

# PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT



## COMPASS



INSPIRING CREATIVITY AND CURIOSITY IN EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY

Winter 2023



## A Message from Superintendent Krestin Bahr

**Happy New Year 2023!** Thank you for being a community that is committed to our students, making the Peninsula School District (PSD) a destination where parents are proud to have their children. We ask that you continue this history of support for our children and our schools.

Our district will have two levy measures on the upcoming February 14 ballot. First, the Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy is a renewal of our

expiring 2020 levy. This will continue to fund programs and staff that are not fully funded by state basic funding. Districts must bridge the gap between what the state funds and what we need to keep our schools vibrant, safe centers of learning.

This levy accounts for about 18% of the district's overall budget and funds programs like athletics, arts, music, early learning, highly capable, as well as nurses, counselors, transportation, and much more. I have enjoyed going to our district's many phenomenal athletic events and performances this year. None of these programs or activities would be possible without this levy.

Second, the Safety, Security and Technology Levy funds enhanced safety and security systems and technology improvements to protect, serve and prepare our students for the future. This is new to PSD but common in many neighboring districts.

School safety and security were very clear top priorities for our families and community during our strategic plan engagement process. Our state provides no funding for safety and security projects, so this will dedicate funds for these projects and equal technology access across our school district.

Together, these two levies provide essential funding for PSD programs and staff, and our total local school tax rate will be less than today. Our school board was careful and deliberate in their decision to not increase the local school rate. The Peninsula School District is fiscally responsible, making essential investments in our students while maintaining one of the lowest overall education tax rates in Pierce County.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to our students in Peninsula schools. Our strong school system benefits our entire community for years to come. **Please remember to vote by February 14!**



## THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

January is National School Board Recognition Month, and we'd like to thank our Board of Directors for serving Peninsula School District's staff, students, and community. Board members are elected by local residents, and they represent five geographical areas within the district. Together, they work to oversee the school district.

For the second year in a row, the board received a Board of Distinction award from the Washington State School Directors' Association. This is given to exemplary boards who show a clear link between their leadership in applying Washington School Board Standards the and closing gaps that impact student success.

"Our school board members uphold our mission of inspiring and empowering every student, every day," Superintendent Krestin Bahr said. "They spend countless hours of unpaid time working to provide the best possible education for our students. We make a special effort during January to show our appreciation, and we recognize their contributions reflect a year-round effort on their part."

## 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.

## What is your favorite part of being a school board member?

“My reward comes in seeing students engaged in school activities that inspire and challenge them. Whether it’s a class, sport, club or activity, these experiences build within our children a connection, a sense of accomplishment and the desire to persevere.”

— **Natalie Wimberley**

“For me, it’s the collaboration between the district, members of the community, and fellow board members to accomplish meaningful goals that help our students succeed.”

— **David Olson**

“Greeting kids on the first day of school and handing out diplomas at graduation. The opportunity to participate in these major moments for so many children is an honor and a joy.”

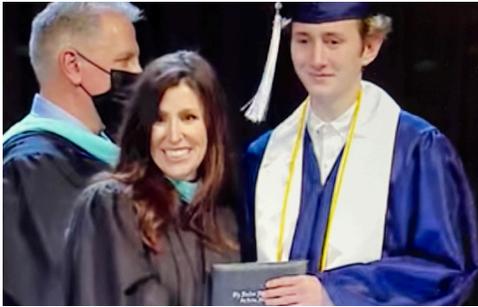
— **Jennifer Butler**

“Easily the best part of being a board member is visiting schools and seeing kids thriving! It is a special joy to see the dreams of the board become reality for the children of PSD.”

— **Lori Glover**

“Our board has a kids first attitude. We made so many positive impacts on the district during the pandemic, creating the best environment possible. Every child, every day is more than just words and I love working with people who share that passion.”

— **Chuck West**



Board President Natalie Wimberley, District 4, presents a diploma to a graduating senior during Spring 2022.



Board Director Lori Glover, District 3, presents an award and shakes the hand of retirees at the 2022 PSD Retirement Ceremony.



Board Directors President Natalie Wimberley, Jennifer Butler, and Vice President David Olson sit in the audience during the 2022 Artondale Elementary Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.



The Board of Directors and Superintendent Krestin Bahr present an award to Swift Water Elementary Office Manager Brenda Abel during a board meeting.



Board Director Jennifer Butler, District 2, helps greet students on the second day of school at Evergreen Elementary.



Board Director Chuck West, District 1, keeps one of his favorite children’s books near his microphone during a board meeting.



# DID YOU KNOW?

The Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy funds 100% of PSD's athletic programs. Washington state does not provide funding for school sports at any grade level.

## HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS BUILD CONFIDENCE AND ENGAGEMENT ON AND OFF THE FIELD

High school athletics can play a major role in helping students succeed academically and socially.

Statistics show students who participate in at least one high school sport have a GPA that is 1.21 points higher than students who do not play a sport. Student athletes are less likely to have disciplinary problems than their peers and report better emotional health.

"The benefits of our programs are many, and the statistics we gather bear that out," said Ross Filkins, Peninsula High School (PHS) Athletic Director.

"Being on a team keeps students engaged, because it motivates them outside the classroom," said Blair Suek, Gig Harbor High School (GHHS) Athletic Director. "Students have an additional adult or two as coaches in their life, looking out for them and guiding them."

Suek said many of her older athletes participate in PSD's Running Start program, which allows them to take classes at nearby colleges. Being an athlete gives them a reason to come back to GHHS and visit their friends and be a part of their high school.

"I met a lot of my best friends playing sports," GHHS senior Brendan M. said. "Sports have definitely helped me in school a lot. We did study halls, and there was a culture of 'school first, sports second.'"

"There's the community you build at school, the people you're with at practice every day. I'm with some of those girls for 3-plus hours," PHS senior Josie B. said. "Those are friendships that I really benefit from. Having something to invest in outside of your academics is so important."



## SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR STUDENTS

John Stratton drove a school bus during his college years, before starting his career in California as a fisherman and a mass transit train operator. After retiring at 55, he decided driving a school bus would be a great part-time retirement gig.

“The hours are good and so are the benefits,” Stratton said. “But also the everyday interactions with the kids and seeing how they mature and grow during the year. And some of the funny stories they tell, you really get to know them.”

Stratton drives Peninsula School District (PSD) students from elementary through high school on bus number 104. He loves seeing how students grow throughout the year, especially kindergarten students who are new to riding a school bus. Stratton sees his role as more than just a chaperone, but as one of the first and last adults students interact with during the school day.

“With all my kids, I set the bar really high,” Stratton said. “I once had these twin kindergarten kids on the first day, and their dad wanted to bring them on the bus. But I told him ‘Let me take them for their first day, they’ll be okay.’ He looked nervous but now he knows his students can handle this.”

Stratton says he has relationships with the students who ride his bus route, and he thinks helping them behave well on the bus helps them learn how to navigate social situations. These relationships can end up leaving lasting relationships. Stratton remembers one student back in California who made a lasting impression.

“There was this kid who would get in trouble often and have to sit up front near me,” Stratton said. “We would have long conversations, and he rode my bus for a few years. About 10 years later, I saw him working the counter at a store. He told me he remembered our conversations and wanted to thank me.”

Stratton said the schedule leaves him with a lot of time for his day-to-day activities and the guaranteed time off.

“I’ve worked jobs where you work weekends and you have to work the holidays. And it might be kind of quirky hours with a split shift, but you get a lot of time off to do the things you want to do, which is really cool,” he said. “You can do a job that is rewarding, but still have time yourself. And it gets you out. It keeps you busy.”

**PSD is currently hiring full-time and part-time bus drivers. No experience is required, and paid training is provided. Drivers start at \$25 per hour. Visit [psd401.net/employment](https://psd401.net/employment) to join the team!**



PSD bus driver John Stratton with his wife Colleen Stratton.



### DID YOU KNOW?

A fleet of 63 buses transport approximately 4,500 students each day to and from school. PSD school buses travel an average of 6,800 miles a day. That’s over 1.2 million miles in a school year.





**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Safety, Security and Technology Levy will ensure equal access to technology for all PSD students.

## INNOVATIVE TEACHING PREPARES STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Teaching kids how to be innovative starting in elementary school is a way to prepare them for a technological future.

“Technology in the classroom is so important for our students’ future,” said Katie Crowell, a 5th grade teacher at Purdy Elementary. “Especially at this young age, they are such sponges and have already become so technically savvy in the classroom.”

Justin Towner teaches Innovation at Pioneer Elementary, Peninsula School District’s (PSD) first magnet school which emphasizes STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math). Towner uses technology to give students the opportunity to innovate and experiment with ideas and to create solutions to real-world problems. Students have 3-D printed designs to help pet owners entertain their furry friends and learned basic coding to build new worlds inside a video game.

“I have a unit where students design a miniature golf course and then code robots to work through the course,” Towner said. “It is a great example of students working through the engineering process and applying the mathematics of angles, durations, and speed to solve problems. To watch them do that in an environment where they’re engaged and having fun is always exciting.”

Crowell’s students use Chromebooks regularly to research topics for in-class projects, create their own videos, and explore new concepts. Students and educators across the district will receive classroom technology improvements if the proposed Security, Safety and Technology Levy is approved by voters in February.

“The levy will fund a variety of STEAM and technology-based resources for teachers and students, such as 3-D printers, robotics, coding, Promethean Boards, and more, that teachers can use to increase student learning,” Towner said.

PSD is proud to emphasize STEAM learning from Kindergarten through 12th grade and is continuing efforts to expand technology resources to every classroom.

# GMSTECH CLUB STATE FINALIST IN NATIONAL STEM COMPETITION

The Goodman Middle School (GMS) Tech Club was awarded a \$2,500 prize package as one of 300 state finalists in the 13th annual Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition.

Solve for Tomorrow is a national competition that challenges U.S. public school students in grades 6 through 12 to explore the role science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) can play in solving some of the biggest issues in their local community.

Jennifer De Groot, one of the Tech Club advisers, said her students were inspired by a recent interaction with a substitute teacher.

“The sub was not able to figure out how to connect their laptop to project a video I had prepared,” De Groot said. “The students had an idea to create a helper app for teachers and substitutes who are having trouble with technology.”

The proposed app would contain information about the most commonly used curriculums. It would have a troubleshooting section for common problems and could help with device connection issues.

“This will allow for smoother transitions between substitutes and teachers and cut down on learning loss,” the students wrote in their proposal.

To advance in the competition, the GMS Tech Club must submit a lesson plan detailing their project and how it will directly address their chosen issue. Fifty state winners will advance to the next phase of the competition and receive \$20,000 in technology and supplies. One of the 50 state winners will be chosen as the Sustainability Innovation Award Winner and will receive a \$50,000 prize package.



## STEAM AND TECH CLUBS BRING STUDENTS TOGETHER

A group of students meet each Tuesday after school at Kopachuck Middle School (KMS) to learn new concepts, solve problems, and make constellations out of marshmallows and toothpicks.

The KMS STEAM Club started four years ago and has grown to include students in all grades who enjoy learning new skills and being innovative beyond the classroom.

Advisers Eileen Schurer, Joseph Haworth, and Jesse Ernst oversee the club and present them with new projects. They run the club on a three-year cycle, so students don't repeat any projects during their time at KMS.

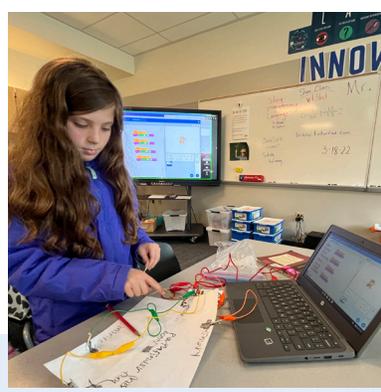
“These students don't have a lot of classes where the grades are mixed,” Schurer said. “They are building relationships, and we are trying to expose them to as many projects as possible.”



# PSD LEVIES

EVERY CHILD EVERY DAY

[PSD401.NET/LEVY](http://PSD401.NET/LEVY)



## REPLACEMENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & OPERATIONS LEVY PROPOSITION 1



- ☑ Replaces the expiring 2020 Educational Programs & Operations Levy
- ☑ Supports programs, staff and student resources not fully funded by the state and accounts for 18% of the district's overall budget
- ☑ Funds nurses, counselors, athletics, special education staff, paraeducators, transportation, arts, music, preventative maintenance, early learning and highly capable

## SAFETY, SECURITY & TECHNOLOGY LEVY PROPOSITION 2



- ☑ Creates dedicated funding to better protect, serve and prepare our students
- ☑ Funds secure building access controls, emergency communications, security cameras, cyber security, student and staff computing and classroom instructional equipment
- ☑ Equal access to technology is essential to prepare all students for the future

**Together, our levies provide essential funding for Peninsula School District programs and staff.**

### ESTIMATED LEVY TAX RATES PER \$1,000 OF ASSESSED VALUE



**VOTE BY**  
**FEBRUARY 14, 2023**



**DID YOU KNOW?**

The state does not fund any safety and security projects.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Bonds are for building and levies are for learning. The 2019 bond provides quality, flexible spaces for learning and future growth for PSD's schools. This would not have been possible without the support of our voters. *Thank you!*

### RENOVATED CLASSROOMS, GYMNASIUMS STIR EXCITEMENT AT KOPACHUCK AND KEY PENINSULA MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Construction is ongoing at Key Peninsula Middle School (KPMS) and Kopachuck Middle School (KMS), and staff and students are seeing glimpses of what their schools will look like in the near future.

The Peninsula School District was able to modernize and add more classrooms to KPMS and KMS using funds from the 2019 Capital Bond. This was due to cost-saving steps made by the district, additional state assistance for Swift Water Elementary, and accelerated elementary construction. All four elementary schools were completed by the end of 2021.

Students and staff at KMS and KPMS have been flexible while attending school around the ongoing construction. In December, the new gymnasium opened at KMS. Construction was also completed on the new Career and Technical Education room and new art room.

"You could feel everyone's excitement right before it opened," KMS Principal Kelsey Parke said. "The teachers are relieved to have new spaces. The gymnasium makes the building feel a lot bigger."

At KPMS, the gymnasium and front office space are expected to be completed throughout January, according to Director of Capital Projects Patrick Gillespie. The kitchen and the commons area will also open up more in January, and students can expect to start using the main front entrance of the school.

Parke, just like other middle school staff and students, said she is very excited for the new buildings, which are expected to be completed before the 2023-2024 school year.

"Seeing the progress that we're making so far is awesome. The incredible technology and updates to classrooms, and what that brings to the feel of a learning space is great. We're just really looking forward to everybody having a place to create our own community," Parke said.





## DID YOU KNOW?

### STUDENTS OF ALL ABILITIES CREATE FRIENDSHIPS DURING SWIM CLASS AT GHHS

**Washington State does not fully fund the mandated special education programs, including paraeducators, who serve our most vulnerable students. Paraeducators and programs like Employment Training and Transition are funded by the EP&O Levy.**

Wednesday and Friday are the best days of the week for a group of students at Gig Harbor High School (GHHS), who get together each week to swim and play at the school's pool.

Happy pop music loudly plays in the background as Employment Training and Transition (ET&T) students and general education students swim together as a part of their P.E. class. ET&T is a special education program provided by PSD to help high school age students learn skills that will benefit them after graduation.

ET&T focuses on functional academics, daily living skills, and vocational skills. Students prepare for post-graduation goals both in the high school setting as well as in the community. GHHS paraeducators and teachers say the integrated swimming class is a wonderful way for the students to meet their peers and get to know each other.

"The [general education] kids can really be behavior models to our kids and get them excited to try different things," said Paraeducator Frankie Hacker. "They're more comfortable with each other, and swimming lets them relax around their peers. Our students then make better connections that way. They bond and become friends."

To an outside observer, swim class looks like a group of students just having free play in the pool, but for both the general education students and ET&T students there is a lot of learning going on. GHHS P.E. Instructor William Landram is the school's swim instructor and chooses which of his students to ask to join the integrated swim class.

"It gives the general education students a chance to do something for others, and gain some empathy, and it gives the ET&T kids a chance to work with others and get guidance from their peers," Landram said.

Landram teaches P.E. for the ET&T students throughout the year. When they aren't swimming, they are learning tennis, relay races, yoga, and more. Swimming, Landram said, is a great exercise for anybody no matter their physical abilities.

"Some of our students have physical disabilities where it's difficult for them to move their body. But the water provides an easier way to move around. It can be therapeutic," he said.

Senior Christian P. plays multiple sports for GHHS including football and basketball. He swims each Wednesday and Friday with the ET&T students and some of his fellow teammates, and says it's something he looks forward to each week.

"It's just super fun," Christian said. "The other students are funny, we teach them a little bit of swimming but mostly we just get to have fun."



PSD has 55 full-time custodians to clean 2,123,211 square feet, which includes 17 schools and 7 support buildings. PSD also has 6 building maintenance employees, 3 HVAC employees and 5 grounds technicians.



## DID YOU KNOW?



The state only funds 0.62 psychologists. The EP&O levy funds 11.4 psychologists. The state only funds 4.88 nurses. The levy funds a health professional at all 17 schools.



GHHS Nurse Pauline Schembs

## SCHOOL NURSES EXTEND CARE BEYOND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Gig Harbor High School (GHHS) Nurse Pauline Schembs has worked as a school nurse for the Peninsula School District for a decade. She fell in love with the role and has found ways to expand her reach beyond providing basic health care. During the past few years, Schembs has helped many students who are facing increased anxiety.

"We've almost tripled the number of visits we've seen here in the health room for kids that are having anxiety and emotional issues," she said. "I want to be a resource for those kids."

Schembs said many students enter her room with a headache or an upset stomach, which could be signs of anxiety or stress.

"Some kids can't identify the headache they get everyday during math class is related to anxiety. I see how they are feeling and if it's a situational thing," Schembs said.

In her health room at GHHS, Schembs has a comfortable space for students to lay down. She has a basket of "goodies" that students can take items from to help them relax. She also provides the basics of every health room, first aid kits, medication and more.

Schembs works as a bridge to the counseling office, for students facing the physical ailments caused by anxiety and stress. While many of today's kids have a better understanding around

mental health, they might not have the skills to recognize the signs of stress themselves, and therefore don't seek help from school counselors.

"I think we have a really good support team," Schembs said. "We all kind of tend to know which kids are struggling, so we do wraparound services to give them the emotional support, or whatever it is they need that day."





*The Compass is produced by the Peninsula School District.*

Peninsula School District Board of Directors: Natalie Wimberley, David Olson, Lori Glover, Jennifer Butler, Chuck West | Superintendent: Krestin Bahr

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