



Port Townsend School District No. 50
Superintendent Polm's Newsletter
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Photo: High School Campus: Credit Jan Boutilier

Attendance Counts! ~ from Dr. Polm



On the opening days of the school year, buildings are filled with students who rush into school eager to greet friends they haven't seen all summer. In some cases those friends are their primary motivation to attend school.

Even early in the school year, some students already are heading toward academic trouble because they are missing too many days of school. Data released in June 2016 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) revealed that more than 6.8 million students missed 15 or more days – almost a full month – of school during the 2013-14 academic year. The data shows the unsettling reality that millions of students are missing so much school that they are struggling to read proficiently by third grade and are more

likely to drop out.

Here in the Port Townsend School District, our rates are good overall, with over 90 percent of the students present for school each day. However, there are some students who are already not attending regularly. Common sense tells us that all of our efforts won't improve academic success if students aren't showing up to benefit from them.

So, Port Townsend School District is joining a nationwide Call to Action to make improved attendance a top priority for this school year. By supporting this program, our district joins a growing national movement of schools looking beyond average daily attendance and truancy numbers to identify and address the challenges that keep students from getting to school every day.

Our first step will be letting families know what a critical role they play in getting children to school on time every day. Many families simply don't understand how missing just two days a month can put a child at academic risk, starting in the early grades. Teachers will reinforce these messages and, when they can, offer fun incentives to encourage good attendance.

We will be monitoring attendance numbers, which are early warning signs that can trigger action and support. But schools can't do this alone. Please join us in our effort to make every day count!

MDS News ~ Dr. Polm

The Maritime Discovery School Initiative has entered year three (second year of full implementation), and it feels like it is no longer a new project. In fact, the difference from last year to this year seems more relaxed....teachers seem more comfortable with this new way to approach our teaching and learning.

We recently received an independent report or evaluation from Dr. Jeffrey Youde. Dr. Youde is a former teacher and principal, and is currently an adjunct university professor. We asked him to complete a program evaluation based on perceptions of students, teachers and parents. He used some of our

existing survey information and he completed focus group interviews last spring. The findings were presented to the board on October 5, 2017. I also attached the report to a staff email. The report is in BoardDocs and accessible to the public as well. See: http://www.ptschools.org/board_supt/board_docs. Our district leadership, MDS leadership team, and building leadership teams will help review the data and recommendations as we move forward. Thank you to all those who participated in the study.

Community Relations (Info on Distribution of Materials)

We love our community! Sometimes our community wants to distribute information through the district. We have guidance through policy and procedure 4060/4060P. The principal of the building is responsible to determine if materials from a non-profit may be posted or distributed in a school. If the request is from an individual (not a non-profit group), then those requests should be forward to the Superintendent. All materials distributed must contain the statement, "The district does not sponsor this event and the district assumes no responsibility for it. In consideration of the privilege to distribute materials, Port Townsend School District shall be held harmless from any cause of action filed in any courts or administrative tribunal arising out of the distribution of these materials, including costs, attorney's fees and judgments or awards."

From PTHS ~ Principal, Carrie Ehrhardt

Seven PTHS Mock Trial students and advisor Chris Pierson are in San Francisco this weekend attending a Mock Trial International Invitational. Our students will be working with and competing against other teams, from high schools around the world. Their mock case is based on a private prison being sued by the state for the wrongful death of an inmate. Students have been working since last June preparing for this case. In addition to faculty advisor Chris Pierson, students work with our Jefferson County District Court Judge, Jill Landes, to prepare for their competitions.

We have several place-based projects which have already started for the year. Students in Kelley Watson's Maritime Boatbuilding class have begun construction on their stand-up paddle boards. Jen Kruse has her students regularly working in our school garden and her Culinary Arts students have used the freshly harvested produce to create the appetizers and desserts which were served at the Harvest Dinner to support our district's local food service program, this past Tuesday evening. Our beautiful fall weather has allowed Richard Sweeney's physical education classes to 'Experience Port Townsend', by taking walks around town and learning about the history of their destinations, such as our Jefferson County Courthouse, the Jefferson Museum of Art and History, Chetzemoka Park, and a historical homes walking tour in uptown.

In the principal's office, I have been busy working with our teachers, completing their beginning of the year conference, and helping them to establish their student growth goals for the 2017-18 school year. The student growth goals are academically focused goals which teachers write, and work on, throughout the year. Successful measures of student growth are demonstrated when teachers, through focused instructional measures and a data collection process, can clearly show the academic growth of their students over the course of the school year.

Blue Heron Principal Gaffney and I attended *Queer Survival Quest*, a theatre production put on by the Mandala Center for Change, last week at Fort Worden. Several PTHS student actors participated in the play. Our high school strives to make sure that our school culture supports acceptance and is inclusive of all our students and their families, including those who identify as LGBTQ. Since the production, I have set up some training for staff in December on some of the gender identification issues our students may be struggling with, as well as training around privacy issues and communication and use of names and pronouns for transgender or gender nonconforming students. Our presenters will be Teresa Shiraishi, a

Dove House advocate for LGBTQ issues, and Beau Olhgren, facilitator of the Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Support Group in Port Townsend.

Food Services ~ Director, Stacey Larsen

We have an altered menu for the new few weeks due to our steam kettles being broken. They are over 35 years old and our booster finally gave up. We cook almost all our our food in our steam kettle so we are trying to get a new booster as fast as possible. Thanks for hanging with us! Even with the steam kettles down we participated in the Taste of Washington Day with Dharma Ridge Baked Potato Bar, a gleaned apple, and local kale, salad mix and radishes.

We had our first annual Fundraiser for Local Food on Tuesday at Finnriver farm on Tuesday. 75 people showed up and we had wonderful music by Chris Montgomery and his band followed by a wonderful upscale school lunch cooked by Colleen Mills. We even raised some money-I cannot wait for next year. Thanks to all that helped and donated that night-we have a wonderful and supportive community.

The Heron Highlights ~ Principal, Patrick Gaffney

On Thursday and Friday of this week, the 7th graders began their forest restoration project by visiting Ilahee Preserve and Salmon Creek. The goal of the project is to restore land that had been cleared to encourage salmon to return to their native streams.



At Ilahee, students observed chum salmon returning to spawn, learned about “the return”, and were then treated to barbequed salmon, prepared by CedarRoot Folk School instructor Justin Lake. At Salmon Creek, students also observed returning salmon, and then measured plots and took soil samples. Between now and March when they return to Salmon Creek to plant, students will use the information from the soil samples, research native trees and shrubs, and study vegetation needs to decide on which vegetation is best suited to the local environment.

Grant Street News ~ Principal, Lisa Condran

Grant Street held its first assembly recently to celebrate Citizenship Day. Grant Street is launching Positive Behavior Intervention Supports to help ensure that students have the social and emotional support needed to be successful in school with academics. The leadership team leading this effort is being coordinated by Dr. Emily Gustafson, Grant Street School Psychologist. For this assembly, students demonstrated the correct way to be safe, responsible, and respectful in the common areas of the school, and teachers demonstrated the incorrect behavior. These examples and non-examples were shown in a video that was filmed over the course of the first couple of weeks of school.

Grant Street's first MDS Team met on its project today with project coaching from Sarah Rubenstein. This team's project is called, “Yikes, Emergency Preparedness.” This team is further developing this project which was started last year. The Red Cross has been an important partner in this project as well. In related safety news, Grant Street had its first fire evacuation drill last week. This was very successful with a minimum of confusion, considering this was a major change in how Grant Street conducts drills.

Grant Street's temporary playground has been successful thus far. The cooperative games through the Peaceful Playground program are starting to take hold with students. Foursquare is a particularly popular game. The one hiccup has been that the Imagination Playground blocks that were ordered in July have been backordered due to problems with the manufacturer being able to have a large enough supply of foam to keep up with the large demand for this product. The new shipping date for our Imagination

Playground blocks is October 13th with an estimated arrival of October 20th. In the meantime, the sandbox is a very popular option with students. Students also love the scooters. Many thanks go to Sheri Shaw, Grant Street PE Teacher, and our older OPEPO students for providing scooter safety instruction to all of our students.

Fine Arts News ~ Daniel Ferland

Fine Arts Coordinator

Daniel Ferland is working this year as PTSD Fine Arts coordinator. This is a new position funded by Music and Arts Boosters. In this role, Daniel is working make connections with community organizations that have a vested interest in our school fine arts programs. Daniel is exploring ways to work with these community partners and find common visions and opportunities and collaboration. We hope that some of these opportunities can lead to MDS projects for our students.

Some of the organizations met with so far include the Northwind Arts Center, Centrum, Port Townsend Community Orchestra, and Songwriting Works. Good connections have been made to all organizations with plans to meet with more during the course of this year.

Course Offerings and Participation

Currently fine arts offerings at Grant Street include Art and Music classes for all students. At Blue Heron, all 6-8 students receive art instruction while all 4-6 students receive music classes.

In our performing arts classes 7-8, we have 42 students enrolled in orchestra and 26 enrolled in band. At the high school level, we currently have 51 students enrolled in orchestra and 29 in the band.

Teacher Reports

D. Ferland – PTHS Orchestra is planning on a trip in March of this year to Los Angeles. The orchestra will be doing a workshop for learning how to record music for feature films at Disney Studios. The orchestra will also have public performances.

W. Lecerc – Grant Street Art is planning on a clay project with community artist Lynn Anju as well as a field trip to the Bainbridge Island Art Museum. Grant Street will also be holding its annual Gallery Night again this year.

J. Nielsen – The after school drama program is producing “The Accidental Death of an Anarchist” by Dario Fo, a satire of police corruption. The HS is excited to add a 7th period drama class this year for those who don’t have time to meet during the school day and is hoping that it can continue to increase in meeting frequency next year.

K. Clarke – Blue Heron 4th and 5th graders will be working to expand the collaboration with Songwriting Works this year. This MDS project teaches music composition skills to students and includes other subject work.

D. Ashton – Our new Grant Street music teacher is going to be working towards two separate end-of-year concerts for our students. A K-1 concert and a 2-3 concert on separate evenings are planned.

L. Chambers – Blue Heron 8th graders are studying Art History including cave paintings. They will be creating their own “cave paintings” and inviting 4th graders to go spelunking in the caves when finished. Sixth graders are working on principals of design curriculum with projects using wire and bead mobiles, a tight rope walker as well as symmetry drawings.

M. Soderstrom – Our new HS art teacher is currently planning on repainting the east exterior wall of the art portable. Students are learning how to enlarge images using a grid system and cut stencils for the wall mural. Teamwork and project management is a large part of this undertaking.

Special Services and Assessment ~ Director, Patch Kane



Special Education –

The special education department would like to thank the City of Port Townsend for providing crossing flags for high school students. The flags are located at the crosswalk of the main campus and the Gael Stuart building. Some of the students on the campus require being more visible to cars approaching the crosswalk and the flags are helpful in signaling the driver to be alert. The crossing flags are similar to what you see at various crosswalks in downtown Port Townsend

Pictured: Paula and Bryan are taking advantage of the new flags for crossing the road by the high school.

Two day training took place at the high school for two staff members to learn about being a job coach for students who are transitioning from high school to independent living. The training titled “Coaching for Independence” was presented by Dan Rutten who is a program manager from WISE, based in Tukwila. Many objectives were covered in the two day training (e.g. knowing ways to set up a new job site to encourage fading from the start, exploring environmental changes and providing ideas and examples of how to increase natural supports). Teresa Coupe and Michael McKell gained a lot of insight on how to support students when they go into the community to intern or mentor at various businesses.

Pictured: Michael and Teresa are working together on a non-verbal exercise.



The district is following up on the Board of Directors request for a special education program review. We have contracted with ESD 112 out of Vancouver for this service. Representatives will be coming to PT the week of Nov 6 to Nov 8. They plan on meeting with special education personnel at each of building to collect information about programs, services, curriculum and other things about the district. This may feel similar to the review we had two years ago from OSPI; however it is different in that ESD 112 is not looking for mistakes. Instead, they are taking a deep look at how the system is operating and make recommendations for improvements. We appreciate everyone’s cooperation with this effort to help improve our work with the students and the community.

Assessment Information –

ELPA21 has concluded for this time of the year, later this school year there will be testing in the spring to measure students’ progress in adapting and acquiring English language skills.

Test results from the spring of 2017 have been released by OSPI. You can visit the State website to see how our district did in comparison to the State at different grade levels and subject areas.

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?groupLevel=District&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State&yrs=2016-17&year=2016-17>