

VHS will start CAM program and change to trimester for flexibility

Vernonia School District Board of Directors voted May 9 to begin implementation of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM), one of the final pieces of state education reform. All districts will be required to offer the CAM for the graduating class of 2006. The four-year phase-in plan allows the district to develop the CAM over a period of time. Major changes for the 2002-2003 school year will include a move to a trimester system, an increased number of elective offerings and expanded student advisory time.

The purpose of the CAM, as

required by the legislature and adopted by the State Board of Education, is "...to ensure that each student is prepared for successful transition to his or her next step." The five-part certificate requires students to:

- Develop an education plan and build an education profile.
- Meet the performance standard for extended application through a collection of evidence.
- Demonstrate career-related knowledge and skills.
- Participate in career-related learning experiences as outlined in the education plan.
- Meet specific CIM perform-

ance standards in English, mathematics, science and social sciences through CIM assessment options.

The plan, presented to the board by curriculum coordinator Robyn Cochran and high school Principal Mike Durbin, represents intensive work by staff members to meet state mandated requirements and develop a program based on current research that is educationally sound and beneficial to students. The group — teachers, administrators and a counselor — has been commended by the Oregon Department of Education for their work, which

was presented to other districts in the region at a recent meeting.

Vernonia High School has struggled for many years to offer a greater variety of elective and job-related courses but, because of the small size of the staff, these offerings have been extremely limited. The CAM requires a wide variety of elective offerings not possible with current levels of staffing. Since increasing staff was not an option, the committee turned to a trimester system to increase slots available for elective and professional/technical courses. The plan approved will change the VHS calendar to a 12-week trimester system. Instead of dividing the 36 weeks of school into four grading periods, or two semesters, the year will be divided into three sessions. Cochran said that the committee, after careful review of a variety of options, chose the CAM model that allowed students the greatest possible degree of flexibility.

Currently, the schedule allows a student to take seven classes each semester or 14 classes per year. Each class is one-half credit, so that at the end of one year a student can earn seven credits, or a total of

28 credits by the end of four years. This schedule will allow each student to take 15 classes per year, for 7.5 possible credits, or a total of 30 possible credits in four years of high school. The plan will also raise graduation requirements to 27.5 credits (from the current 25.5) for the Class of 2006. Graduating classes prior to 2006 will not be required to meet the higher level of credit, but will benefit from additional course offerings. High school coursework will be restructured to allow more integrated curriculum that aligns more closely with the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM), the CAM and PASS, new college admission standards also being implemented by the state.

Unlike the CIM, which seemed to students to be just another test, the CAM impacts them on a day-to-day basis. Four new classes to be offered next year are Health Occupations, Forestry, Wildlife Management/Ecology, and Sports Psychology. Other courses will be offered as the curriculum expands to meet the additional requirements of the CAM. Though not required by the state, the VHS plan proposes to offer all six of the CAM options to students.

"Best case scenario" leaves Vernonia district budget nearly \$200,000 short

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Education Model, which was developed by a legislative task force for establishing the level of funding necessary to provide Oregon's students with a quality education. The legislature did not fully fund the QEM for the 2001-2003 biennium and the economic downturn will take the state farther away from their supposed goal of funding the QEM.

Two special legislative sessions addressing the shortfall in the state general fund have resulted in two ballot measures for additional school funding. The budget presented to the committee by McClellan is a "best case scenario" even though available represent a reduction of almost \$172,000 in current funding levels. The proposed budget also relies more heavily on special grant monies than at any time previously, with eleven grant applications that total over \$1.1 million. The district will not know how much

they will receive in grant funds until after the budget is adopted.

The proposed budget focuses on maintaining the current student/teacher ratio and counseling support for students, providing educational leadership for staff, and meeting state standards and regulations. It also includes allocations for all fixed costs, including utilities and transportation. In all other areas, the proposed budget falls far short, including extremely limited allocations for supplies, textbooks and replacement equipment, building and grounds maintenance, facility improvements and long range planning.

McClellan summarizes his budget message as follows:

"...we are very fortunate to have an exceptional, caring, and dedicated staff who focus all their energies on the youth of the community. However, even the most talented staff needs adequate supplies,

equipment and a safe, clean, appropriate environment to do their best work. Unfortunately, the level of funding we are receiving does not support that and we are not able to provide the education our students deserve."

Budget committee meetings are scheduled for May 16, 23 and 30, at 7:00 p.m. in the district boardroom. The public is urged to attend. A public hearing on the proposed budget is scheduled for June 13 at 7:00 p.m.

The budget committee is composed of the seven school board members (Darrell Hamblet, Randy Hansen, Jim Krahn, Cari Levenseller, Leslie O'Leary, Carla Strand and Tim Titus), plus seven community members appointed by the board (Noni Andersen, Robyn Bassett, Jeff Blum, Tobie Finzel, Greg Kintz, Cindy Naillon and Vicky Rice). Andersen was elected to chair the committee, with Blum as vice-chairman.

Merle Haggard will perform Saturday in Longview

Country legend and winner of sixteen Country Music Awards, Merle Haggard will perform at Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts on Saturday, May 18, at 7:30 p.m. Maverick singer/songwriter Merle Haggard represents an unusual intersection in American music, a crossroads where folk, pop, jazz and blues traditions are used to create his own soul-baring form of expression. With hits like *Okie from Muskogee* and *Branded Man*, Haggard has always set

his own trends. He is the only country performer ever featured on the cover of jazz bible "Downbeat"; the only California born singer in the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the only artist who has performed at the White House and done time in San Quentin. He is a creative force unlike any performer of this time.

Haggard remains an uncompromising artist whose work relies upon the honest and purity of his vision, not the obligations of being a country star. Rolling

Stone Magazine has said of Haggard, "He is the greatest country artist of our times!"

Opening for Merle Haggard are local favorites, Moonshine Country, with special guests Charlie and Monica

Tickets are \$40, \$45 and \$50. Call CTPA's ticket office at 360-575-8499 or toll free at 888-423-TIXX, visit the ticket office at 1538 Commerce Ave., Monday through Friday from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m., or visit www.columbiatheatre.com



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