

District Newsletter

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Why Did the KFCS Board of Directors Make This Decision?

Some in the community who are not closely involved with our schools may ask, “Why did the KFCS’ school board last week approve the placing of a local option levy on the May 15th ballot?” Information on the KFCS website helps explain this: http://www.edline.net/pages/klamathfalls/Resources/Operational_Levy. Feel free to share this information with friends, family, and neighbors. The overriding reason for the board decision is very clear: the KFCS’ school board believes, without additional funds, the district will be severely hampered in accomplishing what the community has charged them to do.

The district’s strategic plan seeks to prepare all students to succeed in an ever-changing world. The current State of Oregon educational funding seriously jeopardizes this undertaking. District class size averages have escalated from 23 in 2007-08 to 30 in 2011-12 (see the graph below). This happened at a time of increased state and federal accountability and mandates. It also is during an era of exploding family stress and poverty. This has a dramatic effect on students in all classrooms.

Helping students learn while at the same time helping them cope with homelessness, abuse, hunger, and emotional deprivation would be a daunting task for teachers even without extremely high classroom numbers. Escalating class sizes raise the challenge these problems present to an extreme level. These conditions pose a serious menace to student learning and well-being. They also threaten to make the district mission little more than a trite statement.

The forced elimination of elective opportunities also threatens the mission. These electives helped students prepare for their adult lives with skills and training they need to become productive workers and citizens. Added to this is the curriculum upheaval budget reductions have caused. The district has had to indefinitely delay high school text purchases. The result is outdated and obsolete textbooks and resources. One example is Klamath Union High School social studies books that have a mid-1990’s copyright. According to these books, 9/11 has never happened! The other problem with such antiquated learning materials is they do not adequately address the new standards the state and federal government are requiring all schools to teach. Learning from such materials is a little like going into a boxing match with one hand tied behind one’s back.

The district board of directors sees the local option levy as a way to address the concerns mentioned above. While not solving all the financial woes, the levy would help decrease the acute needs the schools are experiencing. The \$.50 on \$1,000 of property levy (\$50 yearly on a \$100,000 home) would raise \$890,000 per year for each of the three years. This also would qualify the district for a 17% state match – thus generating \$150,000 per year or \$450,000 for the three-year life of the levy. The total generated by this levy annually would be \$1,040,000.

About half of these dollars would be used to hire elementary teachers in order to lower class sizes in the lowest grades. The rest is reserved for grades 7-12. This would allow the schools to add elective classes. At Ponderosa this will do more than just give students more options. It will also provide more tutoring support for students to help increase the passing rate. Finally, a portion of these upper-grade allotments would update text materials. The school board believes a successful three-year local option levy will help blunt the impact of inadequate state funding by lowering class sizes, adding elective classes, and updating text materials. This three-year supplement would help students educationally succeed until the state begins to fulfill its promise to appropriately fund K-12 education.

Did you know?

- The Credit for Proficiency Program (CFP) that KFCS started last year with a number of community partners is starting to take off. Through this program, 30 students are gaining internships in a number of community businesses. These students gain valuable information and experience in a profession or a trade while learning valuable work skills that will lead to future success. They will also gain high school credit through their efforts. Please thank the business and community partners who have volunteered their time, effort and resources to make this unique project a reality. KFCS is the first district in the state to establish such a program.
- Here are some of our CFP partners: The City of Klamath Falls, Klamath & Lake Community Action, Pacific Crest Federal Credit Union, Basin Tire, Search and Rescue, High Desert Promotions, Plum Ridge, Bud's Automotive, Merry Maids, Holmes 4-Wheel Drive, Bell Hardware, Mt. Mazama Spring Water, Habitat for Humanity, Cellular One, Denham Music, and Douglas Photography.
- Junior Achievement has also been a key player by providing three-week work skills classes. Students take these classes before their internships. The community is providing the hands and brains to help students learn what it takes to be a successful employee. Scott Mason, district agricultural science teacher, coordinates the placement of students in the jobs.
- I mentioned this last week, but I think it bears repeating: If KFCS were at the national class size average, they would have 47 more teachers. This disparity between Oregon educational funding and the national average has an impact on all districts in the state.
- **Feel free to forward this email to any people you think might be interested.**
- **If you are not on the email list and would like to be, please respond to this email and let me know.**
- **If you do not wish to be on the email list, respond to this email and we will take you off.**