

Vernonia School Board emphasizes improved communications

The Vernonia School District Board of Directors approved continued operation of the Mist School, board goals and working agreements, and adopted a resolution in favor of the school bond at their September 13 meeting. The board also heard reports from the superintendent and building principals.

Superintendent Larry McClellan presented the board with an operational cost analysis for Mist School. In making the analysis he assumed that operations would continue at the present level and did not include the cost of any capital improvement. Given these assumptions, the school actually receives slightly more money from the state to operate the Mist School than is budgeted for its operation. McClellan said that the school also offered an important educational option for elementary students. McClellan also recommended that the district hire an engineering review of the facility. The board approved modification of the Long Range Facilities Plan to recommend retiring Lincoln Elementary School, only, and maintaining Mist as an active school site.

The board approved agreements that include job descriptions for board members, how they operate during meetings, and how the board and superintendent communicate with each other. The agreement also requires all members to cast votes on issues requiring a vote, except when there is a conflict of interest. Additional provisions require annual planning and evaluation, orientation of new members, and the role of the board chairman.

The board established goals for the 2001-2002 school year to support a belief that each student needs to experience

success. According to the goal statement, success should be demonstrated in concrete ways and in manners that place each student in a "winner's circle." The board selected five goals in the areas of (1) community communication, (2) student safety, (3) district communication, (4) instruction/curriculum program, and (5) a secure learning environment.

Improving communications and relations between the community and the district received particular emphasis. The board has contracted with OSBA (Oregon School Boards Association) for a communications audit that will study how people currently receive information about the schools. When the results are received the board will develop a plan of action.

The board has already started a project to develop a network of "key communicators." Key communicators are opinion leaders in the community whose views are respected by others. The district has identified a number of people and invited them to a meeting to explain the program. Key communicators will help correct misinformation and disseminate accurate information. They will also keep school officials informed of misperceptions and inaccuracies before they are widely spread. Anyone with an interest in becoming a key communicator should contact the district office.

Two additional activities were added to the community communications goal at the board meeting. The board agreed that each board member should attend at least one activity, classroom or program every month. In addition, every month one board member will report on a program, classroom or activity that they have researched and visited. The pro-

gram a board member researches should be one that they would not normally attend.

Board responsibility for the student safety goal is to provide safe, adequate buildings for all students. Activities supporting this goal will include presentation of the bond measure to the public and design of a new facility.

The superintendent will implement the Teach to the Future program, review the Vocational-Technical program, continue implementation of the Certificate of Initial Mastery and begin steps to implement the Certificate of Advanced Mas-

Tami McDonald has trained the staff in the Second Step Program that will be used for character education this year, and K-3 teachers have received training in the Open Court reading program.

The theme chosen by the VHS Leadership class for 2001-2002 is RESPECT. Principal Mike Durbin reported that the theme reflects a direction that will build a more positive, respectful and courteous climate in the school. Durbin also noted improvements carried out by Vernonia Youth Corp and the Youth Transition Program at Greenman Field. High

cally to provide sound, safe and attractive buildings for our students, and praised the efforts of local volunteers to improve our schools, like those who constructed the steps at Lincoln.

During the recently added audience comment time at the end of the meeting, Mist resident Tom Jones thanked the board and the superintendent for their response to community feeling and their decision to keep the Mist school in operation. Jones, who has attended several board meetings in the last year, also said that he was impressed with the direction the board is going.



One of late summer's last days was enjoyed by a Deer Island family who prefer the tranquility of Vernonia Lake to the busier - and noisier - Columbia River beaches.

tery in support of the board's goal to strengthen, improve and expand the instruction/curriculum.

The board's final goal is to provide a nurturing and emotionally secure learning environment for all students. Student counseling and management programs will be reviewed and modified as needed, as will the school and district improvement plans, to support this goal.

Kirk Sherrill, Washington Grade School principal, reported that the staff is very excited about spending the "Run for the Arts" money raised this spring to enhance art programs in the school. He also reported that

school athletics involves nearly 90 members of the student body in football, volleyball, cross country and cheerleading.

Superintendent Larry McClellan shared with the board a letter he received from DeLoris Webb regarding the current run-down state of the school's buildings and grounds. In his response to Webb's letter McClellan said these were concerns that he and the board shared, but that limited resources are focused on maintaining small class size and providing support for classroom teachers. He also said that the bond election is an opportunity for the community to decide lo-

Vernonia School District Upcoming Events

September 19 - Vernonia High School Open House

September 25 - Lincoln Grade School Open House

September 26 - Washington Grade School Open House

October 3 - Mist Grade School Open House

October 15-19 - Homecoming Week

October 24 - Certificate of Initial Mastery Recognition Night

Country Kitchen & Pizza

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