December 31, 2018.

Board Approves Out of State Travel – The Board voted to approve out of state travel for staff members Juliet Saffier and Justin Benassi who attended conferences in November. The trips should have been approved prior to the travel dates.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller was not present at the meeting, but did take part by phone and provided a written report. Miller reported that a behavior survey has been drafted and will be distributed to staff in February to help gauge the effectiveness of discipline actions.

Miller told the Board that good progress is being made towards the At-Home School Program the District is working to create.

Miller told the Board that new School Resource Officer (SRO) Abbie Hanson has completed training and began work at the school on December 10. Miller said Officer Hanson is working to be visible and get to know students and school routines.

Miller reported that a one-year contract extension has been signed with Curl Transportation to provide bus and other services for the District. He said the contract extension allowed Curl's to purchase a new bus with wheelchair capabilities to help meet the needs of all students in the District.

Miller updated the Board on the wetlands the District has been monitoring and said the District has completed their responsibilities for the project.

Bond Update – Superintendent Aaron Miller provided a verbal report on bond projects. He said the Mist School has new siding and the building has been painted, although it will need some touch up work, and a cement ADA ramp has replaced the old wood ramp. Miller said he will be evaluating the Bond budget to determine what interior projects at Mist will be completed. Miller told the Board that the City of Vernonia Planning Commission will hear a request for a Conditional Use Permit for the construction of the Metal Shop in early January.

Principal Reports – High school/middle school Principal Nate Underwood provided a written report to update the

Board on staff training, students achievements, attendance, and the recent blood drive organized by students which had 30 units of blood donated. Underwood also reported on the 2017-18 School Report Card which showed 79% of high school students On Track to Graduate, a 17% increase from the previous year

Elementary Vice Principal Michelle Eagleson provided a report and told the Board that 86% of parents participated in teacher conferences in November. Eagleson told the Board that elementary students are starting each school day in the gym where they do breathing exercises before heading to class; Eagleson said teachers are seeing a positive impact with students arriving to class calm and ready to learn.

Student Reports – Kortnie Adams and Torey Tolonen, representing the middle school AVID class, updated the Board on scholastic, social, and athletic activities at the school.

Dakota Willard and Angela Iem reported to the Board on a Career Day

trip that eight students took to learn about cosmetology.

Public Comment – VHS senior Jade VanPelt told the Board about her experiences as an art student at her previous school and at VHS, and told the Board she did a survey of students here who responded that they appreciate having art classes in school.

Scott Laird asked the Board to vote in support of Resolution 1819-04 from the Oregon School Board Association (OSBA) to approve a By-Law change that would create a new voting seat on the Board of Directors for a representative from the OSB Members of Color Caucus.

Vernonia's Voice is published twice each month on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Look for our next issue on January 3.

Vernonia Students of the Month

November 2018

Elementary School



Front Row: Avery Cota (k), Abbey Thorn (2nd), Aiyana Randall-Gardee (1st). Back Row: Sapphire Herndon (4th), Joshua LaBelle (3rd), Morgan Lee (1st), Mackenzie Burkland (5th). Not pictured -Serenity Richardson-Lawson

Elizabeth Gonzalez Grade 6

Elizabeth is an engaging and creative student.

She is known for being responsible, hard working, on task, and courteous and kind to other students and her teachers. Elizabeth says she loves to do art, and likes to draw pictures of cats and mystical animals. She plays flute in the school band. At home she likes to draw and take care of her cat Amelia Princess Fluffer Butt.



Abby McGuire Grade 12

Abby is an excellent student who is the Vice President of the Vernonia National Honor Society. She plays the clarinet in the school band. She says her favorite subjects in school are history and English. In her spare time she has been working with her dad to fix up a '94 Jeep Chief Cherokee.

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