

Schools Update: Strategic Planning Survey Update

By Superintendent Aaron Miller

The Vernonia School District is seeking input from the community as it works to develop a long-range Strategic Plan on how to best implement educational programming that will align with the VSD School Board of Directors' priorities. This work will also be a chance for patrons to engage with the District on how to best utilize state Student Investment Account (SIA) and some Federal Covid relief funds.

Please help the District "Clear Paths" for our students' successes at school, so we can "Build Bridges" to their future successes in life.

Surveys will be available on the VSD website (www.vernoniak12.org) and at the school for community members to begin providing that input.

Other opportunities to hear about the District's priorities, its current long-

range plan, and to help move this work forward will include in-person and virtual meetings in late January and early February. Exact dates for these meetings will be announced soon, and posted on the District's website.

SIA funds are aimed at reducing academic disparities for students of color, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who are impacted by poverty, homelessness, and foster care through four main components for school district expenditures:

- Reducing Class Size
- Providing students a "well-rounded education"
- Increasing Instructional Time, and
- Students' Health and Safety

The District's current Strategic Plan, implemented over the past five years included three main areas of focus:

- Students graduate from high school

ready for college, career, and civic life

- Improve and maintain positive communication and relationships between staff, students, parents, and the community

- Become a financially stable and thriving district where students and staff flourish

The District Board of Directors recently adopted District Priorities are:

- Improving Academic Proficiency Levels for All Students
- Providing Innovative Career Pathways for All Students
- Providing Inclusive/Equitable Programs and Opportunities for All Students

Your opinions and input on all these topics are encouraged and welcome. Access to these surveys and meetings will be available soon.

Please help our students, staff,

and community by participating and helping our schools clear our students' pathways to success, and build bridges to their future!

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

Superintendent Explains School COVID Closure *continued from front page*

snow and ice that made driving dangerous.

"Moving to Distance Learning is going to be our last choice every time," said Miller. "We have the ability. If we have to do it we need to take a day and get everybody prepared, including students and staff, but it's not even close to our first choice. It's not nearly as effective as being on-site. I think we've seen the results of that nationwide, with kids not participating. It's just a difficult situation to try and teach in. As much as we have the capability to do it, it's not something we're going to switch back and forth to, unless we absolutely have to. It's not the best model to educate our kids."

Miller said in a letter to parents that the closure came after a wrestling official who had worked two recent Vernonia meets, one of those a home meet on Friday, December 10, tested positive for COVID, had been contagious, and had close contact with a number of Vernonia athletes and staff. Miller said that exposure resulted in positive tests for several students and then several staff members also became sick.

After doing some contact tracing, Miller said the District realized without quarantining, the District was at risk for a large exposure. "It happened really quickly but with the way things are going right now, sometimes we have to make an immediate decision."

In addition, Miller said the school schedule naturally lent itself to a closure. He said with one day needed to transition to Distance Learning, and the last day of school before the start of the holiday scheduled to be a half day, it didn't make sense to make the switch.

Miller said he would ask the School Board to approve making up the three lost days of classes by using three days built into the schedule as snow make-up days, one each in March, April, and May.

"We don't want to give away student contact days where we're instructing our students through online learning," explained Miller. "We decided that we can utilize those days more effectively with in-person learning than we could by switching to Distance Learning."

Miller said the District did go ahead and host two basketball games on Saturday, December 18 and Monday, December 20 after cancelling a league game on December 17, but did cancel a game scheduled for December 28. "We decided that as long as we could field healthy teams and not worry about spreading to others, we would go ahead and not fall behind and have to alter the athletic schedule."

Miller said any other snow days or other closures this year will likely be added on to the end of the school year, or could potentially impact the Spring Break vacation, currently scheduled for March 21-25.

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Look for the next issue on January 20.

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Church Directory

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Sunday Schedule:
Sacrament Meeting: 10:00 am
Sunday School & Primary: 11:20 am
Relief Society, Priesthood and Young Women: 12:10 pm
Roger Cook, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street
503-429-7151

Grace Family Fellowship
Sunday School: 9:00 am

Worship Service: 10:30 am
Thursday Prayer: 6:00 pm
Greg "Mac" McCallum, Pastor
957 State Avenue 503-429-6790

Nehalem Valley Bible Church
Sunday School: 9:45 am
Sunday Worship Service: 10:45 am
Sunday Evening Service 6:00 pm
Mark Organ, Senior Pastor
Gary Taylor, Associate Pastor
500 North Street 503-429-5378

<https://www.nvbiblechurch.org>

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Sunday Mass: 12:00 pm
Fr. Joshua Clifton, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue
<https://www.facebook.com/StMarysOfVernonia>
503-429-8841

Vernonia Christian Church
Worship Service in Youth & Family Center: 9:30 and 11:00 am

www.Vernonia.Church
Sam Hough, Pastor
410 North Street 503-429-6522

Vernonia Seventh-day Adventist Church
Sabbath (Saturday) Services
Sabbath School: 9:30 am
Worship Service: 11:00 am
Pastor Antonee Leo Aguilar
Email: antonee.aguilar@oc.npuc.org
<https://VernoniaOR.AdventistChurch.org/>
1294 Nehalem Street 503-429-8301