



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Planning for the future; district seeks input

You're invited to join us for a strategic planning meeting:

Please join us as we map out the future
of Washougal School District

February 24, 2007
9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
Jemtegaard Middle School

March 24, 2007
9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
Jemtegaard Middle School

This is a two-part series of meetings, and lunch will be served both days. After these two meetings, the school board and the superintendent will frame goals. Each year, the superintendent's staff will develop annual action plans and a report to the community on progress toward the goals. This Strategic Plan will be for 2007--2011.

If you plan to attend one or both of the planning meetings, please RSVP by calling Cassi Marshall, 954-3005, or e-mail her at cassi.marshall@washougal.k12.wa.us. We need to know how many people are attending in order to have adequate materials and lunch for everyone.

The Washougal School District Board of Directors invites the community and staff to be involved in setting the district's vision for 2007-2011. Two special board meetings are scheduled for strategic planning purposes, one on February 24 and the other on March 24. Both meetings will be held at Jemtegaard Middle School from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. and lunch will be served.

The strategic planning process spread over two days will be productive and enjoyable for participants. Skip Bonnucci, a strategic planning expert from the

Washington State School Boards Association, will facilitate the sessions. Skip will set the stage and lead the sessions in a productive manner that will also be filled with humor. It will be a great opportunity for people with an interest in schools to come together to consider issues related to the improvement of student learning in Washougal school district.

With input from staff and community, the board will set goals and turn those over to superintendent Teresa Baldwin for the development of annual action plans. Superintendent Baldwin said, "My commitment to the community is that progress toward these strategic goals will be reported publicly." In addition, Baldwin said she would

like to see an annual "anniversary" event celebrating the success that the district is making toward its goals.

As part of the process, participants will also review and have the opportunity to either affirm or update the district's current vision and mission statements. Currently, the district's vision is stated as follows: *Washougal schools and community working together to develop educated, healthy, responsible and successful citizens.* The mission is stated as follows: *Our mission is to serve our community by our continuing commitment to sustaining a high quality education system.* These fundamental statements need to be reviewed by our staff and community as the foundation for goal setting that will improve the district's educational service to students and families in Washougal.

The Board of Directors and the superintendent envision broad-based community and staff involvement in this process. These will be open public meetings and all Washougal residents and staff are invited to attend. To ensure that there are materials and lunch for all participants, everyone is asked to reserve a space by calling Cassi Marshall at 954-3005. For more information, please contact Teresa Baldwin at 954-3001 or by email at teresa.baldwin@washougal.k12.wa.us.



Skip Bonnucci met with staff, parents, students and patrons to kick off the strategic planning process in January.

INSIDE

2 Program highlight:
Excelsior High School

3 Tech Talk

4 Proposed math changes

FEATURED PROGRAM

Good things are happening at

Excelsior High School

Creating a Small Learning Community

With a restructured curriculum, new staff, and a newfound sense of family, good things are happening at Excelsior High School, Washougal School District's alternative program for students in grades nine through 12.

Principal Jill Anderson, formerly assistant principal at Jemtegaard Middle School, took over in the fall of 2006, but the real work began the previous summer, when Jill and her staff worked to restructure the school to be a more positive learning environment for students.

The new model fits the district-wide goal of creating a professional learning community, as the staff meets regularly and is in itself a cohesive group. "We're really a team," said Anderson. "We're all very supportive of the program and each other, and that makes a huge difference."

Program changes, including increased structure and accountability, additions such as a student-selected school mascot and a graduation ceremony, and more extended opportunities, including internships and field trips, aim to boost student success and create a sense of community.

"We wanted a strong curriculum and a program that would help at-risk kids have a place where they feel that they belong," said Jill. "We've



Gause Elementary students read to an Excelsior High School student as part of the Reading Buddies program.

tried to build an environment of family and to help students understand how the choices they're making affect their future and impact others." Mission accomplished, according to staff and students, who say the sense of community and student success is greater than ever.

"We have a real sense of family here," said instructional assistant Betty Millington. "Some of these kids are lost at the high school, but this is more of a home for them."

Excelsior's small size allows for unique opportunities, such as a Thanksgiving dinner celebration, where students and staff prepared a traditional feast. Teachers and students are on a first name basis, and that's a good thing. "It's no lack of respect," said instructional assistant Tere Gustafson. "On the contrary, it increases respect and creates a family atmosphere."

Anderson says she's already seeing students take ownership in a positive way. For example, students decided they didn't like seeing litter around their campus, so they cleaned it up.

Not all students were thrilled with the new rules, but once they began to see how they were learning and earning credits, they changed their tune. Now Anderson says she hears kids engaged in discussions about learning. She's also noticed kids beginning to monitor each other. Respect has increased, between peers as well as toward adults.

Student accountability has increased because classes change every nine weeks, at which time successful participants earn one half credit per enrolled class. An awards ceremony recognizes those who worked hard and earned credits at the end of each term. Conversely, kids who aren't succeeding can be put on academic probation.

Instructional assistant Betty Millington enjoys seeing students taking pride in their accomplishments. "The bar is set higher and the kids are stepping up to reach it," she said.

Reading Buddies

Curriculum changes include a focus on literacy and leadership, including student presentations, journal writing, field trips, and opportunities that encourage leadership, such as Reading Buddies. Through this program, each Excelsior student serves as one-on-one "Reading Buddy" with a struggling fourth grade reader at Gause Elementary. For 30 minutes each week, fourth grade students read to their high school "buddy." The program provides an opportunity for the high school students to establish positive relationships with younger students, develop leadership skills and strengthen their "buddy's" reading skills along with their own. It helps build self-esteem for both the high



Above: Excelsior staff, from left: Trudy Tkach; Karen Wildenberg; Ali Miller (seated); Tere Gustafson; Betty Millington; Jill Anderson (seated); Sherry Lorenz-Hunt; and Mina Custer. Below: Students participate in the Reading Buddies program.



school students who are read to and for the elementary students who are improving their skills and gaining positive reinforcement from their "buddy."

"My students who have 'reading buddies' from Excelsior look forward to the mornings that they come," said Gause teacher Donna Nickerson. "They are thoroughly enjoying this one-to-one time to share reading. I think this is a very beneficial experience for all the students."

Senior Ashley Piontek likes the Reading Buddies program as well. "I like to teach them strategies on reading," said Ashley. "The kids like it a lot and they look forward to seeing us every Tuesday. My buddies are already good readers, but the program helps them build confidence."

Another component of the Excelsior curriculum provides unique learning opportunities such as guest speakers, art projects, landscaping around the school, and field trips. For example, when the traveling Vietnam memorial was in Portland, the students studied the era of the war through reading and writing projects before taking a field trip to the memorial exhibit.

continued on page 3

Superintendent's News

School closures for winter weather extend school year

Washington state law defines the conditions under which school districts are required to make-up "snow days" for school closures due to winter weather. Washougal schools have been closed a total of five days this year including November 30, January 11, and January 16, 17, and 18.

Superintendent Teresa Baldwin will apply for a state waiver specifically for January 16, because one condition under the law allows for a waiver when students have arrived at school prior to the announcement of a closure. After the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction rules on the superintendent's waiver, a public announcement will be made regarding make-up days.

Seniors at Washougal High School will need to make-up three days and principal Missy Hallead will communicate that make-up schedule directly to the graduating class and their parents.

If you have questions, please contact Mark Ross, assistant superintendent, at 954-3002.

Mayor visits Gause students



Washougal Mayor Stacey Sellars visits with students in Marvina Bugajski's class at Gause Elementary. Students wrote letters to Sellars asking questions about her job and making suggestions for improving the community.

TECH TALK

Team maps out future plans

Will it be computers in each classroom or a rolling lab that travels from room to room? Will students learn keyboarding skills in third or fourth grade instead of waiting until high school? Who will train staff to use the equipment and how will the equipment be disbursed equitably? In other words, what does the future classroom look like in Washougal School District?

These are some of the questions Washougal School District patrons and staff have been asking as they help guide the future, at least in terms of technology instruction over the next five years. Charged with developing the district's technology vision in alignment with district, state and federal goals and guidelines, this steering committee will determine how technology fits into Washougal classrooms.

A team of teachers (Felicia Weaver, Robert Yee, and James Bennett); principals (Mary Lou Woody, Sandi Christensen and Rex Larson); Network Support Specialist Lester Brown and Business Manager Kim Maloney, along with several community patrons, make up this task force under the direction of Dr. Ron Carlson, Director of Technology and Operations.

The committee will ensure that technology instruction in the district is aligned with state and federal standards as well as the educational goals set forth by the Washougal School District Board of Directors. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has determined what teachers and students should be able to do in terms of using technology. Washougal's technology committee will explore options for the instructional environment (i.e. what is the best use of technology in the classroom) as well as integration of technology teaching strategies. In addition, the group will be responsible for guiding the direction of teacher and student literacy in technology and will determine how to spend technology funding as provided through the district's technology levy.

This year, the district is fortunate to have Tom Hays serving as technology coach to assist staff in using technology to enhance classroom learning. He will work with school staff in technology planning, professional development in the area of staff literacy, and instructional teaching strategies using technology. He has spent the first part of the year assessing each school and staff member and has helped data mine school information for individual buildings' School Improvement Plans.



A WHS computer lab.

Excelsior, continued —

Unique Learning Opportunities

The bulk of Excelsior's students are sophomores, and some have enrolled in the program with little or no credits on their transcripts. These may be students who made poor choices at some point in their school career or who fell behind their freshman year. "Some kids have learning difficulties and some kids are sharp learners who have other problems, perhaps family issues, that get in the way of their success at school. In our small learning community here at Excelsior, we can personalize learning for them in a way that just isn't possible in the larger comprehensive high school," said Anderson.

Parent involvement is important. Parents already attend the initial interview required for enrolling at Excelsior. Anderson is in the process of developing a Parent Advisory Committee so that parents can be more involved in various aspects of the program.

Next spring, for the first time, Excelsior students will walk across the stage, clad in cap and gown, to receive their diplomas in front of family, friends and classmates. Down the road, students are planning additional changes to give the school a more traditional high school feel, such as the development of an ASB, class yearbooks and a school newspaper.

"There is so much more here than people think there is," said Millington.

"A lot of my students came in with a chip on their shoulder or a lack of confidence," said Anderson. "Some of them wouldn't look me in the eye during their initial interview." But now they are proud of what they are accomplishing. "My students are able to hold their heads up with pride and look me in the eye now," she said. "When there are problems, we mediate through it. We have created a positive teaching and learning environment, for students who will benefit from a smaller learning community. It's something very unique, and I'm blessed to be a part of it."

Legislature will consider math graduation requirement alternative

Governor Chris Gregoire and Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Terry Bergeson have proposed to the legislature that graduating seniors be granted a temporary alternative to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) standards of math achievement. Under current law, high school students, beginning with the Class of 2008, must pass the mathematics subtest of the WASL as a graduation requirement. Gregoire and Bergeson's proposal is prompted by statistics showing that mathematics achievement on the high school WASL is below that of WASL reading and writing achievement across the state, a condition that could keep some students in the Class of 2008 from graduating.

Governor Gregoire and Superintendent Bergeson are proposing that students who have not passed the high school mathematics WASL continue to take rigorous math classes in their junior and senior years until they either pass the WASL or graduate. Taking the WASL or passing a math class would be required annually until graduation. The option of allowing students to graduate without the passing the math WASL would remain in place for three years for the classes of 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Recently, the Washington State Board of Education approved another alternative to the mathematics WASL graduation requirement. The new ruling is that students who have taken the mathematics WASL twice but have not passed may use a PSAT, SAT, or ACT math score to satisfy the math graduation requirement.

Scores must be at or above the following:

PSAT: 47

SAT: 470

ACT: 19

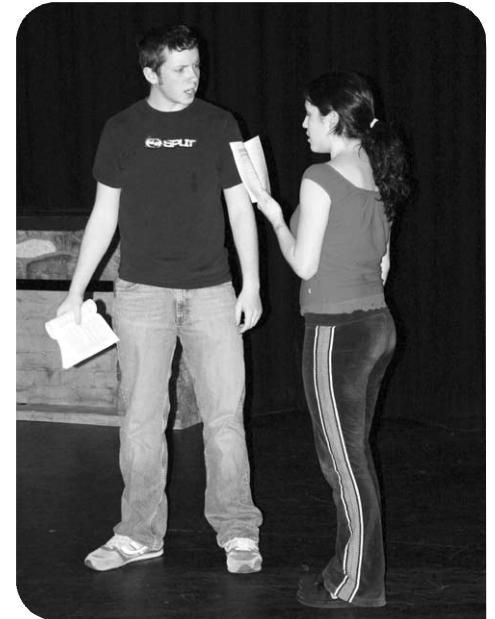
Governor Gregoire told reporters in a news conference, "I want parents and students to know that we are listening to their concerns and we believe this plan promotes math skills without penalizing hardworking students and teachers." She went on to say that students who graduate from high school without meeting the competitive math standards end up in remediation courses in state colleges and universities, and the state owes it to our students to prepare them before they graduate from high school. Superintendent Bergeson added, "We have a comprehensive plan to improve mathematics teaching and learning in our schools. Teachers, students, parents, and government leaders must all share responsibility for making education work and assuring that Washington is preparing a workforce that can compete."

"We are pleased to see this proposal move forward to the legislature," said Washougal School District Superintendent, Teresa Baldwin. "This proposal does not compromise our focus on having all students meet rigorous math standards, it just gives us additional time to improve mathematics achievement as a graduation requirement based solely on WASL scores. We are prepared to implement the proposal so that juniors and seniors who did not pass the WASL may continue to take the WASL along with a rigorous math class until graduation."

WASHOUGAL DRAMA PRESENTS *THE CRUCIBLE*

Rehearsals are underway for Washougal High School's production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Twenty-six actors make up the cast of this classic production.

Performances will be March 1-3 at 7:00 p.m. and are \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for students. Tickets will be pre-sold a week before the opening. This play will be staged in a black box format so there will only be about 150 seats available for each performance.



An early rehearsal of *The Crucible*.

Washougal School District complies with all federal and state rules and regulations and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or military status. Inquiries may be directed to the district's Title IX/RCW 28A.640 compliance officer, Charles Carpenter, (360) 954-3051 and/or Section 504 ADA coordinator, Carol Boyden, (360) 954-3020.

SUPERINTENDENT
Teresa Baldwin

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Garry Alexander Thomas Huffman
Ron Dinius Elaine Pfeifer
Orlan Gessford

EDITOR
Jodi Yann Thomas, 360.954.3000

FIND MORE NEWS AT
www.washougal.k12.wa.us

WASHOUGAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



4855 Evergreen Way
Washougal, WA 98671

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Washougal, WA
Permit No. 14

Washougal School District Patron
Washougal, WA 98671