



September 16, 2013

KFCS' District Newsletter

What's New?

By Paul Hillyer, KFCS' Superintendent

Don't you just hate it when people ask you this question? Especially this year, it is hard to know where to start in a response. These are some possibilities: Ponderosa Middle School now includes a new sixth-grade wing; Conger has added additional classrooms; the district has been awarded a \$2 million after-school program grant for grades K-12; KFCS has been named one of 25 CLASS Project districts in Oregon and rewarded a \$20,000 grant to begin the CLASS Project work; the Klamath Promise Initiative, the community effort to improve graduation rates that was initiated by KFCS, has been awarded a \$40,000 state grant to jumpstart their work; Oregon's Deputy Superintendent of Education, Rob Saxton, spent two days in the district to learn about our initiatives; a new teacher evaluation plan is being initiated this year that took a year to write; a new proficiency grading system is being instituted in all schools this year; the Common Core State Standards are now being taught in all classrooms ... well this gives you a sampling of our answers to the question.

Do you see why the "What's New?" question can be difficult to answer? Through the upcoming year, these newsletters will update the readers on the above-mentioned and other important KFCS' undertakings.

This issue will focus on the new after-school program that will be started in mid-to-late October. It is called the 21st Century Grant After-School Program. The district will have more than \$400,000 on average annually for five years to provide after-school academic support and enrichment opportunities for students. Five district schools qualify for these programs: Pelican, Conger, Mills, Ponderosa, and KU. A prerequisite was a free-and-reduced lunch rate of more than 50%.

The programs in K-8 include two, one-hour sessions each day. One will be academic supports. This hour will provide homework help, math reinforcements, reading practice, and academic games. The second hour will include enrichment activities such as arts and crafts, fitness options, science projects, English language learning supports, career education, nutrition information, and character education. Also included in every day's schedule is a meal for all participating students. The program will run for 25 weeks. At Ponderosa, it will also provide a summer school option for students.

Buses will transport students home at about 5:15 p.m. daily from the elementary sites and 5:30 p.m. from Ponderosa. Fees will be charged on a sliding-fee scale. About 180 students will be served in each elementary school. Ponderosa will be able to serve about 240 students and KU's numbers are not capped at this point. Students receiving first priority are those that qualify for free-or-reduced lunches and who are below grade level in reading or math. The program will start before November 1st. More information on enrollment and starting procedures will be sent out soon.

The YMCA is a key partner in this programming as their personnel provide the enrichment sessions. Other key players include KYDC and Citizens for Safe Schools who will facilitate parenting classes. Junior Achievement and KCC will be offering career education enrichments for students.

At KU, besides the academic supports, the program will offer electives in a number of areas including robotics, broadcasting, and health occupations.

Finally, why has the district been awarded this major grant? It is given to help our schools have safe after-school places for children. This is critical at this time in which most families have both parents working. It is also awarded to allow the district to accomplish its mission of each student ready for the next grade. The academic supports after school are a step to make this possible. Finally, the grant allows the district to provide enrichment areas that otherwise would not be feasible due to the limited time and dollars available during the regular school day.

Thus, one of the key answers to the "What's New?" question is an exciting new after-school opportunity for children and families at five KFCS sites. This exciting resource will provide safety, create critical academic supports, and deliver enrichment experiences that will expand opportunities in many areas for children. This is an exciting new addition to KFCS' program that will add great value to their service to their families.

Other News:

1. We have good and bad news related to fall enrollment. First the bad news. KFCS is down more than 100 students from last year at this time. Much of this can be attributed to families moving from our community. We hope this movement out reverses soon and new job opportunities surface to attract people to Klamath Falls. Now the good news. Because of this attrition, class sizes are lower overall than expected. The K-5 classrooms average 23.6 students. Ponderosa and KU average between 25 and 27 per class. These class sizes are well below the average found almost anywhere else in the state in public school districts. Part of the reason for these smaller class sizes is the operational levy that the community approved in May of 2012. Again, a big thank you to our community for their generosity!
2. The kickoff for the Klamath Promise Initiative will be on **Thursday, November 7, from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at OIT.** Danny Miles will be the keynote. Food and beverages will be provided. Feel welcome to attend at no charge and learn more about this key community effort and what you can do to support it.
3. All teachers in each K-5 grade are meeting together at one site every other week this year. They will be sharing common assessment results, identifying teaching strategies that bring

about the best results, creating common lesson plans, and determining joint intervention and enrichment strategies. It is believed this cross-district teamwork will bring about great student achievement benefit. Now that sixth-grade teachers are together at Ponderosa, they will be able to do similar work together.

4. KFCS has contracted with KYDC to hire two staff members who are called, "Transition Coordinators." They will help students new to our district in grades 9-12 get connected to their schools and get off to a good start. They will also help students who leave one school and move to another get established in their new place. These staff members will also work with new families to help them acclimate to Klamath Falls. The purpose of these positions is to help students who are in school changes become academically successful. This student population is often one at high risk of dropping out. This is one way to be proactive in order to increase the number of students who successfully reach graduation.

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.