

SUPERINTENDENTS UPDATE

A newsletter brought to you by Echo School District

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New Staff

Echo School District had only a few changes in staff coming into the 2015-2016 school year. In August we welcomed Mrs. Shana Schmidt (left in picture 1) to teach middle and high school science. Mrs. Schmidt comes to Echo from Enterprise Oregon. She graduated from Eastern Oregon University with a degree in Biology and a Masters Degree in Education. Mrs. Schmidt has worked in the field for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife before coming to Echo. She has already proven to be an outstanding teacher and valuable addition to our family. Miss Jessica Hughes (right in picture 1) was brought on in mid September to help alleviate the unexpected growth in our kindergarten class from 23 the first day of school to 31 by the second week in September. Miss Hughes is under a temporary contract right now as we have split the kindergarten class in half to insure that each student gets the individual quality instruction we strive to provide in Echo. Jessica student taught in Echo, she is from the area and has a heart for our students. Increased enrollment is a positive sign, however it brings challenges and Echo School District will continue to work at keeping small class sizes and quality instruction at the forefront. Both our new staff members have shown the determination and qualities that make great educators.

Curriculum Development

Over the past year our district has been looking for ways to expand and increase the opportunity for staff professional development and over all curriculum development. We are excited to have that goal become reality this year. Becky Bacon has accepted the extra duty position to help in the area of curriculum development, state test preparation, and assist in Title I curriculum development. Becky will attend regional curriculum development meetings, help all grade levels attain state testing preparation materials, and help organize and disseminate information regarding staff professional development. In addition she will work with Title I instructor Janice Scott in curriculum development. Becky is taking this challenge on while completing her duties as 3rd grade teacher. As a school it is important to look for proven avenues to improve the teaching and learning process, this is just such an opportunity for Echo.

Drug Testing

In an effort to help students make good choices and provide support to those students who need it; Echo School District is continuing the district policy of conducting random drug testing of all students participating in extra-curricular events at anytime throughout the school year. All information regarding the district drug testing policies is in the student hand book and at the start of the school year students were sent home with forms for parents to sign. If you have questions regarding this policy and/or how it is administered please contact school administration. We would be more than happy to meet and answer your questions.

Smarter Balanced Assessment

As many of you are aware last year was the first year that Oregon students in grades 3—8 and 11 were assessed using the new Smarter Balanced Assessment System. While I am sure that you have no doubt witnessed the debate that has occurred through social media, I want to reassure you that much of what you hear and read are just not fact. The new assessment is just that an in-depth assessment of what a child can prove they understand and have learned. Our students, performed on average above the state average on the assessment. The test is designed to take guessing out of the equation and allow students to explain and prove their understanding. In a multiple choice test it is either right or wrong, under this system student have the opportunity to get point through their documentation and explanation of their answer. Much of what you see on Facebook and the likes are examples of the curriculum chosen by the school (s) to teach the information. Each school has the responsibility to choose a curriculum source that they feel is appropriate and meets the needs of the students. My hope is that if you have questions or concerns about Smarter Balanced and/or Common Core that you please come in and ask those questions of our administration and staff. Don't believe that if one school is using a chosen curriculum model that all schools are doing it. Our goal is to provide students with the tools and knowledge to become productive members of society. Look for more information about Common Core and Smarter Balanced in future newsletters.