

# Schools Update: The Start of School

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

Another school year has started, and the halls at school are back to normal. There is noise. Good noise. The sound of students learning, the sound of teachers teaching... the sounds of school.

While the sounds of school are generally the same each year, there are many changes this year in the Vernonia School District (VSD).

Two of the bigger changes in the District involve programs for our kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

First, a second teacher has been added to Mist Grade School (MGS), allowing students to be divided into two classrooms, one K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom and one 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. This change has allowed the population at Mist to double, not only increasing op-

portunities at Mist, but also decreasing class sizes at Vernonia Elementary School.

The second 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 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.

Other changes in the District include:

- Adding four additional student contact days to the VSD Instructional Calendar.
- Adding two new teachers to the Vernonia Middle School/Vernonia High School (VMS/VHS) teaching staff, creating more student opportunities for core instruction and elective options.
- Adding a full-time custodian, and additional funds for maintenance and grounds, so the District can better maintain the wonderful facilities provided by our community.
- Completing the football field and track with lighting, a scoreboard, fencing, and

a sound system.

- Adding a metals/welding shop and teacher that will be up and running for classes in January.
- VMS and VHS teachers continue to build their AVID (Achievement Via Individual Determination) program which impacts college-going and career-related attitudes and curriculum.
- New carpeting, lighting, and interior paint have been installed at Mist Grade School, as well as the refurbishing of the gym and stage floor.

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 September 12, 2019 School Board Meeting:

**Board Changes Date of November Meeting** – Due to a conflict with the annual State School Board Conference, the Board voted to change the date of their November meeting from the scheduled Thursday, November 14 to Wednesday, November 13.

**Board Approves New Hire** – The Board approved the hire of Chuck Calhoun to teach high school physical education and health.

**Board Nominates Kintz for OSBA** – The Board voted to nominate Vernonia School Board Chair Greg Kintz for a position on the Oregon School Board Association's Board of Directors. Kintz currently holds the #14 North Coast Region position, and has served in the position for 9 years.

**Superintendent Report** – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board that he will have accurate enrollment numbers at their October meeting, but estimated that approximately 580 students are enrolled in the District this year, up from the estimated 566. That number includes 44 enrolled through the Vernonia Family Academy, which provides teaching assistance to home school students.

**Bond Update** – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board painting is mostly complete at Mist School, except for some touch up and trim, new carpeting has been installed, and the refinishing of gym and stage floor has been completed. He said the Mist kitchen is almost complete with new flooring, cabinets, and plumbing repairs. New LED light bulbs have been installed at Mist, and will be installed at the Vernonia campus in the coming weeks, and window shades have been ordered for Mist. Cement work and new exterior doors still need to be completed at Mist, and new

playground equipment still needs to be installed at both schools.

The scoreboard and lighting has been installed at the new football field and track.

The VHS metal/welding shop is behind schedule and will not be completed until late fall, with classes starting in January. Security, lighting, storage, and the new classroom addition are still in the planning stages.

**Principal Reports** – Elementary Principal Michelle Eagleson thanked Mist School staff Joanie Jones, Andrea Anderson, and Tabettha Groshong for their work to get the building ready for the school year. Eagleson said "Meet the Teachers Night" on September 5 was a big success with 76% of families participating. She reported that K-5 students held an assembly on September 10 where students were excited to learn that all schools (elementary, middle, and high school) will now use the Logger mascot and be known as Vernonia Loggers; Eagleson said the change (eliminating Timberwolves and Toppers) is part of efforts to increase school spirit and build a positive culture. Eagleson introduced a new House system, where students will spend their school career grouped with the same students across all grades in a "House" to create community, strong relationships, healthy competition, and pride – students will meet every Thursday morning and participate in team building activities as part of the program.

Middle/high school principal Nate Underwood told the Board the middle school has 130 students enrolled in three grades, and the high school has 188 students enrolled in four grades, including 14 foreign exchange students. Underwood told the Board the following new classes have been added for middle school: Academic Success, German, Engineering, AVID Leadership; and for high school: Music Appreciation, Yoga/Pilates, German, Theatre Arts, Creative Writing, Speech/Debate, AP Senior English,

Freshman Academic Success, and HS Leadership. Underwood told the Board they will be enforcing the cell phone policy this year, which requires students to have phones powered off during class instructional time.


Vice Principal Rachel Wilcoxon provided the Board with the Discipline Consequence Guidelines for the school year, along with some revised policies, noting the updated Dress Code Policy which has been simplified.

**Board Schedules Workshop on Superintendent Succession** – The Board scheduled a workshop on September 29 to begin discussions on a process to select a new Superintendent. The Board has invited a guest to address them who works with school districts on Superintendent succession. Current Superintendent Aaron Miller has informed the Board that he intends to retire in the next several years, although he has not made a specific announcement. The Board's Negotiations Committee is planning to meet with Miller to discuss his current contract in the near future.

**Next Board Meeting in Mist** – The Board will meet at the Mist School for their next meeting on October 10 at 6:00 pm.

Vernonia School Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. The next School Board Meeting is scheduled for **October 12 at 6:00 pm at Mist School**. The date of the November meeting, scheduled for Thursday, November 14, has been changed to **Wednesday, November 13**.

# Vernonia Dental



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