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Klamath Falls City Schools

District Newsletter

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Finding the Silver Lining

As has been said in a prior newsletter, the new open enrollment law foisted by the Governor and Legislature on Oregon school districts has many potentially damaging consequences for education. One is it seriously damages cooperation between districts as they now become active competitors to recruit the same students. College football has large recruiting budgets. Is this now going to be a part of K-12 budget priorities?

A second negative consequence is reducing a student value to a dollar sign. Districts in different parts of the state are seeking to balance their budgets by getting children from neighboring districts. Open enrollment is a zero-sum game. For every \$5,700 per-head student a district gains, another district loses \$5,700.

As the old saying goes, "When the water hole dries up the animals look at one another differently." The educational funding water hole has been drying up for some time. This makes open enrollment a particularly contentious issue at this time. For example, in another district outside of KFCS, a firsthand witness reported on a recent staff meeting. When it was asked why their district was pushing open enrollment, the principal's answer simply was, "Its \$6,000 for every student we can add." This is not exactly the best focus to have in education.

There has been one positive result that has come out of this contentious process, however. It has forced us to look at ourselves and determine what gives us a competitive advantage. This self-examination has been reaffirming because we have identified many unique qualities about which we are very proud. Students in KFCS have many benefits that are not duplicated by our neighbors. Some of those benefits are shown in the accompanying attachment.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference between KFCS and the neighboring district is the great discrepancy in student-instructional time. The KCSD has chosen to balance their budget the last two years by reducing instructional days. As a result, they have 11 fewer school days than KFCS. All things being equal, this has a huge impact on student learning. More learning time is one of the top two-or-three factors that lead to greater student achievement.

You will see in the attachment some of the other advantages that KFCS students enjoy. It is encouraging to identify these assets that are given to our children. Therefore, our district does not fear the competition. When you have a great product, you are eager to share it with others. That is the silver lining in the dark cloud of open enrollment.

Did you know?

- The Governor is requiring districts to develop District Compacts with the state. These mandate districts to agree to goals in a number of areas and report on their progress to the state. We will send more information on this to you soon in another newsletter.

- KU's graduation rate at 71.93% is above the state average of 67.19%.
- KU's DECA program was named Chapter of the Year in Oregon. DECA is a business and entrepreneurial program that has won a number of state championships.
- All districts in the state are now required to implement new national academic standards and new national student tests. A great deal of time and energy is being expended across Oregon to comply with this mandate. The state allocated no dollars to help districts implement this major change.
- A strong improvement focus of KFCS has been implementing a teacher-teaming concept called Professional Learning Communities. This initiative helps teachers work closely together to develop curriculum, analyze student assessment results, and create customized instruction for all students. This model has been proven in national studies to be the most effective tool to improve student achievement.
- KFCS is now using a new Parent Notification System. This tool allows schools to contact all parents via phone, text, or email to keep them informed. This will be a great instrument in increasing home and school communication and partnerships.
- KU is presenting the play, "Anything Goes" this Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. at the Ross Ragland Theater. Ponderosa students will be admitted free of charge on Saturday. KU is the only Basin high school that gives students the opportunity to participate in major student productions such as this.
- You may want to see an outstanding performance by "Mr. Pelican" by watching this link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spR_LZrBZuU&feature=related.
- I have also attached a recording of a radio advertisement for KU that will be airing next week if you would like to listen in advance.
- The Herald and News will be running the following two advertisements for the KFCS:
 - <http://www.kfalls.k12.or.us/edline/DoesLearningTimeMatter.pdf>
 - <http://www.kfalls.k12.or.us/edline/AClear-CutChoice.pdf>