

**October 4, 2012**  
**Klamath Falls City Schools**

**District Newsletter**  
**Volume 2; Issue 6**  
**Tapping Into the Mine of Parent Partnerships**  
By Paul Hillyer, Superintendent

A significant change is planned in elementary parent/teacher conferences this year. As in past years, teachers will report student progress to parents. However, unlike the past, teachers and parents will also take time to look at student achievement and set goals together to help the students maximize their academic growth this year.

In order to make it possible to add this goal-setting component, conference times will increase from 20-to-30 minutes each. This will provide the time necessary for true collaboration between parents and teachers.

Such two-way communication and collaboration between teachers and parents can be a big difference maker in student growth. Typically, students who improve academically have parents in the background who care about this school performance and do everything possible to support their learning at home and school.

Parents also know their students far better than anyone in the school. Therefore, their input and ideas are valuable resources for schools to use to help maximize student achievement.

This is an area that is so important that it is one of the five district goals. Increasing parent involvement and developing strong parent partnerships are essential to all schools. KFCS is only scratching the surface in utilizing this incomparably important resource. Hopefully, soon parent involvement will be a deep mine of support and assistance. The result will be students who achieve at levels never before seen in our schools.

**Other News:**

1. The district learned last week that the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) board is increasing the PERS charge to school districts in the next biennium by 7%. This increase is \$972,605. Combined with our current PERS charge of \$3,246,515, KFCS's PERS costs will be \$4,219,120 each of the next two years. This is equal to about 14% of the total budget.

Continued growth of PERS' costs to public entities threatens services beyond education. Public health, safety, and infrastructure are also heavily impacted by state PERS obligations. To use an analogy: PERS is not the elephant in the room; rather, it is man-eating monster in the room. The quality of life of every person in the state will decrease unless this unsustainable obligation can somehow be brought under control.

The problem stems from the fact that those in first level of PERS, called Tier 1, are guaranteed an 8% increase in their retirement benefit each year. Unfortunately, the return on investment from PERS funds is much less than 8%. That gap between revenue and

obligation has created an economic nightmare for the state. The only way to bridge the gap is to charge public entities, like school districts, more to make the fund solvent.

What is ironic is though public entities are charged more per employee for the PERS retirement system, it is likely most current employees will only see a fraction of the dollars that are deposited in their names. Somewhat like social security, more and more dollars are collected for younger workers and the funds actually go to those already in the retirement system who receive the ongoing 8% annual increased benefit.

2. At KU, teachers are working on progress reports this week. Early next week, parents will be able to see progress report marks on FamilyLink and they will be receiving a hard copy in the mail. If you do not know your FamilyLink username and password, call the main office at 541-883-4710. – From Principal Bullock
3. The district Internship Program started again this week. Juniors and seniors interested in participating started their training course this week.
4. The Community Graduation Rate Improvement Steering Committee met for the first time last week to plan ways the community can help young people reach graduation. They are looking for a catchy slogan. If you have one, please let us know. One suggestion is “100% Graduation is Klamath Falls’ Business.” It is exciting to see the number of people who are interested in helping with this critical initiative.
5. You may have received a phone call from me explaining that we are asking principals to use their time differently this year. Specifically, I have asked them to spend more time in classrooms helping improve teaching and learning. This shift will require principals to structure their time more closely. Therefore, they will not be as available for drop-in visits and will be asking visitors to set up appointments unless there is an emergency. The change is at my direction. Should you have a concern about this, please feel free to call me to discuss it. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.
6. KFCS enrollment is up 49 students over last year at 3,053 students this year vs. 3,004 last year.
7. Are you a Twitter user? If so, you should check the daily Twitter messages from the district and a number of our schools.
8. If you have not already done so, please donate to the United Way campaign drive. It helps many of our most needy students and families.

Please forward this newsletter on 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.