

509-J Schools in Action!

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Leadership Corner

A Message from Rick Molitor Superintendent



Dear JCSD families and friends,

For the past several years, District teachers and staff have been working hard to help our students be more successful in school. We continue to make changes in the way we teach and engage students and while we still have a ways to go, we are seeing some great improvements. Our OAKS test scores continue to go up and graduation rates are increasing as we stay focused on teaching and learning.

The changes we're making haven't been easy for any of us. Our teachers, staff, students and parents are being asked to open their minds and hearts to a new way of thinking about education and success for our children. With proficiency-based learning, we are working towards a higher standard of academic excellence that will better prepare each of our students for life, careers and college.

I'd like to thank our team and community members for their patience and support as JCSD helps lead the charge for a brighter future for our children. Please don't hesitate to contact me at rmolitor@509j.net or (541) 475-6192 if you have questions about anything related to our District.

Sincerely,

Rick Molitor, Superintendent

Higher standards lead to success in life

The shift from the traditional high school setting to Proficiency Based Teaching and Learning (PBTL) at Madras High School hasn't been easy. Teachers and students are adjusting to new systems that focus less on homework and assignments now called practice work and more on how much a student can show what they have actually learned in class.

"We're moving away from traditional models of teaching," said MHS Principal Sarah Braman-Smith. "In the past, it didn't matter if students were learning as long as they were completing assignments and earning the required points to advance. Now, we're focused on knowledge and understanding. Are they learning what they need to be successful in careers, college and life?"

According to Braman-Smith, as we move to a more student centered model, the teacher role is shifting from "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side" where teachers work with individual students to help them master the common core or other designated course standards at their own pace.

"It's been an adjustment for all of us, including parents, but we're starting to see students thrive under the new model," said Braman-Smith. "Once we are able to implement PBTL District wide, at all grade levels, the transition to the high school system will be smoother."

MHS is one of the first and only high schools in the state to adopt Proficiency Based Teaching and Learning at a comprehensive level explained Braman-Smith.

"Learning how to navigate all sides of this new way of teaching and learning can be stressful, especially at the end of the term when students are pushing extra hard to pass," said Braman-Smith. "But that comes with the territory when you have high academic standards. It's what our students will face when they graduate and move into careers or higher education. We want them to be prepared for success."

For more information about PBTL at MHS, contact Sarah Braman-Smith at sbramansmith@509j.net or (541) 475-7265.

What students have to say about Proficiency Based Teaching & Learning...



Skyla Whiteplume, grade 9

MHS Freshman Skyla Whiteplume explained that she was confused by the proficiency changes at first, but now she understands how it works and has finished her first semester with a 4.0 Grade Point Average.

"It wasn't easy, but I have high expectations for myself as a student and as a member of my tribe. I feel satisfied, but it's not over yet. I still have more years to go. I know I can and I want to, so that's exactly what I'm going to do."



Laura Diaz, grade 10

MHS Sophomore Laura Diaz said that at the beginning, she felt kind of confused by the proficiency system, but she got used to it.

"It helps us show what we know and what we need to improve. I think it's a great opportunity because people who are failing have a chance to make up work."



Bryan Bueno, grade 11

MHS Junior Bryan Bueno was one of the first students to transition to the proficiency system as a freshman.

"It's harder to get an 'A' because you have to get everything on the test right and sometimes you have two or three tests on the same day. The great thing is, you can fail, try again and ask for help until you pass. You are taking control of your education and you have to push yourself to learn more."



Margaret Hoaglin, grade 10

MHS Sophomore Margaret Hoaglin said that while she understands the concept of PBTL, the transition was difficult.

"For straight 'A' students, it hit us hard because if you miss one question on a test, you have to keep going back. The good thing is, there's no time limit so you can keep trying. I think we need to ease in by starting in 8th grade or as freshmen."



Dalton Herkshan, grade 10

MHS sophomore Dalton Herkshan advises other MHS students to take advantage of proficiency plus days to help them be successful under the new proficiency system.

"Last year was hard because I didn't know what to do and it felt like I was doing the work, but not getting enough done to count. Proficiency plus days helped me because you get a lot more time and help."

Proficiency Based Teaching and Learning

What is Proficiency-based teaching and learning (PBTL)?

Proficiency Based Teaching and Learning (PBTL) uses systems that require students to demonstrate a true understanding of subjects in order to advance to the next level in school.

How is PBTL different?

Traditional teaching and learning systems allow students to advance in school based on points earned through a combination of completed tasks and assignments, tests and extra credit. PBTL systems are based on a student's ability to prove the knowledge they have gained through teacher-guided studies.

Why is PBTL important?

Throughout the United States, students with average and above average grades are graduating from high school unprepared for college and careers. College drop out rates are on the rise as students struggle to adjust to the more rigorous standard and expectations they face as young adults. PBTL is designed to help them be more prepared and to narrow the gap for minority students who are struggling within the U.S. education system.

Why is JCSD moving to PBTL?

We want our students to reach their full potential. For several years, our District has fallen below the state average in academic achievement. Our graduation rates have been low and some of our students who go on to college drop out because they are unprepared. We know we have great teachers and staff. We also know that our students have the potential to be successful in college, careers and life. To make progress, we've had to find new ways to teach and help our students learn -- and it's been working. PBTL is the next step to help JCSD students reach higher and be ready for life after high school.



Scott Sanchez, grade 12, with Assistant Principal Paul Navarra. Sanchez is one of the first MHS students to take advantage of the new advanced diploma program.

College credits for high school students

Fourth year high school students can now graduate with a full year of college credit if they enroll in the new advanced diploma program at MHS. The program, offered in partnership with Central Oregon Community College (COCC), is designed to break down barriers to a college education.

"Some students don't realize that college is an option because of tuition costs," said MHS Assistant Principal Paul Navarra. "Others don't have the confidence or their families may not be ready for them to leave home. This option allows them to transition into college and work towards a two-year degree while tuition is covered by our District."

MHS senior Scott Sanchez is one of the first students to apply for an advanced diploma at MHS. He will start the advanced diploma program in the Fall of 2014.

"This is a great opportunity because I will attend my first year at COCC for free," said Sanchez who is also a member of Juntos, a program that encourages high school students to explore higher education. "It's pushing me to do more."

— Scott Sanchez, grade 12

Madras High School Coffee with the Principal is Back!

Thursday February 27

8-8:30 a.m. in the Parent Center.

Chat informally with the principal about all things on the last Thursday of every month (except for March).

Calendar

March

3/7	No School Parent Conferences
3/10	School Board Meeting 7 p.m. MHS
3/12	2-Hour Early Release
3/24-28	No School Spring Break