

Schools Update: New Programs

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

Students and parents in the Vernonia School District (VSD) may have a number of new choices to make with their educational options starting in the 2019-20 school year. In an effort to provide learning opportunities to better meet the needs of all students, there are several changes that the district is working to implement. These new program options will impact students in all grades, kindergarten through twelfth.

The first new option involves expanding the number of students who attend Mist Grade School (MGS). Mist's size and remote location give the school a real family feel, but with only one teacher for grades K-5, there is need to expand. Our plan is to allow up to 20 students to transfer to Mist Grade School from Vernonia Elementary School (VES). This will necessitate the hiring of another teacher which will allow students to be divided into a primary (grades K-2) and intermediate (grades 3-5) setting. This move will not only increase opportunities at Mist, but also will decrease class sizes at VES.

If you are interested in applying to have your student transfer from VES to MGS, please contact the school at (503) 429-1333.

Another new option for students in Vernonia will be provided through the district's new program, the Vernonia Family Academy.

The Vernonia Family Academy (VFA) is a program being developed to meet the needs of parents and students who are currently utilizing "home schooling" as their mode of education. In the VFA parents will enroll their students in the VSD, but will still be able to work with their students at home. They will have curriculum and teacher support provided by the District, opportunities for field trips and other extra-curricular activities, state testing support, and the ability to be more connected to their peers and the community as a whole. The district feels this is a great way to bridge the gap between home schoolers and their hometown school district.

If you are interested in finding out more about the VFA, or would like to place your student on the

waiting list, please contact the district at (503) 429-5891.

On the middle school/high school side of education, the VSD is also making strides to provide more options for its students. One way to do that is to provide alternative education options that better meet the needs of students.

For the past two years the VSD has contracted with Oregon Outreach, Incorporated (OOI) to provide an alternative learning environment for up to 10 of our students each year. In this program students access coursework online and attend school for about half of the day. This decreased classroom time actually helps students stay focused on their work, and provides them an educational setting that better meets their individual learning style, and allows them to be successful.

The VSD is working hard to provide as many options as possible for its students to thrive and be successful. If you have any questions regarding these programs, or anything that has to do with school, please call Superintendent Miller at (503) 429-5891.

School Board Report

At the April 11, 2019 Vernonia School Board Meeting:

Board Meets at Mist School – The School Board held their meeting for the second time this school year at the Mist School.

Board Approves Calendar with Late Start Wednesdays – The Board approved a proposed School Calendar for the 2019-20 school year which includes a one hour late start on every Wednesday morning. The approved calendar also adds three additional student contact days and four additional staff days.

Budget Committee to Begin Meeting – The School Budget Committee will hold their first meeting on May 2 at 6:00 pm, where the proposed budget will be introduced. The next meeting is scheduled as part of the regular School Board meeting on May 9.

Board Discusses Mandatory Vaccinations – The Board held a long, and sometimes contentious, discussion about mandatory vaccinations. The item was placed on the agenda at the request of Board member Stacey Pelster. The Board concluded that the Oregon School Board Association is not currently taking a position, and took no action.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board five people attended his Community Chat on March 20. The next session is April 24 from 6:00-7:00 pm in the Vernonia School Commons.

Miller reported that he hopes to announce a final decision on the At-Home School Program at the May School Board meeting.

Miller said he will have a final decision on increasing enrollment at the Mist School at the May Board meeting.

Miller said the District has a number of teaching positions open, including:

- Part-time Welding
- Elementary Teachers
- Vernonia Family Academy Teacher
- HS Foreign Language Teacher
- MS/HS Band
- MS Language Arts/Social Studies
- MS 6th Grade (Self Contained)
- MS Special Education
- K-12 Special Education – Behavior

Miller said bids for the construction of the 4-classroom addition are due May 6, which will push comple-

tion of the project back to November/December of 2019. He said the Facilities Committee will be reviewing two bids the District received for construction of the metal shop.

Principal Reports – Elementary Vice Principal Michelle Eagleson presented the VES report, and noted:

- VES students participated in the annual Run for the Arts on April 11.
- VES has implemented a new strategy called "calming lines" to help students work on regulation and calming techniques while in transition in the building. All classes are also finishing up the Mind Up curriculum and focusing on mindfulness. The K-2 classes started Second Step, a social emotional curriculum, to teach feelings and empathy.
- On April 3, VES recognized 35 students for perfect attendance during the third quarter.
- On Thursday, May 16, Koa Leininger and Stetson Taylor will be representing VES at the Columbia County Spelling Bee.

Middle/High School Principal Nate Underwood reported that 8th grade students were leaving for their Close-Up trip to Washington D.C. on April 13, VHS seniors were leaving on their senior trip on April 19, that the VHS Prom is scheduled for May 4, and High School graduation is scheduled for June 1.

Underwood reported that a number of staff members attended a School Employee Wellness Conference in Bend and brought back good ideas to promote

healthy habits, camaraderie, and burnout prevention. Underwood also announced the District received a Wellness Grant to be used to promote employee wellness.

Underwood told the Board the Project Based Learning (PBL) Class is working on a campaign to reduce the use of foul language as a Vernonia School Community.

Underwood reported that room reconfigurations have created an Opportunity Room for MS/HS, which will allow for some separation from Elementary in dealing with student behavior issues.

Winter Sports Report – Athletic Director Gordon Jarman reported the winter

sports season was very successful from some perspectives and not so successful in others.

11 athletes qualified for state in boys wrestling, more than any other 2A school. He said the team finished in the top three of all tournaments they entered. Top wrestlers were Josh Rice, James Watson, Wyatt Jones, and Patrick Fletcher.

For the first time girls wrestling was recognized by the OSAA and sanctioned as a new sport. The girls had their own separate state tournament. Top wrestlers were Hailey Reynolds, Charity Coleman, and Hannah Creutz.

continued on page 14

Come Join Us...

Holy Week at St. Mary's

Catholic Church



4/14 - Palm Sunday Mass - 12:00pm

4/18 - Holy Thursday Mass - 7:00pm

4/19 - Good Friday Liturgy - 7:00pm

4/21 - Easter Sunday - 12:00pm



He is Risen!



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