



Photo: Point Wilson Lighthouse and Mt. Baker

Port Townsend School District No. 50

Superintendent Newsletter, Vol. 16-17, No. 1

September 9, 2016

Introduction ~ John Polm



The summer ends and a new school year begins. Much like a new toy, the school year holds promise of excitement as students arrive eager with anticipation. There will be reuniting with friends, sharing of stories, and meeting with new people. For little ones, school is exciting, but also frightening as they must learn how to “do” school. Our older students often look forward to their activities with friends. For me, I have a mix of excitement as well as a heavy sense of responsibility as I fill the position of superintendent.

I would like to take the opportunity to further introduce myself by sharing some of my beliefs and commitments.

- I believe the education of each student is a responsibility shared by students, families, schools and communities. This belief leads to my commitment to the continued development of our place-based curriculum and Maritime Discovery Schools initiative. This belief is grounded in the idea that students need to be engaged in collaborative and meaningful educational activities in order to build the skills and knowledge needed in the 21st century.
- I believe we all are guardians of the school district values, mission, vision, and goals. My commitments are to be fair, truthful, reliable, and respectful while we diligently work to deepen the learning experiences for our students. These deeper experiences take a lot of effort and thought around how we can leverage our place-based ideas, engage our community based on real needs, and assure that rigorous standards and assessments are part of every project.

Why place-based? Why Project-Based Learning (PBL)? The following article by Bonnie Lathram, Bob Lenz, and Tom Vander Ark does a nice job capturing why we are committed to PBL in Port Townsend.

<http://gettingsmart.com/2016/08/its-a-project-based-world-lets-prepare-students-for-it/>. Access to the longer 20-page article can be found at: [Preparing Students for a Project-Based World](#)

I hope you will join me in these beliefs and commitments. We can all be committed to the student experience. That is, we can understand that our public schools are where our students experience a significant part of their life. Let’s make our work centered on creating quality opportunities for students that are rigorous, relevant and connected to our community.

Canoe Landing

The picture at right shows PTHS students and staff helping the Jamestown S'Klallam and other tribal citizens carry long boats at the canoe landing at Fort Worden State Park on July 23, 2016. The event was part of the "Paddle to Nisqually" that culminated at the Port of Olympia on July 30th. This was a great event.



Ann Healy-Raymond

Port Townsend School District employee Ann Healy-Raymond has been providing leadership in the libraries and technology areas for some time. The past few years she has also been highly engaged in leadership in the teaching/learning area. Her work has been quality, and she has contributed to significant improvements in teacher development, the MDS initiative, and overall instructional practices. I am pleased to announce that her job title has been elevated to Director of Instruction and Technology. She will continue to oversee the district libraries as part of her responsibilities.

September is Attendance Awareness Month

The Port Townsend Board of Directors declared September as Attendance Awareness Month. This means each school in the district will be paying special attention to recognizing excellent attendance as well as identifying students who have barriers to regular attendance. The City of Port Townsend also supported this effort by proclaiming September as Attendance Awareness Month as well. For more information on building activities, please see your building principal.

Maritime Discovery Schools ~ Director, Sarah Rubenstein

This summer over 50 teachers were hard at work in Maritime Industry Immersion and Curriculum Design Sessions. In each session, teachers connected with a maritime industry partner and spent time planning maritime and place-based projects for the upcoming school year. Thank you to Port Townsend Sails, WA State Ferries, WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Port Townsend Shipwrights Co-op for hosting a group of teachers for a day and sharing their work with us. These sessions were funded in part by WA Sea Grant.



In the week leading up to school all teachers signed up for a curriculum design and coaching day, as well as a peer observation and teaching lab session, to further support all teachers reaching our goal of facilitating *at least two maritime or place-based projects with their students this school year.*

The district wide back-to-school professional learning day was full of inspiration for incorporating creativity and innovation into projects. We hosted 15 community members' lively conversation about the needs in our community at our annual salmon feast lunch, which was prepared by our district food service staff. Our keynote speaker, Lynn Dierking, from Oregon State University School of Education, noted that it was the best luncheon food she had ever tasted. Our teachers are energized and prepared to head into the school year with new, and re-envisioned, maritime and place-based learning in place.

From PTHS ~ Principal, Carrie Ehrhardt

We've had a great start to our school year! All of our back to school activities for students, parents and faculty went smoothly. Students returned to school energized and excited to reconnect with friends.

Last week, eight PTHS students began their participation in the Watershed Science and Stewardship class, sponsored by Jude Rubin and the Northwest Watershed Institute. These students will earn a .5 PTHS credit for participating in the service projects offered throughout the school year. Five of these students are taking on a major internship project around an area of needed environmental restoration in our community, for an additional .5 credit. This new project-based class is an example of how we are able to leverage our place-based community resources to offer credit-bearing programs to PTHS students, outside of the traditional classroom setting and school day.

Another new program being launched this week is our Redhawk Mentors. In an effort to create a stronger sense of culture for our freshmen, 13 junior and senior age student Mentors will be working with freshmen and their teachers for three days (Wednesday-Friday) during this first week of school. Structured team building and school orientation activities will be held at Fort Worden on Wednesday and Thursday, followed by a program offered at the Wooden Boat Festival on Friday. Thanks to the 13 outstanding student Mentors dedicating their time over the summer to work with excellent staff members Brandi Hageman, Jen Kruse and Kelley Watson, in putting this program together for our freshmen.

Our first home football game this past Friday night against Sequim had our fans on the edge of their seats. With the final score Sequim 27 to PT 26, our Redhawks played extremely well and we are looking forward to our next home game, this Thursday, September 8 against Port Angeles. This event is also our Andy Palmer game. Other opening home events for fall sports include Soccer and Volleyball against Klahowya on September 15, and Cross Country on September 28. Swim and Dive will have their first home meet next month. Remember to check the PTHS website for up-to-date athletic schedules and game times. Go REDHAWKS!

Parenting Resources

There may be a lot of different resources available for parents. One such resource that may be worth investigating is Parenting Wisely <https://www.parentingwisely.com/>. This program is published by Family Works Inc. This resource was recommended at a recent meeting of the Jefferson County Truancy Reform Committee. However, it has a lot of information and suggestions for parents.

Special Services ~ Director, Patrick Kane

Over the summer the Port Townsend School District Learning Support Services website was updated. Information regarding programs in each of the buildings has a little more explanation as to the structure of the program. Added to the website is information regarding IDEA, Child Find, links to OSPI website explaining what parents need to know about special services and other information that families will find helpful. For the Port Townsend School District website, please see the following:
http://www.ptschools.org/departments/learning_support_services_i_d_e_a

The Special Services department hired three new staff members at the end of the previous school year. Two staff members are new to Grant Street. David Egeler and Laurie Solchenberger are excited to be at Grant St. David's previous teaching experience was in the Los Angeles SD and comes here with incredible experience of getting students involved in their community. Laurie hails from Wisconsin and she has been successful in motivating students to bring out the best in themselves. The other staff member is Laura Cook

and she is the speech instructor. She will work with students at Blue Heron and Port Townsend HS. Laurie just finished her degree in Portland and is very excited to be working in Port Townsend.

The district has started a new program for high school age students to gain some work skills in what is known as a transition program. Students will be working at Fort Worden on various jobs throughout the year. They will gain skills in groundskeeping, kitchen work, laundry, housekeeping and office work. With this training it is expected these students will be employable in the community in the next couple of years.

Assessment ~ Director, Patrick Kane

Parents/guardians will be receiving information in September from their student's respective building regarding spring assessments for the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), Measurement of Student Progress (MSP), End of Course Exam (EOC) and Washington-Access to Instruction and Management (WA-AIM). Please be aware that these assessments are a snapshot of your student's performance at a given time. Student progress in school is also measured by daily classroom assessment, district assessment, credit accrual and grade point average.

If you have questions about the State assessment(s) please arrange a meeting with your school's counselor. This will give you the opportunity to understand the assessment and also provide an opportunity to develop a plan of learning for your student. Parents and guardians of high school students are encouraged to find out more information about assessment and how it ties in with your student's graduation goals.

Human Resources (Employees) ~ Director, Laurie McGinnis

On September 9 we are hosting our annual Benefit Fair. Representatives from the Aflac, WDS Dental, Willamette Dental, Premera, Costco, Inspirus Credit Union and California Casualty are expected. Safeway will provide flu shots from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

K-5 Math Curriculum Training ~ Ann Healy-Raymond

On September 2nd, teachers from Grant Street and Blue Heron met to learn about the newly adopted Math curriculum for grades K-5. Teachers learned from a trainer who also teaches with the Bridges Curriculum, how the program works, and about the different curriculum components. This curriculum received the highest rating from EdReports, a non-profit devoted to rating curriculum in the areas of focus and coherence, rigor and mathematical practices and usability. Every teacher on the curriculum review team selected Bridges as their first choice. Teachers especially liked the Number Corner element of the program, where students daily engage in discourse about mathematical concepts.



Minds on Mathematics ~ Jason Lynch, Title/LAP Director

This summer we offered a professional development opportunity for our teachers entitled "Minds on Mathematics". The author of Minds on Mathematics, Wendy Ward Hoffer, was the facilitator of this top-notch learning opportunity and over 55 of our K-12 staff attended. This professional development engaged our teachers in using thinking strategies to support students' mathematical thinking as well as taught teachers how workshop model instruction can scaffold students' independence as mathematical problem solvers. Another learning objective was to develop a community of learners where students deepen their mathematical understanding through discourse.



Facilitator
Wendy Ward Hoffer, MA
PEBC Senior Director of Education, STEM

Hoffer works with math and science teachers at all levels to promote student thinking and understanding in their content areas. Hoffer is the author of *Science as Thinking*, *Minds on Mathematics*, and *Developing Literate Mathematicians*.

Summer Programs ~ Jason Lynch

Building on the success of last year's summer program, four-week summer school programs were offered at both Blue Heron and Grant Street. Both programs included small group instruction in mathematics and literacy taught by Grant Street and Blue Heron teachers. This program was a partnership with the YMCA's "Feed Your Brain" program, which provided meals to the participating students. Both Grant Street and Blue Heron schools were open food sites through the "Feed Your Brain" program which allowed any child eighteen years and younger to receive meals at both schools. At Grant Street the garden was integrated to teach literacy through the use of stories, life science, and journaling. At Blue Heron, incoming third graders that needed extra instructional support were invited to attend so they could meet Blue Heron teachers and become familiar with their new school. Fifty-five Grant Street students regularly attended and over 33 students attended the Blue Heron program.

The Blue's News ~ Principal, Matt Holshouser

First Day of School

We are off and running to a great new school year. We welcomed all Blue Heron School students at our front doors and learning spaces today with a new year's theme and all the hoopla. We are ready a great year ahead. Stellar attendance on day one.....with 99+% in attendance and 395 students enrolled currently at the Home of the Herons.



Welcome Back to School Nights ~ We actually kicked off the school year last week with our Welcome Back to School Nights where students and their families were invited on campus to gather schedules, requisite forms and logistics, and garner more information around the essential home and school connection and communication that is so vital for success. We greatly enjoyed welcoming all our students and their families to our OCEAN Night, 4th & 5th grade Night, and our Middle School (6th, 7th, & 8th grade) Night.

BH Fall Sports to begin ~ Blue Heron School Fall Sports season is already in swing. Football, Girls' Volleyball, and Cross Country running have begun practicing. Please check the Blue Heron website for home matches and join us to help root our student athletes on! GO HERONS!

Girl's Boat Project ~ In concert with Kelly Watson @ PTHS, Chrissy McLean, and the good folks at the Northwest Maritime Center.....we will be offering a great Girl's Boat Project learning opportunity here at Blue Heron School. Our young ladies, twelve years and older, will have an opportunity to learn boat design, work with wood projects, and sail our local waters. More pictures and detail soon.

Blue Heron School Mountain Bike Team & PT Recyclery ~ In partnership with Nhatt Nichols and the PT Recyclery team we are looking to increase rider membership and participation in our Boys and Girls Blue

Heron School Mountain Bike team. Via our Welcome Back Nights.....we gathered great interest.....and thus watch for our Blue Heron kiddos out on the local mountain bike trails.

Grant Street News ~ Principal, Lisa Condran

New Teachers and Teachers in New Roles



On the left is Sheri Shaw, who has taught first and second grade for many years at Grant Street. This school year she has an exciting new role as Grant Street's PE Teacher, replacing Aleen Berard who retired.



On the right is Kate Miller, who has made the decision to become a teacher after being Grant Street's Garden Coordinator for two years. Kate will be student teaching with Dawn Braden.

Below left is Cheryl Garnett-Harris, who taught kindergarten and third grade for many years and is rejoining her Grant Street family as a half-time Reading Specialist in the Eagle Reading Room. Below right is Jeanne Turner, who is our new .6 FTE School Counselor. Jeanne comes to us with years of experience teaching and counseling in the North Kitsap and Bainbridge Island School districts and is very excited to begin work with Grant Street staff, students, and families.



For Fun!

Administrators, Matt Holshouser and Scott Wilson serving food to staff on our September 1 District Day.



Support Services ~ Director, Brad Taylor

1. The new lights are on in the High School Auditorium, we now have a new LED system of lights that enhance the lighting for school use.
2. The High School gym roof has been resealed with a coat that will guarantee it for the next ten years.
3. Gym floors have been refinished.

Capital Projects:

We are well on our way with the cost estimating and design of the new elementary school at Grant Street, and we will be posting the design on our district web site after board review in mid-September.

Included in the bond money is the ADA and Security upgrades at the High School. The first meeting with the architect took place last week with the intent that the work will begin at the end of the school year, also included are plans for an upgrade of the entry door locks and a camera surveillance system. That work will continue throughout the school year.

Welcome back everyone!