

Printer-friendly version  Email story link 

Gresham High gains \$2 million grant

Learning center's after-school program will serve K-12

BY ROB CULLIVAN

The Gresham Outlook, May 29, 2009

The Oregon Department of Education has awarded Gresham High School a \$2 million 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, the Gresham-Barlow School District announced May 28.

The federally funded grant will finance an after-school program for about 300 students at Gresham, as well as a summer program for incoming ninth graders who will need mentoring and academic support before entering high school and during their freshman year.

Through the after-school program, students will have the opportunity to take classes in math, science, social studies, and language arts or meet with tutors. Such opportunities will allow students to get credit they may have failed to get before in a subject.

The program will also help students learn financial literacy, social skills and college readiness and give students opportunities in the arts, music and drama.

April Olson, the district's coordinator of administrative resources and federal programs, noted Gresham-Barlow has been exploring opening the center for about two years, and conducted focus groups with students and staff members this year to talk about the need for after-school programs.

"We knew we needed more opportunities for students to earn credit, and we also knew that there was a lot of power in bringing in community partners to help our school," she said.

Gresham High School partnered with Metropolitan Family Service, the Multnomah County SUN Service System, Open Meadow Schools, the Greater Gresham Area Prevention Partnership (GGAPP), and Lifeworks Northwest in submitting the grant proposal.

Olson added that the center is not designed to make up for extra-curricular activities lost to recent budget cuts, but noted that the center will offer a number of opportunities that might otherwise not be available to students.

"We are extremely pleased Gresham High School received this grant," Superintendent John Miner said. "This program will provide staff with additional resources to support students who need help the most. Our goal is to help more students graduate on time and become productive, successful members of society."

"This is a great opportunity for the students of Gresham High School," Carol Daiberl, principal, said. "By partnering with community agencies we have the ability to offer additional services to our students and families."

The grant will allow Gresham High to be designated a SUN School. SUN stands for "Schools Uniting Neighborhoods." It is a Multnomah County program designed to coordinate and provide educational, recreational, social and health services.

There are 54 SUN schools in six school districts throughout the county. The Gresham-Barlow district is home to four SUN schools.