

KEY FINDINGS:

Harney County School District #3 Business Practices Review

August 2008

In August 2008, the Oregon Association of School Business Officials led an independent review of business operations in the Harney County School District #3. OASBO's key findings and recommendations:

COMMENDATIONS

- **District leadership communicates effectively with community.** Open door policy, "unheard of" access to local media and strong union relationship help build strong relationships within the school community.
- **District has effectively reduced class sizes even in tough economic times.** For example 2007-2008 enrollment in kindergarten classes range from 13-19.
- **Facility managers "keep things running" and are "good stewards."** The district has done energy audits, ADA reviews and asbestos-abatement programs. A recent maintenance bond has allowed some major improvements in facilities.
- **The district has developed multi-tier routes for increased vehicle efficiency wherever possible.** Bus drivers keep kids safe with a policy against discharging students at distant stops during inclement weather when no one is there to greet them.
- **District gets creative about technology.** The StRUT program ("Students Recycling Used Technology") reconditions decommissioned government computers for use in high schools. Students get technical training while classrooms get computers at little or no cost to the district.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- **Budget projections should be current and fund balances should match indicated trends.** Staff should propose a balanced budget to the Budget Committee at its first meeting and keep it up to date as the fiscal year proceeds.
- **The districts teacher performance evaluation system needs further upgrading.** The current system uses a traditional inspection model of formal and informal observations.
- **Bus drivers should document vehicle inspections.** Student safety can be improved by providing drivers with two-way radios
- **District should update all policies and maintain them on the web.** This is needed especially for risk management, since the district faces unique risks of weather and the need for equipment such as deer guards on vehicles.
- **Create a new salary schedule for administrators.** This would allow some growth and stability for a reasonable cost.
- **The district should match meal pricing to costs.** Nutritionist should also conduct "market research" to make sure students want what lunch program provides.
- **Better training on payroll software would make its use more efficient.** Some payroll tasks are still performed manually.

Read the full report: www.chalkboardproject.org/images/harneyfinal.pdf