



**March 14, 2014**

**KFCS' District Newsletter**

By Paul Hillyer, KFCS' Superintendent

**Chronic Attendance: The Worm That is Killing the Apple?**

Have you ever bitten into an apple and discovered a marauding worm hidden within? This can be a harrowing, if not disgusting, experience. A similar experience was recently experienced when this writer read the state report on the condition of attendance in the state, the district and the schools. These figures caused the reader's stomach to turn, like biting into a worm-infested apple.

The report notes the state has the lowest student attendance of any state in the nation. Twenty percent of Oregon students are chronically absent. This means they miss 10% or more of school days in a year. Even more discouraging was the news that 24% of KFCS' students are on the chronically absent list. Why is this a stomach-turning concern?

Think about it for a minute. A student who misses 10% of the school year misses about 18 school days. How difficult is it to catch up the learning that is lost on that much school? Worse yet, this pattern starts at the youngest grades where 28% of last year's kindergarteners and 23% of first graders were chronically absent.

This begs a question: Is this one of the main reasons for a disappointing graduation rate? In other words, is this the worm in the graduation apple? The answer would seem to be yes, as last year's graduates averaged a 93% attendance rate throughout their years in school. This compares to a 72% average for a dropout. This helps explain the success and failure of these two groups. A graduate is in school an average of 39 more days per year than a dropout.

In fact, dropouts miss an average of 49 days of school per year. This means every 3.5 years, on average, dropouts miss a full year of school. Is it any wonder so many of these students are not performing on grade level at the end of the school year?

Identifying a problem is only the first step towards a solution. What are the next steps? Solving such an insidious problem requires many different strategies and much help from a number of people. The two most important groups that will need to ramp up their efforts are the parents and the schools. Schools must stress good attendance more and follow up with consequences, positive and negative, for good and bad attendance. Also necessary, will be more contact with the students and the parents when young people begin a downward attendance spiral that often starts in kindergarten.

However, even the best efforts of the schools will have little impact if students and parents do not take attendance seriously. It is critical that parents understand the close relationship that exists between learning and being at school faithfully. It makes sense that a student who is not in a classroom stands very little chance of learning the day's material. This is a critical point as learning is cumulative. Missing a lesson one day makes it much more difficult to learn the next day's lesson.

Other entities in the community can also help eliminate chronic attendance problems. This includes law enforcement, the court system, the Department of Human Services, businesses, and others. Everyone can encourage students to be in school.

That said, the two key entities when it comes to making sure students are in school are the parents and the educators. It will take an improved partnership between home and school to evacuate all the worms from the learning apples.

1. How to determine whether or not to send your children to school. If they are vomiting or have a fever over 100, they need to stay home. In most other cases, unless recommended by the doctor, the students should be in school.
2. Conferences are coming soon for grades K-8. Please check on your children's attendance at that time.
3. There will be a summer school offering for elementary and middle school students. Find out more information at conferences.
4. Did you know by funding the Modoc Field and track improvements through a zero-interest loan as compared to including it on the bond issue, the KFCS' Board of Directors saved local taxpayers more than \$600,000 over the life of the loan? This savings includes over \$300,000 in-kind contributions.
5. Do you, your church or your business wish to be a Klamath Promise Partner? Please go to the Klamath Promise webpage to learn more: [Klamathpromise.org](http://Klamathpromise.org).
6. Congrats to the Robotics Team: They were given second-highest award in the regional competition. It is the **Engineering Inspiration Award**. This award is very important as it celebrates outstanding success in advancing respect and appreciation for engineering within a team's school(s) and community. (Win this at the state competition and the team earns an invitation to Worlds in St. Louis.)
7. The Ponderosa sixth-grade teachers and other Ponderosa staff are working at McDonald's on Avalon on March 18<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. They are doing this as a fund raiser to assist students in paying for Outdoor Science School. They would like to invite all City School employees and their families to assist us in this fun event. They will receive 20% of all counter and drive-thru sales, and 100% of all cookie and pie sales. There will also be a donation jar if you don't want to purchase food. McDonald's has been fabulous to work with on this event. They guarantee it will be fun!!!!
8. May 23<sup>rd</sup> is **Give Back Day** for our schools. All students will be involved in community service projects to help beautify Klamath Falls on this day. Let us know if you have a project you would like us to add to the worklist.
9. In case you missed it, here is the link to the inaugural KU electronic news magazine. You can also access on the district and KU websites:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWLUZQ64rzc>. Each month, Klamath Union High School will produce a video magazine called "**KU & YOU**." Please click on the link above to access this magazine. The video magazine is a reflection of the many stories involving KU students, teachers and staff as well as the community that supports Klamath Union High School. In the March Edition of "**KU & YOU**" (the first edition), you will meet:

- Tisha, a senior violinist in the KU Orchestra
- Brad Croxford, KU Alum and Social Studies Teacher
- KU students in the theatrical production of ***Grease***
- The State Champion KU Cheer Squad
- March of Time - a historical view of KU's building
- The inspiring story of Rachel's Challenge
- The KU Spirit OSAA video

To view "**KU & YOU**" each month, google, "Klamath Union High School." The video is located in the middle of the webpage. If you have an idea or story you believe should be featured in an edition of "**KU & YOU**," or if you would like to nominate a local business or alumni as a featured story, contact Dan Stearns at [stearnsd@kfalls.k12.or.us](mailto:stearnsd@kfalls.k12.or.us).

If you would like to receive a link to all videos that will be produced at Klamath Union High School, please do so by going to the Klamath Falls City Schools' District webpage, on the left-hand side under NEWS, click on "District Email List" and enter your contact name and contact email address. Each month we will send you a link to all KU videos and other information.

10. Please forward this on to anyone you know who might have an interest in the information.