



100 DAY REPORT

Superintendent Krestin Bahr | *2021-2022 School Year*



Dear Peninsula School District Community,

First, I want to thank the hundreds of people in our community who shared their thoughts about the Peninsula School District with me. Public education in the United States is a noble cause.

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which
you can use to change the world."*

– Nelson Mandela

It is with optimism and honor that I have taken on the role of superintendent of our schools, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to work together with this community. I am invested in PSD and confident about our future. When I joined PSD on July 1, 2021, I committed to a 100-day entry plan. The purpose of this plan was to build a structure to get to know the people involved in running the district and to listen broadly to others and learn comprehensively about our schools.

Since July, I have met with and listened to over 400 individuals, including students, parents, teachers, support staff, community members, and organizations. I sought to learn the history and norms of the district and their effect on how the organization functions. It was vital that I heard from multiple perspectives and voices, in order to start building strong relationships in support of student achievement and identify issues that should be addressed.

This experience has affirmed my commitment to understand the unique culture of our Peninsula schools. People who I met with shared bright lights in our work and areas for growth and opportunity. They offered thoughts and advice on how to move forward and be a successful superintendent in this community. I am grateful and appreciative to all who shared their insights with me.

My 100-day entry plan goals have been clear:

- Introduce myself to the community and begin the process of building public trust and strengthening engagement in our schools;
- Identify the district's strengths and improvement opportunities, based on external perceptions, internal experiences, and detailed analysis of data; and
- Update the needs, objectives, and work priorities of the Peninsula School District as outlined in the Peninsula Promise to help the development of a new 2022-2026 strategic plan.

The following report highlights the observations and key findings resulting from the many interactions, meetings, and events I participated in. I look forward to acting on the information in this report for the benefit of all Peninsula School District students.

Sincerely,



Krestin Bahr
Superintendent

LISTENING AND LEARNING

The entry plan began with intentional purposeful meetings and interviews with students, parents, staff, administrators, collective bargaining groups, labor, and educational partners representing both the Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula communities. During each session, I asked the same key questions:

1. What should I know about Peninsula schools and its community?
2. What is going well and should be continued?
3. What are challenges and areas for growth?

The second portion was a listening tour format for parents, community members, and interested community members. These activities ranged from Walk-n-Talks, Coffee Chats, family feedback forums, hosted sessions with groups such as PTA/PTO/VPO, and meeting with civic groups such as Rotary and Kiwanis. I introduced myself to our local business and industry partners across the community and participated in many community events and volunteer activities. We also conducted community surveys both in-person and electronically using the three key questions.

Internally, I had the opportunity to meet with each staff member at the district office, and each principal school leader group; held Breakfast with Bahr and Friends events at each school; and met with each of our collective bargaining groups. I met individually with each board member and conducted several retreats over the summer to begin building relationships and looking ahead to the strategic planning process. I created Superintendent Student Advisory Teams from all high schools to advise on topics relating to the strategic goals of the district and to create a bridge for students to have a voice in topics regarding their future.

Early insights I gained over the summer were communicated with district staff during the 2021 Welcome Back Day, where the focus was on belonging, collaboration, and referencing our mission this year to be "Better Together." This included hearing the student voice from our PHS and GHHS ASB Presidents and students from The Academies at Henderson Bay. We have continued to use *#BetterTogether* on social media.



DATA ANALYSIS & DOCUMENT REVIEW

Concurrently with these meetings and events, I began meeting with my Foundational Leadership Team and our Learning Support Team on a weekly basis. We conducted a complete review of performance indicators across a wide variety of data sources, particularly student achievement data. The goal was to discern trends, patterns, areas of accomplishment, and opportunities for improvement.

Student achievement data reviewed includes the following: standardized tests, dropout and graduation rates, staff and student attendance rates, truancy and discipline data, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, College in the High School, dual enrollment and passing rates, SAT and ACT scores, college-bound rates, and other relevant indicators disaggregated by program, ethnicity, and geography.

Other data studied include the district's organizational structure, policy and procedure manuals, district and school strategic plans, employee handbooks, and all commissioned studies by outside agencies, including Technology, Communications, Career and Technical Education (CTE), Student Services, and Safety and Security.

All of this was then overlaid with a detailed analysis of our current operating and capital improvement budgets. Through departmental meetings and retreat formats, the discussion of fiscal responsibility and long-term commitment to equity and alignment to school needs was paramount in the review of operating and capital improvements.



OVERALL FIRST 100 DAYS REFLECTION

The overwhelming community sentiment is extremely positive and supportive of our schools. Parents and patrons believe that Peninsula schools are excellent places for children to learn and that teachers are caring, dedicated, and skilled professionals. There is a strong foundation of collaboration and partnership with parents and schools. At the same time, we all acknowledge the stress that pandemic school closures have placed on families, staff, community, and especially children. Public schools have become the center of a passionate national dialogue about the future of education, and I welcome the full range of perspectives in these discussions.

Nearly everyone I spoke to communicated pride and willingness to volunteer, communicate, and partner with schools to make a difference in the lives of children. Many district parents and community members have been in the Peninsula community since childhood and/or raised their children in our schools. Many who are new to the community came specifically for the quality of schools and community. Stories of positive, caring, high-quality educational experiences were echoed by many parents who are proud of their children's success in post-secondary opportunities.

EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

I am so grateful for the many conversations I have had to assist me in building an understanding of your priorities and expectations of me as your superintendent. Several expectations were most commonly voiced for the role of the superintendent, including:

- Increased level of transparency and visibility within the greater community;
- Advocate for students through researching and implementing programs that are student-centered and proven to impact students' success;
- Establish a strategic plan whose vision, mission, and values reflect the full range of district perspectives; and
- Encourage innovation and progress to schools and students through intentional outreach and partnering with successful systems and grant monies when appropriate.





EXISTING DISTRICT STRENGTHS

Based on data analysis, document review, individual interviews, and multiple meetings, PSD is blessed with the following strengths.

Academic Performance: Students in PSD continue to score above the state and/or national average on assessment. PSD prides itself on strong academic achievement and consistently aims to increase student performance by taking a personalized and proactive approach, developing specific course plans to align with future goals and providing a wide range of course offerings. The continued expansion of Advanced Placement and College in the High School courses through both University of Washington and Central Washington University allows students to earn transferable college credit, and in some cases, attain an AA degree within the school day.

Strong Financial Position: PSD ended the fiscal year 2021 with a total ending fund balance of \$16,955,537. The unrestricted fund balance was \$6,778,046, equating to 4.86% of actual expenditures for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. This continues to meet the board's goal of 4% to 6% unrestricted balance. Our district has a strong record of clean financial and accountability audits. Any audit findings have been addressed and are not recurring. PSD has a strong credit position; the Aa2 rating is slightly higher than the US school district median of Aa3. We have one of the lowest tax rates among Pierce County school districts.

Approximately 17% of our operating budget is funded through a voter-approved levy that must be renewed every three to four years. We have been successful in securing ongoing approval because we are financially prudent and sensitive to taxpayer dollars.

Professional Workforce: PSD has a highly qualified workforce to support our students. We have 693 certificated and 520 classified employees. Our certificated educators have an average of 15 years of service and our support staff average 9 years. The district has established a collaborative structure to create a supportive and transparent environment around employee compensation and workplace conditions. This collaboration between executive administration, our teacher organization Peninsula Education Association (PEA), and District Association Committee (DAC) is ongoing throughout the school year. Recently, an initiative has been developed to address the need to increase staff wellness and engagement during this year of continued pandemic flux.

High Parent Involvement: Every school in the district has a strong PTO/PTA or booster club partnership, along with area business partners, to support learning in the classroom. The district also has over 500 cleared volunteers who work inside schools assisting teachers with basic academic skills, clerical tasks, and recess duty. Before the pandemic (which limited building access), parents and community members praised volunteer opportunities with Communities In Schools and Peninsula Hands On Art specifically and want to expand other classroom opportunities to support students' growth.

Professional Development and Instructional Support: The focus for this year's professional learning is embodied in our well-developed Professional Learning Communities (PLC). This process allows teachers and administrators to focus on the whole child through a targeted focus on student data, to ensure we are meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of each child. Instructional coaches provide professional development and teacher development on a variety of academic areas aligned to each school's School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Innovative School Focus: A focus on forward-thinking and providing schools that are focused on creativity, imagination, and wonder has been in the planning for several years. In 2020-2021, the opening of Pioneer Elementary as a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) magnet school signaled this effort. This year, three additional elementary schools applied for a STEM Lighthouse grant and distinction with Evergreen and Voyager obtaining recognitions. These successes have opened the door for further discussion with building leaders regarding arts emphasis, access to programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and expanded college and career offerings.

Student Offerings: PSD offers over 180 high school courses, in addition to offerings through the Academies at Henderson Bay (9-12), Global Virtual Academy (K-12), Running Start at Tacoma Community College, and CTE programs at West Sound Tech. Among those courses offered are Advanced Placement, College in the High School, Dual Credit, Navy Junior Reserve Officers training Corps (NJROTC), and more.





OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Throughout these conversations and reflections on the survey data, the following topics were mentioned as issues the district faced in the past or may face in the coming years.

Return and Recovery: As we continue to navigate the challenges of a global pandemic, many-voiced serious concerns about the academic and social-emotional toll the past two years have taken on children. Learning gaps for many of our most vulnerable students have grown and will require ongoing support to identify and address. There are also concerns about teacher and staff well-being and retention, and reduced enrollment numbers that will impact funding during this delicate period of recovery in which additional programs, supports, and interventions are needed.

Population Growth: New housing continues to be built at rapid rates, and there is the worry that even the addition of two new elementary schools to our district may not be enough to handle increased numbers in the future.

Aging Secondary Facilities: There was much enthusiasm expressed for the four new elementary schools that opened over the last year (Artondale, Evergreen, Swift Water, and Pioneer) ahead of schedule, plus the modernizations underway at Kopachuck and Key Peninsula middle schools. However, many expressed concern over the condition of our high school facilities. Peninsula High School was built in 1949 and Gig Harbor High School in 1979. Both have been well maintained and have had numerous, but limited, improvements and enhancements.

Doubts were raised if these facilities are able to support the high-level programs our students need to succeed in our modern, competitive world. Many pointed out the condition of our sports facilities compared with neighboring districts and the limits this places on our athletes. Additionally, safety is a real concern. Several buildings lack fire sprinklers, as they were built before the implementation of modern fire codes. "California style" campus design from the past means there are many uncontrolled entries and direct access points to classrooms.

Support for Diverse Learners and Multiple Pathways: Our community is blessed with strong parent and community support for students, but many acknowledge the increasingly complex needs of our students during ever-changing times. Some examples are children receiving special education services, English learners, underrepresented minority groups, and students living in poverty. At the same time, there is a demand to ensure academic excellence and rigor of public education. We must provide multiple avenues for students after high school, including expanded CTE, workforce development, and internship opportunities.

Early Learning Options: Developmental preschools are housed at Artondale, Purdy, and Vaughn. Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is at Artondale, Vaughn, and Evergreen. Our new Transitional Kindergarten programs at Evergreen, Discovery, and Harbor Heights allow students who have not had access to preschool the opportunity to focus on essential academics and social-emotional skills. However, the demand for early learning options still far exceeds our capacity.

Ensuring all Communities have Equity and Voice: Throughout the Key Peninsula and Gig Harbor area, there are underrepresented groups, such as special education students, English Learners, children of color, and children living in poverty. As we look at PSD, we must recognize the diversity in both families and opinions is crucial for the district to understand and to highlight as an asset.





IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

At PSD, our short-term goals include developing a new 2022-2026 strategic plan, continued focus on innovation, the whole child, relationship building, partnerships, collaboration, and communication.

Academic Achievement and Support:

- A Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning will be continued to provide structured intervention for students.
- Monthly learning will occur with building and district leaders focused on increasing instructional leadership capacity in the MTSS, Whole Child initiative, and inclusionary practices.
- A representative team of leaders, teachers, and instructional coaches will continue to review current assessments, align assessment needs, and develop plans for the utilization of data throughout the district. The team will work to develop the strategic plan action plan by June 2022.
- Summer learning and credit retrievals.
- Increase options for students at the secondary level - AP, College in the High School, CTE, Career Connected Learning.

A Culture of Belonging and Well-Being:

- Create daily time to focus on student belonging by using established resources like Second Step, Character Strong, and MTSS inclusionary practices. Initiatives like these support our students by ensuring skill development in resiliency, persistence, problem-solving, critical thinking, and empathy/kindness. Our diversity enhances a strong and healthy community, and we will continue to strive for equitable access for all of our children paying specific attention to our most vulnerable students.
- Panorama data will be used to establish a systematic plan for the wellness structure of implementation throughout the district. The plan will focus on the well-being and mental health needs of students, as well as training for staff, to support a positive classroom culture of belonging.
- Increased opportunities will be provided for internal and external input through the establishment of advisory teams. These would-be parent and student advisory teams will meet three times a year with the superintendent, such as a Special Education Parent Advisory Group.
- A Parent Summit Series will provide learning opportunities for our families, focused on belonging in the areas of academic, behavior, and social-emotional development.

Resource and Facilities Stewardship:

- Focused and transparent budget planning, beginning with the need to renew our existing Educational Programs and Operations Levy in the 2022-23 academic year.
- A long-range facilities plan will be revisited to include a focus on updating other facilities to future-ready learning spaces.
- Leverage the APP (Asset Preservation Program) through OSPI for scheduling and tracking maintenance, along with third party Building Condition Assessments (BCAs) to assign a consistent, objective rating system for all systems and components of each facility. Outstanding efforts of our maintenance department have extended the useful life of many systems past their expected lifespan, and preparations need to be made for systematic replacement and upgrades.
- Planning will be done collaboratively with input from community members through our standing Financial Advisory Committee and Facilities Planning Committee.

Meaningful Professional Learning and Quality District Support:

- A staff survey will be created to measure and monitor classified and certified staff satisfaction, connection, and growth in the district.
- A staff recognition program will be reestablished to highlight the accomplishments of classified and certified employees.
- The district will maintain competitive compensation and benefits packages for all employee groups while attracting, retaining, and growing the human capital of the district.
- A wellness initiative will be developed to address the need to increase staff wellness and engagement during this year of continued pandemic flux.

Expand Community Connections:

- We will increase business and industry partnerships to support the expansion of workforce connections and career-connected learning in the community.
- We will continue our partnerships with community organizations in a coordinated effort to remove barriers that prevent our students from achieving their goals.



LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

Looking beyond the next few years, our strategic planning process will identify in greater detail the need to respond to and prepare for the future through developing action steps to achieve the goals for students in Peninsula School District. Our students will be successfully prepared for their futures when the system becomes aligned to a globally competitive system.

The focus on our strategic plan to create a blueprint with input from professionals and invested community members will assure academic, intellectual, social, and applied skills which are aligned with students' college and career-connected choices.

The spring of 2022 will be a time for the latest expression of the long-standing commitment to Peninsula students and families and incorporate our community's willingness to continuous improvement of our educational programs to meet current and future needs.

This strategic plan reaffirms our commitment to provide the best schools and programs in the world and to keep children in the center of everything we do.





SUMMARY

We are so fortunate to live in a community that values excellent education and the opportunity for children to participate in enriching activities. Our students benefit from the high level of engagement, support, and willingness to commit to excellence from our parents and community. My commitment to PSD is building on the rich traditions and practices, while providing continuous improvement in all areas.

We have an incredible opportunity to create a strategic plan which enhances all of our schools, programs, and in turn, our children. My expectations are to create opportunities for innovation and excellence, provide care and transparency for students, staff, and the community, and to align our programs to our vision/mission. I look forward to capitalizing on our strengths and finding ways to grow and improve together.

Thank you for your commitment, passion, and honesty as we move through this year. We know the value of partnering with our families, business partners, and local associations to create educational opportunities at all levels.

Our students deserve the very best schools and programs. We have a strong foundation and we share a desire to continue to create schools that are models of innovation, creativity, and wonder.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. We are *#BetterTogether*.

Sincerely,

Krestin Bahr
Superintendent

