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SCHOOLS: Chalkboard's CLASS project aims to improve teacher performance

Project was made possible by an \$85,000 grant to the High Desert ESD

By **Jason Chaney**

In an effort to raise student achievement, Crook County School District will collaborate with neighboring school districts in a new program to improve teacher performance.

Thanks to an \$85,000 consortium grant awarded to the High Desert Education Service District (ESD) through the Chalkboard Project's Innovative Grant Program, each school district under the ESD - Crook County, Bend-LaPine, Sisters and Redmond - will participate in Chalkboard's CLASS Project.

CLASS (Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success) seeks to improve student achievement by focusing on four teacher components: career paths, professional development, performance evaluations, and incentive pay.

"It's definitely a teacher-led process," said Chalkboard Project Communications Manager Aimee Craig said regarding the CLASS program. "We bring the districts together and put them in design teams which are made up of superintendents, teachers, administrators, union leaders and classified staff."

According to Craig, the teams meet and brainstorm ways to improve teaching.

"We ask questions about how you would go about improving the district through the four components," she said.

For instance, with the "career paths" component, Craig said the intent is to "keep teachers in the classroom - to provide more options other than just to become an administrator."

Locally, Crook County School District members will team up with the three other ESD school districts to form their own group for the CLASS project.

"The hope is we put a plan together that the districts, teachers, and administrators like," said ESD Deputy Superintendent Kathy Emerson.

As far as how the funding is dispersed, the \$85,000 will be made available to the larger group, rather than dividing the money out for each district.

"The concept was to use the synergy of the group," Emerson explained.

She also noted that the money from this grant will go strictly toward planning. The money will likely be spent bringing in experts that will help them in developing a plan that will help improve teacher performance. That plan would be implemented the following year.



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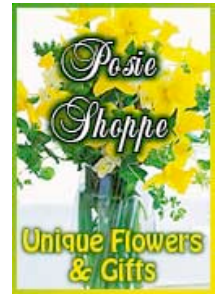
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