

KFCS District Newsletter

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Strategy to Ride Out the Storm

By Superintendent Paul Hillyer

Last year someone emailed a series of pictures to me that showed a Coast Guard ship buffeted by wind and waves. Somehow, the ship comes through each devastating surge and stays afloat. One wonders how it avoids destruction. It dawned on me that the only way to survive such conditions is to keep one's eyes on the lighthouse.

Oregon school districts today feel a bit like that desperate ship. It seems that just as soon as one is over a financial hurdle a new one appears. These waves are poised to take the organization down to Davey Jones' Locker. What is a district to do during such times? They must create a lighthouse.

This is what the Klamath Falls City Schools did recently. Their lighthouse is the strategic plan. The Klamath Falls City Schools' Board of Education approved this guiding document at their February, 2011, board meeting. Within it is a clear statement of district purpose that helps one to focus on what is most important even when battling waves of ongoing challenges. The compass used to guide the creation of the plan was the ideas given to the district by parents, community and staff. Over 1,100 completed surveys provided direction.

Through the surveys, people told the schools that they need to prepare all students to be successful in an ever-changing world. Respondents recognized that even in turbulent times the Klamath Falls Schools need to make sure that all students find success and that they be prepared to meet the challenges of an adult life that can only be imagined at this time. Therefore, the new KFCS mission statement is, "Preparing all students to succeed in an ever-changing world." This becomes the district lighthouse in stormy times to help the crew keep the ship headed in the right direction.

But what will it look like if the district is succeeding? How will they know they are on course? The planning committee again sought their answers in the surveys sent in by their constituents. What they saw in the information was that the district is succeeding in its mission if it is striving for individual and organizational excellence. In other words, the schools are only helping students be successful in an ever-changing world if they are seeking personal and collective excellence. Excellence alone will meet the needs of our tumultuous times. This became the district vision: Individual and Organizational Excellence.

The district strategic plan identifies three areas on which to focus: student excellence, collaborative excellence and operational excellence. Student excellence includes high performance in all areas. Collaborative excellence incorporates how well the district is working with community and parent partners. It also includes internal cooperation and working together in unison to bring about student benefit. Operational excellence happens when all parts of the district seek to be both effective and efficient in their work to maximize the impact of limited resources.

So as the storm clouds continue to mount and the school district experiences increased buffeting from the winds and waves of challenges, the strategic plan will help the organization not only stay afloat but thrive. The community can have confidence that their school district will overcome adversity in order to meet the needs of all students. They can also count on their schools striving for excellence by their

combined talents, hard work, and commitment to preparing all students to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Link for Strategic Plan

For those wishing to look at the strategic plan in more detail the following link will give them this information: <http://www.edline.net/pages/klamathfalls>

Mills' Project Ready to Go

Two local firms, ZCS and Diversified Contractors Inc., were recently selected by the district to design and carry out the Mills' Auditorium renovation project that will begin in March of 2012. Funds for the \$1.4 million construction come from an Oregon Seismic Improvement Grant. This was the largest seismic grant allocation in the state last year.

This project will make the auditorium more structurally sound. It will add aesthetic improvements to make the facility more attractive and modern. This will help the edifice be a safe and pleasant location for the community to enjoy performances for many years to come.

The grant award will also provide a boost for our local economy as most of the work will be done by local firms. This construction award is a great boom to Klamath Falls. Special thanks go to Principals Mike Herron (Mills) and Jeff Bullock (KU) who authored the successful grant with the expert assistance of ZCS Engineering.

Next Newsletter

A group of community volunteers met over a four-month period to examine our facilities, identify needs, and put together short, medium range, and long-term recommendations for the KFCS Board of Directors. This plan was approved at their January 9th meeting. The next newsletter will focus on this report and what it means for the district in the short and long term.

If this newsletter is being forwarded to you by someone else and you would like to be a regular recipient, send me a note at hillyerp@kfalls.k12.or.us , and we will put you on our email list.