



New teachers learn from a panel of experienced JCSD educators.

## Teaching Matters Most

There are many studies that show what a teacher does in the classroom is the most important factor affecting student academic success. The work of a skilled teacher can offset poverty, class size and many other detriments students may face.

The Jefferson County School District has a training program that helps teachers who are either new to the profession or new to the district sharpen their teaching skills and become oriented with JCSD and its diverse culture.

The two-year Mentoring and Induction Program starts with an orientation week in August called "Strength Through Diversity." New teachers learn about the district's unique and diverse cultures, get an overview of policies and learn about the research-based teaching standards JCSD uses. Participants even take a bus tour of the community to see where students live and get a feel for the distance that some must travel to get to school. The week also includes a visit to the Museum at Warm Springs and a demonstration of Native American dancing.

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— Katie Lapke, second grade teacher, Madras Elementary

Each new teacher is assigned a trained instructional coach who serves as his or her mentor for the two-year period. There are monthly professional development trainings and a class project. Highly effective teaching practices are also studied.

"One of the best parts of the program is that new teachers have the opportunity to get feedback on their performance from their mentors," said Instructional Coach Sue Taylor. "Teaching has traditionally been an isolated practice, with individuals working in a silo. The program provides the opportunity for feedback from mentors on what is working and what can use some fine tuning."

The district's program is so successful that other districts around the state have replicated it.

"The time spent with other teachers creates an atmosphere of collegiality and support that lasts over time," said Taylor. "Long-term friendships are created among co-workers, and in a rural community, that's important."

"The new teacher induction program helped me feel more prepared for my first year of teaching. It has given me the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues that are also new to the teaching profession or new to the district," said Katie Lapke a new second grade teacher at Madras Elementary.

"While we don't have funding to reduce class sizes by adding extra teachers, we feel that providing all of our teachers with mentoring and training, will enable us to improve outcomes for our students," said Superintendent Rick Molitor.

## Warm Spring Students Roc Their Mocs

The Warm Springs K-8 Academy's Rise and Shine Club made moccasins in October during November's Roc Your Mocs event. The activity was part of National American Indian Heritage Month. Moccasins can be worn every Friday throughout the month.



Left: Nathaniel Jensen works confidently on his moccasins at WSKS. Right: Seventh graders Kathyce Danzuka and Hailey Cochran are busy making their moccasins.

## JCSD Alumni: Where are they now?

Do you know a JCSD alumni who has moved on to college and/or career success? We are looking to feature our graduates in future *Schools in Action* updates. If you know of a former student, drop a note and photo to Superintendent Rick Molitor: [rmolitor@509j.net](mailto:rmolitor@509j.net).

Visit the District website at  
[jcsd.k12.or.us](http://jcsd.k12.or.us)

## JCSD focuses on improving graduation rates, attendance and test scores

High school graduation rates in Oregon are on the uptick. In 2015, the state's four-year graduation rate was 74 percent, up from 68.7 percent in 2013. Aiming to surpass the state average, the Jefferson County School District has set an ambitious goal of graduating 80 percent of its students by 2018. The district's 4-year graduation rate is currently 57 percent, so the work ahead for students and teachers is challenging.

"A high school diploma is one of the main ingredients to success in life," said JCSD Superintendent Rick Molitor. "We want each and every one of our students to not only graduate, but also have the foundational skills necessary to continue learning whether it be in college or a career."

Because many students face unique life challenges that prevent them from completing high school in the traditional four years, the district is focusing on five-year graduation rates — the number of students earning a diploma within five years.

*"We are working very hard to engage students in the learning process so they enjoy coming to school. We want our students here, we want them to be successful and we want them to graduate."*

— Rick Molitor, JCSD superintendent

"Our five-year programs at Bridges Career Tech in Madras and Bridges Center in Warm Springs have proven very successful in helping many of our students graduate who otherwise would not," said Molitor.

The key to raising graduation rates is improving both attendance and academic scores.

"Attendance and graduation go hand in hand," said Molitor. "If students don't come to school on a regular basis, even in kindergarten, the chance that they will graduate diminishes. Missing even 10 percent of school each year can hurt a student's long-term success. Once learners fall behind in their studies, they feel overwhelmed by the idea of catching up, and just give up all together. We are working very hard to engage students in the learning process so they enjoy coming to school."

The district hopes to increase the overall attendance rate to 92 percent this year. Staff in all the buildings is reaching out to support and encourage families of chronically absent students and help them overcome barriers to getting their children to school regularly.

The district is also focused on improving academic achievement and state test scores in English language arts and math by 10 percent.

"In order to reach our primary goal of improving graduation rates, our learners need to have the academic skills at all levels and be in school regularly," Molitor said. "We want our students here, we want them to be successful and we want them to graduate."

## Warm Springs K-8 takes aim at attendance

Warm Springs K-8 Academy has a new outreach program to help improve the attendance rate of students chronically absent from school.

"Regular attendance is crucial for students to do well in school," said Principal Ken Parshall. "Missing even two days a month adds up over time and can cause students to fall behind."

Twenty-one percent of the school's student body is chronically absent, missing two or more days a month. The school received a Tribal Attendance Pilot grant to hire two family advocates to help address the problem. Warm Springs had one family advocate already on board funded through Title 7.

The three family advocates began the school year by identifying students who are perpetually absent and reaching out to their families. The advocates typically explain to families the importance of regular attendance and then work with them to help address any barriers they may experience in getting their kids to school.

"We want families to know that they we're here for them. We want to work together as partners and support them in any way we can and help get their kids to school so they can be successful," said Parshall.

"We have families who can't come to the school to meet with us so we have driven out to their homes," said Family Advocate Rosetta Herkshan. "We have even picked up students on occasion who needed a ride to school."

The school has also distributed informational pamphlets and flyers about the importance of regular attendance throughout the community.

The program's efforts are paying off. According to Parshall, there has been a reduction in the number of students experiencing a large amount of absences.

"We recognize families face many challenges. We want them to understand the impact over time of their kids missing school, and know that we are their partners in helping them address these challenges and getting their kids to school," said Parshall.

## PAC Calendar

### December

- 2 MHS Drama presents The Grinch: 7-9 p.m.
- 3 MHS Drama presents The Grinch: 7-9 p.m.
- 5 Madras Elementary Lessons Recital: 6-7:30 p.m.
- 6 MHS/JCMS Winter Choir Concert: 7-8 p.m.
- 7 Buff Elementary Lessons Recital: 6-7:30 p.m.
- 8 MHS/JCMS Winter Band Concert: 7-8 p.m.
- 9 Madras Elementary Winter Concert: 1-2 p.m.
- 10 3rd Annual Holiday Gala: 7-9 p.m.
- 14 Board Meeting at District Office: 6 p.m.



### Calendar

#### November

- 11 No School — Veterans Day
- 21-25 No School — Thanksgiving Break
- 28 Board Meeting at Warm Springs K-8, 6 p.m.

