

A woman with glasses and large earrings is shown in profile, playing a black recorder. She is wearing an orange top. The background is a classroom with a desk, a laptop, and a map on the wall. The text 'PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT' is overlaid in large white letters, and 'Compass' is written in a white script font below it.

PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Compass

Learning in Action

School Board Recognition
School Construction Update

Winter 2021

A Message from the Superintendent

by Dr. Art Jarvis



Along with the phrase, “We have never done this before” is a second phrase heard somewhat frequently, “Wow, have we learned a lot!” Both are so true as we examine our online remote learning and the hybrid models developed to support partial in-person learning.

When the governor closed schools on March 13, teachers were largely put in the position to try to salvage what they could of the remainder of the school year. They translated classes and teaching to a wholly different environment and figured out how to move on. It may have been one of the more difficult tasks many teachers have taken on over their careers.

As we moved through the summer, it

became more apparent that fall 2020 would require us to deliver school online and we’d need to plan ways to begin to return students when circumstances permitted. My appreciation goes out to four groups of people who have done an amazing job to deliver on that need: teachers, support staff, statewide agency partners, and families.

Our teachers redefined their work from top to bottom – curriculum, attendance, grading, schedules, assignments, materials, and instructional delivery. Issues such as devices, poor internet connectivity, and distance complicated the relationship between teachers and students. With exhaustive effort, teachers created ways to connect with their students that were creative, innovative, and functional.

The work of our wonderful support staff changed in ways that none had imagined: buses stopped running regular routes; breakfast and lunch delivery was reinvented; assistant principals became COVID-19 coordinators; and unimagined protocols were developed to keep students and staff safe. Office staff communicated with homes through hours of telephone calls and emails. Our custodians and maintenance staff worked hard to protect staff and

students from unseen germs and danger.

Among all of those daily challenges, our federal, state, and local agencies became close partners. We gained assistance with internet connections, devices, emergency coordination, protective equipment, testing, special funding, guidance, coordination, athletics, and much, much more. It is a fact that we simply could not have functioned without the contributions of these partners.

Health attestation forms became a symbol between families and schools that we could keep children and staff safe if we worked together to avoid spreading the virus. In many cases, families had to give up their work and normal lives to stay home and help their children navigate the new world of remote learning. The loss of the normal, secure world in which children were safely entrusted to teachers and schools required families to step in and become “school”.

As we approach the anniversary of the pandemic shutdown, we will soon start to see the benefit of vaccines followed by a slow return to “normalcy”. We offer heartfelt thanks to all who have helped ensure the education of our children is secure.

Teaching and Learning During COVID-19

by Melissa Wisner, Executive Director of Learning and Innovation



COVID’s seismic presence in March 2020 swept across our entire world and changed education unlike any other event in the long history of schools. As we watched the unthinkable closure of our buildings, we took a collective breath and committed to recreating teaching and learning in this new era.

On this journey, we learned how truly critical schools are to students, educators, staff, families, and our community. We deployed new tools and instructional strategies to continue meeting the varied needs of our students. We have emerged stronger, more focused, and changed for the better because of this transformative shared work on the part of the Peninsula School District community.

Along the way, we discovered that learning never stopped because

education isn’t really about a place; it is and has always been about the relationship between our teachers and staff and their students. The magic that occurs in our district every day has the power to transform, uplift, and shape our future generations.

In this issue of the Compass, we are pleased to share just a few of the amazing stories highlighting how our staff and students have adapted and persevered this school year.

Pictured on cover: Vaughn Elementary music specialist Lisa Mills provides remote instruction.

We Appreciate Our School Board

January was School Board Recognition Month in Washington State, and we'd like to thank our board of directors for serving Peninsula School District's staff, students, and community. PSD's Board of Directors are elected from five geographical areas within the district's boundaries and serve four-year terms. Together, they work to oversee the school district.

In honor of School Board Recognition Month, we asked our board members why they choose to volunteer to serve on PSD's Board of Directors.

Why We Serve . . .



David Olson
PRESIDENT

"Prior to becoming a school board director, I was actively involved in community service projects, focused on helping at-risk youth. Serving on the school board was a natural calling for me."



Lori Glover
VICE PRESIDENT

"The school board provides an opportunity for me to give back to this great community, utilizing all of the experience I gained as a volunteer in the schools over the past 30 years."



Deborah Krishnadasan
DIRECTOR

"Serving as an elected school board member has allowed me to impact the educational experience of not only the 9,000 students we serve today, but the thousands of students and community members our schools will serve in the future."



Chuck West
DIRECTOR

"I serve because I want all students represented to include those that are not going off to college. I serve to provide the foundation for everyone to succeed."



Natalie Wimberley
DIRECTOR

"My service is deeply rooted in a commitment to ensure that all children have access to a rewarding pathway to graduation and a healthy preparation for the life that comes after high school."



What Do School Board Directors Do?

1. Hire, supervise, and evaluate the superintendent.
2. Set the vision, mission, and strategic goals for the district.
3. Review, revise, and adopt policies.
4. Establish and oversee the district's budget.
5. Monitor the district's progress toward its goals.
6. Serve as community representatives.



2020-2021 Learning in Action

The Beat Goes On at Vaughn Elementary School



Peninsula School District specialists have balanced teaching in-person students and remote learning students throughout the school year. This challenge is admirably carried out by many staff throughout the district, including Vaughn Elementary School music teacher Lisa Mills.

Now in her eighth year at Vaughn, Mills, who was a student at Vaughn herself and has the self-described dream-come-true of teaching at her neighborhood school, shares the possibilities of using the powerful language of music for creative expression.

A typical day includes Zoom instruction to remote learners before switching gears to visit in-person classrooms with a pushcart of musical instruments. Flexibility is key, and providing remote instruction has necessitated a new reality in how to best deliver music instruction remotely. Mills, like many staff in the district, has taken classes, studied technology platforms, and networked with other teachers to implement new ideas.

Vaughn 3rd-5th graders have been learning to play the recorder this school year. Mills provides live instruction via Zoom, and students also prepare and send videos of their playing.

"Preparing a performance for video is a great way to motivate them to practice, and for me to accurately assess how the instrument learning is going," Mills said.

Success stories from remote instruction have included a student who requested some extra instruction time after having trouble with the recorder. As a result, the student felt confident to continue practicing and soon after performed mini recitals for parents and grandparents. Another student was excited to learn of family history in the military following a Veterans Day project that invited students to interview a veteran and sing U.S. Armed Forces service songs.

"The messaging function in Schoology [PSD's learning management system] allows students to message their teachers," Mills said. "This has been an

important means of connection, helping in building relationships and clarifying questions. I receive and respond to lots of messages from students every day."

During in-person instruction, students have learned with instruments such as ukuleles, glockenspiels, drums, tambourines, and jingle bracelets. Keeping a beat, performing rhythms, learning the names of strings, and learning melodies are among the lessons.

For in-person cleanliness, students are seated at desks, instruments used are carefully cleaned, and each student has a personal instrument bag. Mills is able to deliver instruction from the front of the class and work with students during practice time.

"Music is fundamental, especially during a pandemic, because it helps us find order, synchronize with the rhythms around us and inside us, feel happiness, find beauty, and express our emotions in a healthy way," Mills said.



Lisa Mills, Music Specialist

Helping High Schoolers with Academics, Basic Needs

Jennifer Buys, a success coach who splits her time between Gig Harbor High School and Peninsula High School, recognizes some high school students are struggling to learn remotely from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is why she, along with a small group of other staff, give students the opportunity to come to school for extra help.

High school students who have been referred by teachers, counselors, or other students may come in to school to access the internet, ask questions on assignments, and stay connected to their school under staff supervision. This flexible model allows students to attend week-to-week or day-to-day.

Buys said that beyond helping students academically, she also builds relationships with students to help them feel connected and know they have someone to help.

“While we’re limited in what we can offer,

we give everything we’ve got,” Buys said. “I can give them an air high five and virtual hug. On kids’ faces, you can see the difference this makes.”

Buys acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased basic needs for many of her students. “The number one thing that has helped us is connecting with community partners, especially since COVID,” Buys said.

Buys participates in weekly meetings with a group of PSD staff and community partners, including Food Backpacks 4 Kids, Crossroads Treatment Center, Communities In Schools of Peninsula, and Children’s Home Society to discuss general strategies to help district families with food, shelter, and other basic needs. They also provide direct help to students and families on a case-by-case basis.

Buys said that working together with this group of community partners provides great opportunities for helping students



Jennifer Buys, Success Coach

more quickly.

“To make one kid’s life better is my job,” Buys said.

Cooking with Schrock Club Offers Up Recipe for Fun

Inspired by a common interest in learning how to cook, Key Peninsula Middle School (KPMS) teacher Kate Schrock began the “Cooking with Schrock” after-school club with six students in the spring of 2020. This fall, KPMS teacher Leah Smith joined Schrock to co-lead the club.

The club meets online after school once a week for about an hour. They watch instructional cooking videos and learn how to cook various foods together.

The Gig Harbor Morning Rotary Club Community Service Committee recently awarded a \$500 grant to the Cooking with Schrock Club to help fund the purchase of basic kitchen equipment, ingredients, and supplies.

“The committee was really excited

about the concept of keeping youth engaged in a productive activity during COVID-19, with the added benefit of learning an essential life skill,” said Tom Borgen, Rotary Club of Gig Harbor Area Governor.

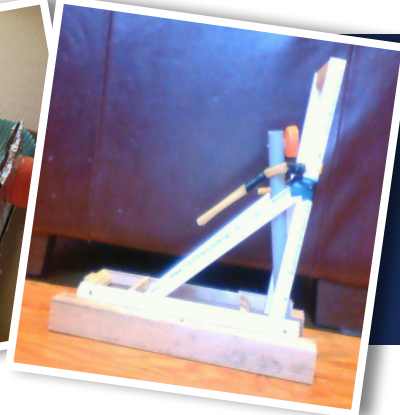
Schrock and Smith used money from the grant to purchase supplies for cooking lessons, which included teaching students how to make cookies from a cake mix, french fries, and baked vegetables.

The club has grown to more than 50 members, including 6th, 7th and 8th grade students and some of their siblings, grandparents, and other extended family members.

“We are so excited to keep our club growing,” Schrock said.



Kopachuck Middle School STEM Class Gets Creative



Adapting to remote learning has required flexibility and resourcefulness of both staff and students. In Tamar Mar's STEM exploration class at Kopachuck Middle School, these qualities were exemplified through a recycled engineering design project that saw students create machines out of household objects – from dog houses, to game tables, to catapults.

During a two-week unit on engineering, students learned the engineering design process via a song. A written assignment provided the opportunity to develop pre-construction drawings, ask questions about the engineering process, and evaluate their creations.

Mar chose this remote learning project as a way to help students creatively engineer a project outside the physical classroom.

"I wanted students to feel like engineering was still accessible to them, even with materials they had at home," Mar said. "I strived to make sure it was equitable for all students, regardless if they had a garage full of tools and supplies, or if they just had some glue and an Amazon box to work with."

Prompted by a group brainstorming session, students headed to closets, Lego bins, kitchen cabinets, and tool sheds to find items to use for building. The results yielded creations of all kinds.

While remote learning presents challenges with limitations that do not replicate the in-person environment, projects such as the engineering unit work to emphasize interaction, connection, and togetherness. Students uploaded images of their projects to a shared media album on Schoology, PSD's learning management system, to share and compliment one another's work.

"I like to make media albums with our at-home projects to mimic, as close as possible, the feel of walking around a classroom," Mar said. "It's inspiring and creates a sense of togetherness in what we are doing."

3rd Graders Complete The Great Poetry Race



Harbor Heights 3rd Grade Team

The Great Poetry Race has been an annual project for Harbor Heights Elementary 3rd graders, and the school's 3rd grade teachers have worked hard to ensure remote teaching didn't prevent this learning experience.

For The Great Poetry Race, students were asked to read poems they wrote to as many people as possible.

To fit the realities of remote instruction, students found creative ways to read poetry to people outside of their households in a safe manner. Students read to grandparents over the phone, FaceTimed with cousins, and held physically-distanced porch readings for neighbors.

After students had plenty of practice, they recorded a video reading their poems on Flipgrid, a social learning

education tool that aids video-based discussion, for classmates to hear. The 3rd graders eagerly took on the task.

While the mode of instruction is different in remote learning, the Harbor Heights 3rd grade team exemplifies the work of teaching teams throughout the district – focusing on essential grade standards while making learning meaningful and memorable. Harbor Heights teachers are purposeful in providing opportunities for students to gather via Zoom as a grade level to do read-alouds and art projects together.

Finding creative ways to build community and support relationships is at the forefront of the team's planning, ensuring every student in 3rd grade has a connection with a classmate and teacher at Harbor Heights, even if the connection takes place via Zoom.

School Nurses, Health Technicians Provide Healthy Dose of Service

Each school has a health team comprised of a health technician and a school nurse. While each building has its own dedicated health tech, there are only eight school nurses districtwide, so most nurses in the district help manage multiple schools.

Health techs are the kind, friendly faces most often seen by students who report to the health room. Under the direction of their school nurse, health techs provide first aid to injured students and administer daily medications to students who have prescriptions that must be taken during the school day.

While school nurses have less of an active role in health rooms, they stay busy serving students in other ways, including processing registrations for incoming students, creating individualized plans to ensure the safety of each student based on unique health conditions, and reviewing student immunization records.

Health teams are dedicated to working collaboratively in order to keep practices

consistent across every building in the school district. The district team includes two LPNs (Licensed Practical Nurse) that work under the direction of the school nurse to help support students with complex medical needs.

Although there are fewer students in buildings, health teams are far from idle. School nurses actively follow guidelines from federal, state, and local health agencies to remain up-to-date on keeping students and staff healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. They help manage health screenings, health room protocols, isolation rooms, and school safety plans.

In addition to COVID-19 related duties, nurses must also continue to adapt to changes in other facets of school-based health, such as changes to immunization laws. They continue to serve families by helping to connect them with local health care providers or by organizing flu vaccine clinics with community partners.

The health techs work closely with their nurses to help implement all of these



Miriam Atchison, Lead Nurse

jobs — COVID or otherwise — in our buildings.

The next time you see a school nurse or health tech, please thank them for keeping our staff and students safe and healthy.

We  Our School Nurses and Health Technicians!

A New Superintendent is Coming to PSD

Superintendent Dr. Art Jarvis was selected by the Peninsula School District Board of Directors in July 2018 as the district's interim superintendent and continued as superintendent for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. Dr. Jarvis will be retiring from the district at the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

Selecting a new superintendent is one of the most important decisions the board makes for the district. Finding and hiring the right chief executive for the leadership team is critical to the success of students and staff. The board is committed to finding a superintendent who will connect and partner with the community and help its schools and

students be successful. Board directors are also committed to providing an open, transparent, and collaborative process in hiring the new superintendent.

The board hired Northwest Leadership Associates, a search consultant firm, to conduct the superintendent search.

The board tentatively plans to announce and introduce the new superintendent by the end of March 2021 in order for the new superintendent to begin in the district on July 1, 2021. These dates are subject to change as the search process continues.

psd401.net/suptsearch
for more information on the
superintendent search process.

Beyond the Classroom

Beyond the classroom instruction taking place remotely or in-person on school campuses, PSD staff continue working hard to provide essential services for the district to run efficiently.

How has our staff adapted to the 2020-2021 school year in the midst of COVID-19?

Transportation



Kurt Olson, Bus Driver

Although most students have been learning remotely this year, PSD bus drivers are still transporting small groups of students to and from school who have been learning in-person. Bus drivers have also partnered with PSD's Nutrition Services Department to deliver school meals over the summer and school year. Bus drivers follow strict COVID-19 safety protocols, including cleaning and disinfecting their buses between each bus run, to help keep students safe.

"The fall of 2020 has brought with it many challenges for the Transportation Department. As we worked with the administration team to come up with routes and stops for our small groups, we were pushed to do things in a way we haven't before. This has definitely been a lesson in stepping out of the box, which has been a real test in our abilities. But as always, we get the job done."

Stephanie O'Brien-Fors
Transportation Supervisor

Maintenance, Grounds, and Warehouse



Tim Sicotte, Grounds Worker

PSD's maintenance staff maintains and services mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and low-voltage electronic systems throughout all PSD schools and facilities. Groundskeepers care for 203 acres of land at schools, facilities, and athletic fields, and warehouse staff perform essential deliveries throughout the district and manage the storage of furniture, supplies, curriculum, and food in district warehouses. These groups work together to ensure facilities are running safely and efficiently for all students and staff.

"Our staff continues to maintain our facilities and grounds, providing essential services for the continuing operations of the district. With COVID-19 safety protocols in place, we have been able to complete many maintenance and grounds projects already this year, and our warehouse staff have remained safe while delivering much needed items to schools."

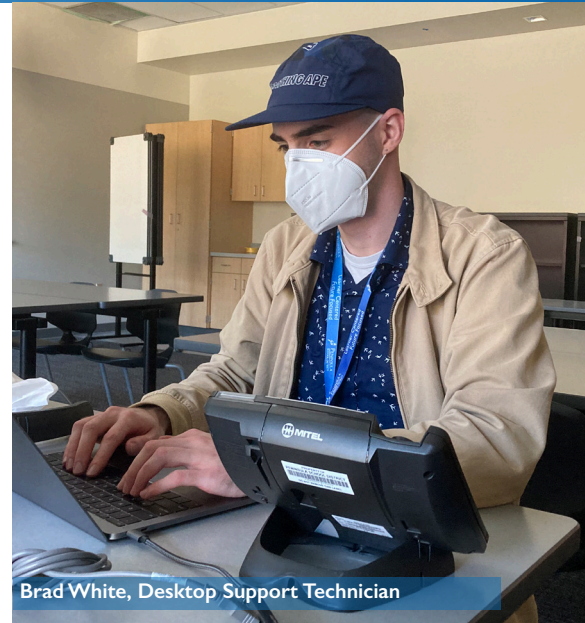
Jeff Otis
Maintenance Supervisor

Technology

“Our work this year has taken new shape and emphasis as we’ve navigated and supported the shift to remote learning. While we recognize remote learning does not replace all that in-person learning offers, I am proud of the way our district’s staff and students have embraced and grown in utilizing digital learning tools for classroom instruction, and the role in which our department’s technology staff has been able to serve in supporting that work.”

Kris Hagel
Executive Director, Digital Learning

The technology team within PSD’s Department of Learning & Innovation plays an integral part in supporting remote learning. Work has included ongoing support for PSD’s one-to-one device program by ensuring Chromebooks have been provided to all students, plus distributing WiFi hotspots to families for internet access. Other work includes providing support for tools such as Zoom, Google Education tools and Schoology, the virtual learning management system utilized by PSD, for remote learning consistency between grade levels and classes.



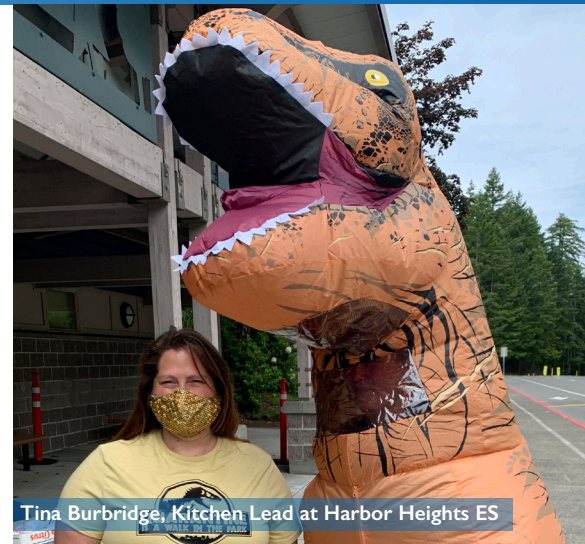
Brad White, Desktop Support Technician

Nutrition Services

“Part of our job is to make sure kids get fed, and we’ve continued to learn how to make it work and adapt. At the end of the day, it’s about feeding kids. That’s why we’re here.”

Katie Walters
Nutrition Services Director

PSD’s Nutrition Services Department prepares nutritious meals in schools for those students learning in-person, and by curbside pickup and meal delivery routes driven by PSD bus drivers for remote learners. Staff also provide meal kits for students during school breaks, so that students who need meals can have enough to eat when out of school. Thanks to a funding waiver extension from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, all in-person and remote students under 18 years old can receive school breakfasts and lunches free of charge for the entire school year.



Tina Burbridge, Kitchen Lead at Harbor Heights ES

Custodial

“This year, custodians have continued working hard to clean and disinfect our schools, paying particular attention to high-touch areas. I cannot be more proud of our team’s efforts to ensure each school and district building provides a clean environment for the safety of all students and staff.”

Candy Lawson
Coordinator of Facilities Services

Peninsula School District custodians are responsible for cleaning and maintaining district schools and facilities. Custodians clean and disinfect classrooms and bathrooms, vacuum, mop, and ensure schools and other facilities are clean and safe places for students and staff to learn and work. They also ensure garbage and recycling is handled properly at each site.



Jill Clark, Head Custodian at Henderson Bay HS

School Construction: Elementary School #9 Update



Elementary School #9 is one of four elementary construction projects, and six projects overall, funded by the 2019 capital projects bond.
Rendering Credit: Integrus Architecture



Meet Elementary School #9's Core Team

David Brooks
PRINCIPAL

Kelli Willson
TEACHER

Carlyn HansonSmith
TEACHER

Nichola Wright
TEACHER

Brenda Abel
OFFICE MANAGER

Jeremy Wilson
MUSIC SPECIALIST

Stacy Bigger
TEACHER

The core planning team of educators at Elementary School #9 was chosen last December. The core team sets the stage for dreaming, designing, and developing the new school's vision, culture, learning and support systems, program logistics, and operating procedures. They serve as key communicators and will act as catalysts for growing the school and making connections that bring staff, students, and families together.

Driven by a belief in all learners, the team will help plan for and design a learning environment in which everyone develops a passion for learning, takes ownership for their learning, and contributes to a positive learning community.

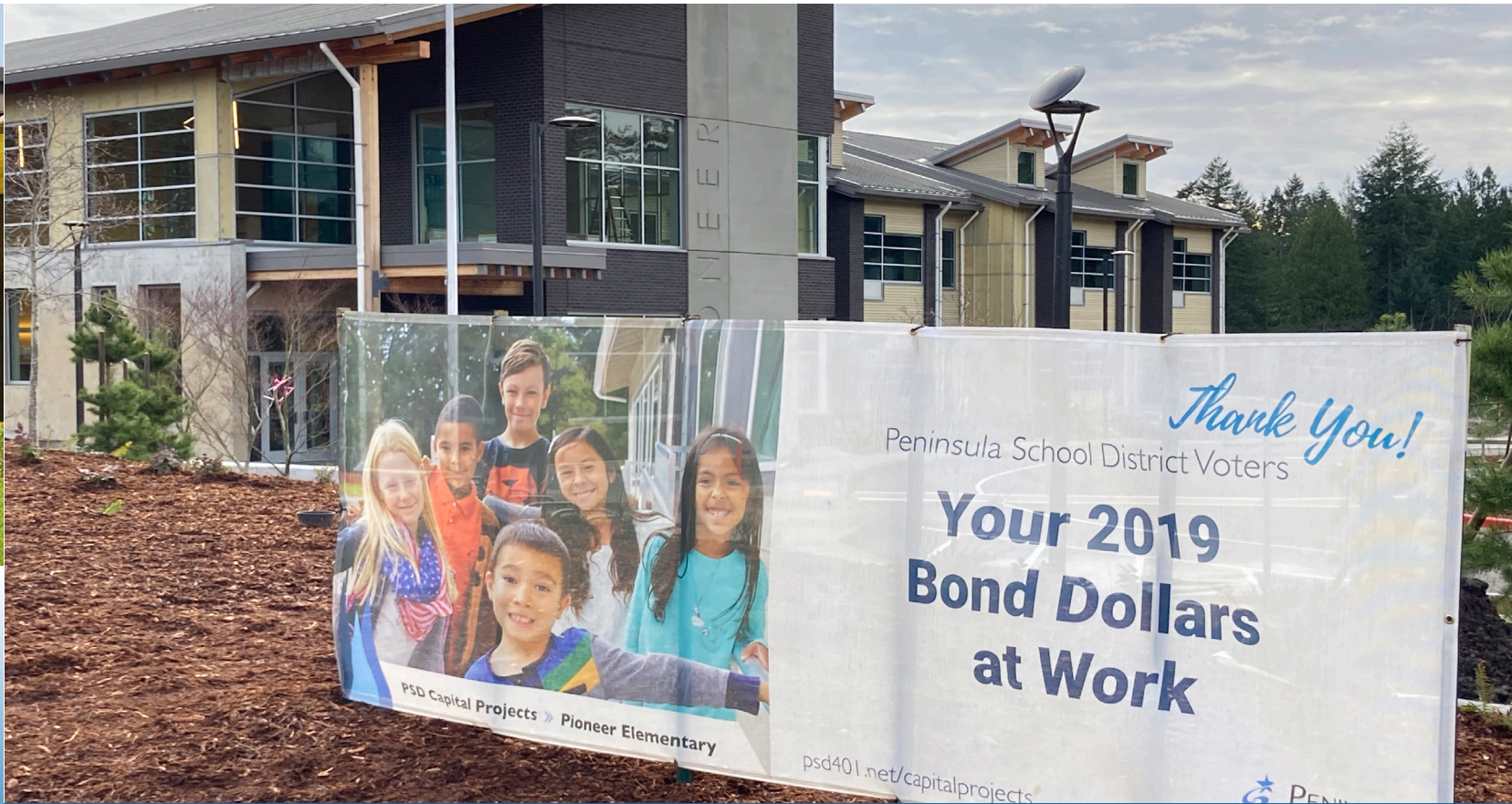
"Knowing that we have a community of learners ready to start in September of 2021, growing a brand new school culture and systems to support all learners is a tall order, especially as we

navigate this work during a pandemic," Principal David Brooks said. "It is exciting to bring a team together and focusing on designing a school that uses inclusive practices to empower all learners to discover and develop their passion for learning and making a difference in our community and world."

Elementary School #9 is located on Harbor Hill Drive in Gig Harbor and will be officially named in early 2021.

Find more information about PSD's school construction at psd401.net/capitalprojects

Pioneer Elementary School Opens Its Doors



Pioneer Elementary School opened its doors to students and staff on Tuesday, January 19. Pioneer is the first elementary school to open out of four elementary construction projects, and six projects overall, funded by the 2019 capital projects bond.



"I am honored and proud to watch our dreams as a community come to fruition. Every step of the project has been a remarkable experience, as we have been given the freedom to rethink education and create the space in which students get to experience wonder and imagine the possible."

Stephanie Strader
Pioneer Elementary Principal

Pioneer Elementary is the first new elementary school to be added to the district in 34 years.

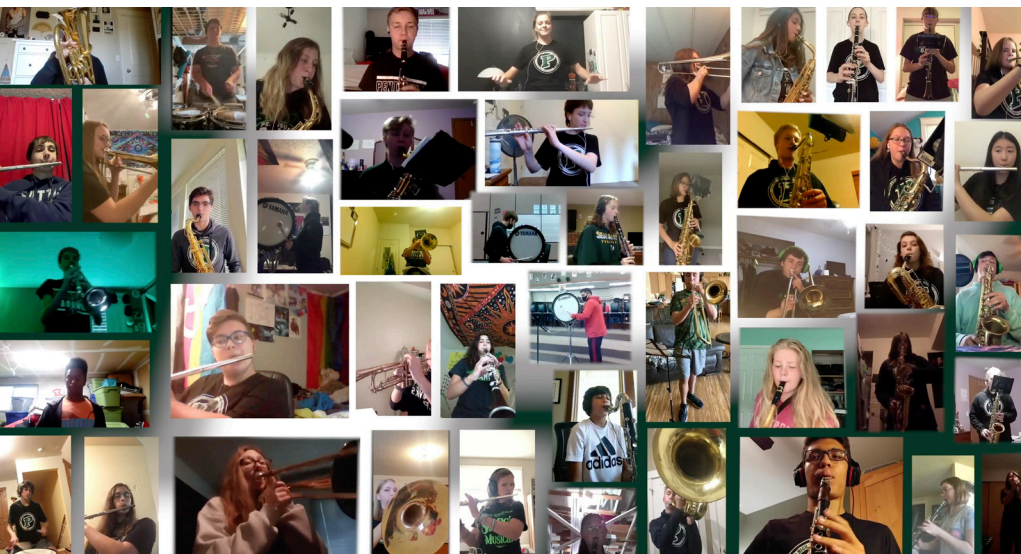
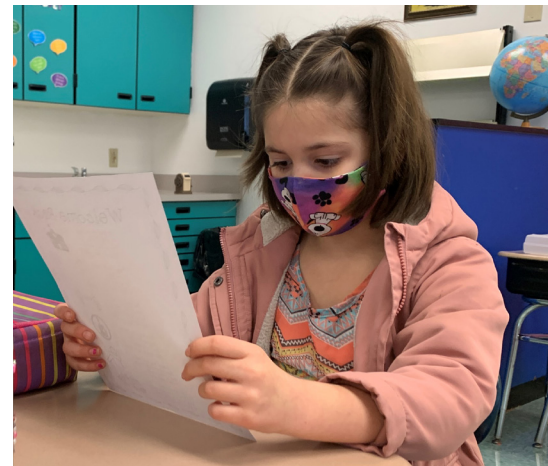
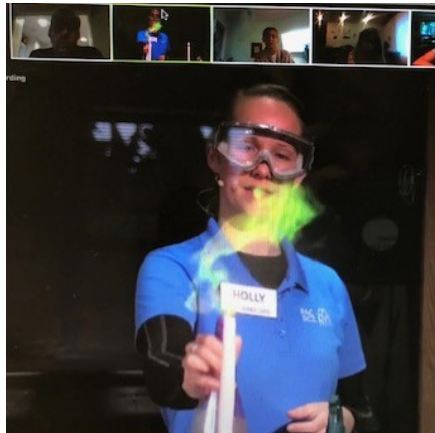
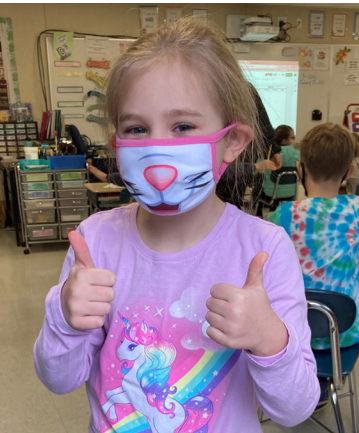
It is the first school completed out of four elementary construction projects, and six projects overall, funded by the 2019 capital projects bond. The bond was passed by voters, approving school construction to address extreme elementary overcrowding and other emergent infrastructure needs.

Pioneer Elementary School students and staff have been housed at the Henderson Bay High School building near the new building site located on Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. They were able to move to the new Pioneer Elementary on January 19.

Check our website at psd401.net/PIEbuild for more information and photos.



Pictured: Anna Martin, Office Manager (top); Pioneer students find their classrooms (bottom)



PENINSULA
SCHOOL DISTRICT
Compass

Board of Directors
David Olson | Lori Glover
Deborah Krishnadasan | Chuck West
Natalie Wimberley

Superintendent
Dr. Art Jarvis

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TOP ROW: Voyager 2nd grade student Ali K. on her first day back to school for in-person learning; Peninsula High School student Connor B.; Elementary students at Purdy and Pioneer watch an experiment while on a virtual field trip to the Pacific Science Center; Minter Creek 3rd grade student Reece C. shows his artwork.
MIDDLE ROW: Gig Harbor High School football workout; Harbor Ridge Middle School student Hunter B.; Evergreen 2nd grade student Aniya W. reads in class.
BOTTOM ROW: Peninsula High School's band plays school fight song together virtually.