

Message from the Superintendent



I consider myself truly fortunate to be serving the Port Townsend Schools and community as we continue the work of creating quality educational opportunities for our students, and meaningful engagement with our community. When we think about what students need to become ready for life beyond their K-12 schooling, there can be a variety of competing philosophies. Many of these are centered on the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be college and career ready. Some schools miss out on the focus they need by thinking too much about “beyond” school. Instead, I would like to share a short list of what I think students really need while in school.

Challenge, rigor, interest and choice

A sense of belonging and community

A safe environment

A teacher who believes they are valuable and capable

Support for growth and development, intellectually and socially/morally

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 lives. Let's work together to ensure we are centered on creating quality opportunities for students that are rigorous, relevant and connected to our community.

This quarterly publication is intended to show you, the community, how we are putting the district motto “Learning Through a Sense of Place” into action.

It is our hope that you will enjoy reading about your public schools and the incredible opportunities you help to support. To contact our staff or myself to learn more, please call 360-379-4501 or email jpalm@ptschools.org.

– John Polm



Learning Through a Sense of Place

MDS Initiative continues to inspire

The Maritime Discovery Schools Initiative is in its fourth year in the Port Townsend School District. This innovative partnership between the school district and the Northwest Maritime Center has brought a new mission and vision (and energy) to the school district, and has supported and grown partnerships across our community. Through the MDS Initiative all students in the district now participate regularly in maritime and place-based learning at all grade levels.

The community-focused maritime and place-based projects provide opportunities for students to not only learn important content standards, but also to make meaningful contributions to the community and build important relationships beyond the walls of the school. Last year, more than 70 community partners were engaged in projects with teachers and students.

Over the summer, during early-release Wednesday collaboration time and in meetings beyond the school day, teachers across the district have worked diligently with one another and local partners to design meaningful projects for students. Each year of the initiative, new projects are being developed and past projects are being reviewed and refined. In 2017-18, plans are in place for students to participate in activities ranging from learning about Washington state history through sailing experiences on a tall ship, learning about the impacts of fishing treaties on local Washington tribes, and restoring riparian habitat for salmon.



Mentors meet students in Ms. Kruse's classroom.

Community mentors partner with ninth-graders

This year an exciting partnership between Port Townsend High School and Skillmation, a local mentorship organization, has formalized a bold idea: to create a mentorship program that begins with ALL ninth-grade students at the high school. The program, called Ninth Grade Community Mentors, takes place in teacher Jennifer Kruse's career development class, a high school requirement. The plan is for students and mentors to meet once a month, mixing three groups of roughly 30 freshmen each with a dozen volunteer mentors to discuss goals, experiences, passions and purpose. With planned activities and topics for discussion, program organizers expect to see communication skills improve, personal connections forged, and civic engagement among young people expand.

“The initiation of our ninth-grade program began with the goal of increasing career and post-secondary career and skills awareness of our students,” said Ms. Kruse. “Our community mentors will support and encourage students to

manage their own learning in order to maximize their potential and develop aspirations and goals for the people and citizens they want to be.”

Principal Carrie Ehrhardt added, “Students are genuinely interested in hearing from adult mentors who are outside of their normal scope of parental and teacher interactions. They have really enjoyed these initial class periods.”

In future years, the school district plans to expand mentoring to include grades 10, 11 and 12 with job shadowing and career exploration opportunities to enhance senior projects.

This concept stemmed from Superintendent Dr. John Polm's experiences with a mentorship program during his tenure as principal at Bremerton High School. In partnership with Skillmation, this program takes the idea to an entirely different level by engaging with every student in the freshman class.

“Having adults from the community interacting with students gives them a perspective that cannot be taught in any other way, and is very beneficial to their development as community members and young adults,” Polm explained. >>>>>

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Blue Heron seventh-graders study a site at Salmon Creek for restoration. Photo courtesy of Charles Espy

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Identifying community members who would be willing to commit to the challenge of meeting nine times throughout the year with freshmen was no simple task. Dr. Polm worked with organizers of Skillmation, which has created an online database, to find these mentors.

“We were thrilled to work directly with the high school on this project and Skillmation mentors were eager to volunteer,” said Martha Trolin, co-founder of Skillmation. “We needed 24 mentors and 40 came forward to share their insights with our local students. Ms. Kruse was delighted and expanded the program to include more mentors!”

The online Skillmation mentorship directory (www.skillmation.org) was an outgrowth of Collective Impact discussions and was launched locally in 2015. The directory has become a vital resource for young professionals, for high school senior projects, and most recently, the Ninth Grade Community Mentor program. Skillmation boasts more than 115 local mentors who are willing to freely share their skills and experiences with the next generation.

PT Schools serve local food, prepared from scratch

This is the third school year Port Townsend Schools’ food service program has prepared school lunches based on real food cooked from scratch. Food service is no longer built on a heat-and-serve model, instead inspired by a more locally sourced, seasonal, “home” cooked concept. To give you a taste of the kitchen at Blue Heron, cook Shannon prepares mac ‘n’ cheese with carrots and yam as well as spaghetti sauce with zucchini and carrots. Baker Tom incorporates zucchini and apple into his muffins and makes granola bars. Colleen, an assistant cook, produces an amazing kale and apple salad.

A healthy portion of the produce served in the district’s cafeterias is from the high school garden tended by Port Townsend students and farmer Zach. This fall, lots of apples and pears harvested from local trees as well as the Blue Heron orchard, were served. Additional larger produce orders of kale, carrots, cabbage and salad greens are filled throughout the year by Red Dog

Farm in Chimacum. As the weather cools, baked potatoes from Dharma Ridge Farm in Quilcene will appear on the menu. At the high school, sandwiches made with bread from Pane d’Amore are served daily. Seasonal menus that reflect a scratch cooking and local foods initiative are planned for three months at a time. Beef stew and a salmon chowder, both using local protein, are on the menu plan for winter.

Port Townsend’s school meals program is supported by school breakfast and lunch fees (ranging in cost from \$1.50 to \$4), federal free and reduced program reimbursement, and local maintenance and operation levy dollars. In addition, this initiative has attracted a tremendous amount of community support and partnership. Most recently, a grant from the Master Gardener Foundation provided new signs showing students where their local food comes from. These signs serve as a great educational tool that help to meet the goals of the farm-to-school initiative as well as serve the district’s health and wellness policies.

This fall, a successful local food fundraiser at Finnriver Farm & Cidery was organized by Stacey Larsen, food service director, to

raise additional support for buying even more products locally. Beef from Westbrook Angus, located in Chimacum Valley, has been incorporated into a variety of menu items. Owners Julie Boggs and her husband Chuck Boggs, a Port Townsend High School graduate, have spent their whole lives raising cattle. Last year the district purchased two cows that provided enough meat for monthly hamburgers and beef stew in the winter. The enhanced menu was so well received that the district ordered three cows this year from Westbrook Angus. Last May, third-grade classes at Grant Street Elementary took a field trip to Westbrook Angus and SpringRain Farm & Orchard to see where their food comes from and to meet the farmers.

Building awareness of ocean acidification

A recent \$43,000 grant from NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training was awarded to the Port Townsend School District to support teacher learning and student projects. This summer, in collaboration with the Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, 15 Port Townsend teachers participated in two days of professional de-



Port Townsend High School Nutrition Specialist Joanne Mackey serves lunch to Junior Hannah Germeau. Photo by Jan Boutilier



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Teachers and members of the Jefferson County Marine Resource Committee observe Olympia oyster habitat.

velopment, learning about the local impacts of ocean acidification.

Jamestown S’Klallam tribal biologist Neil Harrington gave the group background information about the native Olympia oyster, and took teachers on a tour of restoration sites in Discovery Bay that are providing habitat for the native species. Teachers learned that native oysters may be more resilient to the effects of ocean acidification, as well as serve a key role in habitat restoration.

As part of the class, teachers also took a bike tour of rain gardens in the Uptown neighborhood, a project of the Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee. They learned that rain gardens can help keep pollution out of the ocean through filtration, which reduces the overall human impact on oceans, and helps ecosystems be more resilient to acidification.

The Port Townsend Marine Science Center provided the teachers with training in background science and chemistry to better understand the process of ocean acidification and how the burning of fossil fuels cause changes in ocean chemistry. Teachers took part in fun, hands-on science experiments to demonstrate the chemistry involved. They could, in turn, take back those experiments to their classrooms.

During the summer session, teachers developed projects that will be used by

students at seven different grade levels to engage students in learning about watersheds and the local causes and effects of ocean acidification. These projects are to include restoration activities, conducting research and advocating for solutions to ocean acidification.

Project highlight: Little Free libraries at Grant Street

Last June you may have noticed an important change at Grant Street Elementary School – a construction project, yes, but not the one you might be thinking of. Two Little Free libraries were constructed and installed, just in time to help prevent the “summer slide,” which is the term used to describe the loss of learning in students who don’t read over the summer. During the school year, students collaborated on this service-oriented, project-based unit to help promote literacy in the community. By creating an outside gathering place, parents, teachers, students and children of all ages can access an ever-changing collection of books and encourage a love of reading. During library time, students in grades three, four and five worked in groups to research the problem of summer slide, and discussed creative ways to solve it.

Students described summer slide in their own words: “It is when your brain muscles get

weaker and you forget lots of stuff.” Another said, “The slide is not good. You want to stay on top. This is weird. Slides are usually fun.”

Librarian Joy Wentzel told students that research shows that having books at home is one of the best ways to support student reading achievement. The idea of the Little Free libraries at Grant Street came about as a way to promote literacy by providing free access to books when school is out to help reduce summer slide.

Through the project, students learned about curating a library and worked in teams to select (curate) a collection of books for every age group that might visit the Little Free Library, staying within a \$50 budget. Students also participated in a book drive to increase the number of books available when the libraries opened. Students researched Little Free Library designs and created their vision of the little libraries. These design ideas went to local shipwright, master builder and community volunteer Bryan Wentzel, who constructed the libraries. The final, but very important step was for students to help choose the best locations for the libraries: one in front of the main building and one on the other side of campus near the early childhood learning center. Students took GPS readings of the final locations so that they could be registered at www.littlefreelibrary.org and shared on the world map.

You can visit both Little Free libraries at Grant Street School. Take a book or leave a book. High quality children’s books at all levels are always a well-loved addition to the libraries.

PTEF awards \$55,000; 29 grants go to Port Townsend schools

The Port Townsend Education Foundation (PTEF) recently completed its annual grant cycle and this year has awarded nearly \$55,000 to individual teachers and programs in the Port Townsend School District. For the last 10 years, PTEF has raised money to support and enrich rigorous learning opportunities for students in Port Townsend’s public schools. PTEF is an organization whose singular purpose is to raise money for classroom needs in the district. Grant requests may be created and submitted by individual classroom teachers, groups of teachers, principals or district administration. Utilizing a formal review process, a committee within the nonprofit foundation vets, selects and allocates the awards. This year, the group received 36 grant applications, the sum of which carried nearly \$87,000 in funding requests. Of the 36, PTEF was able to fund 29.

“When my high school students learned that their PSAT test booklets would be fully funded, they broke into a round of applause,” recounted high school teacher Julianne Dow. PTEF recognizes that students’ enthusiasm for this grant, entitled “Improving College Access,” reflects the need and impact of these grants.



Local shipwright Bryan Wentzel with the Little Free libraries before they were installed.



In addition to the “Improving College Access” grant, PTEF-funded grants for the 2017-2018 school year include: the seventh-grade Maritime Discovery Program, Support for Struggling Readers, and place-based learning opportunities such as the Engineering Day field trip for middle-school students.

For more information about PTEF grants and how to get involved, contact info@pt-educationfoundation@gmail.com or www.pteducationfoundation.org.



PT Education Foundation supports hands-on science

Like many of us in today's briskly changing world of technology, school districts face obsolescence issues in science classrooms. Each year, lab equipment becomes outdated, making vital components and equipment repairs unavailable. Such is the need in the science classrooms of Port Townsend High School, prompting a grant request for molecular model kits by science teachers Brandi Hageman and David Kelley.

Over the past decade the Port Townsend Education Foundation (PTEF) has awarded grants to improve student learning in science and to offset the vagaries of obsolescence. Many grants have provided for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) experiments that would not have been obtainable otherwise. At the same time, the resourceful-



A forensics studies student examines slides using grant-awarded equipment.

ness of the grantees is reflected in the curriculum they have designed, multi-tasking and re-purposing equipment whenever possible. Ever mindful of equipment obsolescence, teachers often request grants for items that can be used beyond the typical lifespan of the item.

With the Vernier probe-ware and electrophoresis lab kits purchased through past grants, students have, for example, investigated the genetic components of taste, learned about forensic pathologies and studied whale paternity. This year, 20 molecular model kits were purchased for PTHS students through an awarded grant from PTEF. Students benefiting from the purchase of these molecular models include all those enrolled in the introductory sciences, chemistry and biology, as well as the advanced placement courses – essentially all high school students.

For some students, these molecular model kits open an understanding not afforded by lecture or books. The tangible experience of using these kits enable

many students to understand the way elements bond to create molecules. These hand-held models and the experiments designed using them, help kinesthetic and visual learners better understand elements and their processes of bonding ionically or covalently. The kits are flexible in application of study and allow exploration of both inorganic and organic compounds. Students can explore properties of water and macromolecules (carbohydrates, lipids, proteins and nucleic acids), cellular respiration, amino acids and patterns of chemical properties by utilizing the molecular model kit.

While providing modalities of learning that deepen the reach of teachers such as Brandi Hageman and David Kelley, these materials are also foundational to meeting the Washington State Next Generation Science Learning Standards performance requirements.

To learn more about the grants awarded to the Port Townsend School District through the Port Townsend Education Foundation, visit www.pteducationfoundation.org.

What's new at OSPI? Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In 2015, Congress passed a new federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act. This law works to shine a light on performance and achievement gaps between student groups that persist in our schools. In Washington, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is responsible for implementing this law.

One of the key changes in the plan is that it provides more flexibility and support to schools. Under ESSA, a school's ability to help students has been greatly expanded. Evidence-based strategies that address students' unique needs can be employed to help every student succeed.

Washington's ESSA plan outlines initiatives to attract and retain effective educators, especially for students of color and low-income students. Additionally, OSPI will identify more schools that have gaps in student performance between student groups. With this identification comes targeted funding and other supports to help reduce and eventually eliminate those gaps.

The new law allowed OSPI to rethink Washington's federal accountability system. Policy makers heard that schools are measured too rigidly based on assessments and have made some changes. Under the new accountability system, assessment proficiency is still a factor, as assessments are still required by federal law, but schools also will be measured on student growth, graduation rates, English learner progress, and school climate indicators including attendance, dual credit opportunities, and ninth-graders on track to graduation. This approach will help parents understand a fuller picture of school success. The index launches in Spring 2018.

To learn more or ask questions, email essa@k12.wa.us or visit k12.wa.us/ESSA.



A student in Maggie Kelley's fifth-grade classroom completes word work.



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