



Education – Meeting Notes

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 | 5:00 – 7:00 PM | In-Person

In-Person: La Pine Activity Center, 16450 Victory Way, La Pine, OR 97739

AGENDA

- 5:00 – 5:30 **A. Community Meal**
- Catered by La Pine Activity Center Kitchen
- 5:30 – 5:35 **B. Meeting Begins**
- Introductions
 - Moderator: Courtney Ignazzitto, La Pine Community Health Center
- 5:35 – 5:45 **C. Purpose & Survey Overview**
- Who are We?
 - Newberry Regional Partnership – a team of public and private citizens who have come together to develop a long-range plan for growth in South Deschutes County
 - Project Goal: collaborative organization of community leaders engaged in planning for and dealing with changes associated with growth in the future.
 - Purpose
 - Address the effects of growth in Newberry Country (South Deschutes, North Klamath, West Lake Counties)
 - Serve as facilitators for collaborative, community-led development.
 - Create a Community Strategic Action Plan
 - Today's Purpose
 - Engaging community discussion on matter of interest and/or concern
 - Candid conversations welcome
 - Bring forth issues, problems, challenges, successes, opportunities, and ideas for action to address today's topic.
 - Survey Overview
 - Total study population: 16,800 in 97739 and 97707 zip codes

- Sought to collect information on community priority issues and values.
- Biggest Concerns from Survey:
 - Growth & Change
 - Public Safety – wildfire, homelessness, drug use & crime
 - Recreational opportunities & family friendly activities
 - Social divisions in the community
 - Quality of public education
 - Lack of local restaurants, shops, and competitive grocery stores
 - Access to healthcare and 24/7 emergency care
- Important Results
 - 44% of respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with the quality of public education.
 - 52% of respondents were very or somewhat concerned with access to higher education.
 - 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for 2021-22
 - La Pine High: 59.2%
 - Link to Oregon Department of Education “At-A-Glance” Profile
<https://www.ode.state.or.us/data/reportcard/reports.aspx?id=2144>

5:45 – 6:05

D. Panelist Presentation

Bridgit Montgomery – ASPIRE

- School to Careers at La Pine High School, provides supports to help students get jobs and explore careers.
 - Careers (long term) vs. jobs (short term)

Valerie Stensland – South County Collaborative and Sunriver Women’s Club

- SMART Coordinator for Rosland Elementary
- Sunriver Women’s Club helped fund South County Collaborative

Angela Groves – Community Member/Parent

- From Gilchrist/Crescent, lives in La Pine Community and works with Friends of the Children

Erin Foote Morgan – Board of Directors, Central Oregon Community College

- Represents Zone 7, South Deschutes County and North Klamath
- Not as large of a footprint from COCC as they would like in the region, looking to identify where they can fill gaps and serve South County needs.
- Workforce development
- Classic higher education – academic credit programs.
- Non-credit courses – certifications, trades, professional training

- COCC is keen on being a stronger partner, help identify what large employers need. What short-term certificates are needed?
- Help young people move from minimum wage jobs to a \$25+/hour job, skilling up.
- Demonstrate the value of higher education to the community.

Pam Price – Counselor, La Pine High School

- Background working with struggling youth.

6:05 – 7:00

E. Group Discussion

- Community Members introduced themselves.
- Group activity – participants wrote on sticky notes about Challenges, Opportunities, Successes, and Ideas for Action concerning the topic “Education.”
- Participants also asked questions of the panel and took part in large group discussion.

Additional Resources:

- COIC Youth Career Connect
 - <https://www.eastcascadesworks.org/youth-career-connect.html>
- Talent Hub – For employers interested in hosting youth internships or job shadows through Youth Career Connect. Partner in creating meaningful work experiences for local youth.
 - https://coicruralcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Business-Flyer_Electronic-2-1.pdf

Challenges:

- Regular attendance!
- Childcare desert – Central Oregon is high risk desert.
- Parents get frustrated with Park and Rec for schedule changes that are often a ripple effect from High School and Middle School sports changes.
- Transportation issues to get to COCC classes.
- Rotating high school period schedule.
- Facebook as a main method of communication.
- How do we grow and offer opportunities to those that want to contribute that will also provide indemnity, coverage for liability, and child safety? (childcare)
- Behavioral issues in our community, not just in schools.
- Attendance – doesn’t seem important to many families.

Successes:

- Online learning expanding higher education access.
- COCC classes at high school, ED 101 – introduction to early childhood education.
- Park and Rec as hub for sports programs and youth programs.
- Community connections through youth sports and extracurricular activities.

- College now courses at the high school – partnership with COCC and La Pine/Caldera High Schools.
- We are still standing, we are embracing challenges and seeking improvement as a community.
- Students on the City Council
- Childcare CTE – at LPHS

Opportunities:

- Night Hawks after school program, volunteer path for other high schoolers and community members.
- Job shadow program for high schoolers (sophomores)
- Advocate for more childcare funding and state rule changes.
- Making education and childcare a priority.
- In home childcare – but not happening fast enough.
- Early childhood education program at COCC, partners with Neighbor Impact
- COCC investing in more partnerships, more Community Education classes in La Pine
- Communication – reader boards, flyers, etc.
- Community celebrates and honors the success of our kids in more strategic ways.
- To invite and create greater community involvement opportunities for people to participate with schools.
- Better transportation
- Community values and supports education – “Is education a value to us?”
- Alternative class times for students that can’t/won’t attend regular class times, regardless of reason, such as night & weekend classes.
- COCC partnership for programs in La Pine – youth program specifically.
- Childcare for all families.

Ideas for Action

- Further development of non-partisan, on jurisdictional strategic bodies that bring decision makers together to build collaborative non-traditional partnerships/solutions.
- Utilize available and accessible resources and connect them to needs i.e. seniors partnered with students for life/skill mentoring.
- Extra-curricular programs starting in freshman year – community service.
- Teacher appreciation community events.
- Keep track of current attendance of students and the goal ongoing to improve.
- Collecting region specific data
- Volunteer for Night Hawks after school program
- Mentorship program to do job shadows and meet with high school students.
- Join/participate in South County Collaborative – sole focus is success of the youth and supporting all programs.
- Bring fliers to Self-Sufficiency DHS office for any activity or program to connect with families and individuals.
- <https://www.erinforcocc.com/> newsletter sign-up
- Changing high school schedule back to 5 periods a day, more regular structure
- Electronic reader board, more visible location. Day Rd corner store.

- Calendar from school that can be sent to businesses with sports games, days off school. Making sure these are widely distributed.
- Send announcements to Fire Station, they have a reader board and would like to advertise.
- Celebrating our students as a community, positive reinforcement.

General Questions:

How are things in the schools and the classrooms now compared to pre-COVID? Are there lingering effects?

- Bridgit: From a high school perspective – this is the first year since COVID that has felt like a normal year. Graduation rates show impact from COVID. Challenge maturity wise but are on the uphill swing.
- In the classroom, the freshman coming in are a little “squirrely” present a challenge but will take time to get back to levels maturity wise pre-COVID.
- Angela: from perspective of a parent, these have been some of the hardest years. She has middle and high school age children in a stable home, had no issues prior to COVID disruption, but this disruption has thrown families into instability.

Based off above answers – what are the schools doing to engage with students in unstable households and bridge the gap?

- Pam: Fan advocate in all the schools to help access resources for students and families with clothing, toiletries, school supplies
- Just hired a family engagement specialist to bridge the communication and support gap.
- Refer to outside agencies, housing, food, mental health, etc.
- Challenging to get people to come to them and ask for help.
- Schools can only do so much, it is a community issue – we need to be aware of the gap and help connect the dots for kids, especially families who don't proactively seek social support help.
- Friends of the children help provide stability for students most in need.
- Not just a school or home problem, multifaceted. What can a community do?
- Night Hawks Program – teachers, staff, support after school. The new program focuses on academic achievement and everything that comes with it. Providing structure, time to sit and do homework with help. Beginning Tuesdays and Thursdays after Thanksgiving break, 1 hour long. Volunteered program, can't force kids to go. Around 2 dozen kids, looking to implement a peer support program as well.

Can the community help with Night Hawks Program?

- Phase 1 is to get it up and running.
- Next Phase is to get community volunteers to mentor and tutor as well as high school kids. Opportunity to gain volunteer experience.

In terms of children not attending school on a regular basis, what are the positives and negatives of e-learning?

- Push by teachers in high school classrooms to eliminate screens. Weaning process to get kids reading physical books.
- Screens for children can be problematic, is used in elementary schools as well for standardized testing.
- Getting better, much more hopeful than a year ago about the condition of kids.
- Can be helpful for students who aren't in class to access resources at home.
- Allow students to demonstrate learning and understanding in class with physical reading and writing.
- Allowing time for group activities, four corners, Socratic seminars, interaction with other students.
- Must disclaimer everything: the way you say things is taken much more delicately by students post-COVID – but this is changing.
- COCC and higher education access, virtual options greatly expanded opportunities in rural areas with reliable internet.

When kids are sick at home, is there a virtual option?

- Students are given the time that they are gone plus additional time to get the work done. Online Canvas platform helps with this – can be challenge for students without internet.
- Not a hybrid virtual option, attendance is still a major challenge. No kids would come to school if there was a virtual option.
- When kids used to come to school sick, now they don't.

Are there any programs to help with accountability for lacking attendance?

- Every student's situation is different
- Some can be gone and get all their homework done, some can't do any at all.
- Having extracurricular activities helps students feel engaged and connected to school.
- Transportation can be a huge challenge as well, especially in winter. Some families don't have enough gas in a given day. Sometimes older children have to stay home to take care of younger children.
- Cyclical poverty, culture that attendance isn't important.

What are the childcare options?

- Very difficult, huge shortage in Central Oregon, not a new issue for South County.
- How do we pull in resources, partners, is this a value to us? Making education and lifetime care a priority.
- Connections with higher education, COCC has a goal of being more present in rural communities, workforce development, have early childhood education program.

Do you feel SB 744 will artificially inflate graduation rates and leave youth unprepared for the future? This is the bill where graduation requirements were changed.

- Angela: as a parent she doesn't want her kids to have lowered standards. Oregon is already behind most states. La Pine graduation rates are falling behind but aren't paid

attention to by the district. Many community members don't even know about the low graduation rates at La Pine. Complex factors not solved overnight, district based, capacity, formulas, other factors.

- We don't have control over this, but the community can step up to address it.
- 59% of students graduated on time, this doesn't count transition students, certificate students, alternative education, GEDs. The rate is for the cohort that started in La Pine their 9th grade year, even if they transfer schools. Can be a tracking issue, if you don't track down if they enrolled in a new school it counts as a dropout.
- 9th Grade on track, Statewide program, La Pine is the highest they've been in the last two years, meaning freshman students have enough credits to show they are not behind.
- La Pine's rate is still very much below the Bend high school's, all are measured using the same methods.
- Money alone cannot fix graduation rates, South County Collaborative will continue to have conversations and put focus on what the community wants. Collaborative's job to find funding for supportive projects.

COCC has great classes youth (Community Ed programs) only in Bend not in La Pine, are there transportation solutions?

- Community Education classes for all ages, geared towards engaging the entire community. Challenges with enrollment when the classes are hosted in La Pine.
- Credit academic classes are also low enrolled in La Pine and North Klamath.
- Chicken or the egg – is there low enrollment because of lack of classes and awareness, or do people just not want to come?

Community Comments (opinions, ideas, accounts, etc.):

Parents don't always know what to do with kids when they are sick. Attendance can be a real issue especially at elementary school age. Further parent engagement to happen with elementary schools.

19 staff members who left during COVID, some quit teaching altogether, retirement, moving schools. It's everyone's issue, especially behavior wise, situations can be very intense. Staff feeling lack of community support, parents angry with teachers, being yelled at, this is a huge cause of worsening morale.

Learn first, the South County region doesn't really know what or where the problems are. Need clarity and data, then Strategic Plan to address these barriers and challenges.

Scott O., other administrators are here to stay. La Pine commonly was a steppingstone where teachers or admins started because they could not get a job in Bend. Now you can get a job in Bend so it is harder to recruit teachers in rural areas. There are people advocating for La Pine at a district level, (e.g. 2 full time counselors for school of 400 kids). There are many areas to grow, also actions being taken.

- La Pine can be a difficult place to break in to, some community members can be guarded and distrustful. Can make is difficult working in schools and social services.

Prior to this year, felt that there were only a few people who were regularly involved. We need to connect the islands in La Pine, won't be solved by money. Park and Rec is a great example of a hub for all the sports program. Need a centralized way to communicate and connect.

Must move away from pointing fingers or pushing responsibility to other organizations. Everyone holds a piece of the pie and can play a part in making a difference.

Incentivizing programs, e.g. gift cards for doing wellness checks at the Health Center. Can be funded through grants.

Many of the struggles come down to communication.

Have some grace and leeway with deadlines, sign-ups, we want to be as inclusive as possible for all students who are interested in participating in extracurriculars.

Cultural challenges, lack of hope, need for more celebration of kids.