

# Schools Update: Attendance

By David Spackman

Attendance has become a recent focus of education in our nation. There is good reason for this. Good attendance is a requirement of just about any job we can think of. One of the most important goals of education is to equip students to do well beyond school and of course this requires gaining some basic academic skills. Having highly developed academic skills will not be enough in today's workplace though. Students need to develop habits of good attendance to be successful.

The Oregon Department of Education defines chronic absence as missing 10% or more of school days. For Vernonia Schools this amounts to a maximum of 16 days in a school year.

There is a statewide initiative in Oregon to get

school districts to reduce chronic absence. In Oregon, about 1 in 6 children are chronically absent. The state does not make a distinction regarding the reason of absence because it is known that every absence results in missed instruction and that affects achievement. Studies show that continued chronic absence can significantly compromise a child's ability to read at grade level by the end of the third grade and children who are not reading at grade level by then are less likely to graduate on time.

Building good attendance habits early can go a long way to help solidify students' own expectation of their attendance. Morning routines can create a readiness for school that is carried clear through to high school and beyond. Evening routines are also important. Having homework, backpack, and lunches ready to go, as well as laying out clothes the night be-

fore, and a reasonable, consistent bedtime are all helpful. We try to encourage good attendance at school by giving awards each quarter for perfect attendance and improved attendance.

Of course there are good reasons for students missing school and we expect parents to keep their ill children at home. If a child has a fever, is vomiting or has diarrhea, they should not be at school. But if they have the common cold, sniffles, a mild stomach ache, or are tired, they need to be in school.

As always, call the school if your child needs to be absent and if there is any way that we can help, please let us know. Call one of the counselors or an administrator if you have concerns that we can help with.

*David Spackman is the K-6 School Councilor with the Vernonia School District.*

## School Board Report

### At the March 14, 2019 School Board Meeting:

**Bond Update** – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board after having 11 contractors express interest in the four classroom addition construction project, only one contractor made a bid, which was \$800,000 over the proposed \$1.7 million budget. He said the District is unsure how they will proceed at this time.

**Board Approves Administrative Contracts** – After recessing to Executive Session under ORS 192.660(2)(i) "To review and evaluate the performance of the chief executive officer or any other public officer, employee, or staff..." the

Board voted to approved Resolution 1819-08 and extended the administrative employee contracts as presented.

**The Board Accepts Resignations/Retirements** – The Board voted to accept the retirements of middle school math teacher Nga Frederiksen and elementary teacher Linda Hobart, along with the resignations of music instructor Katherine Brown and middle school special education teacher Debbie Stahlnecker. All are effective after the conclusion of the school year. Both Hobart and Frederiksen said they would be interested in substitute teaching in the future.

**Snow Make-up Days** – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board the

District will make-up three more missed snow days on April 22 and June 10 and 11; one missed day was made up on March 15.

**Board Appoints Titus to Budget Committee** – The Board voted to appoint Kimberly Titus to a three year term on the Budget Committee. There are still several openings on the Committee.

**Board Receives Calendar Proposals** – The Board received three proposed school year calendars from the Calendar Committee. All three proposals include "1-hour late start Wednesdays" and all proposals increase student contact days by three or four days over the current calendar. The Board will make a final decision on the 2019-20 calendar at a future meeting.

**Student Reports** – Self Managers from the elementary school helped explain the program, along with School Councilor David Spackman. Self Managers are students who are recognized for being safe, kind, respectful, and responsible. They are assigned special duties each month and receive a badge to identify them. Spackman said the program was started about 10 years ago. One of the students, Koa, explained that to become a Self Manager a student needs to get the signature of their parent, a teacher, and someone else, indicating that they meet the goals of the program.

**School Reports** – Elementary Vice Principal Michelle Eagleson provided a written report that noted that K-2 students made a field trip to the zoo on February 22, and said an Oregon Coast Aquarium Shark presentation has been rescheduled for May 15. Eagleson reported that author Trudy Ludwig was at the school all day on March 14 and made presentations

to students and staff, and met with parents in the evening to talk about bullying and friendship issues.

High School/Middle School Principal Nate Underwood provided a written report that noted state testing through Smarter Balanced will begin soon. He said 8<sup>th</sup> grade presentations were scheduled for March 22, and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Close-Up trip is scheduled for April 14-19. He said the No Name Coffee Company, started by the HS Transition Class has been successful, with staff ordering coffee while students deliver and learn about business and customer service. He said students in the Project Based Learning Class have started a clothes closet to benefit students in the Life Skills program.

**Superintendent Report** – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board he is moving forward with the At-Home School Program, and plans to hire an instructor for next fall. The program will provide instructional assistance for home-school students.

Miller said the plan to add students and another instructor to the Mist School has not received enough interest at this time, and will probably not go forward.

Miller told the Board he has proposed a "1-hour late start" for every Wednesday next year for the 2019-2020 school calendar. The time would be used for Staff Development.

Miller told the Board he has heard there are plans for a one-day Teacher Walkout across the state on May 8, to demand more education funding from legislators in Salem. He said the Administration and Board will need to devise a plan in case it occurs.

## VHS Hall of Fame Class of 2019 Announced

The Vernonia High School Hall of Fame Committee met recently and selected the following people to be inducted into the 2019 Class of the Vernonia High School Athletic Hall of Fame.

**Jim and Kathy Eckland**

Class of 1962 & 65 respectively  
Community Volunteers, Founders of the Vernonia Education Foundation - Vernonia Sports Initiative

**Larry Elton**

Class of 1968  
Outstanding Football and Basketball

**Bill Howard**

1970s  
Coach of Vernonia Middle School and Vernonia High School

**Kris Crowston**

Class of 1976

**Shrine Team Football**

**Nathan Fleck**

Class of 2013  
State Champion and Record Holder in 800 meters

**1989 Cross Country Team**

State Champion

The Hall of Fame Dinner, Silent Auction, and Induction Ceremony will take place at the Cedar Ridge Conference Center on Saturday, April 20 starting at 6:00 pm with a social time and dinner starting at 6:30. Ticket Prices are \$20 and are available at the door or through Vernonia High School. Please call Vernonia High School (503) 429-1333 and let us know how many people in your group will be attending so we can prepare the correct number of meals.



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