

# Richland Schools

## Office of the Superintendent

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### Memorandum

**Date:** 9/22/23  
**To:** School Board  
**From:** Shelley Redinger  
**Subject:** Friday Packet

Enclosed please find the following documents:

- Board Dates to Remember
- Community Events/Activities
- 8<sup>th</sup> Annual "Take Strides" Suicide Prevention Walk Flyer
- Special Education Family Resources Fair Flyer
- Media



**TO: Board of Directors**  
**RE: Event Dates**  
**DATE: 9/22/23**

**September:**

- **9/26...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
  - **5:30-Grievance Hearing-Bd. Ex Room**

**October:**

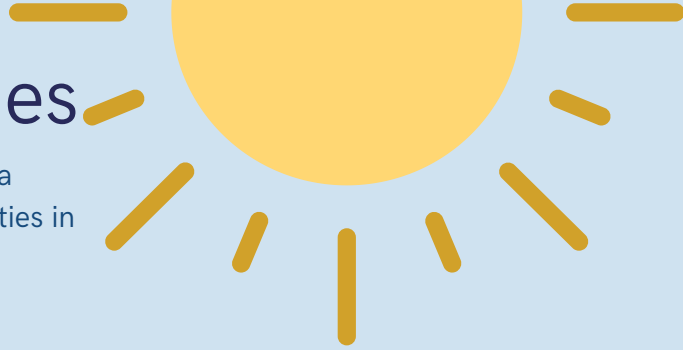
- **10/17...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
  - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**
- **10/31...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
  - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**

**November:**

- **11/14...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
  - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**
- **11/28...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
  - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**

# Upcoming Events/Activities

This list is suggestions of RSD and community events to attend as a Board Member. By no means is it a comprehensive list of all activities in the District. Future events will be added weekly.



## September

**Monday  
25**

**What Does It Mean To Be  
Hi-Cap? Presentation**  
6:00 - 7:30 PM  
Hanford High Auditorium

**Wednesday  
27**

**8th Annual "Take Strides  
TC" Suicide Prevention Walk**  
5:00 PM  
Fran Rish Stadium and John Dam  
Plaza

## October

**Wednesday  
4**

**PTO Fun Run**  
2:00 - 3:30 PM  
Homelink Main Campus

**Friday  
6**

**Cane Quest Northwest**  
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
Leona Libby Middle School

**Saturday  
7**

**Cavalclade of Bands**  
Time: To Be Announced  
Lampson Stadium, Kennewick  
[www.cavalcadeofbandswa.org](http://www.cavalcadeofbandswa.org)

**Thursday  
12**

**RSD Facilities  
Community Update**  
12:00 PM  
Zoom

**Thursday  
12**

**Family Resources Fair-  
Special Education Dept.**  
6:00 - 7:30 PM  
TLAC

**Thursday  
12 -**

**Saturday  
14**

**One Acts Festival**  
7:30 - 10:00 PM  
Hanford High School  
[www.hanforddrama.org/](http://www.hanforddrama.org/)

**Tuesday  
17**

**College and Career Expo**  
5:00 - 7:00 PM  
Hanford High School

**Wednesday  
18**

**College and Career Expo**  
5:00 - 7:00 PM  
Richland High School

**Tuesday  
24**

**RHS Fall Choir Concert**  
7:00 - 8:30 PM  
RHS Auditorium

**Thursday  
26**

**Fall Red Cross Blood Drive**  
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM  
Hanford High School  
(Small Eyrie Gym)

**Hanford + Richland High  
Athletic Events Calendars**

[www.hanfordathletics.com/events](http://www.hanfordathletics.com/events)

[www.bomberathletics.com/events](http://www.bomberathletics.com/events)

Crisis hotline:

988

Crisis Response:

(509) 792-1747



Crisis Text Line:

Text HEAL to 741-741

For more info:

[Chandra.Markel@rsd.edu](mailto:Chandra.Markel@rsd.edu)

# 8th Annual "Take Strides TC" Suicide Prevention Walk

Hosted by the Richland School District and the Tri-Cities Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition (YSPC)

**Wednesday, September 27, 2023, 5:00 PM**

**Begin & End:** Fran Rish Stadium Parking Lot

**Gathering:** HAPO Community Stage for food, music, t-shirts, speakers, and community vendors!

**Attire:** **Wear Yellow for Suicide Prevention or represent your school or business**

**Use hashtag #TakeStridesTC on Social Media!**

**Use pictures of the walk!**

**Remembrance, Community Awareness and Prevention**



RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT'S  
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PRESENT

# FAMILY RESOURCES FAIR

MAKING CONNECTIONS

**THURSDAY, OCT. 12 • 6-7:30 P.M.**

RSD Teaching, Learning & Administration Center  
6972 Keene Road, West Richland, WA

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Join RSD's Special Education Department for the first annual Family Resources Fair! **Make connections** and discover new resources from more than 30 local and state organizations. All ages are welcome at this free event. A light dinner will be available for attendees. Childcare will be provided by the Richland High School Key Club.



# Richland School Board appoints 2 to vacant seats



COURTESY RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bonnie Mitchell interviews Wednesday for the vacant Position No. 1 seat on the Richland School Board.

BY ERIC ROSANE  
*EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM*

Richland, WA

The Richland School Board chose community connections over other traits when deciding at a special meeting Wednesday night who should fill two vacancies.

After two hours of public interviews and multiple closed-door executive sessions, the three-member school board voted unanimously to appoint Bonnie Mitchell to Position No. 1 and Brianna Watson to Position No. 4.

Watson will serve until the general election results are certified on Nov. 28. Mitchell will serve a two-year term, and will have the chance to run for election if she chooses in 2025.

The appointments stem from the success of an Aug. 1 recall election, when a majority of the five school board members — former members Semi Bird, Audra Byrd and Kari Williams — were removed from office over an illegal COVID mask vote.

One of the board's top priorities this fall will be to approve a bond package to build a third high school in West Richland. While the school district already has begun the planning process, they will need to earn the support of parents and voters next year in order to make that building a reality.

Board President Rick Jansons said it was that "deep community connection" that made Mitchell and Watson stand out.

"I think that was the tipping factor for the board members," he said.

Mitchell was selected among a group of four candidates.

She and her six kids are products of Richland schools. Mitchell also is a longtime Richland High School volunteer and served 12 years as president of the Bomber Booster Club.

Mitchell said the board's effectiveness will come in its ability to cooperate with one another and listen to opposing viewpoints to act in the benefit of students.

"I would judge my effectiveness on the school board as Richland schools being a place where people want to be," Mitchell said.

Watson works as an engineer and serves as co-chair of the district's Parent-Guardian Advisory Committee. She also previously served as vice president of the Jefferson Elementary PTA.

She was selected among a pool of five candidates.

Raised in Arkansas, Watson said she saw peers graduate from high school who didn't know how to read.

"I recognize how great a district we are. And I appreciate that we invest in our students and that our community believes in our district," she said. "Growing up with folks in that community, it was heartbreaking to see that education was not as well supported as I have seen it here."

These two appointees will take their oath of office and be sworn in at the next meeting on Sept. 26. The board will be made whole after nearly a month.

The Aug. 1 recall election initially crippled the school board's ability to form a quorum and hold meetings, so local Educational Service District 123 appointed Lindsay Lightner to the board to give them the three-member majority they needed.

Jansons and the board urged all candidates interviewed Wednesday night to register and run for the school board once their seats are up for reelection again in two years.

"This was a hard decision, and that was echoed by all three of us," Jansons said. "But I think with this board the community can look forward rather than dwell on the last few years and COVID. We're moving forward again with a student-centered board."

The board also interviewed Ron Higgins, Heather Cleary, Tony Gonzalez, Gary Wargo, Jeffrey Dennison, Rick Raymond and Katrina Waters for the two seats.

# Kennewick High School locked down after teen robbery suspect ran inside

BY CAMERON PROBERT  
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Kennewick, WA

A teen triggered a lockdown at Kennewick High School after beating up another teen for their shoes.

Police were called to the school just before 10 a.m. Wednesday after the robbery, Kennewick police said in a release. The suspect went into the school after taking the shoes.

The school was locked down in response to the robbery.

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Kennewick police and the school security found the suspect, who was a student, inside a classroom in the school, and he was arrested without incident.

He was booked into the Benton-Franklin Juvenile Detention Center on suspicion of second-degree robbery.

*Cameron Probert: 509-416-6478, @cameroncprobert*

# Richland School District adds over 200 students for fall

BY ERIC ROSANE  
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Kennewick, WA

Richland School District is seeing a small jump in enrollment as students returned to classes earlier this month in the Tri-Cities.

The district added more than 200 students this fall, a sign welcomed by administrators after many public schools saw a sluggish rebound in enrollment following the COVID pandemic.

Other local school districts, however, haven't seen the same gains.

School building administrators started their first head count of the 2023-24 school year on Sept. 7.

Roughly 13,990 students were counted in Richland and 18,276 were counted in Pasco.

Districts count heads on the first school day of each month. The next count will be Oct. 2.

Enrollment is important because it's tied directly to public education funding. For each full-time pupil sitting at a desk, schools receive thousands of dollars in general education apportionment from the state.

Districts also receive funds from other sources, such as the federal government, local taxpayers and from fees and other programs. But that enrollment apportionment makes up a large chunk of the total revenue that local school districts receive to operate.

As of Monday, the Kennewick School District was still working to finalize enrollment data from this month's count and couldn't provide a projected enrollment.

The school district has budgeted for 18,450 full-time students in the 2023-24 school year budget, which is about the same as last year.

Vic Roberts, Kennewick's executive director of business operations, previously told the Tri-City Herald over the summer that the district is still missing about 300 full-time students when compared with pre-COVID enrollment.

## CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT

Here is the year-over-year change in enrollment as compared with fall 2022 headcounts.

- Richland: +215 students, or +1.6%.
- Pasco: -114 students, or -0.6%.
- Kennewick: Data not available.

Pasco staff are actively reaching out to parents whose children are currently enrolled but have not yet attended classes, said Anna Tensmeyer, the district's director of public affairs.

"Our primary objective is to ensure that every student within our district has the opportunity to benefit from the exceptional educational resources and supports we offer," she said.

This school year, Pasco also has 57 fewer general education and 15 fewer special education teachers working.

Meanwhile, the number of certificated general education teachers in Richland schools has mostly stayed the same, said Shawna Dinh, the district's public information officer.

It's too early to tell what Richland's enrollment gains mean for the medium-sized school district, Dinh said. It's the first school district among the Tri-City "big 3" to return to pre-pandemic enrollment levels.

## STATE AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Public schools around Washington state have nearly 67,000 fewer students than they did four years ago.

Enrollment dropped nationwide by about 1.2 million students during the pandemic, with the largest declines seen among kindergartners, and states are still trying to catch up.

At the same time, enrollment at private schools, home schools and other alternative learning arrangements went up.

In Washington, more than 10,000 students enrolled in private school during the pandemic, an increase of about 17%, while 7,000 more students enrolled in home schooling, an increase of about 34%.

By some measurements, public school enrollment is expected to continue its decline.

By 2030, enrollment of students prekindergarten through 12th grade is expected to be down 5.4% from fall 2023 in Washington, according to the Seattle Times, which cited data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

That projection of declining enrollment appears consistent with nearly every state in the nation, except for Utah, North Dakota, Arizona and Tennessee.

Some demographics, including a decline in fertility rates across much of the country, are likely key factor when it comes to declining school enrollment, the Times reported.

# Tri-City schools see modest growth in latest state test scores



BOB BRAWDY BBRAWDY@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Teacher Nicole Hagner reads Countdown to Kindergarten to a new class of kindergarten students. Tri-City schools overall saw slight gains in test scores earlier this year.

BY ERIC ROSANE

EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Kennewick, WA

Tri-City schools overall saw slight gains in reading, math and science test scores earlier this year, but some students are still struggling with learning loss after months of remote learning during the COVID pandemic.

The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction released data last week from the Spring 2023 Smarter Balance Assessment and the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science.

The Smarter Balance test measures the grade-level proficiency of students who take it from the third-grade to eighth-grade, as well as in the 10th grade.

The science test is taken in the fifth, eighth and 11th grades.

A student cannot pass or fail the tests. Instead, the score is used to measure the college readiness of a student and proficiency in the subject without needing remedial learning.

“Our expectation is that all students, regardless of need, are going to learn and they’re going to grow and progress, and ultimately meet grade-level standards and graduate,” said Kennewick Superintendent Traci Pierce. “It’s not enough to look at proficiency alone, we have to look at growth.”

When deciding how well a program, curriculum or school is performing, officials also take into consideration how well students are doing in classes, engagement and retention, in-school testing, attendance and discipline data, and several other variables.

Spring 2023 testing data is available to view online and can be sorted by the state, district and school levels.

Here are the percentages showing how many students at each Mid-Columbia school district met grade-level assessment standards last spring:

- Washington state: 51% in English, 39% in math, 43% in science
- Richland: 55% English, 42% math, 42% science
- Kennewick: 48% English, 34% math, 38% science
- Pasco: 32% English, 22% math, 29% science
- North Franklin: 36% English, 26% math, 24% science
- Prosser: 34% English, 22% math, 32% science
- Columbia-Burbank: 30% English, 16% math, 33% science
- Finley: 28% English, 14% math, 30% science
- Kiona-Benton City: 20% English, 13% math, 26% science

These Tri-City schools saw the largest year-over-year improvement in the math standards:

- Rosalind Franklin STEM Elementary, Pasco
- Marcus Whitman Elementary, Richland
- Westgate Elementary, Kennewick
- Hawthorne Elementary, Kennewick
- Jason Lee Elementary, Richland

These schools saw the most improvement in English and reading standards:

- Columbia River Elementary, Pasco
- Marcus Whitman Elementary, Richland
- Rosalind Franklin STEM Elementary, Pasco
- Horse Heaven Hills Middle School, Kennewick
- Edwin Markham Elementary, Pasco

## **HALFWAY THERE**

Comparisons of math and English scores from 2019 to today show Tri-City schools are halfway to fully rebounding from learning losses during the COVID pandemic.

The pandemic's impact on student learning was clearly shown in Smarter Balance testing in Fall 2021, as the percentages of students meeting grade-level standards dropped by double digits in Kennewick, Richland and Pasco. Those results also mirrored broader trends seen across Washington state and the nation.

Today, Richland must add 6.9 percentage points in English and 8.3 points in math to be back to pre-pandemic levels.

Pasco needs to add 7.7 points in English and 7.9 points in math.

And Kennewick needs 8.7 points in English and 7.8 points in math.

"Our goal isn't to get to where we were pre-COVID, because where we were pre-COVID is not where we want to be," Pierce said. "Having less than half of students (testing) at grade level in math? I mean, that's not what we're shooting for."

Kennewick has several initiatives in the works to help address that, including adoption of a new elementary math curriculum this year and a review of district-wide literacy programs.

Pierce said schools with a higher percentage of low-income and English-learning students tend to perform worse on the Smarter Balance test, which is given in English.

As many as 38% of students in some Kennewick schools are English-language learners.

While it's helpful to use Smarter Balance findings in conjunction with other data points to see how well schools are doing overall, Pierce said the testing data alone doesn't tell the full story of how individual students are doing academically and how effective classroom instruction is.

Pasco was the only school district among the Tri-City "Big 3" to see year-over-year overall increases on the Smarter Balance and science tests.

A half-percentage point more in Pasco met English standards, 2 points more met math standards and nearly 1 point more met science standards.

"I think the challenge is it's never just one thing," said Carla Lobos, assistant superintendent of instructional services at Pasco. "When it comes to education and teaching, it's complex. If it were easy, we would all do it and have the answers."

Several variables contributed to the rise in students meeting grade level standards, Lobos said: A big push for "rigorous instruction" and social-emotional learning in the classroom, stronger support for multi-lingual learners and individualized instruction, a new K-5 literacy program roll out for both both general education and dual-language learners, and a focus on mathematics in secondary schools.

Lobos also said students, families and teachers are feeling happier and more optimistic this year with the worst of COVID in the rear-view mirror.

## **COVID LEARNING LOSS**

Tri-City school districts have already spent millions on tutoring, summer school classes and for extra staff to help address learning loss, and it's expected that those spending efforts will continue in the coming years even as COVID-era federal dollars dry up.

One estimate from Georgetown University's Edunomics Lab shows it would take more than \$77 million in math and English tutoring for the Tri-Cities to make up for the time students spent away from in-person classrooms.

"We have to meet all of our students where they're at and support them on an individual basis," said Pasco School District spokesperson Anna Tensmeyer.

The schools that saw the largest year-over-year drop of students meeting standards in the Tri-Cities were on average smaller, whiter and alternative choice schools.

The sharpest declines for students meeting math standards:

- Tapteal Elementary, Richland
- Phoenix High School, Kennewick
- Pacific Crest Online Academy, Richland
- Orchard Elementary, Richland

- Lincoln Elementary, Kennewick

The schools with the largest slide in English standards:

- Legacy High School, Kennewick
- Tapteal Elementary, Richland
- Sunset View Elementary, Kennewick
- Pacific Crest Online Academy, Richland
- Amon Creek Elementary, Kennewick

### **'ACCELERATED LEARNING RECOVERY'**

OSPI says the statewide data shows an "accelerated learning recovery" in math in nearly all grades, as well as in English language arts in elementary schools.

The new scores show "diligent recovery and acceleration efforts by Washington's students, educators and families."

But the data also reflect opportunity gaps for students who are disabled, multi-lingual learners, low-income, homeless, or are Latino, Black or Native American.

About 60% of Tri-City students live in a low-income household, and nearly half identify as Hispanic or Latino.

"Some of our students faced persistent opportunity gaps which continue to be reflected in these data," said Washington Superintendent Chris Reykdal in a statewide statement.

"Our schools, community partners and the state get better each year at targeting resources to the students who would benefit from additional supports, and in many communities, they are seeing their efforts make a difference," he said.

Washington students continue to perform similar or better than students enrolled in public schools across the U.S., according to National Assessment of Educational Progress results.

The state's eighth graders place in the top 15 states in the country for their math and reading abilities.