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Port Townsend School District No. 50

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**“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.  
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.” ~Helen Keller**

### **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) ~ John Polm**

Some in our community may wonder about all of the talk in the last few years about PLCs in schools. This concept of professional learning as part of the school system might seem like a “no brainer” sort of concept. Interestingly, many of us who have been in public school service for a while remember a time when collaboration around professional learning was not the standard. In fact, many teachers and other school staff worked in isolation most of the time. How times have changed - and for the better.

Why are we committed to PLCs? Well, one of the reasons is based on Gestalt theory, which basically says, “the whole of anything is greater than the sum of its parts”. The idea is based on social learning or social interdependence. We, as well as our students, tend to learn collaboratively (and collaterally). Students learn what the teacher sets up for them, but they also learn a lot more through interactions with others. This happens in our small groups or teams, and even in larger settings on early release Wednesdays. Perhaps this may also happen through peer observations. Some of our teachers may use their prep time to visit other classrooms to get ideas and to provide feedback. This process is highly encouraged (and a common practice in many schools). The PLC groups are intended to help build teams of educators who learn from each other, and thereby help our whole school system be better than any one of us. Let’s keep up the good work!

### **Thoughts for Teachers and Principals: Classroom Strategies that Work**

I am very thankful to be in a school system with so many dedicated teachers and support staff. As I have visited classrooms here in PT and in my past posts, I have observed some strategies and behaviors that are associated with the most effective learning environments. I’d like to share a few that tend to support more effective classrooms and result in higher levels of student learning. Some of these are:

- *Routine Strategies:* Many teachers communicate the learning targets very clearly (in writing and verbally) while some tend to write activities on the whiteboard. The most effective teachers tend to follow the former. These teachers provide clear learning goals (and scales to measure these goals), track student progress (find ways for students to track their own progress), and celebrate student

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success. The most effective teachers also tend to have set classroom procedures and organize the physical layout of the room to fit the planned learning activity. (That is....the layout changes.)

- *Content Strategies*: Some teachers may lecture or show PowerPoints to introduce new information to all students, while other teachers may use similar strategies, but they also scaffold student interaction with new knowledge. The most effective teachers tend to scaffold by identifying the critical information, organizing the way students interact with the new knowledge, chunk content into “digestible bites”, and reflecting on learning.
- *Strategies Enacted on the Spot*: Some teachers focus on engaging students through physical movement, pacing, and opportunities for “student talk”. The most effective teachers notice when students are not engaged, and adjust instruction to improve engagement “on the spot”. The most effective teachers also know their student’s interests, backgrounds, and aspirations. They have high expectations for all students.

Sometimes we all tend to get caught up in the pressure to “cover” the material. But, we all need to remember that “telling” is not “teaching”. And, covering the material does not necessarily get the results we are looking for. We all want high rates of student learning, which takes hard work and lots of energy and focus from students.

Some other techniques I have observed in several classes has to do with “wait time”. Some research has shown that when students are given just three to five seconds of wait time after a question, several key things are likely to happen:

- The length and correctness of student responses are likely to increase.
- The number of failures to respond (those who say, “I don’t know”) is likely to decrease.
- The number of students who volunteer to answer is likely to increase.
- The use of evidence in answers is likely to increase.
- Teachers who strategically use “wait time” often say things like:
  - “I’m waiting for more hands”
  - “I’d like to see at least fifteen hands before we hear an answer”
  - “I’ll start taking answers in ten seconds”

I am often inspired by visits to our classrooms; I am confident that this is a place where many teachers are effective, and high rates of student learning are taking place in many classrooms daily. Thank you!

References:

Marzano, R. (2011). What teachers gain from deliberate practice. *The effective educator*, 68(4), 82-85.  
Lemov, D. (2010). *Teach like a champion*. (1st ed., pp. 135-137). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## **Kitchen News ~ Director, Stacey Larson**

Last day of Conference Week-thanks to the great kitchen staff for making hundreds of sack lunches for the kids this week. A big thanks to all the teachers and principals in helping make the sack lunch procedure as smooth as possible-got so much better as the week went on.

I was excited to speak Friday night the 18<sup>th</sup> at an event put on by the Co-Lab focused on Collaboration and Innovation. It was called *5 Minutes of Brilliance* and there were 9 speakers talking about what they are doing in our community to foster collaboration and innovation. I got to spread the word about the great work we are doing here in the district.

Starting Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> we will be taking kitchen vegetable scraps and putting them in the High School compost system that Farmer Zach and the Students for Sustainability are working on. We are meeting in the garden on Monday to get it rolling!

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## From PTHS ~ Principal, Carrie Ehrhardt

On Monday, November 14, the high school started a Credit Recovery program for 20 juniors and seniors needing to retake coursework to meet on time graduation requirements. The program meets Monday through Thursday from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. and is hosted in the library, allowing access for any students to complete quiet study after school.

Student athletes are finishing up their first week of winter season practice. PTHS is hosting basketball, wrestling and cheerleading for this upcoming season. Our first home contest begins on Friday, December 2 with a girls basketball game against North Mason.

Arena Parent Conferences were hosted on Thursday in the gym. We ran two sessions, an afternoon session from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. and an evening session from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

## From PTHS ~ AD/AP, Scott R. Wilson



{coach Peter Braden and swimmer Corinne Pierson}

The fall sports season is officially over...and the winter season has begun. There are several highlights from the fall season that give plenty reason to celebrate. The Redhawks definitely made some noise and appeared in the headlines for some outstanding efforts.

The most outstanding news is that of our girls swim and dive team. Not only did we have some emerging talent in the water, but the Redhawks earned the honor of 1A Academic State Champions for the collective high Grade Point Average of each member of the team! At the state tournament, where Corinne Pierson, Ismay Gale, Chloe Hatfield and Masie Gould all competed and represented Port Townsend High School, the girls were presented and recognized by the Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association. We are proud of our Redhawk Swimmers for outstanding work in the pool and in the classroom! Also congratulations to coach Peter Braden for his undying efforts to support the girls all season--particularly when our local pool shut down and caused coach Braden to get creative with the folks at Port Ludlow for practices. Finally, it should be noted that Corinne Pierson—a junior-- broke her own school record in the 100 meter backstroke with a time of 104.52!

Other highlights for the fall season include back-to-back Olympic League Champions: The Redhawk Football team! Behind the outstanding play and leadership of senior quarterback/defensive back Berkley Hill who set rushing records of his own, the Redhawks once again rocked the Olympic League teams as they battled in a combined Olympic/Nisqually League. By the end of the season, the Redhawks found themselves seeded as the #2 in the West Central District 3, and traveled to La Center for the first round of the state play-offs. Although they battled well and gave La Center a tough time, the Redhawks failed to advance to the second round. Still, a second trip to the state tournament in as many years is impressive.



We are proud of first year head coach Alex Heilig and his staff of veteran coaches of Tom Webster, Terry Khile and Rich Hill for putting in the extra time and effort to make sure our small team of Redhawk athletes were able to compete at the highest level week after week. Well done Redhawks!

Our other fall sport teams competed well all season. Our team of three tennis athletes fought consistently all season and made their way well into the district tournament. Our girls soccer team overcame a significant

number of injuries to position themselves with an a chance to make it to the post season, but fell short in the last two games. Most of the team will be returning next season and are poised to do well, giving head coach Ahmad Baabahar some high hopes. The Redhawk volleyballers were the youngest and least experienced group among the Olympic League, but head coach Cameron Botkin is looking forward to a summer of team camps and clinics to help the team reach its potential.

By winter break, we will have the complete list of all-league recognitions for each fall sport. Stay tuned!

I would be remiss if I did not mention the hard-working and spirited Redhawk Cheerleaders. Weekly, this band of girls practiced all week long and performed at home and away Friday football games. We appreciate their efforts to support positive sportsmanship, consistently creating posters and cheers that endorsed our own team rather than putting down the opposition. It is certainly a shift in culture that coach Kirsten Hammer has created, expected, and maintained.

The winter season officially began last Monday. There were 28 boys trying out for both varsity and JV spots in boys basketball. On the girls side, we have 15 girls out with a few more planning to come in this coming week. Our wrestling team has one of its best turn-outs in years with nearly 28 kids- a mix of both genders. This year for the first time, the WIAA has ruled that the traditional one-piece singlet uniform is no longer required. So all teams have an alternate MMA-style two-piece uniform that looks a bit more flattering than the traditional. I suspect this may help drive up the number of student athletes since so many have said in the past that there was "no way" they would wear a singlet.



## The Blue's News ~ Principal, Matt Holshouser

### Mountain Bike team

In partnership with our PT Recyclery friends.....we have grown our Blue Heron School Mtn. bike team to 13 members. They are cruising and careening down the local hills and trails with smiles on their faces. Thank you PT Recyclery and students for representing us well out there in the hills and trails.



### BH Parent-Teacher Conferences

We have enjoyed a great week here at Blue Heron School in hosting our Parent-Teacher Conferences this week. We have enjoyed fabulous attendance and many thanks to our supportive, engaged parents and wonderful, hard-working teachers for making a great partnership for all of our Blue Heron School kiddos.



### Art work

Enjoy great art work and projects adorning the Blue Heron School learning spaces and hallways.



### Red Dog Farm –Jesse Watson & students

Planetary & Scale project – Susan Doyle & Jennifer Manning and students project work.



Native Artwork – Susan Doyle and students artwork and learning

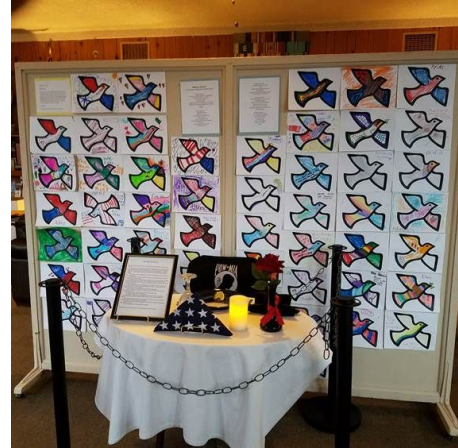


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## Grant Street News ~ Principal, Lisa Condran

Grant Street classrooms observed Veteran's Day in their classrooms through reading about the history of Veteran's Day and the contributions of veterans to our community. Students in library classes connected with the original intention of the holiday as Armistice Day, in which Calvin Coolidge after the end of World War I, on June 4, 1926, declared November 11<sup>th</sup> "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to thereafter known as Armistice Day." In 1945, the day was expanded to celebrate all Veterans, not just World War I veterans, and became known as Veteran's Day.

Teacher Joy, Grant Street's Librarian, asked students what peace felt like to them. Below is a picture of student artwork that is being displayed in the Marvin Shields American Legion Hall in downtown Port Townsend. Students shared thoughts on what peace feels like to them in the form of a group poem that is included in the display.



## OCEAN ~ Liz Quayle, Director/Teacher



### ***Learning about the Shoreline***

We were pleased to have as our guest, Jude Rubin from the NW Watershed Institute, to introduce the Plant-a-Thon activity that most of our students will be participating in on February 4<sup>th</sup> at the Tarboo Creek watershed. We have eight high schoolers who have volunteered to be part of the youth crew leader corps. This field experience extends our studies in marine biology and environmental issues in social studies.

### ***Mathematics as Theatre***

Middle and high school students are frequently surprised as they see their teacher flip upside down in class as a reciprocal, have the opportunity to act out math expressions and properties, and to make connections through a variety of physical movement and social skills activities. Students learn that if you divide by a negative in an inequality, you can just turn around and ignore the insult; traveling together in a chair "car" means that your "commute" gets you both there, no matter who is driving, because  $a+b=b+a$ , and that words in the problem mean words in the answer, that is, "use your words."

### ***Bicycling as Transportation***

Many of our OCEAN students ride bicycles for their daily transportation to and from school, and we support this even further through our Bicycle Class for students in grades 3-12. In cooperation with the Recyclery, students learn to repair bicycles, true wheels, and gain lessons and practice in bicycle safety. This class runs in the fall until the beginning of November, and will pick up again in April.





### ***Music to Energize***

Twice a week, two of our classrooms sing with the sound of violins and other instruments as our youngest students learn violin, taught by teacher Daniel Molotsky with the support of local musical instructors Kristin Smith and Pat Yearian, and then learn fiddle tunes and other jam session pieces in the OCEAN String Band class. Very often, students and Daniel will randomly break out instruments and play between classes, creating a friendly place for all.

### ***Processing the Election***

Students in various social studies and math classes processed the elections through calculating candidate percentages of the vote, analyzing the pros and cons of state initiatives, and holding a Socratic seminar that discussed the socio-political pendulum swings, including Hegel's Dialect, and the thinking process of "I used to think, but now I think..." aspects of the presidential election and our governmental practices. A great deal of time was spent on the concept of respect for others in dialogue and in actions, and showing appreciation for the values we carry as a school.

## **Libraries, Instruction and Technology ~ Director, Ann Healy-Raymond**

### **Dedicated to District Technology**

Steve Haveron worked on Friday, November 11 to problem solve the sporadic wireless outages that several teachers and students noticed in the last two weeks. He spent many hours tracing the problem to its root- an out of date certificate for our controllers. While the problem may not be understandable to most who use technology in the district, Steve monitors many systems behind the scenes, such as our controllers, to keep the wireless and hardware up and running throughout the district. After working to make the necessary updates, our many hundreds of Chromebooks should be maintaining connection to the wireless. If you notice dropped coverage, please notify Steve through "School-Dude", and he will check the local access points. And if you have a chance, thank Steve for his dedication to keeping things running for all of us.

### **Our District's New Teachers Speak**

Teachers new to the Port Townsend School District meet once a month for collegial support and learning. We asked the new teachers what was going well for them so far. Here are some of their thoughts about what they appreciate about their experience working in our district:

- Making great friends
- Great collaboration with staff
- I am digging the MDS professional development
- Building relationships and getting to know teachers and students
- Making friends with co-workers
- Building positive relationships with students
- Enjoying celebration parties with students
- Routines and academic progress feeling good- seeing lots of student growth
- Lots of positive feedback from teachers
- Seeing positive results regarding students I work with- especially regarding anxiety and engagement in learning
- Developing good relationships with my primary teacher partners
- Behavior management and clear class expectations are feeling pretty good this year!
- Having a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student say "That's why history is cool" after a Social Studies class

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- Developing good relationships with educational assistants and parents
  - Seeing gains in student behavior and academic performance

We are grateful for the hard work of *all* teachers and staff, and welcome the teachers new to our district. They bring enthusiasm and variety of experiences that strengthen our district.

### Library News



The students at Grant Street honored Vets and learned about peace through a book called **What Does Peace Feel Like?** The students wrote poems and created doves. Joy Wentzel sent these with the poems to the American Legion in Port Townsend. The picture shows the beautiful display the Legion made for Veteran's Day highlighting the work of Grant Street students.



## Special education and Assessment ~ Director, Patrick Kane

### Special Education –

The special education teachers of the high school attended their third meeting this past week in regards to the CCTS grant that our school district received this past spring. The meetings have been very informational as well as preparing the team to look closely at transition for students when they leave the high school. Teachers have been busy learning how to enter data in the CCTS data base regarding the student's' transition plans in their IEP. The goal is to enter the data and give the district and teachers an idea of what students want to do after leaving high school. Teachers have also been looking at curriculum to implement into their instruction to guide students on how plan the transition from high school to being employed or continuing their education. These meetings and workshops are scheduled to the end of November, 2017 which is a good indication there is a lot of work that needs to be done.

### Assessment Information –

Special education teachers are creating class lists for students who need to take the WA-AIMS for the 2016-17 school year. This assessment is an alternative assessment to the SBAC allowed by the State. Students are given a baseline assessment at the beginning of January and then given a final assessment in April to see if they have mastered or performed better than the initial assessment. Students are assessed in the areas of math and English Language Arts (ELA). The assessments are designed by the IEP case manager and the expectation is for the assessment to encourage growth in areas the student is finding difficulty to comprehend.

### Ending thought:

*"For this boat to get anywhere, we've got to start rowing." ~Jake Beattie*