

SUSAN CASTILLO
State Superintendent of Public Instruction



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February 28, 2012

A.J Grauer, Superintendent
Sheridan School District
435 S Bridge St
Sheridan, OR 97378

Dear Superintendent Grauer:

Enclosed please find the staff report from our Title IV-B, 21st Century Community Learning Centers review of the Sheridan School District. The review was part of the regular monitoring required by Oregon's participation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recognizes the efforts underway to ensure Sheridan School District's compliance with ESEA.

The report does not have any Title IV-B, 21st Century Community Learning Center program findings that require response or action by the district. I personally want to thank the district staff who participated in the review process for their dedication and diligence in designing services that improve basic programs for the students who are most in need in the district.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the district. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact Sue Parton at sue.parton@state.or.us or 503- 947-5783.

Sincerely,

Colleen Mileham, Ph.D.
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Enclosure



Oregon Department of Education
Oregon 21st Century Community Learning Centers
Monitoring Report

Report Date: February 10, 2012

Grantee Name: Sheridan School District

Date of Site Visit: January 10, 2012

Program Contact: A.J. Grauer, Superintendent

Personnel Interviewed: Supt. Grauer; Elizabeth Blake, 21st CCLC Coordinator; Marianne Hatch, Sheridan High School Coordinator; Jessica Walter, K-5 Coordinator at Faulconer-Chapman Elementary School; various program staff and students at program sites. Monitoring Team: ODE Specialist, Sue Parton; Contractor: Cliff Brush.

Areas Requiring Corrective Action(s)

If areas are checked below, they contain a finding for which there is a required action. The report may offer recommendations to assist you in addressing an identified problem or strengthening a program operation. In this case no response is required.

No findings are identified below. The grantee is not required to submit a written plan of action to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

- Needs & Resources
- Partnerships
- Program Design

- Management & Staffing
- Program Evaluation
- Fiscal Compliance

I. Needs & Resources

No Findings.

Comments:

District staff reported three primary methods for determining which activities are offered in the district's After School Program (ASP).

- Input received from the former After School Advisory Council that evolved into the Sheridan Education Foundation. The membership in the Foundation includes parents, a school board member, and district staff. At the end of the 2010-2011 school year, parents requested that the program offer foreign languages, as well as active activities such as martial arts, dance, and gymnastics. The district responded by offering programs such as Beginning Spanish, Modern Dance, Chess for Success, and Martial arts at Faulconer-Chapman ES (FCS) and Robotics and fitness activities at Sheridan HS (SHS).
- The district administrators have input as to the days and after-school schedules to be implemented. Administrative input and information from parents of kindergarteners identified a significant group of students who needed a safe place to be after school. After determining that those students need more than before school activities, the district decided to continue to serve the youngest students after school based on need.

- Input from the parent showcase meetings and responses to parent, student, and staff surveys. At the showcases, which take place at the end of each 6-week session, parents and students share their input about the after school program. Families are invited to the school to have dinner and engage in conversations with staff and each other. Students perform demonstrations about what they are learning in their enrichment activities. Information gathered from parents and students is used to make adjustments where needed.

The district distributes surveys to parents, students, and staff at the end of each school to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the ASP and offer suggestions for improvements for the following year. This year, the district plans to distribute the surveys in the spring.

Strengths:

During the initial interview, district staff described ASP successes to include:

- Commitment and dedication of the ASP district and site coordinators;
- Offerings at Sheridan High School including proficiency based credits, academic “Power Hour,” and the student tutor program;
- Enrichment offerings at FCS such as Chess for Success; and the superintendent’s evolving plan to sustain the ASP through supporting eligible activities with Title I and other grant funds and, where possible with general State School Funds (SSF).
- The superintendent is considering options if some or all Sheridan School Foundation (SSF) projected to support the ASP are not available.

Site observations confirmed that the ASP staff, and volunteers who were present, are dedicated to operating an ASP that serves the best interests of the school and community.

Challenge(s):

During the same interview, district staff identified and agreed on these specific challenges:

- Development and expansion of before school activities,
- More participation by Sheridan High School students in ASP enrichment activities,
- Physical spaces to accommodate and serve ASP students.

Suggestion(s) for the district:

Clarify how the district shares survey results with the Foundation, staff, parents, and students. For example, how do those groups have opportunities to respond and provide feedback to survey findings? Do they agree with the results? How do they suggest that the ASP and district respond? How should students and parents respond? How do survey results align with student academic performance and behavioral data?

Conduct as deep an analysis of the needs survey methodologies, contents, results, and alignments with student performance and behavioral data as time and energy allow. Report the results to the Foundation, staff, parents and students. Report any proposed adjustments to the surveys and get feedback before implementing those adjustments. Determine who is responsible to take actions in response to findings, and how he/she will respond.

If possible, consider conducting Progress Nights midway through the 6-week intervals (which appear to be coordinated with grading periods). These could be subject specific and designed to help parents and guardians better understand how they may support student success before the

6-week period goes on the record. It was clear during the visit that there are struggles with parent conferencing because of the limits on staff time and energy. If at all possible you could consider it as an alternative to conferencing.

Recruitment:

District staff report and interviews confirmed that the ASP program select the students based on their academic need. District staff and parents or guardians make referrals for students who are falling behind. Some students self-refer. Enrichment ASPs are open to interested students. ASP students are those who primarily attend schools eligible for school-wide programs.

District staff reported that the district recruits ASP students in several ways. Newsletters and written information about the ASP are handed out at the main office of the school and at the ASP office. The district also distributes ASP Information in mass mailings. It sends new student registrations home through classroom teachers and ASP staff. Teachers and building principles make student referrals to the ASP for specific academic help. The district also provides information to the community through the local newspaper and cable channel.

The ASP works to retain students by offering a variety of engaging enrichment activities. The ASP changes its activities every six weeks to give each student opportunities to participate. As discussed above, students and parents have opportunities to provide input on enrichment activities they would like to have offered in future sessions. ASP offers incentives to students that participate in ASP for specific numbers of days, ranging from daily rewards to yearly field trips.

Strengths:

As stated above and confirmed by site observations, ASP staff are dedicated to providing quality programs that serve student and community needs. The students attending the FCS and SHS after school program appeared engaged in their academic and enrichment activities. The district reaches out to the school and general communities through family events; student, parent, and staff surveys; as well as print and electronic publications.

Attendance:

Evidence from the initial interview shows that attendance and numbers of students served are consistent with the approved grant application.

Strength:

Site observations confirmed that the staff is conscientious about attendance taking and reporting. Interviewed staff expressed satisfaction with and approval of the district's attendance data system. Extended dinner hours, during ASP, accommodate overlapping or conflicting student schedules (e.g. participation in interscholastic activities). The two-room system at SHS encourages attendance and engagement by providing both instructional (observed) and disciplinary (not observed) purposes.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

Sustain, maintain, and -where possible- improve current systems.

Dissemination:

The district publishes information about the Community Learning Center (CLC) and ASP in English through the personal contacts and print and electronic methods described above.

District staff report that Spanish is the home or first language spoken by a small number of students and families, and that most understand and speak English.

Strength:

Methods used to communicate with the English-speaking community are intentionally designed and implemented and are appropriate and adequate.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

During the site visit, district staff agreed that the district should translate certain ASP documents into Spanish. They agreed to start immediately by translating ASP registration forms. The grantee is commended for recognizing the need and volunteering to follow through.

II. Partnerships

No findings.

Comments:

District staff reported a number of partnerships providing in-kind services for the ASP enrichment programs. For example:

- City of Sheridan – provides the School Resource Officer (SRO).
- Sheridan Education Foundation, through fundraising, provides scholarships for students whose families cannot afford to pay fees for ASP enrichment activities.
- White Wolf Family Martial Arts- provides martial arts training.
- Dual Language Provider-qualified individual(s) identified by the district.
- Parent University provider
- Chess for Success-supported by grant funds. The program lead is the K-5 ASP coordinator.

The fees per student for range from \$10-\$15. Supplemental scholarships through the Education Foundation are described above.

Strength:

A small, rural community has developed and maintained significant program supports from a variety of in-kind partners.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

The “utility” gym at FCS is subject to constant and heavy use. Civic groups use it after ASP activities finish. The gym shows significant wear, some of which appears on the gym floor and which may become a tripping hazard.

Consider how civic users may provide more support for maintaining and improving that frequently used and valuable area.

Comments:

Evidence presented that the ASP provides educational and related activities that complement and enhance the academic performance, achievement and positive youth development of the students include:

- ASP academic programs in math, reading, and science at FCS (e.g. lessons in Science Exploration, American Sign Language, Beginning Spanish) and SHS (e.g. “Power Hour,” student tutorials, robotics).
- ASP enrichment programs at FCS (Chess for Success, Arts and Crafts) and SHS (Fitness Club, Cooking).

During the site observations, FCS and SHS students appeared to be generally and consistently on task and engaged in their academic and enrichment activities. For example:

- During the chess club enrichment at FCS, the teacher using this technique effectively:
Teacher: "One, two, three, eyes on me." Students, looking at teacher: "One, two, eyes on you." Students volunteered to provide steps in solving the problem of the afternoon's lesson- "How to Castle a King."
- We observed FCS students co-operating with each other during academic and enrichment activities (e.g. sharing, following rules, and waiting their turn). One student, probably well known to staff, took leadership during a mathematics activity.
- When asked, individual SHS students or students in small groups at the Academic Hour and fitness programs described their work or participation. Two students in the academic program introduced themselves; one asked for assistance with an unfamiliar word in her reading for pleasure activity; another described his work on geometry. Some students in the fitness program were working to earn diploma credits.

Strength:

The district clearly intends to enhance its students' academic performance and achievement through ASP activities. For example, the ability to earn or recover credits is a major attraction for SHS students.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

As stated above, district staff agreed it is challenging to recruit SHS students to enrichment activities.

During the site visit, district and monitoring staff discussed the possibility of applying proficiency instruction and credit concepts to selected enrichment subjects so SHS students might earn at least partial credits. District staff agreed to consider that option.

Comments:

District staff reported and program staff agreed that communication between regular school staff and ASP staff occurs through e-mail and face-to-face conversations about grade level work and/or individual student needs. In weekly staff meetings, the school staff relay relevant student information to ASP staff. At the beginning of every new session, classroom teachers receive a shared enrollment document that has the names and activities that their students signed up for.

District staff also reported they are seeking to improve teacher and staff communication and will work with building principles to find consistent opportunities to accomplish that

Strength:

The initial interview and site observations demonstrated that there is collaborative and consistent communication between school and ASP staff.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

The superintendent described a high staff turnover rate in the ASP and the district in general.

Consider how the district's plan for sustaining post-grant ASP activities might include succession planning and activities to ensure staff commitment to and enthusiasm for the ASP.

Comments:

The sustainability plan submitted by the district, as its Appendix B, details financial contributions received from district partners, fees, and other grants. As discussed above in Partnerships, the district has partner organizations. They make forms of in-kind contributions by donating time and expertise in ASP enrichment activities for nominal fees, ranging between \$10 and \$15 per student. Those fees go directly to the independent partners/contractors as partial compensation for their services.

The district allocates other, additional grant resources to specific activities such as robotics and science exploration. The district used that funding to purchase materials and fund staffing.

All three of these sources are part of the long term sustainability plan. The partner contributions and fees need to be consistent, and grants will generally be short term. Fundraisers and grants will be pursued on a continuing basis.

Strength:

The district makes conscious and consistent efforts to support its ASP by coordinating its grant funds and contributions from partners. The superintendent reported that the Appendix B sustainability program is going under review and will be revised based on commitments from partners and the district's board.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

As discussed in Needs and Resources above, the superintendent's evolving plan is to sustain the ASP through supporting eligible activities with Title I and other grant funds and, where possible with general State School Funds (SSF). The superintendent is considering options if some or all SSF projected to support the ASP are not available.

Consider whether expanding proficiency based curriculum, instruction, and assessments into select ASP academic and enrichment activities might offer more options for at least some students to earn diploma credits and increase demand and public support for those programs.

III. Program Design**Comments:**

Information provided by district staff for review prior to the site visit, including schedules and attendance counts, demonstrate that weekly operational hours are consistent with the approved grant application. Information reported during the initial and other staff interviews tended to support that conclusion.

Staff reported that the SHS student tutors participate in these activities: They receive instruction and mentoring from SHS staff. They prepare for their tutoring assignments. They conduct their tutoring assignments. Finally, they report reflections about their tutoring experiences. Taken together, it is reasonable to assume that the tutoring experiences meet the weekly hourly requirements and qualify as academic activities. It appears that students take significant time to prepare for, carry out, and reflect on the tutoring experiences. It also appears that the student tutors need to acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully carry out their tutoring assignments. They have to know their subject to be able to tutor it. Finally, it appears that student tutors have opportunities to deepen their subject matter knowledge and skills.

Strength:

Staff reported that ASP students often work more cooperatively with student tutors than they do with adults.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

The challenge is to ensure that the ASP's student tutoring provides a valuable service within grant requirements.

Consider documenting, at least from time-to-time, how the student tutors qualify to become tutors; how much time student tutors spend preparing for, conducting, and reflecting on their tutoring assignments; and how information from their reflections inform improvements to the student tutoring activities. Note: This is a suggestion. It is not a corrective action requirement.

Comments:

At FCS we observed academic and enrichment programs for students in grades K-8. Some were in classrooms, the library, the cafeteria, or a "utility gym" (also available for civic use after ASP hours). All environments appeared to be clean and safe. Students appeared to cooperate in keeping the areas clean and safe by following instructions and protocols. For example, students helped clean up and put away materials and equipment during their transitions from one activity to another. The ASP provides custodial services both to maintain the ASP areas and to ensure spaces are clean and ready for regular school.

At SHS, we observed the Academic Hour Program housed in a classroom and the Fit Club housed in an exercise area in the HS gym complex. The academic classroom was clean and orderly. Students appeared to cooperate in keeping it so.

The exercise area is in an enclosure at one end of the gym complex. It appeared to be clean, well lit and ventilated. It was equipped with free weights, stationary weight machines, and aerobic equipment (e.g. treadmill, stationary bikes). Staff interviewed reported that students receive instruction during their regular PE classes on the safe use of the equipment. Basic instructions on caring for free weights and the stationary equipment were posted throughout. Some general behavior expectations focused on personal interactions (e.g. how another person may react to what I say) were posted. The staff person available reported that PE staff familiar with the fitness area and equipment occasionally volunteer in the fitness program.

Students appeared to be using the equipment properly and safely and to be working cooperatively in small groups (e.g. "spotting" weights for each other).

Procedures and activities at FCS and SHS appeared to be consistent with the district's detailed School Building and 21st Century Community Learning Centers Safety Plan submitted by the district as Appendix A in their materials.

The areas of FCS and SHS visited by the monitoring team were easily accessible and appear to meet ADA requirements.

No activities took place outside of FCS or SHS.

Strength:

The district's school building and 21st Century Community Learning Centers Safety addresses safety issues that are important to students and parents. Site observations confirmed that

students, staff, and parents who came to check out their children follow reasonable safety procedures outlined in the Safety Plan.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

Ensure that FCS and SHS students receive appropriate notices and reminders about safety procedures, especially in areas with high student-to-staff ratios and levels of activity, such as the FCS gym and FCS exercise room where Fit Club meets. For example, in the exercise room, consider posting (or re-posting) instructions on the safe uses of fitness equipment along with instructions on proper care for it.

Comments:

Staff, students and parents at FCS and SHS appeared to understand and practice student and parent check-out and pick-up procedures and protocols. Protocols include use of radio communications between staff if a parent requests to take a student from a program prior to the dismissal time.

We observed elementary staff assisting students and parents with check-out and pick-up procedures. We also observed frequent use of radio contacts among elementary program staff.

As would be anticipated, many SHS students participate in interscholastic and other after-school activities. The SHS students and their families have a different level of responsibility than those at FCS.

Strength:

Staff commitment to and clear protocols for checking students in and out of ASP are commendable, especially at FCS.

Challenge(s) for the district:

Continue and improve on systems to monitor student safety plans during travel to and from ASPs.

IV. Management & Staffing

Comments:

The program management plan is shown in the organization chart provided by the district as Appendix C-1 for review prior to the site visit. That chart shows the reporting relationships and responsibilities among the superintendent, the ASP coordinator, the coordinators at FCS and SHS, and the principals at FCS and SHS. Interviews and observations confirmed that those relationships are known and understood by the district and ASP staff interviewed and observed.

Strength:

Because Sheridan is a relatively small district, the district, school, and ASP staff have numerous and effective opportunities to communicate formally and informally. This appears to help make ASP operations efficient and effective.

Challenge(s) and suggestion(s) for the district:

As discussed above in Partnerships, Collaboration and Communication, the superintendent described a high staff turnover rate in the ASP and the district in general. Consider how the district's plan for sustaining post-grant ASP activities might include succession planning and activities to ensure staff commitment to and enthusiasm for the ASP.

V Program Evaluation

No Findings

Comments: As discussed in Section I under Needs & Resources; the district distributes surveys to parents, students, and staff at the end of each school year to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the ASP program, and offer suggestions for improvements for the following year. The district plans to distribute the surveys in the spring. This section also describes the ASP strengths and challenges identified by the superintendent and the ASP coordinators. Suggestions are included for the district regarding assessments of the ASP program, and how those assessments might inform program adjustments and improvements in the following year.

VI Fiscal Compliance

No Findings

Comments:

- Information provided by the district prior to the site visit included this statement in the Site Monitoring Tool under Program Design, Family Education Activities: "21st CCLC technology is available for regular class time use and checkout during the school day."
- During the initial interview, the superintendent and staff present clarified that the grant-funded equipment in question were computers in a lab setting. The monitoring team expressed concerns that this use of grant-funded equipment constituted supplanting. The superintendent and others present agreed.
- During the initial interview, the group discussed solutions. The superintendent proposed that district technology staff bring general funded computers to the lab for use by students who are not in grant-funded programs. She also later explained that the district will clearly label the general and grant-funded equipment for proper users. We agreed this is a reasonable solution under the circumstances.
- Before the monitoring team left, the superintendent said she had ordered the work done and that it will be completed within a week.

Strength:

The superintendent has a clear understanding of and commitment to accurate accounting for 21st CCLC funds. She is to be commended for following-up with an email to ODE explaining that the district had clearly labeled the general and grant-funded equipment for proper use. No corrective action needed to be taken.

Strengths

The Sheridan School District grantee is to be commended for:

- Consistent and creative program planning and development using team-based involvement, facilitated by the Program Director and the energetic, committed staff.
- Positive communication, site and program-wide, are evident and apparent during the site monitoring visit.
- SSD has invested in long-term partnership development for the good of the community and as a result, enhanced community-based partnerships are "giving back" benefits to families, students and schools.
- The District staff, we were able to meet, were welcoming, helpful, open, informative, cooperative, collaborative, and dedicated to providing ASPs and other programs that serve the best interests of their students and community.
- Students and staff appeared to be on tasks, engaged, and enjoying their academic and enrichment activities.

- When dealing with concerns that arose during the visit such as document translation, and “supplement and not supplant,” the superintendent and her staff immediately began working toward solutions.
- This was an enjoyable, informative, and productive visit.