

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



A message from the Superintendent



Dawn Tarzian

Washougal School District has a long history of partnering with colleges, business and industry to make sure that our students are leaving high school with the skills they need to be college and career ready.

Our Career and Technical

Education department works with Clark College to articulate coursework in our classes, enabling students to get college credit for coursework taken in Washougal. Our metal and wood shop teachers work with industry partners to train students on skills, like welding, which prepare them for post high school jobs.

This year, we have introduced robotics classes as a Career and Technical Education elective in our two middle schools. These classes have been very popular with students, and teachers are reporting high levels

See our middle school students' robots in action! View the videos on our web site:
www.washougal.k12.wa.us

of engagement from students. Students in these classes are challenged to solve real world problems and program robots to complete complex tasks that involve higher order thinking skills and problem solving. These hands-on classes require flexible classrooms with additional space providing room for students to work in small groups on large, long-term projects. The robotics class at Jemtegaard is taught in a repurposed wood shop, which provides a larger environment than the average classroom in that building.

Most of the classrooms at Jemtegaard are not suited to these kinds of learning activities. The learning spaces inside the building are small



Hathaway first graders settle into learning easily thanks to skills acquired through full-day kindergarten.

Washougal kindergarteners are off to a great start with full-day program

This fall, Washougal School District kindergarteners attend school all day, every day at all three of the district's elementary schools. The additional instruction time is thanks to voters who approved a maintenance and operations levy last February.

Research shows that full-day kindergarten provides many academic and social benefits for students by allowing them to have more learning opportunities and more time to socialize with peers throughout the day.

Last year, the district was able to pilot the full-day program at Hathaway Elementary thanks to state funding for schools with higher percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced price meals. Hathaway kindergarten teachers were thrilled to have the additional classroom time for their students because it enabled them to retain what they learned and lessened the time spent re-teaching things that were forgotten.

As the students from the pilot program entered first grade this fall, first grade teachers Tiffany Gilbreath, Keri Knight, and Chera Thompson are seeing many positive signs.

"We are seeing a big impact, especially in writing," said Thompson. "All of their skills are elevated and they are catching on to the classroom routines more quickly."

Knight agrees, "They are coming in with the skills they need and we are able to fast forward

instead of spending time reviewing things they have forgotten."

Teachers say their students seem more mature and they are used to the consistency of being at school all day. These students have the stamina to attend school full time and there are fewer tears and fewer questions about when will it be time to go home.

Knight says the first graders have higher expectations for themselves. "They're more confident, they're reading directions, and they are less hesitant to take a learning risk," she said.

"They get their pencils out and start writing," said Thompson. "They are very capable. It's definitely a different feel academically." In fact, students' pre-assessment tests this fall are much higher than in past years.

With this much progress taking place so early in the school year, these students will keep teachers on their toes as the year progresses. "We are excited that we will get to push farther," said Thompson. "It's awesome that this district listened to the needs of students, teachers and the community and supported making this happen."

The teachers are also looking forward to sending their students on to second grade with skills that past students hadn't yet acquired. "We hope they'll say 'Wow, we've never seen kids this well prepared,'" said Knight.

CONTINUED INSIDE...

Students continue to grow as district works to support learners at all levels

A WORD ABOUT THE WAIVER

Washington state's waiver from the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was not renewed for the 2014-15 school year. The state has been operating under a conditional waiver for the past two school years. For the 2014-15 school year schools in our state will be required to revert back to reporting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), an annual measure of student achievement on state tests in reading and math. Under these guidelines, 100% of students are required to meet standard in 2014-15. The results are that nearly every Washington school will not meet the No Child Left Behind requirements.

Despite the federal classification, Washougal schools have had great success in improving achievement and helping many students experience a higher level of academic success. The very schools labeled as 'failing' under the federal definition are some of the ones most recently recognized for major achievement gains.

TEST SCORES SHOW ACADEMIC GAINS

Fall brings with it the release of state test results and Washougal School District students have made academic gains in a number of areas based on the recently released assessment scores from last spring's testing. Here are a few highlights:

- Nearly 80% of seventh graders met state standards in reading.
- 90% of high school students met state standards on the writing assessments.
- District cohort (grade level) writing scores increased by 10% across the district and science scores increased by nearly 15%.

COMING SOON TO A CLASSROOM NEAR YOU: SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENTS

Washington state is transitioning to the new Smarter Balanced Assessment that aligns to Washington State Standards: Common Core. Washougal students will take these tests in the spring.

The new assessments require deeper thinking skills. Not only will students be required to know how to achieve an answer, but they will be required to apply that knowledge and skills to new and unique problems. Practice tests and other information is available on the

Smarter Balanced web site: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>

DISTRICT WORKS TO KEEP CLASS SIZES SMALL

By keeping class sizes low, Washougal teachers are able to provide individualized instruction for our students. Human Resources Director Marian Young reported to the school board at the October 7 meeting that the district is doing a good job meeting the goal of small classes, with an average of 23.9 students in K-3 and an average of 24.6 in grades 4-12. State funding supports class sizes of 28 students per teacher to fully fund a classroom teacher.

"When class sizes are large, the district works to address the issue and balance class sizes," said Young. "Although at the secondary level, the district considers the needs and learning goals of students to enroll in a particular course of study, which may sometimes result in an individual class being larger. When we have class size less than 28, the district makes up the difference with levy dollars or other funding."

The district works to reduce the class size of a different course for teachers with a larger class to balance the number of students seen over the course of a day.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH ADOPTION

The Washougal School Board recently approved the adoption of new middle school math curriculum based on the recommendation of the district's math teachers.

The previous curriculum was adopted in the early 2000s, and as standards have changed, teachers have had to rely on more and more supplemental materials to ensure alignment of instruction to state standards.

The adopted curriculum is Burger Middle School Mathematics 2012 Common Core.

The new materials were selected because of their alignment to the Washington State Learning Standards and the robust online supports available to both students and parents. A timeline for staff training and introduction into math classes has been developed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

when compared with most others classrooms in the district. These spaces do not allow flexibility for students to work in groups and learn critical team building skills and real world problem solving skills. The Long Range Facility Committee identified quality learning spaces for students as one of the highest priorities for district facility planning, along with student and staff safety, and the preservation of district assets and their life expectancy.

The district is projected to grow steadily over the next several years. Enrollment this year is at 3140 students and over the last three years we have grown by approximately 60 students annually. The graph below depicts the district's growth as projected by the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

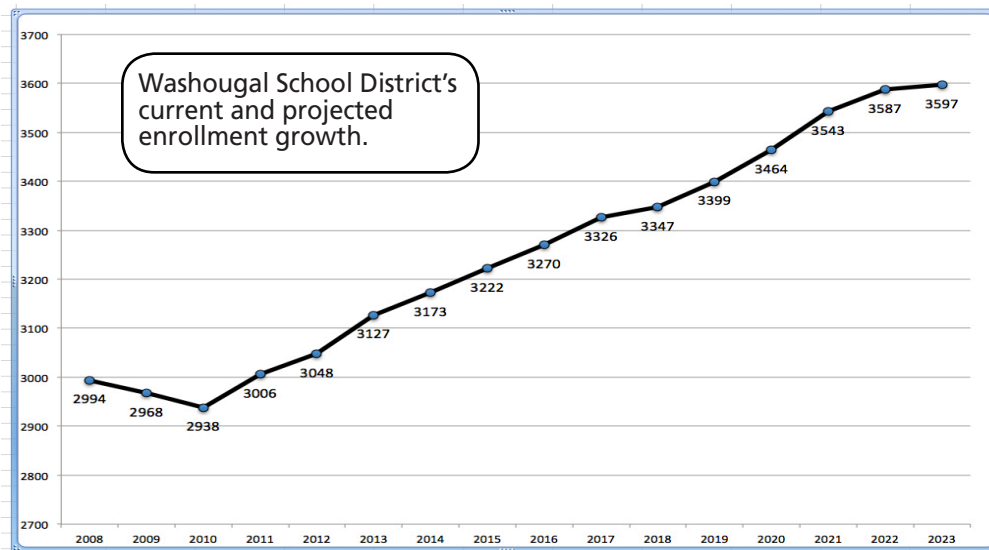
The district must work with the community to address the classroom space that will be needed in the next couple years. In the past the district purchased portable classrooms to accommodate growth. The district has 30 portable classrooms. These learning spaces have exceeded their life span and do not provide the kind of learning

spaces that allow students to engage in real world problem solving that is essential for their future. The Long Range Facility Committee has recommended that the district construct a new Jemtegaard Middle School and a new elementary school on the same property to save construction costs through shared spaces for the two schools including the library, cafeteria, gym, fields and parking facilities. By removing the old portable classrooms used for instruction, the safety of students and staff will be addressed, the learning environment will be appropriate for high quality learning experiences, and the district can construct permanent structures with a life span that exceeds that of these temporary learning spaces.

Sincerely,



Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent



District considers committee's recommendations with focus on school safety and facilities

This fall, Washougal School District patrons were invited to attend a series of School Safety and Facilities Planning Forums to discuss issues surrounding student safety, enrollment growth, and facility capacity and quality.

During the 2013-14 school year, a Long Range Facility Planning Committee evaluated the needs and conditions of WSD facilities and prepared recommendations to the superintendent and School Board to ensure that Washougal school facilities support a safe, positive environment for student learning and success.

The committee's recommendations include several priorities for the district, including improving safety at school entrances as well as planning for recent and anticipated enrollment growth. Although enrollment this fall came in at the same number of students as last year, the district grew by approximately 60 students per year the prior three years. Portables, many of them outdated and in use beyond their intended life span, are being used to house classrooms and other programs at six of seven schools.

The committee consisted of 18 members representing Washougal area citizens, district staff, two school board members and other individuals with



Community and staff discuss the future of the district's facilities at a recent forum.

professional expertise in facility planning. They reviewed nearly 300 needs identified by the district and toured school buildings over the course of several months. The evaluation separated the needs into two basic categories: facility needs that should be funded through voter-approved bonds and facility needs that should be addressed through the district's annual budget process. The highest priority identified by the committee was the need to improve the safety and security of every district school.

The committee has recommended the following projects:

1. Security upgrades for every school/classroom
2. Build new elementary and middle school at Jemtegaard site
3. Replace Excelsior portables with new facility
4. Replace roofing at Gause and Hathaway
5. Upgrade HVAC at Gause and Hathaway
6. Remodel bus barn (to be used for maintenance only) and relocate bus storage and dispatch to district office site.

Projects the district is saving to complete without asking for new capital bond funds include: stadium seats, exterior lighting at Cape and Canyon, and replacing corroding pipes.

The Board of Directors will hold a special meeting for facilities discussion on Wednesday, November 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the District Office.



Middle school students take inventory of the Lego Robotics kit they'll use to build a programmable robot.

Middle school students inspired by new robotics program

This fall, middle school students are taking a hands-on approach to science thanks to a new robotics program at Jemtegaard Middle School and Canyon Creek Middle School.

At JMS, Cherise Marshall and Tim Davis teach four Introduction to Robotics classes that are receiving rave reviews from students. Tim Pfeifer teaches an enthusiastic class at Canyon Creek. The curriculum uses Lego Robotics kits that students build from scratch and then program the robot to do various tasks.

Already, Marshall says she notices that students are more engaged than in some of her previous science classes. She has noticed that boys, in particular, are paying more attention and students are asking to come in after class to use the kits.

Because the robots are built in teams, students learn how to communicate with their partner to complete the lesson. "There's

a lot more teamwork involved than in a traditional science class," said Marshall. "Students can see how science applies to life and how robots are used every day."

"It's like going back to first grade because it's fun," said student Jacob Waudby. "But the hard part is it's much more advanced. It isn't just about building a robot, we have to do math calculations and problem solving to get the robot to work the way we want it to."

Over the summer Davis, Pfeifer and Marshall attended a training to learn how to use the Lego Robotics kits and build their own prototype for their classes. Part of the district's Career and Technical Education curriculum, the class was initiated by CTE Director Marsha Spencer. In the future, Spencer says that plans are underway to offer a pre-engineering class at WHS.

SUPERINTENDENT

Dawn Tarzian

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New teachers receive support to ensure successful start

This fall, Washougal School District welcomed 26 new teachers to its classrooms. Nine of those teachers are in their very first year of teaching. To help them have a successful start, each will work with a more seasoned teacher who will act as a coach throughout the year.

In addition, new teachers will attend a monthly workshop focusing on topics that

include: classroom management, information on assessing students and how to tailor instruction based on each student's individual results from the assessment, strategies to include parents in their education, how to prepare and hold conferences, proven instructional practices and addressing specific topics requested by new teachers.



Washougal School District welcomed 26 new teachers this year. Back row: Marina Clarke, Colleen Davis, Lisa Hadden, Glenn Rhodes, Donna Nolan, Christian Lewison, Tabitha Pearson, Laura Kurtz, and Brian Dryden. Front row: Jenna Johnson, Jenna Linerud, Jamie Anderson, Lisa Miller, Katie Daniels, Mary Murray, Kelly Chen, Jaymi McQueen, Meaghan Hewson, Sarah Dryden, and Linda Barnes. Not pictured: James Avino, Vina Black, Amy Keller, Jennifer Muscatell, Ida Thorson and Adam Utehs.

Find More News at www.washougal.k12.wa.us

Washougal School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employee has been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Title IX/RCW 28A.640 compliance officer and Section 504/ADA coordinator, Allan Fleck, Director of Special Education.

You're invited to the Washougal School Board meeting!

Meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. in the District Board Room, 4855 Evergreen Way, unless otherwise noted.

November 12, District Board Room
November 18, Gause Elementary School
December 9, District Board Room

Upcoming Events

WHS Holiday Marketplace Bazaar: November 15
9 a.m.-4 p.m. in the WHS Commons.

Stuff the Bus: December 5
Bring a donation to any Washougal school for the Stuff the Bus bins on or before December 5.

Festival of Trees: December 5-6
Tree Viewing and Silent Auction:

December 5-6, 9 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
View and bid on gorgeous Christmas trees and gift baskets created by Washougal staff, students and businesses.

Breakfast with Santa: December 6, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at Hathaway Elementary. Cost is \$3.

Welcome new Board Member

Washougal School District welcomed its newest school board member, Teresa Lees, at the October 7 meeting. A parent of six Washougal students, Lees will represent the patrons in Director District 1.



Teresa Lees

"A friend suggested I check this opportunity out," Lees said. "He said the Board needs people to represent the community on school issues and felt that I could give good input. I went to a couple meetings and I liked what I saw."

As a parent of six children who attend Washougal schools, Lees said she is able to see first-hand what teachers' goals are and what things they need. "My kids come home and we talk about what they are doing in school," she said. "As a parent I am also able to see directly the positive effects of decisions by the Board on issues such as the iPads in the classroom and the new turf field."

Lees has seen how the recent levy dollars are being spent and how the changes are implemented. For example, four of her children are using the new iPads in the classroom. "I love seeing the greater role of technology in the schools and how it is helping students to excel," she said.

Teresa and her husband Randy have lived in Washougal for 16 years.

SEEKING BOARD MEMBER FOR DISTRICT 3

The Washougal School Board of Directors is seeking applicants to fill the board vacancy in Director District 3. To be eligible, an applicant must be a registered voter and live inside the boundaries of Director District 3. A map of board director districts can be found at <http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/schoolboard/boardzones.htm>. For more information, please contact Superintendent Dawn Tarzian at 360-954-3000.