



# Crater Campus News

Volume 1, Issue 1

October 2008

## CRATER'S SMALL SCHOOLS STARTING SECOND YEAR

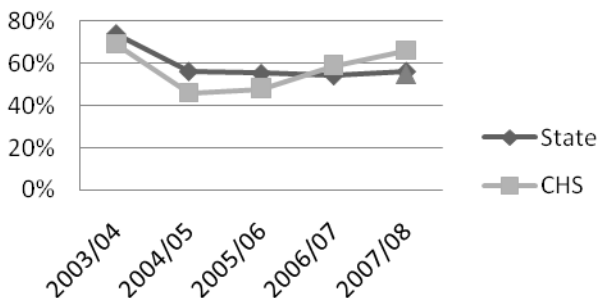
The 2007-2008 school year saw the implementation of four new small schools on the Crater campus. This major change in school structure came about after over two years of intensive planning, school visitations, multiple meetings with students and parents and major assistance from the Oregon Small Schools Initiative. The initial funding for this massive effort came from a grant award of \$1.125 million, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Meyer Memorial Trust. Crater arguably has achieved the most comprehensive school conversion model in the state of Oregon and is receiving national attention for the effort.

***"While we've seen incredible academic growth in the four schools, I am most pleased in how strong relationships have developed between the schools' staffs and the students." Randy Gravon, Superintendent, School District #6***

The four schools that emerged from this planning effort are the Academy of Health and Public Service, the School of Business, Innovation and Science, The Academy of Natural Sciences and the Renaissance Academy. The general consensus of the four school principals is that in the smaller school setting (no larger than 400 per school) staff know their kids better, and they've been able to change teaching styles to help all students learn. Also, the principals agreed that the small school model has gone a long way to promote student and staff ownership and collective buy-in.

They point to some rather remarkable improvements in test scores (see separate article) as another early indicator that things are moving in the right direction. This does not mean that all is fine, however. A major change such as this comes with some trepidation and certain problems. The schools are committed to addressing these problems and working to alleviate them. ▲

### Writing

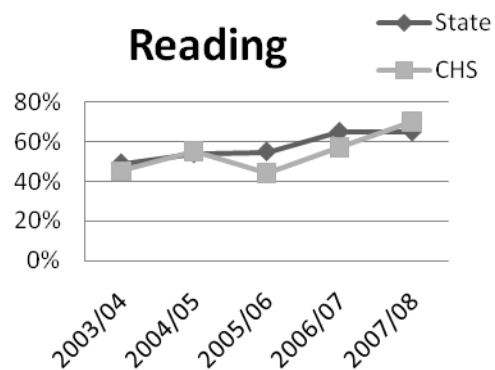


## State Test Scores Show Great Improvement

With the exception of math, the 2007-08 composite Oregon state test scores for the four Crater schools showed impressive improvement from previous years, including the 2006-07 school year. The basic measure of the tests is the percentage of sophomore students meeting or exceeding the state standards in four major areas of study: math, reading, writing and science. For many years School District #6 has used the state average in these areas to see how our students are matching up.

The most impressive gain came in writing, where combined, the four schools had 65% of students meeting the state standards, compared to the state average of 56% and last year's average of 59%. The next area of significant growth was in reading, where the Crater combined average came in at 70% meeting or exceeding the state standard, compared to the state average of 65% and last year's Crater average of 57%. While science was not tested in 2006-07, the composite Crater average of 61% meeting or exceeding the state standards was significantly better than the state average of 57%. Math, as it has for years, remains the major problem area. For example, in 2007-08 48% of the sophomores of the four schools met or exceeded the state standard compared to the state average of 52% and the Crater 2006-07 average of 57%. While certainly not ignoring the other three areas of study, all four schools are prioritizing math instruction during the 2008-09 school year. ▲

### Reading



*"I can get to know kids better. We can track what's going on in their lives so we can help personally and academically." Gary Taylor, Academic Advisor, CANS*  
*"The biggest change I've noticed in moving to the small schools format is the ability to know our students well and, in turn, to ask more of them." Robin Reames, Renaissance Academy*

*"Having classes with the same kids throughout the day meant we became friends, not just acquaintances. You also really get to know teachers and they get to know you – we're not just a name in their classes anymore." Steve Strohman, CANS Senior*

## 2008 Valedictorians

Four valedictorians, representing each of the Crater campus schools, helped celebrate the completion of the first year of the four new Crater schools. These four outstanding students and citizens are diverse in their interests and backgrounds but all share the spotlight in academics. We would like to share a brief Crater background of each student.

Jared Murphy represents the Crater Academy of Natural Sciences (CANS). With his 7' height, he was a prominent man on campus. Jared, the son of John and Maryn Murphy, graduated with a 3.97 GPA. He was the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the scholar athlete award, State FFA Degree and Rotary Student of the Month. He is now attending the Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls, majoring in mechanical engineering. Someday, he hopes to realize his career dreams of designing engines and agricultural machinery.

Kaitlin Ironside, who graduated with a 4.02 GPA, represented the Crater Academy of Health and Public Services (CAHPS). She is the daughter of Kathy and Bruce Ironside. Like Jared, she received numerous awards and honors while in high school. Included in the list are a Presidential Scholarship to OIT, Honor Society and CAHPS Advanced Placement Psychology Student of the Year. Kaitlin also will be heading to OIT this fall with plans of majoring in nursing.

Alex Miller is the Crater Renaissance Academy valedictorian representative, and with a 4.20 GPA, it is easy to see why. Alex is the son of Richard and Marcie Miller. Alex's GPA was weighted because he took five Advanced Placement classes which gave him close to one year of college credit before graduating last spring. His honors and awards include; Advanced Placement Calculus Student of the Year, October Rotary Student of the Month and Presidential Scholar at the University of Oregon. Alex is enrolled in the Robert D. Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon. Academically strong in many areas, Alex wants to explore chemistry, mathematics and social science before making a career-goal decision.

The fourth valedictorian is Luke Peyralans, representing the Crater School of Business Innovation and Science (BIS). The son of Erika and Bernie Peyralans, he also finished with a 4.20 GPA and took five Advanced Placement classes. In addition he took two courses at Southern Oregon University to gain even more college credit before graduation from high school. His list of honors includes National Merit Scholar, Presidential Scholarship at University of Oregon, and the American Psychological Association Excellence in Psychology Award. He is attending the University of Oregon with plans of majoring in economics and political science prior to going to law school. ▲

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Former Crater principal and retired School District #6 Superintendent, Mike McClain, recently had the opportunity to interview the principals of the four Crater Academies: Julie Howland (CAHPS), Mike Meunier (BIS), Kay Dorner (CANS) and Bob King (RA). The following are responses to a series of questions he asked.

**Since this is the last year of the Small Schools grant, how is the district going to maintain the four small schools once the grant monies run out?**

**Principal King:** At least 90% of the grant funds have been used to train teachers to develop skills and techniques to help students learn. As a result of this intensive teacher training effort, we now have a set of teachers who are themselves trainers. Maintaining the four schools after next year will not add additional cost to the district.

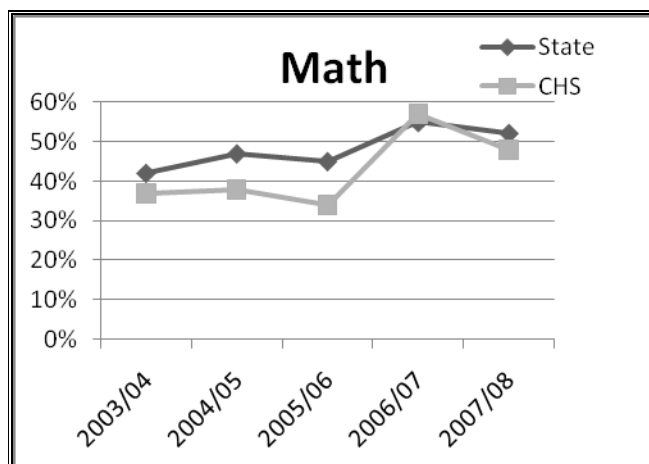
*"Before small schools I felt like a lot of my teachers knew of me, but didn't actually know me. These last two years my teachers have gotten to know who I am and what my interests are. I feel more involved in my learning and more capable of success." Tarren Mitchell, RA Junior*

**As I am out and about in our community, one question that is frequently asked of me is, "How can the school district afford to have four principals when Crater used to have just one?"**

**Principal Meunier:** Crater actually has the same number of administrators as it did two years ago, just in a different arrangement. What has changed is two support positions, the campus dean and the attendance officer, have been eliminated, which enabled us to hire one new teacher and to buy needed instructional software to enhance our core classes. In addition, the four Crater principals are paid at a lower rate than when Crater had one principal. The end result of this is that the conversion to small schools has not added additional administrative costs.

**Is it true that Crater has fewer classroom teachers now than it did say four years ago?**

**Principal Dorner:** No, just the opposite is true. Because of the re-alignment of the administrative staff, additional funding from the state and closing our alternative school, we have been able to hire four more classroom teachers and two additional special education teachers. *(continued on page 3)*



**When I conducted a similar interview in November 2005 I asked a question regarding a concern with the possible loss of electives when Crater went to four schools. What is the current status of electives in your schools?**

**Principal Howland:** While I'm the new kid on the block, I do know that electives at all public high schools in the state of Oregon have been on the decline for one major reason: the Oregon State Board of Education now mandates two more semesters of science and two more semesters of math for graduation. In our system this automatically eliminated four electives. Keeping in mind that students always had to pick and choose what electives they would take, I'm actually amazed at the number of electives that are offered in the four schools and the number of electives available to all students in the Early Bird and first period general schedule.

**Are students experiencing more difficulty than before in scheduling classes that are offered only once, such as Advanced Placement classes:**

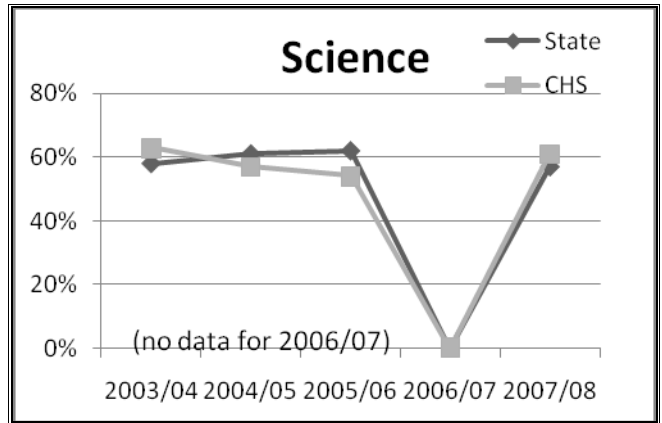
**Principal King:** Through our Early Bird classes and through our four schools we are actually offering more sections of AP classes than ever before. For example, for the first time ever we have two Advanced Placement Calculus classes. In addition to AP classes, two of the schools are now offering Writing 121, a required college writing class.

**If I understand it correctly, you have four different schedules in your schools. Why is this so?**

**Principal Meunier:** Our goal from the beginning was to have four schools where their staffs could make many decisions, including building a schedule that would best meet the needs of their students and teachers. For example, in my school (BIS) early on the teachers said they wanted to meet for longer blocks of time with fewer kids, so our schedule reflects that and staff now see no more than 100 students a day, where before they were seeing as many as 175. Now I know that when we divided the teaching staff among the schools, the Renaissance School had more elective teachers than the other three schools. So they opted for a 7-period day so that they could offer more classes. A block schedule did not work for them. One thing that is not well known is that all four schools enjoy more instructional time. By starting the day a little earlier, cutting way back on passing time between classes and shortening the lunch period, we have all gained over two hours a week in instructional time. This might have contributed some to the impressive growth in our Oregon test scores last year.

**Is it true that two of the schools are college-prep and the other two are not?**

**Principal Howland:** No that is not true. All of our schools offer the same academic core classes to meet district, state and college entrance requirements. Our focus in all four schools is on these academic core classes in math, science, English and social studies. Let me give you some interesting facts. Five years ago, Crater offered four sections of chemistry and had a rather low student enrollment in the four. This year together we are offering seven chemistry



classes and all of them are full. Another example, two years ago we offered 24 sections of foreign language; this year we are offering 29. We are greatly encouraged that more and more of our students in all our schools are taking more challenging college-prep classes. Another great thing that is happening is the increase in seniors going on to some form of post-high school education. We know that 70% of last year's seniors applied for scholarships through the Crater Foundation and all of them received a scholarship. In years past if 40% of graduating seniors moved on to further education that was pretty good. Moving to 70% in one year is amazing and very encouraging.

*"The significant gains in statewide assessment scores are incredible and speak to the skill and dedication of the staff in each of our small schools." Samantha Steele, Director of Education for School District #6*

**On a similar note, while your literature says that the schools are not career-focused, in reality aren't they developed around career themes?**

**Principal Dornier:** No, when we were planning for the four different schools, we worked hard not to develop career-focused schools. We did, however, develop general interest themes in an attempt to individualize teaching and learning. In all our schools we want our students to enjoy their classes and to be engaged in their learning. Our mutual goal is that all our students in all our schools will be equally prepared for college and any vocation that they may pursue. And we feel really good about our progress in this area.

**What is your greatest challenge as you enter the 2008-09 school year?**

**Principal King:** While we've done a good job of involving students in their learning, we need to do a much better job communicating with and involving parents in their children's schools.

**Principal Meunier:** We have a long way to go in developing our school systems to meet the needs of all kids. We've made progress but we're not there yet.

**Principal Howland:** While I'm a new principal and new to the school district, I recognize many challenges ahead of us. For me the most immediate challenge is how are we going to turn the corner on our math scores.

**Principal Dornier:** We still have too many kids dropping out of school. I really want to focus on improving our graduation rate. ▲

## **KEY SCHOOL CONTACTS**

The office staff for each of the four Crater schools includes a principal, a student services coordinator and an office manager. While there is a good deal of cross-over responsibilities, the following starting list might help when you need to contact your child's school:

### **Office Managers:**

- \*General school questions (when is graduation?)
- \*Questions about school activities
- \*Questions regarding website postings
- \*Requests for transcripts

Renaissance Academy-Robin Reames (494-6369)

[robin.reames@district6.org](mailto:robin.reames@district6.org)

Academy of Health and Public Service-

Karen Buel (494-6319)

[karen.buel@district6.org](mailto:karen.buel@district6.org)

School of Business, Innovation and Science

Sharon Tuttle (494-6311)

[sharon.tuttle@district6.org](mailto:sharon.tuttle@district6.org)

Academy of Natural Sciences-

Michelle Greb (494-6365)

[michelle.greb@district6.org](mailto:michelle.greb@district6.org)

### **Student Services Coordinators:**

- \*General Disciplinary Issues
- \*SAT testing
- \*College Requirements
- \*Graduation Credits and Progress
- \*Personal concerns about your child
- \*Schedule changes

Crater Renaissance Academy-Christine Beck (494-6316)

[christine.beck@district6.org](mailto:christine.beck@district6.org)

Academy of Health and Public Service-  
Jeannie Camarillo (494-6388)

[jeannie.camarillo@district6.org](mailto:jeannie.camarillo@district6.org)

School of Business, Innovation and Science-  
Matt Meunier (494-6342)

[matt.meunier@district6.org](mailto:matt.meunier@district6.org)

Academy of Natural Sciences-Gary Taylor (494-6305)

[gary.taylor@district6.org](mailto:gary.taylor@district6.org)

### **School Principals:**

\*School Curriculum Questions

\*Student/Teacher Issues

\*Serious Discipline Issues

\*Suggestions/concerns for School Improvement

\*When You Need to Just Talk to the Principal

Renaissance Academy-Bob King (494-6371)

[bob.king@district6.org](mailto:bob.king@district6.org)

Academy of Health and Public Service-

Julie Howland (494-6304)

[julie.howland@district6.org](mailto:julie.howland@district6.org)

School of Business, Innovation and Science-

Mike Meunier (494-6304)

[mike.meunier@district6.org](mailto:mike.meunier@district6.org)

Academy of Natural Sciences-Kay Dorner (494-6303)

[kay.dorner@district6.org](mailto:kay.dorner@district6.org)

Bookkeeper-Sandy Blackmon (494-6314)

Bus Transportation Questions-Lindsay Heard (494-6931) or  
Tammy Taylor(494-6932)

Athletic Department Questions-Jeff Johnson (494-6386)

Questions Regarding College Scholarships-Jay McRoberts  
(494-6308)

CRATER SMALL SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DISTRICT #6

300 Ash Street

Central Point, OR 97502

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

