

# Superintendent Communication

March 6, 2013

Wes Owens



As I write this letter at the beginning of March, the snow is falling and I am looking forward to the transition from winter to spring. As we move closer to a new season, it reminds me of some of the transitions and transformations that are occurring in Oregon and on the national front regarding education. Two of these changes include how teachers and administrators are evaluated and implementation of a new, more uniform set of state standards.

## **SB 290 - Teacher and Administrator Evaluation and Support Systems**

Senate Bill 290 directs all school districts in Oregon to develop or modify their current teacher and administrator evaluation system by July 1, 2013. During the 2012-13 school year, we established a collaborative team--consisting of Sherman County School District staff, administration and school board members--who have been working together to select and design a new evaluation system. According to the Oregon Department of Education, the system must include multiple measurements aligned with Model Teaching Standards. They are as follows:

- Professional Practice: Measures the quality of a teacher's planning, delivery of instruction, and assessment of student learning.
- Professional Responsibilities: Measures the teacher's progress toward his or her own professional goals and contribution to school-wide goals.
- Student Learning and Growth: Quantitative measures the teacher's impact on a student (or sets of students) as delineated by multiple sources of student data over time.

The implementation of this new evaluation system will have a positive impact on improving classroom instruction and student outcomes in the Sherman County School District.

## **Common Core State Standards**

Prior to the Common Core State Standards, each state had its own set of educational standards for what students were to learn and know at certain points in their academic development. However, over the past few years, there has been a move to create a set of national standards. These standards became known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Forty-five states, including Oregon, have adopted these standards that will be fully implemented during the 2014-15 school year. The CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn K-12 in Mathematics and English Language Arts & Literacy.

These new standards, now more than ever, require our teachers to take on some formidable challenges. Our teachers are optimistic as they address and meet these new challenges. This year we have made it a District goal to integrate these standards into curriculum documents, or maps. Our teachers meet in collaborative groups to focus on new targets and develop these curriculum maps to integrate CCSS and chart educational progress for all students district wide. They are developing cutting edge teaching strategies that will be implemented in all classrooms; this effort is vital to the academic success of our students and for which I am extremely appreciative. The national standards reflect new levels of expectations for our students in the Sherman County School District and, like other districts in Oregon and the nation, our teachers recognize the need for students to meet the highest of standards in order to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will be transitioning to the CCSS over the next couple of years. Students will be tested using a performance-based assessment (Smarter Balanced Assessments) starting in the spring of 2015.

## **Thank You Classified Employees!**

After seven and a half years in the Sherman County School District, I continue to be amazed by the outstanding assistance our classified and support staff members provide our students,

teachers, and administration. They constantly work together to ensure the best education possible for ALL students. Every staff member works tirelessly to uphold the District motto of, "Working Together to Put Student Success First". The week of March 4-8 was National Classified School Employee Week. I want to take this opportunity to, again, recognize the outstanding classified employees and other support staff who work in the Sherman County School District. Their service and devotion is vital to the everyday operation of our schools.

- Our Instructional Assistants do amazing things daily that often go unnoticed. Debbie Bird, Connie Greenwood, Jerri Lovell, Britney Macnab, and Elaine Richelderfer perform a myriad of tasks over the course of a school day to support teachers and students. They pride themselves on jumping in and assisting with anything that they can. These wonderful ladies are all tremendous team players.
- Our libraries are supervised by Deanna Christiansen and Arla Melzer. Together with the caring Public School Library staff, they professionally support our students, teachers and the community on a daily basis. Their friendly and helpful service is commendable and they provide an abundance of helpful materials, books, technology and information.
- We are fortunate to have an outstanding food service program in the Sherman County School District. Ree Ella von Borstel and Darcy Henry do a fantastic job preparing nutritious breakfast and lunch meals for our students. Their friendly service to our students and staff is exemplary.
- We have a custodial staff that has a tremendous amount of pride in caring for our facilities. Dan Aldrich and Craig Wood simply do a fantastic job. We regularly receive outstanding comments from community members, parents from other schools, and students about how clean our facilities are in the District.
- Linda Burnett, Patti Ketchum and Jeanie Pehlke are the faces and voices of each school office. They are professional, friendly, and helpful to everyone with whom they come in contact during the day. They answer questions and process a remarkable amount of requests from parents, students, teachers and administrators. We are extremely fortunate to have them working in their positions.
- Kim McKinney is the Business Manager for the Sherman County School District. She works tirelessly supporting the staff, school board and administration. Her finance and budgeting experience is noteworthy.

If you ever get the opportunity, please take a moment to thank these wonderful employees for all that they do to support the students, parents and teachers in our community.

As always, I encourage your feedback and participation in the life of the Sherman County School District. I welcome your comments, questions, or concerns. Please give me a call at 541-565-3500, 541-333-2250 or send me an email at [wowens@sherman.k12.or.us](mailto:wowens@sherman.k12.or.us).

Sincerely,

Wes Owens  
Superintendent