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## New Ventilation System Improves Air Quality for Students and Staff at the District's Pioneer Complex

*Crook County School District uses Cares Act funding to complete the \$1.5 million project*

**Prineville, OR** - The health of students and staff and keeping schools open are top priorities for Crook County School District as COVID-19 continues to impact local communities. One way to reduce transmission and infection rates of the virus is through consistent ventilation of air in classrooms.

This week, the school district's facilities department is wrapping up a \$1.5 million installation of heat recovery ventilators and mini-split air conditioning systems at Pioneer Complex. The educational campus, which dates back the 1930's, is the oldest facility in the district and houses Steins Pillar Elementary School, Grizzly Mountain HomeLink, and Pioneer Alternative High School.

"We committed to our families this year that our school district would do everything possible to keep students in school and avoid distance learning because of COVID-19. This upgrade not only improves safety during the pandemic but also improves air quality for our students and staff moving forward," said Superintendent Dr. Sara Johnson.

Some of the classroom windows are so old that teachers are unable to open them to bring in fresh air. The ventilation system runs all day, filtering and exchanging the air at least 15 times per hour. It also allows the facilities crew to shut down the system when air quality is poor outside due to smoke from wildfires or air inversions. Studies by organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have shown that one way to reduce COVID-19 transmission inside buildings is through the consistent exchange of fresh air.

There are three buildings on the Pioneer Complex campus: Pioneer North houses Steins Pillar Elementary School; Pioneer South includes Grizzly Mountain HomeLink and Pioneer Alternative High School, and there's a gymnasium located in between the two main buildings. The gym already has a ventilation system installed.

Air conditioning has also been added to the North and South buildings, which will keep classrooms at comfortable temperatures during the warm days of early fall, late spring, and potential summer school activities. The school district also plans to add the same ventilation system to the Powell Butte Community Charter School this winter.

"We just wrapped up a long-range facilities planning process and most of the work addresses various maintenance needs across the district, so this project helps to scratch one more item off the list as we budget for future projects," explained Dr. Johnson.

Funding for these projects came from the \$2.2 billion Cares Act stimulus package passed by Congress in March of last year. Part of the package includes the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER). School districts can use the money to address the various impacts of COVID-19 mainly through facility repairs and upgrades.

### **About Crook County School District**

Crook County School District is a thriving, rural, growing district in Central Oregon, serving more than 3,000 students from all across Crook County. It is an organization with integrity, a model for educational success, and a recognized leader for excellence in helping students dream, learn, and succeed.

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