



June 3, 2013

KFCS' District Newsletter Finishing Off a Successful Year

All school years are busy and most result in a number of significant changes. However, 2012-13 was a year that was unique in both aspects: busy and filled with change. Some of the changes promise to bring about clear improvement. Others seem likely to be a step in the right direction. For others, the jury is still out. Here is a brief summary of some of the more important initiatives of the past school year.

When thinking about positives, the first one that comes to mind is the use of the revenue proceeding from last May's successful levy vote. The \$890,000 in levy funds allowed KFCS to hire twelve new teachers to lower elementary class sizes, add middle and high school electives, and purchase new textbooks. This caused our elementary class sizes to reduce by about five students per class. Electives in art, culinary arts, engineering, construction, family studies, and technology were added. New grades 7-12 social studies books were purchased. These additions allowed the district to provide better educational opportunities for all students.

A second significant improvement occurred in our working with parents. This came in two ways. One was the initiation of a student/parent/teacher goal-setting process that helped the school and home work more closely together. This critical working relationship is needed to help all students meet grade-level requirements and move successfully toward high school graduation. The second development in this area is the improvement in communication with parents and students at all grade levels about graduation and their current progress toward this important goal.

One way this communication now happens is sharing progress with parents toward grade-level competencies at spring conferences. Another way is through the KU Personal Education Plan that is established for each student to help them consciously track progress toward graduation. A third way is through a concerted effort to update students and parents on new state requirements and the significant work it will take to earn a high school diploma.

Another area of important change is the effort made on all grade levels to clearly define how students' progress will be determined. This is done through specifying in each subject at each grade level what the students need to know and be able to demonstrate in order to show proficiency. Teams of elementary teachers have been meeting to define this across the district. This hard work promotes consistency in what is taught in all grade schools. At Ponderosa and KU teachers also are setting clear guidelines for each course that defines the state standards that are taught and the methods used to assess and report their accomplishment. This work is

moving our schools from grading students based on time and behavior to grading students based on clear demonstration of educational standards.

A third major effort is changing grade-level configurations in our schools. Elementary schools, starting with the 2013-14 school year, will serve grades K-5. Ponderosa will change from a grade 7-8 junior high to a grade 6-8 middle school. These changes allow for a more efficient use of our facilities. This is critical as all our elementary schools have reached or are nearing their centennial birthdays. It also allows Ponderosa to work with students for a longer period of time. This is a great advantage as they will create deeper family partnerships over a three-year period than was possible in only two years. Another large advantage to this change is aligning district curriculum with state and national standards that are designed to be taught in a grade six through eight configuration.

A new sixth-grade wing is now in the process of construction utilizing Secure Rural Schools funds approved by the county commissioners last year. The project is on budget which means for about \$800,000 the equivalence of a school that can house about 280 sixth-grade students will be built. This is about half the cost that was projected by architects in the district facility study that was completed last year.

Other 2012-13 initiatives worthy of note include:

- The district and the teachers' union completed the most recent bargaining session with a new collaborative bargaining process called, "Interest-Based Bargaining." This process helped reduce the "us vs. them" mentality that often characterizes contract negotiations.
- An increase of math instructional time in the elementary schools and interventions in all grades has helped improve math achievement in the district. More consistent practices and guidelines were also created to bring about district-wide consistencies.
- A community group has been working all year to activate the whole community around helping students successfully reach their high school graduation. This work from a wide range of organizations will help provide the supports necessary in our county to bring about greater student success.
- A partnership was entered into with Klamath Youth Development Center to utilize their expertise in meeting student and families' social/emotional needs.
- A partnership with KCC has resulted in the Advanced Diploma Program in which students can go for a 5th year of high school at KCC. All credits will be college credits. This gives students one free year of college and jump starts their post-secondary education. Twenty-eight percent of this year's seniors have signed up for the program.
- A new teacher and principal evaluation system will be completed before July that will include a component for student achievement.
- The district budget committee is recommending a budget to the board which will be voted on at the June meeting. It provides for a full school year, maintains all positions added by the levy last year, includes funds for new textbooks, and adds positions in such areas as elementary music, after-school programming, and student support at schools.

Other Notes:

- On Sunday, June 9, a phone survey will be conducted to gauge parent satisfaction with our schools. Please take the few minutes it will take to give us your opinions.
- Congratulations to our music programs that did well at state. The KU choir finished second and the KU band finished fourth. Orchestra was not able to compete at state due to a technicality caused by not competing against the other 4A orchestra program in the state at any competitions. This final note is ironic as the orchestra beat many 5A and 6A programs that competed at state in competitions during the year and actually qualified for the state contest at three different competitions.
- See the attachment related to the Mills' Auditorium grand opening. All are encouraged to attend
- Thanks for all you have done to support the growth and success of our children this year. Your continuing partnership and help have been instrumental in another successful school year.

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.