



Small Talk

the official newsletter of the
Oregon Small Schools Association

Fall 2010

The Road Less Traveled



By: **Al Meunier**
OSSA Executive Director

Focus on: Burnt River School District

Burnt River School District is in the town of Unity, which is located just over 50 miles south of Baker

City. Lorrie Andrews is the superintendent and has been an educator for 24 years. She spent 22 years as a teacher and is now in her third year as superintendent of the Burnt River School District.

Burnt River enrolls 34 students in K-12. Seven of the 34 students are international students. These students come from countries throughout the world, ranging from southeast Asia to Denmark. The students live together as a family in a well-appointed dorm setting. They eat all of their meals, cooked by the supervisor who also serves as a surrogate parent, family style. The presence of the exchange students adds a cosmopolitan atmosphere to the high school that enhances the educational experience for the entire student body. The exchange students participate in all school activities, including athletics.

The District offers two years of Spanish through the cooperation of Blue Mountain Community College, which has a satellite campus in Baker City. Students are able to receive some college credits. All five students who graduated in 2010 are attending college. All of the students do well on the state OAKS test. The reason for the student successes that occur in Burnt River School District is the personal attention that each student receives.

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Technology advances increase student learning



By: **David Nycz**, Stanfield Elementary School
OSSA Teacher of the Year 2009-2010

The 2010-2011 school year is now in full swing. By this time of the year, schools and educators are well on their way to attaining this year's learning goals and objectives. Part of this process is usually the implementation of something new or a continued effort to improve on a system which began last year. The educational system by far is not idle in the 21st century. In combination with newer technology and the introduction to the latest educational research every year, educators have a great task to keep informed and up to date on the newest findings in education.

Just this year, projectors were mounted on the ceilings in every classroom in our building at Stanfield Elementary School. Along with document cameras and streaming videos, technology and instructional strategies

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Colton High School receives national honors

Colton High School (Colton School District) received national recognition in August when it was named a National Model School by the International Center for Leadership in Education, a New York-based education advocacy organization. The Center and its Successful Practices Network focus on research-based school improvement and the "new 3-Rs" – rigor, relevance and relationships.

With only 250 students and 15 teachers, Colton High has focused on building relationships between staff and with students. Teachers are available before and after school and many also coach athletic teams and serve as club advisors.

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just went to another level. One day as I was walking the hallways on prep, I peered through the windows into the classrooms of every room. I was amazed to see every teacher actively utilizing this new technology for our building. In a discussion with another colleague who has been teaching for many years, he recalled the day the first overhead projector was purchased, and then shared among the staff. Can you imagine that? One overhead projector being checked out for teacher use in a building? Now, our building has overhead projectors clogging supply rooms and the unused corners in commons rooms.

While we're reminiscing here, when was the last time you fed a 16mm film? The purring sound of the projector is nostalgic in itself, the classic countdown numbers of the lead footage, and priceless are the memories of the pile of film on the floor as the return reel didn't catch correctly. I believe it was 1997 when I showed my last film, then to be replaced by the VHS tape. That was another piece of treasured equipment, shared by an entire building. Teachers would check out videos from the ESD and sign up in advance to have a TV/VCR cart wheeled into their rooms. Today, it's a mobile laptop lab being wheeled in and out of our rooms, and most rooms have their own VHS/DVD players. We are now into the second decade of the 21st century and innovation has shown us no plans of slowing down.

When it comes to technology, I recall a statement made by one of my education instructors at Western Oregon University: Changing technology in education is only beneficial if it increases instructional efficiency and enhances student learning. A good professional question

to ask ourselves is: Is our use of technology increasing student learning? A great example of a resounding "Yes" for my students comes from an online program being utilized by my school, called Achieve3000. This program has incorporated practically every researched-based element of literacy into an efficient learning tool. Students accelerate their learning potentials as they experience non-fiction reading, targeting their interests and reading levels. Five years ago, I was able to provide one such activity per week for a reading class (photocopying articles and making overheads); now the students' access is practically unlimited. Finally, the technology provides data which is continuously generated as the students use the program. Professional reflection and readjustments are available for teachers to maximize the learning potential of every student.

I see great future educational potential in the program's software engine which drives this program. Advancements are already being made to incorporate content materials in science and social studies as Achieve3000 enters a new partnership with National Geographic. The potential of having every science and social studies lesson tiered/ leveled by reading levels and supported by relevant AP news articles is incredible. And how about having a lesson translated into Spanish? It does that, too! Of any piece of newer technology which has proven itself to increase student learning through concrete measurable results, it has come through the application of Achieve3000. I encourage your educational community to check it out: <http://www.achieve3000.com/>.



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The administration and teaching staff are committed to providing students with a rigorous and relevant curriculum with high expectations for academic achievement. Colton Principal Tom Crane identifies a four-point strategy that led to their success:

- What is best for kids?
- What does the data indicate?
- What does current research show?
- What makes a successful student?

“We’ve got to make what we’re teaching relevant to our students,” Crane says. “Kids are much more sophisticated and we need to stretch their learning capacity every day.”

This article is courtesy of
the Oregon
School
Boards
Association.



Dayton Together: Promoting healthy living – connecting our community

Contributed by: **Janelle Beers**, Superintendent,
Dayton School District

“Promoting Healthy Living – Connecting Our Community” is the Dayton Together Coalition for a Drug Free Community’s new vision statement. Dayton Together continues to partner with community organizations to provide opportunities for Dayton’s youth and families. After a healthy free lunch, provided by the Dayton School District’s summer food service, kids and adults alike were welcome to participate in a game of dodge ball or just run around and burn off some summer energy.

Dayton’s 6th annual National Night Out was celebrated on Aug. 3 in the Dayton Courthouse Square Park. This year, Dayton Together partnered with the Dayton Community Development Association for a community portrait. Dayton area businesses will soon have a photo available for nominal purchase. The event also included a free dinner, a bounce house for kids, and entertainment by KaiLee Ashtyn and the Second Winds Community Band.

Summer events concluded in August with Friday night movies at the Dayton Baptist Church, which provided a free hot dog meal, with popcorn provided by Dayton Together. This event has become a local family favorite.

The Dayton Together office is located at Dayton High School. Please feel free to stop by for more information about Dayton Together or other prevention resources.



New grants give Knappa schools an extra boost

By: **Deeda Schroeder**
The Daily Astorian

Students and teachers in the Knappa School District received good news Oct. 20 – the administration announced that about \$30,000 worth of equipment and programs is on its way to the schools.

The Knappa Schools Foundation has awarded almost \$20,000 in mini-grants to Knappa teachers for use in classrooms and the District - roughly double last year’s funding - and the District was able to pitch in another \$10,000 to the pot.

The foundation mini-grants are an annual chance for teachers to request instructional materials and curriculum

that couldn’t be covered in the general fund budget.

All of the requests were funded this year, thanks to an improving economy that boosted the foundation’s investments, said Interim Superintendent Jim Carlile. Last year, the foundation put about \$10,000 into the grants.

“We knew the foundation did better this year. In fact, they did quite well,” Carlile said at a Monday night school board meeting.

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The total amount is enough to make a significant difference in learning for students in all levels of the District, he added.

"It's a real shot in the arm," Carlile said.

Teachers at Hilda Lahti Elementary filed six minigrant requests, ranging from \$435 to \$2,800.

One grant will supply new maps and globes to the kindergarten through fifth-grade classes, replacing old or discarded materials. The supplies will cost \$2,280 to purchase, and the Foundation paid \$1,000 of the ticket price while the district covered the balance.

Another project at Hilda Lahti will send fourth graders to the Astoria Aquatic Center for swimming lessons during spring term at a cost of \$2,800. The Foundation paid for \$1,800

and the District will cover the rest. Teacher Melissa Grothe said the goal is to ensure that children have basic swimming abilities, especially considering how many bodies of water are within the community. Each class will make 10 trips for the lessons.

At the high school, six grants will be awarded, ranging from \$500 to \$2,500, and included calculators, microscopes and an independent reading program, among others.

The District will receive funds for a new reader board to replace the current older model at the front of the schools and a new projector screen for the cafeteria. The District will pay for \$4,600 the cost of the \$7,100 reader board.

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Let's Get Healthy!

On Oct. 12-13, 4th-8th grade students in the Imbler School District attended the Let's Get Healthy! Exhibit, a popular program focused on nutrition and physical activity. Developed by Oregon Health and Science University



(OHSU) scientists, Let's Get Healthy! debuted at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) in the summer of 2007, and has now come to Union County thanks to Union County Fit Kids. Fourth through eighth grade students attended the fair during the school day, and was free for students.

The event featured free health screenings, including:

- Diet, sleep and assessment
- Body fat, BMI, height & weight
- Blood pressure screening
- Cholesterol & glucose testing

Attendees are invited to enroll as research participants where they learn about the research process and the quality of their own diet and body composition. Participants can contribute their anonymous health information to a population database that researchers can use to track the scientific relationships among diet, body composition, genetics, and chronic disease. Communities are invited to use the data to develop programs and write grants that support healthy living in the community. Schools can use the data to conduct scientific inquiry lessons with their students, allowing students to examine information like their own energy drink consumption using real, but completely anonymous, data.

Contribute to *Small Talk!*

Have something you'd like to see in *Small Talk*? Send your story ideas, articles and photos to OSSA Executive Secretary Edie Allstott.

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Athena RAH RAH for Reading Program off to another great start

The RAH RAH (Read at Home) program at Athena Elementary School (Athena-Weston School District) is designed to give students an opportunity to augment the reading instruction occurring in the classroom. All students who participate in the program must complete 15 minutes of reading at home for 15 days. Once completed, the student turns in a "RAH RAH" sheet and earns a free book. Books are donated by parents and the community, or purchased with special funds by the school.

Athena Elementary students continue to be excited by this program. The incentive of getting their very own books to keep inspires many who would not normally read this much. Last year, Athena Elementary students turned in over 980 "RAH RAH" sheets. That's over 980 new books in the



hands of children! The District hopes to surpass that number this year. If you would like to make a donation and help support this wonderful program, please drop off new or gently used children's books at Athena Elementary, 375 South Fifth St., Athena, OR 97813.

Why become a member of OSSA? The benefits are well worth it!

Advocacy:

- OSSA is an active advocate for small schools at the Oregon Legislative Assembly, and has its own lobbyist in Jim Green.
- OSSA provides an opportunity for member districts to meet and lobby their legislators at the February OSBA and Eastern Oregon Leadership Institute day.

Convention/Conference Sessions

- OSSA sponsors Educator Institutes each year.
- The OSSA honors an Oregon Small Schools Association Teacher of the Year from one of its member schools annually. This educator is honored each November at the OSSA Breakfast at the Oregon School Boards Association Annual Convention in Portland.
- OSSA provides breakout sessions at the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators' Seaside Conference annually, as well as at the winter Superintendent's Convention.

Networking

- OSSA is the distributor of Small Talk, a newsletter published three times a year and sent free to member schools. Small Talk provides general information of interest to small schools, and features small school programs, events and achievements.
- Meet other Oregon small school administrators to share best practices, lessons learned and ideas.



Join today! www.oregonssa.org

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For a current list of district
vacancies log on to
www.oregonssa.org/vacancies

Is your school healthy? Apply for the Oregon School Wellness Award

Are you proud of the school wellness program your school or district has to encourage healthy kids? Then consider applying for the Oregon School Wellness Award. This award recognizes schools that are working to establish an environment and culture that supports wellness.

This award is for schools that are taking their district's wellness policy and effectively implementing it to promote student health. To apply, please visit the Oregon Department of Education's Web site, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/services/nutrition/nslp/wellness/award.pdf>. Applications are due January 21, 2011.



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A major concern in the community and the school district is what the future holds for the very small districts in our state. Burnt River School District was forced to cut \$58,000 this year. The school is what holds the social fabric of Unity together, and is the largest employer in the area. The District employs six certificated staff and three classified staff, and the superintendent teaches part-time. Burnt River is not a candidate for consolidation because of the distance from other school districts.

