

LONGVIEW SCHOOLS Review

Focus on reading furthers district literacy plan

A first grader sits at her work table and drags three large paper dots from one circle into three separate squares.

It looks like the beginning of an art project, but this is actually a type of reading lesson—21st-century-style. In this case, the three dots represent the sounds “s,” “n” and “o.”

When Longview students struggle with a concept or skill, they get extra help—or intervention—in that area while continuing to move forward with the rest of the class on other skills.

“It’s based on the best brain research we have—that’s exciting to me,” said Jessica Jones, district literacy specialist, who with her colleagues selected this reading program and is implementing it districtwide.

“We’re going to learn to take away a sound from one word to make another word,” the reading coach tells her student, guiding her to remove the dot that represents the “s” sound. The girl moves the left-most dot out of its square and back into the circle.

Her coach tells her to slide her fingers under the remaining two dots—“n” and “o”—and to sound out what word those sounds make. She sounds out “no.”

This work, using visual cues to help students tune into sounds and then



Paraeducator Shannel Spenker helps kindergartners at Columbia Valley Gardens develop the literacy skills that will form the foundation for their future studies.

phonics, is furthering Longview’s goal to get every child reading by the end of first grade—so students can grow literacy skills in every subject moving forward.

“Instead of waiting till the end of first grade and grouping students into ‘readers’ and ‘non-readers,’ the assessment is ongoing, and the interactive support is ongoing,” Jones explains.

Improving literacy skills is the foundation of the district’s strategic plan, whose primary focus is to increase student achievement and whose secondary focus is

to improve climate and culture.

Each year every school creates a School Improvement Plan detailing ways they will work to fulfill the plan as our district pursues this mission: to ensure that every student learns the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to become a responsible citizen in a rapidly changing society.

Check out our school improvement plans for 2017-18 and information on our district’s strategic plan review at <https://tinyurl.com/y9n4lqkw>.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Community Members,

Over the 30-plus years I've worked in public education, many trends have come and gone. What has not changed is the importance of public education to our society.



Jamie Vollmer, a businessman-turned-education advocate, describes public education as a miracle. I couldn't agree more.

Public schools give every student an opportunity. No matter who they are or what challenges they face, every child has a neighborhood school that welcomes them in to learn and grow.

What has changed over the years is that schools are being asked to do more and more: to help more students attain higher levels of achievement while addressing a growing range of social, emotional and physical needs.

In his book "Schools Cannot Do It Alone," Vollmer emphasizes that schools reflect the values—and, I would add, the needs—of the communities that surround them. That's why in Longview we have a couple of important focus areas. In addition to striving to increase academic achievement we emphasize building productive connections with students, providing focused learning assistance and addressing the needs of the whole child.

These efforts require caring adults with a broad range of skill sets, and in many cases more people than the state provides funding for. This is one area where local levies make a huge difference, and as a district we are thankful to be part of a supportive community.

We share a goal of supporting our students, so they will stay in school and learn what it takes to become responsible citizens in a rapidly changing society.

This outcome well serves our students, our community and the world. In this newsletter and levy guide you will read about some ways it's already happening.

Sincerely,
Dan Zorn, Superintendent

State funding changes to lower taxes ... in 2019

In 2017, the Washington State Legislature made sweeping changes to the way schools are funded. State lawmakers and other officials continue to learn about the impacts of these changes and consider modifications moving forward. Meanwhile, the law of the land currently affects taxpayers by:

1. Increasing the state property tax by an estimated \$0.81 per \$1,000 assessed value (AV) in 2018, and
2. Capping locally funded levies at \$1.50 per \$1,000 AV in 2019. (Some very recent conversations indicate the state might soften this restriction, but the impacts were not known at the time of printing.)

If the above changes stand, a temporary, one-year tax rate increase will occur in 2018 when the state increases its schools levy and the local levy approved in 2014 concludes its final year.

However, under the current restrictions, 2019 will bring a decrease in overall school property taxes once the local Maintenance and Operations (M&O) levy approved in 2014 expires. The decrease is expected even if voters approve both levies on the Feb. 13 ballot.

Community discusses bond vote

After Longview's bond measure narrowly missed receiving a supermajority in November, the district went back to the community in December for feedback on the election results.

The bond request received nearly 58 percent of the vote but needed 60 percent to pass. This put the proposal to replace Mint Valley, Northlake and Olympic elementary schools, renovate Broadway Preschool Center, and add safety and security measures on hold.

More than 500 community members participated in the December Thoughtexchange process, which asked one question: "What are the most important things for the district to understand about the result of our recent bond request?" Participants offered 499 comments and prioritized them using 21,254 stars. Results are available at <https://tinyurl.com/Te-Dec17>.

Thank you for your thoughts!

We thank each of the 503 of you who participated in our December Thoughtexchange conversation. Your input is invaluable to our district as we plan for a bright future—for our students and our community.

Grad rate earns distinction for R. A. Long



These 2017 R.A. Long graduates stopped by the school over winter break. Dakota Haynes, Heydee Amador, Xoe Loudin, Abbie White and Sarah Casillas now are all university students.

For the third year in a row, R. A. Long High School has been named a School of Distinction recipient for its sustained improvement in graduation rates over the past five years. The school posted a 94.3 percent graduation rate in 2017—up from 68.1 percent in 2013. The state average in 2017 was 81.9 percent.

"That they get lauded once as a School of Distinction is quite an achievement, but to get this award three times demonstrates that they've created a system of support that works for kids," said Rainer Houser, a former high school principal and the Educational Service District 112 board member who represents Longview, along with six other school districts.

R.A. Long Principal Rich Reeves says support—in the form of relationships and giving students tools that build

academic confidence—make all the difference.

"School culture is everything. If students want to be there and want to try, that's what we want for them," he said. "We keep preaching that the high school diploma opens so many doors."

"That they get lauded once as a School of Distinction is quite an achievement, but to get this award three times demonstrates that they've created a system of support that works for kids."

- Rainer Houser
ESD 112 Board Member and former principal

Kiaya Baumer, who graduated in 2017, says she encountered teachers at R.A. Long who encouraged her to take more rigorous courses. Now at Clark College in Vancouver, Baumer is heading toward a future in the medical field with the goal

of becoming a pediatric anesthesiologist.

"I really like that R.A. Long is almost like a family environment," she said. "I definitely learned to advocate for myself and do the things I needed to do in a more directed manner."

In its 11th year honoring the highest-improving Washington State Schools, this is the only state award that recognizes schools for sustained growth and improvement over time. It is conferred by the Center for Educational Excellence, the Washington State School Directors' Association, the Washington State Association for Supervision of Curriculum Development and the Superintendents of the Educational Service Districts.

R. A. Long is one of 27 schools in the state to be recognized.

Residential Customer Longview, WA 98632



Superintendent Zorn goes live

Facebook posts about our schools are cool, but don't forget to check out the Friday Facebook Live sessions with Superintendent Dan Zorn.

In his weekly broadcast, Dr. Zorn uses his casual style to provide updates, announcements and reflections on great things happening in our community's schools.

Check www.facebook.com/LongviewSchools/ on Friday afternoons around 4:15 for the week's live session.

If you can't tune in at broadcast time, videos are also available after the show in our Facebook Video Library.

To make sure you don't miss out on Longview's good news, prioritize Longview Schools as one of the first pages appearing in your Facebook news feed. If you have a Facebook account, go to www.facebook.com. In the lefthand column, click on the three dots to the right of "News Feed" and select "Edit Preferences."

See you online!

Athletics task force prepares findings

The school district's 30-member Athletic Facilities Task Force has completed an assessment of the conditions of athletic facilities across the district. Now the group is putting together a report of its findings, which will include recommended facility improvements and their estimated costs.

Recognizing the importance of athletics to our students and community, the Longview School Board of Directors established the group, and it began meeting Sept. 27, 2017. The Task Force plans to complete its work by April.

Stay tuned for the report's release and next steps!

The Longview School District is an Equal Opportunity district in education programs, activities, services, and employment. Longview School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran, or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, genetic information, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal. We provide equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. If you have a physical or mental disability that causes you to need assistance to access school facilities, programs, or services, please notify the school principal. This district endeavors to maintain an atmosphere free from discrimination and harassment. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should contact the school principal. In addition, the following district employees, located at 2715 Lilac Street, Longview, have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

TITLE IX COORDINATOR AND CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE COORDINATOR: Ron Kramer, Director of Human Resources • (360) 575-7004 • rkramer@longview.k12.wa.us

SECTION 504/STUDENT ADA COORDINATOR: Elizabeth West, Director of Special Services • (360) 575-7008 • ewest@longview.k12.wa.us