

**January 11, 2013**  
**Klamath Falls City Schools**

**District Newsletter**  
**Volume 2; Issue 13**

**What is the Achievement Compact and Will It Improve Schools?**

By Paul Hillyer, Superintendent

You may have heard of Governor Kitzhaber's initiative to bring accountability to state education and accomplish his goal of 100% graduation by 2025. This platform was also submitted to the federal government to get a waiver from most of the requirements under the No Child Left Behind legislation. This new state requirement is called the Achievement Compact. Just what is this new mandate and will it improve schools?

The Achievement Compact consists of a number of state-wide student academic measures for which all districts are required to set performance targets. These include the percent of students who graduate in four years, the percent of students at various grade levels that attain a passing (called proficient) score in reading and math, the percent of 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students who have acceptable numbers of credits and attendance, and so forth. Districts are required to set goals in each area and submit their projections to the state for approval.

All districts in the state did this for the first time last year. Like the other Oregon school districts, KFCS is now in the process of determining their targets for next year. They are waiting on the state to finalize the required indicators on which to set their projections. Districts are also waiting for past performance information from the state in order to determine what to set as realistic improvement numbers. These estimated growth targets must be approved by the KFCS' Board of Directors no later than the June board meeting.

To do this work, each district must have a board-approved Achievement Compact Committee consisting of teachers, non-teaching staff, and administrators. This group is required to send their recommendations to the school board for approval before the June 2013 board meeting. Setting improvement goals in these areas has proven to be very challenging due to a scarcity of performance information from the past in many of these areas. It is also challenging because separate targets must be set for a number of different demographic groups based on race, income, and special needs. Finally, setting improvement numbers is very hard as it is difficult to guess how much improvement is possible. Therefore, much of this number setting is based on educated guesses and high hopes.

Will this work improve education in the state? This is very hard to gauge. At least, it will set up state-wide comparisons on achievement in the Compact categories. This could be very helpful as districts will be able to learn best practices from one another through the identification of high performers in each of the different areas. This practice is currently being done in the state. KFCS sent teams from each school last fall to learn from high-performing schools of similar makeup how they achieved strong math scores. This type of learning is very helpful.

What is less helpful is the guess work involved and the more-or-less random setting of numerical targets. Perhaps with time, this will become a more precise and useful exercise once better data is available for setting the goals.

There are many unknowns in the new system. For example, will there be consequences to districts who fail to meet their Compact targets? The Governor's Office has not yet addressed

this question. However, due to the punitive nature of the No Child Left Behind system, districts across the state were reluctant to set ambitious goals for fear of retribution should they fail to live up to their agreed-to outcomes. Another unknown is whether this new system will change the way districts are funded in the state. For example, will high-scoring districts receive more education dollars than those whose students do not achieve as high? If so, will this financial reward and punishment be based on the percent reaching passing scores or will it be based on the academic growth of students?

In conclusion, the new state accountability system based on district Achievement Compacts is moving forward as a means to require districts to set performance goals for their students. There is much that is still unknown about the intent and the repercussions of the new system. This initiative will continue to be a work in progress and the district newsletters will keep readers updated on changes in the system.

#### **Other News:**

1. The district Achievement Compact Advisory Committee is also the district Teacher Evaluation Committee. This group is meeting monthly to rewrite the teacher evaluation system. The new evaluation system must include teacher goal setting, principal observations and reports, and student-achievement improvement. The new evaluation model needs to be finished and submitted to the state by June. The consultant that is helping the committee with their work is funded through a grant from the CLASS organization.
2. KFCS' employees increased their United Way giving by 12% last year. Fairview with a 40% increase received the Silver Award; Mills with a 45% increase earned the Bronze Award; Roosevelt with an 82% increase was given the Gold Award; Adult Education's 78% gain gave them the Silver Award; Early Intervention with a 24% increase also earned the Silver Award.
3. Do you know the tremendous consequences of dropping out of high school on individuals and society in general? Here are a few from the Massachusetts Department of Education:
  - a. Dropouts cost the U.S. more than \$260 billion in lost wages, tax revenue, and productivity over their lifetimes.
  - b. Dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated during their lifetime.
  - c. Dropouts are substantially more likely to rely on public welfare and services.
  - d. In 2001, 45% of adult high school dropouts were unemployed.
4. Congratulations to Reserve Officer Lieutenant Brett Lemieux, sixth-grade teacher at Mills Elementary School, who was recently honored as one of the Exchange Club's Officers of the Year for 2012!

Please forward this newsletter to anyone you think might be interested in KFCS news. If you are not a regular recipient of this free newsletter and would like to be, please respond to this email and let us know.