

Weaknesses exposed by testing will be emphasis of training

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improve academic achievement. The sessions will be on Fridays, when students will be released early. Funderburg said he anticipates that some of the Vernonia schools will receive low ratings on state report cards, which are based on last year's test results.

Funderburg discussed a few of the highlights, or low-lights in this case, of state assessment results for the district. He told the board that research indicates that children who are not reading by the third grade will remain behind for the rest of their academic careers. Thirty percent of third graders in Vernonia do not meet the state standard for reading and literature, compared to a statewide average of 18 percent. By tenth grade, Vernonia students not meeting the state standard for reading and literature rises to an appalling 64 percent, compared to a statewide average of 48 percent. In writing assessment, tenth graders failed to meet the state standard at more than twice the statewide average, with 45 percent of students not meeting the standard (state average 22 percent).

Scores on math assessments in the lower grades are

not wildly below statewide averages, but last year's sophomores performed abysmally in both mathematics (a multiple choice test) and math problem solving, where students are required to show their work. Three-quarters (75 percent) of tenth graders failed to meet the state standard (state average 55 percent) and 78 percent failed to meet the standard in problem solving (state average 50 percent).

Statewide assessments are available on the state's website at <http://www.ode.state.or.us>. The INDEPENDENT will review the findings, in detail, in February or March to coincide with the arrival of state report cards. Also available on the web site are the ratings schools received as required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

NCLB explanation

The NCLB identifies schools as making "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) or in need of improvement. It requires evaluation in nine different subgroups (specified by race, economic status, disability and English proficiency), each of which must have at least 42 students tested in order to be evaluated. Therefore, the only significant subgroup evaluated for Vernonia schools is for eco-

nomically disadvantaged students. The NCLB requires all students to meet state standards by 2014. According to a press release from State School Superintendent Susan Castillo, Oregon's accountability plan is one of only five state plans fully approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

According to instructions for reading the AYP reports available on the website, "a school or district that does not meet AYP should not be labeled as failing...The school or district as a whole may have strong academic performance, but the designation may be based on a single factor or a single subgroup." Schools and districts can demonstrate adequate AYP, for each subgroup, in two ways. Each group must meet the participation target and either the academic status target or both the academic growth and graduation targets. Assessments and standards are developed by each individual state and vary from state to state. The NCLB requires that a target percentage of students meet state standards in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, both knowledge and skills (multiple choice) and problem solving.

Information Funderburg presented to the board indicates that, as a district, Vernonia schools met the participation and academic status targets in both ELA and Math. Therefore, the district received an AYP designation as having met the target. However, apparently due to the performance of some subgroup, both Lincoln Elementary and Vernonia High

School did not meet the target. Mist Grade Scholl received a "pending" designation.

Analysis of NCLB results for Vernonia, Banks and Jewell School Districts will be in the September 4 issue of *The INDEPENDENT*.

Charter School

Kaaren Heikes, of Northwest Regional ESD, briefly reviewed the local charter school proposal. According to Heikes, charter schools vary widely from state to state and Oregon requires schools to be chartered, or approved, by the local school district. A change in the law now allows a charter school to be administered directly by the local district, rather than requiring a separate non-profit entity. Heikes expects the district to receive a \$150,000 implementation grant this year and another \$150,000 next school year. The board will have both a public hearing and a special board, meeting August 28 in the district office, to review the proposal in detail.

The proposed school, with the preliminary name of Technology Learning Center (TLC), will begin in the fall as an extension of the current credit recovery program and, initially, be housed at the high school. The district hopes to be able to share space with the city at the Community Learning Center being developed in the old city hall. Funderburg said that the school is designed to meet the needs of low achieving students, students in engineering and industrial technology CAM strands, school-to-work participants, and home school stu-

dents. Junior high and high school students may apply for admission to the school. Individualized instruction, largely technologically-based, will utilize on-line courses, interactive video-conferencing, and educational software designed to meet district and state performance standards in all curriculum areas.

There will be opportunity to obtain more information or to comment on the charter school proposal at the August 28 public hearing.

Board Discussion

Board chairman Jim Krahn initiated discussion about ways to communicate to the public that the board is driving the actions of school administrators, coaches and teachers in an effort to make the district "a better place for kids." Director Darrell Hamblet proposed that the board send a letter home to parents about the changes that are occurring. Krahn said that last year was a "fix-it year", when the district was constantly applying Band-Aids to existing problems but, this year, the people and programs are in place to move forward. Director Cari Levenseller said that it is important for the public to understand that the board is responsible and accountable for directing the actions of district employees. Krahn urged those who disagree with new policies to contact board members, rather than administrators.

In other business the board:

- Approved quotes for food service.
- Approved handbooks for staff, students and coaches.
- Approved the Career Learning Project, which will replace the senior project beginning in the 2004-2005 school year.
- Hamblet requested that the district investigate moving district funds to Wauna Federal Credit Union.
- Approved changing the date of two board meetings: Meetings will be September 25 in Vernonia City Hall and October 23 at Mist Grade School.

A Special Invitation Extended To Our Community

"Shirley and I would like to invite four couples from our community to have dinner with us for six weeks in a row, commencing Friday evening, September 12th at 6:30 p.m., and continuing for the following five Fridays. Following our dinner together, we would like to share with you why Jesus Christ has made such a difference in our lives over the past 35 years. It is our desire during the six weeks, to share with you the powerful Gospel of our Lord, and to answer any questions you might have. There are no strings attached to our offer of hospitality, our only desire is that we might have the opportunity to share our JOY in Christ with you and we do mean 'share' and not 'force feed'!

If you are curious and interested, please give us a call so that we can make arrangements accordingly, as we feel it wise to keep this to four couples. IF it turns out that there are more than four couples, we will schedule another six weeks following the first six weeks. We can be reached at 503-429-8720.

We are looking forward to getting to know those in the community who might be experiencing the same emptiness in life that we too experienced in our late twenties and the early part of our marriage. Our sincere appreciation for your reading our invitation, and hopefully we will get to know some of you through our having dinner together soon!

Sincerely because of Christ,"

DJ & Shirley Dickey



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