



Silver Falls School District News

CLASS NOTES

October 2013

District Office • 802 Schlador St., Silverton, OR 97381 • 503-873-5303

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Seeking a unifying vision

The beginning of the school year is always a fresh start, a renewal of sorts, with sights set on a vision of individual student growth and success over the coming months.

This school year has begun well and is no accident. Each staff member in every school across the district is effective at planning for a positive start and sustaining that energy for the school year.

In a similar way, the Silver Falls School Board has initiated a planning process.

This one is not limited to one school year or a classroom of students.

Rather, it is designed to better define the vision for all schools in the district for years to come.

While the diversity of each school in our school district will continue to be a unique and proud element, a "unified" district vision is more important now than ever in the past.

Here are some important nuggets of information about our diverse district:

- It was fully formed in 1997 following a consolidation of multiple area school districts.
- It covers 240 square miles and is contained in two counties. Its attendance area includes two incorporated cities, Scotts Mills and Silverton. The remaining area of the district extends into the zip code regions of Mount Angel, Woodburn, Molalla, Canby, Salem and Sublimity.
- The district contains 13 schools. Twelve of them are elementary schools. Most of these are in rural areas and central to their respective community. The district also has two charter schools.
- Each school is equally important to the education of 3,750 students. No one school is more or less important than another. Each has a rich history and a culture which can be defined best by those who attended it.

To initiate the planning process, school board members have begun to challenge themselves with conversations about a more unified district vision.

What should it look like? This process will occur throughout the school year and community input is central to its development.

An on-line public engagement process will be used along with community forums in geographic regions of the district.

Input related to many district-wide topics will be sought.

These topics include curriculum and instruction; technology infrastructure and access; health and safety of students, staff members and visitors; school funding, potential for enrollment growth, school facility sustainability and others.

I am convinced that the outcome of this planning process will build upon the current success of schools across the district. It also relies heavily upon public input and will result in a more unified district vision to best meet the needs of all students for years to come.



Superintendent
Andy Bellando

Academics now mandated focus

If there were enough hours in her day, Silverton High School Assistant Principal Therese Gerlits would welcome the opportunity to spend 30 minutes with every student and his or her parents to explain the changes in the new grading system, required by the state of Oregon.

About once a day, Gerlits receives a phone call from a parent asking her to explain the grading system, which can be a little confusing if parents and students don't have all the facts.

Realizing many parents and students may have questions or concerns, she encourages them to attend a meeting Wednesday, Oct. 9, 7 p.m. to discuss the new system.

For parents and guardians who cannot attend, the Power Point will be posted on the high school's website at www.silvertonhigh.silverfalls.orvsd.org Oct. 10.

In the past, Gerlits said, a teacher could tell her students that 20 percent of their grade would be attendance, 20 percent class discussion, 40 percent homework and 20 percent the final exam.

With the passage of House Bill 2220, and mandated by the Oregon Department of Education, that is no longer the case, Gerlits said.

Now, the majority of the grade must be based on academics. At Silverton, that has translated into no less than 75 percent based on academics, 25 percent can be personal management, she said, adding some classes may have 90 percent of the grade based on academics and 10 percent on personal management.

She encourages parents to look at their student's syllabus

SILVERTON HIGH

to see how the grade will be divided between academics and personal management.

"This means the smartest kid in the world who has terrible time management habits and doesn't turn in his homework can get no less than a C in the class," she said. "The new system makes it a more uniform grading."

While the law is new, Gerlits said teachers at Silverton High School were already heading in this direction.

"Our teachers were tying their grading to the state requirements and what students needed to be proficient in," she said.

There are several steps students and parents can take to understand the new system and to monitor grades.

"The first thing is to breathe and realize even though this is a change, there are things in place to help students with their grades," she said.

Gerlits encourages parents and students to check grades at least once a week by logging into the student's Pinnacle account.

She recommends designating a day each week to do this.

"I used to work with my younger siblings and check their grades to see if they were missing assignments and what their grades were," she said. "We would make a plan each week on what they needed to do."

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School garden plants seeds of learning

The pruning shears are like giant scissors that should always be carried with the sharp points facing the dirt.

The saucer-sized white dahlias look and feel like the white frosting on cupcakes.

The grapevines create "the Fort of Awesomeness."

And the bees buzz to let visitors to the garden know they are busy collecting nectar on the passion flowers.

These are just a few of the observations made by several Robert Frost Elementary students volunteering in their school's garden during their recess.

Robert Frost Elementary School teachers Kate Russell and Jenny Matzka delight in how students notice the garden's intricate details and how eager they are to learn how to grow and care for plants.

The students' enthusiasm for the garden has inspired Matzka and Russell to expand the garden this fall.

ROBERT
FROST



Robert Frost fifth grade students Roberto Ponce and Levi Uloth work together to prepare the garden for winter.

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Students 'Jog Across America' one lap at a time

Central Howell Elementary School sixth-grade student Annie Saddler doesn't understand the concepts of football. And she said she is not good at playing volleyball. So while many of her classmates spent recess engaged in those activities, Saddler spent hers running around the school's .17-mile track.

"I think running is fun and I want to get better at it," Saddler said.

Saddler was one of the many Central Howell students who spent their recess running as part of the new program called Jog Across America. On the first day of the program, Saddler ran 14 laps equaling 2.38 miles.

In mid-September, Central Howell Principal Dustin Hoehne invited his students to participate in Jog Across America program. Collectively, he said, the 172 students need to run from Central Howell to New York City, equaling 3,942 miles.

The dirt track at Central Howell is .17 miles instead of .25 miles. Students have to run 10 laps to equal 1.7 miles or a 17,306 laps to reach New York City, Hoehne said, adding that equals 100 laps for each student to reach their destination.

Participating in the school's Jog Across America program is optional, Hoehne said.

"It is our goal to have students participate as a way to promote physical fitness and to have a common school goal," he said.

"Studies have shown that students perform better academically when they exercise."

Hoehne said the program is a way to encourage students to be physically fit. They can run, walk, jog, skip, walk backwards ... whatever they decide during their recess breaks to

CENTRAL HOWELL

help contribute to the school's goal of reaching New York City, he said.

Students are given a green card numbered one through 10. Each time they complete a lap, a recess assistant marks their card. Once they reach 10 laps, they turn the card in.

In two days, there were 87 cards turned for a total of 263.5 miles, Hoehne said, predicting it will take his students until spring to complete their goal.

"We will slow down during the winter months," he said.

The activity is also a way to encourage kids to learn geography and practice some math skills, he said.

Hoehne encourages Central Howell students to grab a friend and walk, run or jog around the track while visiting.

"For some kids, if you tell them they have to run, it's defeating," he said. "There is no pressure with this program. If it takes 15 minutes to go around the track, that's OK. It is whatever the student feels like doing."

When students see other students running or walking, they are naturally going to join in.

Becky Harle, special needs assistant, kept busy during the middle students' 30-minute recess, punching their cards. She said Jog Across America encourages students to be physically active.

"Games like football and volleyball are great but running and walking are lifetime fitness activities that anyone can do," Harle said.

Sixth-graders Shane Sears, David Galante and Bobby Mallorie encouraged each other to complete lap after lap.



Students spent their recess on a sunny day running around the track.

During one recess, the three boys completed a total of 54 laps.

William Galindo, a seventh-grade student, said he plays plenty of football so he decided to spend his recess doing something different.

"Running will help me with other things I do," he said.

Technology helping students acquire academic skills

Eugene Field Math and Reading Specialist Marie Coxen knows using worksheets won't inspire her students to attain the knowledge they need to succeed.

It won't help them catch up with their peers who are working at or above grade level.

That's why she appreciates the extra help she has from 16 iPads and eight laptops in her classroom.

"Students learn intuitively using technology," she said. "For them, it is more engaging and fun."

"A worksheet can be intimidating to students because they might not know what to do or if they got the answer right," Principal Jennifer Hannan said. "With an iPad, students get instant feedback and they get help if they don't understand something."

The catch is, she said, students are working on skills they need additional help acquiring.

Coxen will give a student an iPad, the student will tap his or her picture. From there, the student will follow a lesson plan specifically designed for their personal academic growth.

"A teacher can set up the program so the student is completing the work he needs to do," she said. "Teachers will be able to look at what the student did and receive information on what the student's strengths and weaknesses are."

For example, a teacher may give a lesson on adding two digit numbers. If a student isn't understanding the concept, the teacher can assign a program that allows the student to practice the skill and maybe explain it in a different way.

"The program talks to the student and provides one-on-one support with the level of program the student needs," Hannan said.

Recognizing every student learns in a different way, Coxen



A third-grade student uses the iPad to practice her reading skills during recess.

EUGENE FIELD

said using technology is another way to guide students in their learning.

For example, if a teacher presented a lesson on how to multiply fractions and the student didn't understand, the teacher can represent the material using technology.

"The program meets the specific needs of the student and reteaches what the teacher taught in the classroom," Coxen

said, adding she works with 75 to 90 students a day who need additional support in reading or math.

Technology allows students to be more self-directed in their learning, Hannan added.

"Technology allows 10 students to work on 10 different things at one time," Hannan said. "In our classrooms, we have kids who are beyond grade level and kids below grade level. Using technology is one way to help students advance and learn the skills they need."

Both Coxen and Hannan said students are wired to learn by using technology and that educators need to go in that direction.

"It's the language they speak and if we are not speaking to that language, then we are not being as effective as we can be in helping them learn," Hannan said.

Technology won't replace teaching, Hannan added. Instead, it allows teachers to more effectively use their time to reach more students on an individual basis.

For example, Coxen can work with five students who need help learning subtraction while five more students are given iPads to work on borrowing.

To bring more technology to the classroom, teachers are writing grants to the school's Parent Teacher Club, they said, adding the long-term goal is to have iPads for every student in the classroom.

Second grade teacher Donna Becker said her students enjoy learning using technology.

"They enjoy the interactive games that require quick thinking," she said. "For them it is easier to learn using technology because it is intuitive for them and more exciting."

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Robert Frost garden From page 1

They envision doubling its size and creating a covered learning space for about 30 students.

“We are working toward an outdoor classroom everyone can use,” Russell said. “We will need support from the community and organizations in the form of funding or volunteering to help build the new structures we envision.”

Both Russell and Matzka said the future expansion of the Robert Frost School Garden will provide more practical learning opportunities for students.

“We would like to use the garden to enrich our curriculum. Students would have the opportunity to learn many things whether it be math, science, writing, art, or nutrition in an outdoor setting,” Russell said. “We want to link the garden to health goals. It gives kids an awareness of where food comes from and what it takes to grow food and plants.”

Matzka said the current trend in education is toward more hands-on learning.

“Working in the garden makes learning real for the students,” Matzka said. “The current trend in learning is more hands-on activities. The garden allows teachers to have integrated lessons on math, science, reading and reading.”

Another goal is to eventually grow enough produce so it can be served in the lunchroom, Matzka said.

When working in the garden during the summer months, Russell said she greets many community members who stop by to visit and admire its beauty. Matzka and Russell are grateful for the community’s

Robert Frost Garden

If you would like to volunteer or make a financial or in-kind donation to the school garden, call Principal Kirstin Jorgenson at 503-873-5301 or email her at jorgenson_kirstin@silverfalls.k12.or.us

support of the garden, including the Silverton Garden Club and the Izaak Walton League.

During a recess in September, fourth-graders Brooklyn Graves, Susie Ortiz, Zach Stadel, Annie Ayers, Andrea Khieu, Kyra Bashor and Hunter Clinkenbeard assisted Russell with tasks in the garden.

As varied are the plants in the garden are the reasons why the students enjoy spending time there.

Brooklyn explains she is visually impaired. She enjoys working in the garden during her recess because she likes feeling the plants’ texture and tasting the fruits and vegetables.

“I like the tomatoes but don’t like the butternut squash,” she said.

With a little coaching from Russell, she carefully pruned the grapevines.

For Zach, Andrea and Annie, sampling the produce was one of the motivators to volunteer.



Fourth-grade students Susie Ortiz, Annie Ayers, Brooklyn Graves, Hunter Clinkenbeard and Zach Stadel, front row, and Andrea Khieu, teacher Kate Russell and Kyra Bashor spent their recess working in the school’s garden.

“I also like helping my community and I think the garden is really pretty and I want more people who come to our school to see it,” Susie said.

With a circular garden bed in the middle, the outlying beds are rectangular, forming the shape of a wagon wheel, with beds planted with perennials, annuals, vegetables and herbs.

Kyra doesn’t like to be sedentary so working in the garden gives her the opportunity to always be moving – whether it is pruning, raking or just walking around the garden enjoying its beauty and bounty.

“I like smelling the lavender, seeing all the beautiful colors and tasting the food,” she said.

Fifth-graders Moira Rollins, Ari Matzka

Dessy Pachaco, Levi Uloth and Roberto Ponce also spent their recess working in the garden.

“Working in the garden is a way to help the Earth,” Moira said. “Even when I am done and I am tired after working in the garden, I feel relieved I got something done and helped out my school.”

The lessons learned in the garden go beyond academics, Jenny Matzka said.

“It’s not just a place to grow things but also a place to learn.”

The teachers have observed students working together on a task, sharing what they observe and assisting one another.

“The garden provides a breath of fresh air in our busy days,” Russell said.

New grading system puts emphasis on academic achievement From page 1

Gerlits cautions parents to not panic if they see their student is getting a low grade during the first few weeks of school.

The reason, she said, is grades right now are like the first quarter of a football game.

“Look at how many academic tasks the students has been graded on,” she said. “If there have been only two tests, that is only a small portion of the academic grade.”

Each academic task is related to a state proficiency, she added.

For example, if a student received a D on her components test in a math class, Gerlits said she will have at least two opportunities to retake the test or to show achieved proficiency in that area.

One concern that has been expressed is since homework is worth fewer points, some students may think they don’t need to do it.

“Each assignment is tied to an assessment that the student needs to know,” Gerlits said. “The homework shows a teacher and a student if the student knows that skill.”

For example, a student wouldn’t skip an athletic, band or play practice and then show up at the game, concert or play and expect to perform well.

The same holds true for homework, she said, adding it is the practice to master the academic task.

To show proficiency in an area, Gerlits said the student may have to take a test, give a speech or write a paper.

Confused about new grading system?

Community members are invited to learn about the new grading system required by the Oregon Department of Education on Wednesday, Oct. 9, 7 p.m. at Silverton High School. The presentation also will be posted on the high school’s website as of Oct. 10.

“It is not just taking tests,” she added.

If a student is struggling in a class, Gerlits said he will be assigned to attend RIE or Remediation, Intervention and Extension. The RIE program is every Thursday from 1:54 to 3:04 p.m. There staff can provide extra help for students.

Gerlits said if a student is requested to attend RIE by any teacher, the attendance is mandatory.

“From looking at the homework, a teacher may notice several students don’t understand a concept and may call all those students in to go over it again,” she said.

“RIE allows students and teachers to go over material and fix holes before the final exam.”

On Wednesdays and Fridays, students can meet with a

teacher during Fox Pause.

“Every Monday, students look at their Progress Report in their AG class to make goals, see if assignments are missing and schedule time to meet with teachers they may need extra help from,” she said.

If a student is struggling with a class, there are options available for assistance.

“For students who want to succeed, there are processes in place to provide that support,” she said.

What parents and students need to understand most about the new grading system is it is no longer about accumulating points to receive a grade.

“It is not a number’s game anymore. The new grading system shows proficiency and if students have learned the material.”

“Before now, students could ask for extra credit to get the points they needed to get the grades they wanted,” she said. “The new law levels the playing field. It is no longer about how many points but whether or not the student understands the material.”

If students or parents have questions about grades, Gerlits encourages them to send an email to the student’s teacher.

For a student to succeed in school, it takes the school, the family and the student.

“Parents are a critical part of the team because the school cannot do it alone,” she said.

Two new teachers welcomed at Victor Point

Although Michael Timmons and Seth Gingerich had been forewarned, they still were a little unprepared for what came next.

On a warm September day, they performed the Chicken Dance along with their colleagues for the students at Victor Point Elementary School.

They chalked it up to just one of the many new traditions and things on their "To Learn List" as the two newest teachers at the school.

Victor Point Principal Linda Myers said it has been several years since she has hired a teacher, let alone two new teachers. And it is the first time in a long time the staff has had male teachers.

Michael Timmons is the sixth-grade teacher. He has taught in the Salem-Keizer School District for more than 20 years.

Seth Gingerich is the fourth-grade teacher. He was working as a substitute in the North Marion School District.

"It's great to have two great guys join our staff who are both good role models for our students," Myers said. "They bring a calm demeanor to our building."

A graduate of Canby High School, Gingerich went to Goshen College in Indiana. When he graduated in 2011, he took a teaching job in the North Marion School District, where he was filling in for a teacher on maternity leave.

Looking back, he said, he was in the fourth or fifth grade when he decided he wanted to be a teacher.

"I really like school and I like helping others and teaching others," he said. "I really enjoy teaching fourth grade students because I think this is the age when they begin to do some higher level of thinking and begin thinking outside the box."

Gingerich, 25, says he likes to mix things up in his classroom so he can keep his students on their toes.

During a science lesson, he was discussing the properties of matter and what makes a liquid.

"I poured water on the floor and asked if the floor could be used as a container to hold the liquid," he said, adding his students definitely weren't expecting him to do that.

He also enjoys using technology in his classroom to engage his students. For example, he gave students plastic cubes and asked how they could divide 8 cubes. Using the iPad, he took pictures of the student's solution and displayed it on the screen.

"I think using technology in the classroom gets students more invested in the lesson and they get excited about showing their ideas and what they are thinking," he said. "It's important for them to understand there is more than one way to think about a problem and to be able to show why they came up with the answer they did."

His goal is for his students to be engaged in the lesson and be confident in giving their ideas and input.

"I want to teach them to be problem solvers and to be able to think about things and ask questions," Gingerich said. "It



Seth Gingerich and Michael Timmons are new teachers at Victor Point Elementary School.

is my goal to have my students be well-rounded learners. I want to hold my students accountable for their own learning," he said.

Gingerich also enjoys working with computers, playing the guitar and building. He grew up attending 91 School in Canby, a kindergarten through eighth grade school. His wife, Eliza, is a kindergarten teacher at Eugene Field Elementary School.

Michael Timmons was surprised to receive a text message last spring from Linda Myers that read, "Old friend, what would you think about teaching in the country?"

The two educators taught together in the Salem-Keizer School District.

"My position was temporary and it had ended in June," he said. "To receive the text out of the blue was a surprise. When I came for the interview, the staff was so positive and the environment was so positive, I knew this is where I wanted to teach."

Timmons went to high school in the Salem-Keizer School District and then to Western Oregon University. A graduate of McNary High School he had the goal of going to medical school.

"I was an Outdoor School counselor for inner city kids in college," he said. "It was such a powerful experience and it influenced my decision to get my teaching degree."

His plan was to teach for a few years to earn money to attend medical school.

VICTOR POINT

"I figured I would go to medical school when I stopped enjoying teaching," he said, adding he has been teaching for more than 20 years.

Describing his style as interactive, he doesn't want to just give students information to memorize.

Rather he wants them to be able to think about what they are learning and why the information is relative.

He has three goals he emphasizes with his sixth-grade students.

"I want to teach them organization, time management and study skills by being a role model," he said.

"I wasn't that organized as a student and I wish someone had taught me these important skills. I try to be proactive by taking the time to teach these skills."

Both Timmons and Gingerich have told their students that it is OK to make mistakes in their classroom, because that is a way to learn.

"I tell my students everyone has something they are good at and something they need to improve on," Timmons said.

Timmons and his wife, Janice, are parents to Julia, Katrina, Kristen and Ryan.

"My community is my family and my church," he said, adding he and his wife are busy with their kids participating in piano, soccer and ballet.

Mark your calendar

College Prep Nights, Events

Freshmen – Freshmen will visit Western Oregon University on Oct. 16.

Sophomores – All take the PSAT Oct. 16. Sophomore Step-Up College Prep Night is 7 p.m. Feb. 3. Field trip to Clackamas Community College on Feb. 11.

Juniors – Junior Jazz College Prep Night is 7 p.m. Oct. 28. National College Fair Nov. 1

at Portland Convention Center.

Seniors - Financial Aid Night is 7 p.m. Dec. 2 and Scholarship Night is 7 p.m. Jan. 27 at the high school.

Homecoming 2013

This year's Silverton High School homecoming theme is "Happiest Homecoming on Earth!" Events include:

Bonfire at 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 30.

Flashlight Tag at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 2 at the old soccer field at the Schlador

Street Campus.

Parade at 4 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4 in downtown Silverton

Future Fox Fair 5 to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4 at the Schlador Street gym

Football game against Lebanon 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4 at McGinnis Field.

Fall Parent Teacher Conferences

High school conferences are Monday, Oct. 14, either 1 to 3:30 or 5 to 7:30 p.m. Call the high school at 503-873-6331 for information.