

March 8, 2013

Klamath Falls City Schools

KFCS' District Newsletter

Why the Change in Conferences?

This spring's conferences will be different than usual. Teachers in grades K-5 will be sharing information about topics including progress on the children's goals set early in the school year, the student's growth in academics, summer school information and facts about the three diploma options that are offered in Oregon. It may sound odd to have parents of young children learn about diploma options. Why would the district take valuable conference time to do this?

One reason is that without a high school diploma, a young person likely will be consigned to a life of poverty. Donna Beegle, a national poverty expert who spoke in Klamath Falls this week, goes so far as to maintain that without a two- or four-year college degree, a life of poverty is likely.

Another reason is that our city has a poor record of high school graduation. For example, of the students from our area that were age eligible for high school graduation last year, only 59% graduated. Those who started out in our elementary schools had a better rate but still a full 25% of these students failed to graduate. That is a large number of young people that are headed in the wrong direction.

Thirdly, we are making a big emphasis on preparing for high school graduation because the requirements that students must now meet to be graduation eligible have increased markedly. Starting with the graduation class of 2015-16 (current freshmen), a standard diploma will require three high school math classes at the level of Algebra I or above. This will require all graduates to have taken and passed the equivalence of a Trigonometry class. These students will also need to pass difficult high-stakes tests in reading, writing and math. Again, the math test will require proficiency in the equivalence of Trigonometry.

So, at a time the consequences are higher than ever for those who do not graduate, the rigor of graduation requirements has escalated markedly. Thus, it is like a perfect storm: one wave of increased need for a standard diploma is hitting at the exact same time as an opposite tidal wave of increased course and testing rigor is ready to crash down.

Thus, we as a school system are obligated to do everything in our power to help children overcome these competing forces and leave their late teens ready to take on the higher-education requirements that they will need to access a middle-class life style. This can only be accomplished when the home and the school are working in a close partnership and helping each student leave their current grade ready for the next one.

This urgency to prepare students for the challenges that lie just ahead explains why important conference time will be used to discuss diploma options and the progress of each student toward grade-level competency and ultimately toward a high school diploma. A strong three-way learning partnership between the parents or guardians, the student, and the school will make it possible for young people to rise to the new learn challenges they will soon face.

Without such a partnership, the odds are long that our youth will accomplish the learning growth necessary to attain a standard high school diploma.

Other News:

- You probably have heard public education in the United States lags behind other countries. This claim is usually made based on international test-score comparisons. Recent studies have shown these comparisons to be flawed. As it turns out, when you compare like students from one country to the next, U.S. ranking in math goes from 25th to 10th. In reading, it goes from 14th to 4th. It turns out that the statistical methods used to make these international comparisons in the past were done incorrectly.
- Another interesting new finding is that there is an achievement gap between socio-economic classes in every country. This gap is less in the U.S. than other industrial countries and among the lowest in the world. It is nice to know there is good news in international comparisons after all.
- Please spread the word that Kindergarten Roundup for the 2013-14 school year will take place at all our elementary schools from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 9th. KFCS' kindergarten teachers and elementary principals have been working with Head Start to develop a preschool checklist of skills children need before entering kindergarten. This will be shared at kindergarten roundups and should be a big help for parents as they ready their boys and girls for school entrance.
- There will be some changes next year in KFCS administrative assignments:
 - Mr. Mike Herron will be serving as the Athletic Director at K.U. Mr. Herron has been Mill's principal for the last four years.
 - Mr. Tony Swan will be the Pelican School principal. He has been the principal of Fairview School.
 - Mr. Fred Bartels will take over the principalship of Mills. Mr. Bartels currently is Pelican's principal.

From KU principal, Jeff Bullock:

- Our KU Cheerleaders took 2nd place at State! Great job!
- DECA was at State last week and did great. The KU team was first place overall, but Chapter of the Year went to another school because you can't win twice in a row. Sorry Nat ;-)
- KU Swimmers did fantastic: Caleb Adkisson, Jackson Costello, Lucas Crebbin, Spencer Jackson, Marich Sikes, Graham VanGeem, and Alex Wellrett all represented KU.
- Wrestlers had a great year: Trevor and Chase Anderson, Mitch Mirande, Phil Morse, Bee and Tee Nguyen, Nick Ogborn, Gray Prescott, Will Ruiz, and Sterling Westfall all made State.
- Skiing: Jessica Bocchi will ski in the Giant Slalom for KU this weekend.
- There was also All Northwest and State music competitions this weekend. KU sent a large contingent of performers and they did very well. I apologize, but I'll need to send those names later as they are not in front of me.
- One final note: I have been officially notified by the ACT that Nelson Lindgren, a KU junior, earned a perfect composite score on the ACT college entrance exam. This is

exceptional. Only 781 students out of the 1.66 million that took this test received a perfect score. That puts Nelson in the top 4% of the top 1% of students who took the ACT. Amazing!!!

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