

Vocational education, program realignment occupy Banks board

An active discussion about revitalizing the vocational curriculum engaged the Banks School Board at their April 12 meeting, and Superintendent Marilyn McGlasson presented an overview of program realignments that will occur next year.

McGlasson told the board that the number of students served in the vocational curriculum has dropped significantly over the last several years and the curriculum needs updating to address more of the student population. To begin the process, an advisory committee composed of Willis Meeuwesen, Jim Foster, Jim Smith, Bob Herinckx and Hap Vandehey met last month to review the vocational curriculum.

Herinckx said he was pleased to report that the FFA

alumni and the administration are "headed very much in the right direction," and that only minor curriculum revisions were needed, though the course descriptions were outdated. Foster added that his goal, as high school principal, was to have every class [in the vocational curriculum] be project-based. The program, previously called vocational agriculture, will be renamed vocational education and will provide a broad overview of both the business and hands-on aspects of agriculture, and include an introduction to the building trades.

Whihle Herinckx stressed the importance of hiring an enthusiastic instructor, McGlasson said that it will be very difficult to find a qualified applicant and that the nuances of the cur-

riculum will depend on the skill set of the successful candidate.

Program Realignment

Two major changes will be made next year in the allocation of Title 1 funds and in meeting the needs of students who have extreme difficulty in a regular classroom.

Oregon is one of a minority of states that do not require daylong kindergarten, according to McGlasson, but students entering school for the first time, whether in kindergarten or first grade, are a disparate group. "Bluntly," she said, [we get] a 'have' and a 'have not' group." Daylong kindergarten would allow an opportunity to narrow the gap, McGlasson explained.

Currently, kindergarten students attend class for a full day twice a week. Next year, students who qualify for Title 1 (approximately one-third of the students) will receive extra instruction, during a Friday program targeted toward Title 1 enrichment.

The program realignment will be nearly cost neutral, according to McGlasson, because Title 1 funds will no longer be used to serve students in the fourth grade and the number of students served in grades one, two and three may be slightly reduced. However, the advantages of concentrated attention in kindergarten will be seen in future years.

Restructuring the special needs program may save the district some money, but Mc-

Glasson stressed that the goal is to best meet the needs of students, not to save money. Currently, the district has a small number of special needs students who can function in a regular classroom only when attended by an instructional assistant. This model, she explained, encourages students to become dependent on individualized instruction, but does not meet the needs of these students for living in the community. This year, the high school successfully conducted a pilot program in which these students received instruction in core subjects (math, science, English and reading) in a self-contained classroom, with a certified special education teacher, then moved among the student body for elective classes.

Next year, the program will be extended to both the junior high and elementary schools. Students will have a home-room, but will still go to physical education, music, art and other subjects with their age mates. The downside of this change is that the district will lay off three instructional assistants.

Maintenance

No major repairs have been done for the last six years, McGlasson told the board, so two maintenance issues must be addressed in next year's budget. Roofs on all district buildings have deteriorated and some repair work must be done next year. Additionally, a study is needed to develop a solution for lighting upgrades at the high school, in order to replace fluorescent ballasts which contain PCBs.

Reduction in library services likely without approval of Measure 34-77

Although the use of library materials and services provided through Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) has increased by 44 percent over the past four years, funding was cut 10 percent this year as a result of the 2002 levy failure. The result was a reduction of \$1,091,370 in support for the twelve member libraries of WCCLS, including Banks Public Library.

Book budgets for local libraries were reduced by about 40 percent. The remaining 60 percent came from eliminating

staff positions, reducing open hours, and cutting back on the frequency and variety of programs for adults, youth and children. Priorities for library services are determined at the local level, so reductions have varied from one library to another. Banks Library

In order to restore local library services and maintain library service levels, the Washington County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously

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