

Schools Update: Getting Back to “Normal”

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

As has been the case for the past 12 months, changes are occurring regularly in the Vernonia School District. As of April 8 ALL students in grades K-12 have the opportunity to attend school on-site, with their teachers and classmates for four days per week; Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Students in middle school and high school have been attending school on-site for only two days per week, but this change will bring them back for a four day per week schedule.

This is extremely exciting news as March 13 of 2020 was the last time that all students were able to

be in Vernonia Schools, on-site, and together. Maintaining precautions with mask wearing and social distancing will be essential to keeping students on campus, as we work to finish this school year, and plan for a fully inclusive schedule and educational program for the upcoming 2021-22 school year.

While the brick and mortar classroom is still the preferred delivery model for most students, others found distance learning to be a more effective avenue for learning. Because of this, the District will continue providing several options for students to best meet their needs and access their education, for the remainder of the school year, and into the future.

In addition to providing these regular options

for instruction, all schools in the District will be putting together options for Summer School to help students make up for any learning losses incurred during Distance Learning. Summer School will likely begin in early July, and will be targeted to help students who are behind on their coursework for any reason. Funding to support summer learning is made possible through special grants from the Oregon Department of Education.

For any questions regarding schedules and options in Vernonia Schools, questions regarding Summer School, or anything else related to education in Vernonia, please call Superintendent Aaron Miller at (503) 429-5891.

School Board Report

At the April 8, 2021 School Board Meeting:

Board Approves 2021-22 Instructional Calendar – The Board voted to approve the recommended instructional school calendar for the 2021-22 school year. The calendar shows the first day of school scheduled for September 7 and the last day on June 13, with 164 student contact days.

Board Approves MOU for Pay Provisions – The Board approved an MOU between the District and Oregon School Employees Association - Vernonia Chapter to make provisions during COVID. The MOU provides for any employee who tests positive for COVID to be granted up to ten (10) days of additional paid leave to be used prior to the employee's regular sick leave.

Board Appoints Cochran to Budget Committee – The Board voted to appoint Carol Cochran to the Budget Committee.

Board Accepts Staff Resignation – The Board voted to accept the resignation of Mist teacher Andrea Anderson,

who is leaving to take a position at the Jewell School.

Board Approves Superintendent Evaluation Process – The Board approved a newly recommended process for evaluating the performance of the Superintendent, along with a timeline to accomplish the evaluation by June.

Budget Committee – The Budget Committee will hold their first meeting on Thursday, April 22. The Budget Committee will take public comment on the budget at their May 13 meeting, which will be part of the regular School Board meeting.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board the negotiation team has been working on a new contract for teachers, administration, and confidential employees.

Miller told the Board the deal for the Mist School to be a test site for Star Link satellite internet coverage has fallen through, and he is now working with Zply to get internet service to the school for the start of the next school year.

Miller reported that the District will be looking to hire two elementary teachers, a HS math teacher, a HS social studies teacher, and a Licensed Graduation Coach for next school year.

Principal Reports – Elementary Principal Michelle Eagelson told the Board the Elementary School will begin holding assemblies once again.

Eagelson told the Board staff has begun discussions about what systems have been put in place this year during COVID, that staff may want to continue to utilize going forward into next year.

Debbie Taylor provided a report on the Vernonia Family Academy, which is in its second year serving a total of 169 students who receive assistance with homeschool education programming.

Public Comment – Eric Larke raised concerns about eliminating the Student Resource Officer program. The expense of the position is shared by the School District and the City of Vernonia. Larke asked the Board and Administration to

keep the position. Board members later asked Superintendent Miller about the position and were told it was a personnel issue which the District is unable to discuss publicly.

Student Reports – Jenna Romaine, the Leadership Representative, provided an update on activities at the high school and middle school, including the start of spring sports, a version of outdoor school for 6th graders organized by instructors Mr. and Mrs. Ward, upcoming Spirit Week activities, and Prom next month - VHS was selected by Abby's Closet to receive 100 donated dresses for students to choose from.

Vernonia School Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 13, at 6:00 pm. Please check the District's website for updates/changes: www.vernonia.k12.or.us

Vernonia School Board Candidates *continued from page 6*

I was appointed to the Board last July and I am seeking a 4-year seat. Our Board is working to set high expectations for student learning with clear communication and goals to support our teachers and administrators. I want to continue this process to give back to the communities and the school district I serve. The Board needs to financially provide the necessary tools, school days, and professional development needed to help all students successfully meet graduation requirements while growing into confident, independent individuals. I believe our Board can provide and support an environment that is inviting, engaging, safe, and nurtures the individual interests of our students through diverse opportunities.

Position #6

Javoss McGuire – I am a devoted father who, along with my family, has contributed countless hours serving our community. I spent many weekends building the picnic shelter at Spencer Park, helped build new softball dugouts at the school, committed my time and equipment for excavating the new youth skate park, and T-ball coaching (to name a few). As active Freewheelers members we have made many community contributions from road cleanup to the train decorations at Shay Park.

As a father of 2 VHS graduates, one currently attending college plus 2 cur-

rent students of Vernonia schools, I have great respect for formal education. My parents served for decades as teachers and I attended University of Alaska SE pursuing teaching before discovering my passion for the trades.

Throughout my 21 years as a tradesman in local 290 Plumbers and Pipefitters and advancing to superintendent, I've become proficient at planning, budgeting, scheduling and successfully completing multimillion dollar projects under cost. I've mentored many fine apprentices and understand the value of good leadership.

I bring a wide skill set relevant to this position and believe my unique perspective contributes a valuable diversity on the school board. Through our varying views we can become better equipped to overcome the many obstacles we face in educating our children in this ever changing world. I would also love to explore options to better equip our students with varying skill sets for their occupational endeavors should they not continue in a formal educational system.

Position #7

Jeanna Gump – I am a volunteer at Vernonia School District, The Chamber of Commerce and Intercultural Society, Hands on Art, and The Senior Trip committee. I have volunteered wherever I can while attending school full-time, working full-time, and caring

for my family. My family has been involved with international exchange programs for the last nine years. In August of 2019, I was appointed to position 7 on the Vernonia School Board and have served since then. Prior to being appointed I attended board meetings on a regular basis beginning in 2014. I have four children, all of which graduated from or currently attend VSD.

I have always been invested in education and believe wholeheartedly in public education.

I want to retain my position on the Board because I am deeply connected to this community and how its students progress. I believe that I have a unique view as a parent, an educator, a volunteer, former employee, and mentor to a number of students in high school and college. In continuing my service on the School Board, I hope to improve the outcomes for all students. My hope is to be a voice for students and parents to ensure that they receive the best possible education that can be provided in our community. My goal is to see all students receive what they need to succeed to the best of their ability and that they reach their full potential whether it be a high school diploma, trade, college degree, or beyond.

Scott Rickard – I would be honored to receive your vote in the upcoming election for the Vernonia School District Board of Directors, Position #7.

I am new to the Vernonia community and live here with my wife of 22+ years and our beautiful and talented daughter who recently turned 9. We bought land south of town back in 2016 and finished building our eventual "retirement house" on it in 2019. I was born and raised in Chicago and moved to Oregon in 2001. Prior to moving here, we lived in unincorporated Washington County for almost 15 years.

I am a corporate lawyer by trade, with a focus on representing electric utilities, financial institutions and infrastructure developers in the financing, purchase, sale and development of power plants and electric transmission facilities across the country.

My prior governmental experience includes serving as a planning commissioner on the Washington County Planning Commission for 6 ½ years.

I am running for a School Board position because I want to contribute to my new community in a meaningful way. I believe that the expertise and judgment I've developed as a lawyer, my prior governmental experience as a planning commissioner, a proven ability to collaborate with others to achieve a shared vision and common goals, and a genuine interest in improving public education and student achievement in Vernonia, while preserving the values and character of our unique rural community, will help me to serve you as an effective School Board member.