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They're touching carburetors, crank shafts, camshafts and learning some of the nomenclature before we moved into the other aspects of the course."

The students get a chance to look at an engine and the core principles of a car, and then from there, the class focuses on maintaining a car.

"We're doing it just like home. They have the tools that they would probably have at home to jack the vehicle up in the air and learn how to do that safely," Tregoning said. "There's the safety jacks, put the vehicle in park and so forth. And then getting deep in there, turning wrenches, draining the oil, changing the filter, putting it all back together, testing it, making sure it runs."

The class has already learned how the change oil, and is now working on changing, and later rotating, tires, along with checking and changing brake pads.

"At the end of the semester, we'll wrap it into identification of all the parts on the vehicle," Tregoning said.

For Automotive 2, students start with small block Chevy engines, tear those down and rebuild them.

"The rebuilding process is slow because we're going through each system," Tregoning said. "We've got the engine completely apart before we put everything together. Where the oil goes, what the engine should be doing, so on and so forth. Then we move on to the crankshafts, check the clearances, put the crankshafts in, make sure everything is okay. And then the pistons, amps and all the rest of the parts. We learned about each part as we went along."

After that, the class moves on to more advanced car care, such as differentials, the electrical system and the anti-lock brake system, "something more than your average car owner would know."

At the end of the semester, students will know how to use the more advanced tools of the trade, including how to use a lift and doing a transmission flush.

For the third class, it's all about going to town on rebuilding cars.

"Basically, anything that's broken that we have available, students will pick a project, and then we go in and start troubleshooting, see how we can fix it," Tregoning said.

The class has already had one win this year.

"One of the teachers broke their timing belt," Tregoning said. "They were thinking the car was toast and it wasn't going to work. But we took our time to figure out why the car was toast. As we were going through it, we realized it was still fixable. So we went through, we replaced the timing belt. We inspected the cylinders, inspected the valves. Put it all back together and returned the car back to the customer. He's very satisfied."

Next, the board discussed the first reading of a policy that will streamline how the school will deal with students who can't afford a meal.

"No matter what a student's balance is, we're not denying them a meal," District Superintendent Andy Grzeskowiak said. "There's a bit of an idiocracy to the alternative meal. To qualify for a meal, a student has to go all the way through the line, have a reimbursable meal, get to the checkout table, and be told 'You have an insufficient balance to have this meal.'"

The meal the student went through the line with is then thrown out, and the student is given a separate meal.

"Why are we spending two lunches on a kid who doesn't have a balance to begin with?" Grzeskowiak asked. Instead of making students go through this process, the policy will now allow the district to "Just give them the lunch, and a reminder to mom and dad."

Board member Suzanne Mann-Heintz called the current way of dealing with student meals "stigmatizing," while Special Programs Director Lisa Utz said that the changes were much needed.

"I don't know if you've seen the news lately, but there's been some grumbling about districts that are pulling the meal and giving an alternative meal," she said. "It's nice to know that I work in a district where you support not doing those kinds of things."

The board will vote on the changes during the next meeting.

Later on in the meeting, the board briefly mentioned the hiring of a new kindergarten teacher, long time substitute Janet Lewis, to help maintain small class sizes in the primary grades. At the beginning of the year, the elementary school only had four kindergarten classes, and an influx of new students found the classes overflowing.

In a report to the board, Siuslaw Elementary Principal Mike Harklerode wrote, "The new room required an investment in curriculum, furnishings and technology to keep it on par with existing classrooms. Identifying students was also an important process. We made individual phone calls to families to discuss the possibility of moving their students to the new room."

The new class began on Nov. 12.

Grzeskowiak then gave an update on the elementary's school gym floor, which is being replaced after a roof leak in the summer caused damage.

"They're pulling bleachers today, and then the floors will be taken out. We should be laying them down after Thanksgiving. We're on target to be operational the second week of January," he said.

During the construction, recess will be relocated to other spaces, such as the computer lab, the cafeteria, hallways and the student center. As for PE, the classes will be temporarily relocated and alternative "small-space activities" will be the focus.

Finally, board president Guy Rosinbaum talked about the importance of board members reaching out to other organizations in the region.

"One of the things that we've been a little remiss about doing is going to meetings of the other boards that are in the district," he said.

He mentioned some of the changes in the community that will be occurring in the community, such as additional housing. These changes could affect the school in a number of ways, including class sizes and bond measure considerations.

"I wanted to ask the board if you guys would be interested in splitting off and going to some of these additional meetings, such as the [City of] Florence planning meetings," he said. "I think it's maybe time as an organization that we reach across the aisle and start understanding what these other boards are dealing with, and what they're planning. If we don't understand what is going on in the community around us, it's going to be really hard to plan what to do in the future."

Rosinbaum also mentioned the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County and other educational entities.

"Siuslaw Public Library, it didn't really occur to me, but I can't imagine a better group for us to be talking to and figuring out what they're planning versus what we're doing, and start working together," he said. "Same with St. Vincent De Paul. We feed every kid in the district, often three meals a day. All year long, St. Vincent is giving them clothing. That seems to be a group that, at a board level, we ought to be talking to."

While it was mentioned that many board meeting minutes are available online, they don't often reflect everything that is said in a meeting. Plus, simply having a presence at these meetings can show support and build relationships.

"There's a great power to being there physically and being recognized," board member Bob Sneddon said.

"I agree," Rosinbaum said. "If we don't understand the community that's around us, how in the heck are we going to educate the children in the community?"