

Ione School District investigates charter schools

The Ione School District Board, at its March 16 meeting, brought up the possibility of creating a charter school, with the hope that the district could increase its student population and thereby funding for its school.

One previously discussed area of contention between the Ione School District and the Morrow County School District are those students living in the disputed Lexington-Pine City area.

The Morrow County School District initially said that those students could decide which school district, Ione or Morrow County, that they would like to attend. MCSD, however, reversed its decision and will now require those students to attend Morrow County Schools beginning the fall of 2004.

The ISD has said that it will accept the students from that area, whether or not MCSD releases them from its district. If MCSD does not release those students and the students still choose to attend school in the ISD, neither district will receive state school funding for those students. However, if Ione were to form a charter school, students outside the ISD could attend Ione schools and the money would follow the student, according to ISD Board member Anne Morter.

Morter told the Gazette-Times Tuesday that the ISD is working to expand its focus and investigate other avenues of opportunity to increase funding for Ione Schools, including the issue of district borders. She stressed, however, that the ISD does not want to "inflamm" the MCSD with the threat of taking students away. "That's the last thing we want to do," said Morter. She said that she had heard the rumor that ISD plans to park a bus outside Central Market in Heppner and transport Heppner students to Ione. "That simply is not true," stated Morter, who questioned why those fearing such a scenario would have such little confidence in the ability of Heppner schools to retain their students.

Aside from possibly increasing the student population by forming a charter school, ISD may also benefit financially because the state per student rate is slightly different for charter schools and could possibly result in more money for the district.

Another issue of perhaps more significance, financially as well as educationally, is teacher certification. A charter school is only required to have half of its teachers and administrators licensed by the state. By law, currently all of the ISD's (and MSCD's) teaching staff must be certified. Theoretically hiring non-certified teaching staff would save the district money.

Answers to many of the questions surrounding charter schools are available online at the Oregon Charter School Resource Center (www.osba.org/hotopics/charters/faqs.htm). Following are some regulations now in

effect concerning charter schools:

-Definition: A charter school is a public school that receives public funds under a written agreement—a charter—that outlines student performance goals and educational services the public charter school will provide. Charters are excluded from many statutes and rules guiding traditional public schools. In exchange for this freedom from regulation, the public charter school guarantees in its written agreement (charter) certain levels of student performance. Governor Kitzhaber signed SB 100 and HB 2550 on May 27, 1999. The provisions of the law that allow public charter schools to be created became effective on September 24, 1999.

-Sponsorship: Either the school board or the state board of education can sponsor a charter school. The state board can only sponsor a charter school if the application is denied by a school board.

-Enrollment: Enrollment in the charter school is voluntary. Any student living in the district in which the charter is

located may enroll. (According to Morter, students living outside the district are also eligible to enroll.)

-Collective bargaining: If the local school district is the sponsor and also the employer of the public charter school, then the employees may be covered by existing collective bargaining agreements. Charter school employees may organize to form a bargaining unit and bargain under Oregon's collective bargaining law with their employer if: the state board is the sponsor and also the employer or if the public charter school governing body is the employer.

-Teacher certification: At least one-half of the charter school's total full-time equivalent teaching and administrative staff must hold a valid teaching license issued by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. The other teachers must be registered with the TSPC.

-Transportation: The charter school must provide student transportation and may negotiate with a school

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Local school districts to receive substantial increases in federal education funding

Public school districts across central, southern and eastern Oregon will receive significant increases in federal Title I education funding this year, according to preliminary figures released by the U.S. Department of Education. Since 2000, Oregon's Title I funding has increased by \$51.8 million, a 66 percent increase.

U.S. Congressman Greg Walden applauded the Bush Administration's continued commitment to education funding increases. Walden traveled to southern Oregon on March 1 with Deputy Secretary Eugene Hickok, the second-highest ranking official at the U.S. Department of Education, who joined him at a number of local education events to highlight the education funding increases and local school quality successes.

"The Congress and the President remain committed both to improving the quality of education that our children receive and making sure the needed money gets to the classroom," said Walden. "At a time when states like Oregon are slashing school funding, the federal government is increasing its contribution consistently and substantially. Our teachers and schools need all the help they can get to meet the challenges of educating today's young people. I will continue to do all I can to make sure that our schools have the resources and flexibility they need."

The bulk of federal funding for elementary and secondary education programs comes in the form of Title I funding, which

supplements state and local funding for low-achieving children, especially in high-poverty schools. The program finances the additional academic support and learning opportunities that are often required to help disadvantaged students progress along with their classmates.

Morrow County School District received a \$204,743 increase in funds, a 38.9 percent increase.

For a complete list of Title I increases to the Second District school districts, visit: www.house.gov/Walden/press/releases/2004/fy04titleI.doc.

Oregon has also benefited under the No Child Left Behind Act. More than \$99 million in increased funding—a 73 percent increase—has gone to Oregon since President Bush signed the bill into law. Oregon has received an additional \$43.4 million under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a 54 percent increase. IDEA was created in 1975 to help states and school districts meet their obligations to educate children with disabilities.

To view Oregon increases in federal education funding since 2000 visit: www.house.gov/Walden/press/releases/2004/EducationFunding2004.doc.

Congressman Walden represents the Second Congressional District of Oregon, which includes 20 counties in southern, central and eastern Oregon. He is a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce as well as the Committee on Resources.

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HES students participate in Safety Fair



HES students ask questions during Safety Fair held March 18.

Kindergarten through third grade students at Heppner Elementary participated in a Safety Fair on March 18 at the school. Police, fire and ambulance personnel talked with the children about safety issues and about their jobs. Students also received a tour of the ambulance.

Following the presentation, the fourth grade class presented a musical with the help of teacher Wendy Appleton.

LaRue named National Girls Track Coach of the Year

Del LaRue was nominated by the Oregon Coaches Association in the fall of 2003 for National Girls Track Coach of the Year.

The following criteria is used in selecting national coaches of the year: career coaching record, community service, involvement in other school activities, involvement in their profession at local, state, and national levels, and their basic philosophy of athletics.

On Feb. 13, 2004, Coach LaRue was notified by the National Federation of State High School Associations that he was selected to receive the 2003 Northwest Sectional Coach of the Year award for the sport of Girls Track and Field. The Northwest section includes the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. The NFHS Coaches Association is the official national coaches association of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

Del LaRue was informed on Feb. 24 that he has been awarded the 2003 NFHS Coaches Association National Coach of the Year for Girls Track and Field. Coach LaRue has been contacted by the National High School Athletic Coaches Association that he is a finalist for the National Girls Track Coach of the Year for 2004. As a finalist he will be honored at the national awards banquet in Las Vegas on June 24. Each of the Coach of the Year finalists are recognized individually at the awards banquet with a narration of their career and a presentation of a plaque. The 17 coaches chosen Coach of the Year in their respective sports are then presented with 10 carat ruby rings or pendants.

Del LaRue coached 10 years at Lostine, Wallowa, and Fossil. For 26 years he taught and coached at Ione Schools, and for the last seven years he has coached track for a total of 33 years.

During this time his track teams have accomplished: one state title, runner-up six times, third twice, fourth once, fifth once, seventh once, state high point girl four different years, 32 individual state titles, and four first place relays.



Del LaRue



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