

Schools Update: Looking Toward the 2021-22 School Year

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

As staff and students have reached the end of this year of Distance and Hybrid learning, plans are being developed to continue a return to normalcy in the Vernonia School District (VSD) for the 2021-22 school year.

While plans are being made, we also know that change and flexibility are constants in the process of dealing with this COVID pandemic.

The District plans to continue to provide K-12 education in our brick and mortar classrooms, online schooling op-

tions for students in grades 3-12, and K-12 home-schooling support through the Vernonia Family Academy (VFA).

Plans for our regular schedule and school calendar are to have students' first day of school on Tuesday, September 7, 2021 with the last day of school slated for Monday, June 13, 2022. Students will attend school Monday through Friday, with their full daily schedule starting at 8:00 am, and finishing around 3:00 pm. Staff are very excited to return our schedules back to a full, regular school day!

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 late June, and will be targeted to help students who are behind on their coursework for any reason. There will also be opportunities for enrichment learning activities, which are meant to be fun and engaging, yet still educational. Funding to support summer learning is made

possible through special grants from the Oregon Department of Education.

Specific information on these extra learning opportunities will be shared with students and parents through school communication channels.

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 June 10, 2021 School Board Meeting:

Board Approves Budget – After a public hearing at which there was no public comment, the Board voted to adopt Resolution 2021-04, approving the budget for fiscal year 2021-22.

Mist School to Include K-5 Students Next Year – Elementary Principal Michelle Eagleson reported that the Mist School will continue to serve its K-5 resident population. The District is confirming with parents interested in sending their students to Mist for the 2021-22 school year to ensure there will be enough students enrolled for both a K-2 and 3-5 classroom.

Board Approves Voting Abstract – The Board voted to approve the abstract report for the Vernonia School District School Board election on May 18, 2021 and certifying the election of Susan Wagner, Amy Cieloha, Stacey Pelster, Joanie Jones, JaVoss McGuire, and Jeana Gump.

Board Approves Out of State Travel – The Board approved Out of State Travel for the 8th Grade Close-Up Washington, DC trip, the Senior trip to California, and the HS student trip to Germany, all occurring in the Spring of 2022.

Board Accepts Teacher Resignations and Retirements – The Board accepted the resignations from teachers Kendra Berryman and Laura Blacker, and the retirements of Byron Brown and Matt Blair.

Board Approves OSAA Cooperative Agreement with Banks – The Board approved an agreement with the Banks School District that would allow a student transferring from Banks to the Vernonia School District to continue to play soccer with the Banks team; Superintendent Aaron Miller clarified that other VSD students could potentially play girls soccer at Banks under this agreement.

PBL Grants and Reader Board – Jim Krahn updated the Board on the activities of his Project Based Learning (PBL) class and their Community 101 Grant Program, which receives funding through the Oregon Community Foundation. Each year the class receives

\$5,000 to distribute in the community, which they do through grants. Last year during COVID they gave all \$5,000 to Vernonia Cares. This year grants went to the Vernonia Education Foundation, Vernonia Cares, and Vernonia Public Library for the Summer Reading Program. Krahn also told the Board his class made the original suggestion for a community reader board seven years ago, which will be installed this summer at Spencer Park and will be a collaboration between the City of Vernonia, the Vernonia School District, the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District, and the Vernonia Boosters to provide information for the community.

District Recognizes Outgoing Board Member – Superintendent Aaron Miller recognized outgoing Board member Brittanie Roberts for her six years of service on the Board.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Board enrollment is up from about 530 at the beginning of the school year, to 556.

Miller had teaching assistant Richard Traver give a presentation from the Equity Team. Traver said the goals of the group are to give each student what they need to reach their full academic potential in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive school community, while also providing access, representation, and meaningful participation for all students, including underrepresented groups. Members of the Equity Team include Michelle Eagleson, Aaron Miller, Jamie Hamsa, Kendra Schlegel, Suzanne Meyers, and Ashley Ward.

Principal Reports – Elementary School Principal Michelle Eagleson said 30 families participated in Kindergarten Registration.

Eagleson said students in K-5 participated in video art lessons with Artist in Residence Jessica Graff, who taught basic drawing skills, focused on animals in the natural world.

High School/Middle School Principal Nate Underwood told the Board it was a busy spring with a prom, basketball and wrestling seasons, principal and academic awards, and promotion and graduation

ceremonies.

VFA Report – Debbie Taylor told the Board the Vernonia Family Academy (VFA) has completed a successful year with 88 families and a total of 144 students in grades K-12.

Opportunity for Graduating Seniors Next Year – High school instructor Juliet Safier told the Board that graduating seniors next year who are a first generation college student will receive an opportunity through the Willamette Promise to attend workshops in Salem that will focus on scholarship preparation, financial literacy, and other life skills.

Public Comment – Laura Blacker, an elementary teacher who has submitted her resignation, said the reason she is leaving is because of recent changes in administration and she no longer feels heard, respected, appreciated, or valued as a teacher. Blacker said she took a position with the Vernonia Family Academy last year because of the change in administration, but misses working in the classroom with students, but doesn't feel she can do that effectively at Vernonia Elementary School.

Thomas Jones thanked Superintendent Aaron Miller and the rest of the administration for their work to reverse the decision to only teach K-2 students next school year at the Mist School, and instead continue to teach K-5 students.

Janice McGuire thanked the administration for providing the opportunity for students to attend the Vernonia Family Academy. She also said she thinks the District needs to do more to reach out and connect with the community when making policies and decisions.

Vernonia School Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 8, at 6:00 pm. Please check the District's website for updates/changes: www.vernonia.k12.or.us

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