

September 6, 2012
Klamath Falls City Schools

District Newsletter
Volume 2; Issue 4
A Sense of Urgency

By Paul Hillyer, Superintendent

What would you guess are some of the predicted consequences of dropping out of high school? How many of you thought about a life of poverty? How about dependence on government assistance? Did any of you predict the likelihood of drug and/or alcohol abuse? Maybe you imagined a high probability of teen pregnancy. Perhaps you even foresaw jail or prison time. National studies say these are some of the punishments youth experience after dropping out. When one considers the tremendous individual and societal cost of dropping out of school, one cannot help but develop an urgency to find a solution to this curse.

In the Klamath Basin, the number of young people who will suffer from these effects unless something is done to turn this trend around is about 30%. Of these, at least half will likely never graduate at all if the past is a prediction of the future.

Would we accept this curse for our own son and daughter or our own grandson or granddaughter? If the answer is “no,” we must develop an urgency to turn this unacceptable situation around. This is a big problem that can be solved if the community pools their talents, resources, and efforts together to drive a community-wide campaign with the message that dropping out of school is not an option.

Each KFCS school is taking this charge seriously. This is the second year in which each school is implementing activities to make progress toward a 100% graduation rate. Such ideas as convocations to honor alumni who are on track to graduate, t-shirts for each child that has his/her graduation year on it, staff diplomas exhibited in school display cases, and writing about careers that will result from graduation are a few of the ideas sites are using.

Perhaps even more important, schools are thinking about what it will take to have each student ready to enter the next grade in 2013-14 and ready to be successful in that grade. Just think about it: if every student leaves their current grade ready for the next and this is repeated each year, KFCS will have 100% graduate. This is a tall order that will take much reflection, careful planning, exceptional follow-through, hard work and, most importantly, the determination.

Equally important to helping all children become high school graduates are parent partnerships. This means listening to parents and using their ideas to improve. It also means helping parents know what the most important steps are that they should take to bring about school success.

This includes taking an interest in their child's school progress. It also means talking to their children about their school days and find out what they learned that day. Checking their backpacks for their work and the Family Link student information on the district's webpage is also important. Most importantly, it means expecting their children to stay on track to graduate by working hard and taking responsibility of their own learning every day.

Finally, just making sure that students have good attendance will make a big difference. Students that have many absences get behind and find it more and more difficult to stay on track.

The community also can play a part. A community-wide steering committee that includes churches, service agencies, parents, youth organizations and businesses will begin meeting this month to devise community strategies to heighten awareness about this area and implement plans to engage everyone in being a part of the solution to our community's high dropout rate.

In summary, we are looking forward to an exciting new school year. Excitement also is building around the effort to help all students graduate in order to find the promise and potential that is just waiting for them to discover. Let us know if you have an interest in joining in this important effort. The first meeting of the community-wide graduation steering committee will be on Thursday, September 27th, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Other News:

1. A special thanks to the YMCA who is providing free swimming lessons to all of our second grade students this year. This is a gift that could save lives. Thanks Steve Meng and the Y staff!
2. Here is some great news for our budding Credit for Proficiency Program. This is our district internship program that provides credit, job skills training, and work experiences for KU and Link River students. Kingsley Field is providing a number of internship opportunities for KFCS students. This is a great addition to the program.
3. Our district is one of the few in the nation that has been given an Energy Star designation. This is awarded to the very few that have made substantial energy improvements and, as a result, have seen significant energy use reduction and concomitant cost savings. Since starting the program in the Fall of 2006 under the direction of Scott Mahaffey, KFCS has saved over \$850,000.
4. Thanks to last year's passed levy, KFCS has been able to hire 15 teachers for the 2012-13 school year. They have also been able to add \$150,000 in textbooks to KU. This three-year levy will allow the district to lower class sizes and offer more grade 7-12 elective offerings. Thanks to all of you who made this possible!

5. KFCS came out ahead on the open enrollment initiative from last year as we have more students who chose to open enroll in KFCS than chose to go to school elsewhere. My preference still is to go back to our former cross-districts transfer policy that worked so well for decades.
6. At 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 19th, in the Lucille O'Neil gym, there will be an open forum on the topic of closing an elementary school. All are welcome to attend and share their ideas on this important topic.
7. Please forward this newsletter on to anyone you think might be interested in KFCS news.
8. 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.