

**February 25, 2013**  
**Klamath Falls City Schools**

**KFCS District Newsletter**  
**Progress on Transition to Ponderosa Middle School**  
By Paul Hillyer, Superintendent

The 2013-2014 school year will be the first for Ponderosa Middle School. The school will change from a grade 7-8 junior high to a grade 6-8 middle school. This model is common in Oregon and across the country with more than 70% of districts organizing in this configuration. Here is a quick update on the conversion to this new model.

The sixth graders will be housed together in what is called a “school-within-a-school” configuration. This means that all sixth graders will be in one part of the building, separate from grades 7-8. They will be in teams of two or three classrooms. These teams are in separate pods that will be together all day with the same two or three teachers.

In order to make this sixth-grade area attractive and effective, the school board has approved the addition of a three-classroom wing. The other two wings will be created by remodeling the shop area and the library into the other two pods. The current library will be moved to a more central location in the building.

Construction of the three new classrooms will begin in March and the completion date is set for August 15<sup>th</sup>. The KFCS’ Board of Directors awarded the job to the low bidder, DCI Construction. DCI and their sub contractors are local. Thus, the project will also help the local economy. This is being funded with the dollars from the Secure Rural Schools Fund that was awarded by the County Commissioners last May. The rest of the remodeling will be done by our district’s Maintenance Department over the summer.

The location of the sixth-grade wing will be in close proximity to the lunchroom, music rooms, and gym. Sixth-grade students will not have classes in the other part of the building where seventh and eighth grades are housed.

Nine teachers currently in our elementary schools have been selected to teach the sixth graders next year. Karen Strickland, Evan Mortenson, Tim Beck, Steve Campbell, Matt Buchan, Dena Modin, Ruben Paschal, Cheryl Kenney, and Brett Lemieux have been selected. They have already met with Ponderosa principal, Daymond Monteith, to begin planning for next year.

The program will be a hybrid model in which a good portion of the day will include self-contained classes for the core subject areas of reading, math, and writing. The remainder of the day will provide an opportunity to acclimate to the model used in grades 7-8 in which students have different teachers for other subjects.

Mr. Monteith is meeting with parents of fifth graders in the next two months at each elementary school to explain the program, answer questions, and seek ideas and input. Mr. Monteith will also be visiting fifth-grade classes in the district to explain the new program for students. An open house for these students is being planned before the beginning of the school year once the construction is complete.

This new program provides an exciting prospect for students and will be a nice transition to the departmental approach used in grades 7-12. It aligns very well with the new national curriculum standards that are required of all districts. These standards are organized in a grade 6-8 configuration. This middle school model makes the delivery of these standards more effective.

In summary, a great deal of work this year has gone into creating a middle school facility and program at Ponderosa that will be rolled out in the 2013-14 school year. An excellent facility, expert teachers, and effective curriculum design will characterize this change. It is anticipated that students will benefit greatly from this new opportunity.

**Other News:**

- The Herald and News will be conducting an on-line survey on the community's thoughts about local graduation in early March. You are encouraged to express your opinions on the topic through this survey.
- A committee of teachers and administrators has been working all year to re-design KFCS's teacher evaluation system to comply with new state law, SB 290. This will be a big change as a significant percentage of a teacher's rating will be dependent on student achievement and student goal accomplishment under their care.
- The district Budget Committee will soon begin their work. The first budget proposal will be given on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and the final budget will be voted on June 10<sup>th</sup>. An opportunity to comment on local school funding priorities will be given at the April 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Meetings will be at 6:30 p.m. in the boardroom at 1336 Avalon Street. More information can be found on the district web site.
- At their February meeting, the KFCS' Board of Directors approved open enrollment for non-resident students in grades 6-12. Limits have been placed on the numbers that will be accepted in grades 6-8. Elementary schools are closed to non-resident open enrollment. Any students wishing to transfer to our schools need to make application in March.
- The following is the schedule for spring elementary teacher conferences:
  - Tuesday and Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> – students dismissed at 11:30 a.m., conferences from noon to 8:00 p.m.
  - Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> – no school for students, conferences from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
  - Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> – no school.