



Superintendent's Message

As we continue the holiday season, I want to extend a heartfelt message of gratitude and warmth to each of you. Our district is more than a collection of schools; it is a vibrant community where dedicated staff, engaged students, supportive families, and a generous community come together to create a place of learning, growth and success.

This year, we have witnessed incredible milestones and everyday acts of kindness that collectively create the supportive and enriching learning environment we are so fortunate to have. Our students continue to inspire us with their curiosity and resilience, our teachers and staff with their unwavering commitment, and our families with their invaluable support and collaboration.

The holidays are a time for reflection, for giving thanks, and for embracing our loved ones. I am thankful for

the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful community, for the chance to see our students grow and flourish each day, and for the support we give one another.

May this holiday season fill your homes with warmth, love, joy and laughter.

In service,



Dr. John Polm, Superintendent

Puyallup School District Board of Directors

- Joseph Romero, *President*
- David Berg, *Vice President*
- Maddie Names, *WIAA Rep.*
- Shannon Burch*
- Gretchen Miles*

* Sworn in at the December 4, 2023 PSD School Board Meeting.



PUYALLUP SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Tradition of Excellence

Puyallup School District 3, P.O. Box 370, Puyallup, WA 98371

Upcoming Dates

DEC 21	JAN 3	Winter Break
JAN 8		School Board Meeting
JAN 12		2.5 Hour Early Release
JAN 15		No School, MLK Jr. Day
JAN 19		School Board Study Session
JAN 22		School Board Meeting

For more information:

Puyallup School District Communications
(253) 841-8703
communications@puyallupsd.org
www.puyallupsd.org

On the cover:

2023-24 school board student representatives: (Clockwise from top left) Alejandra Gonzalez (PHS), Annabelle Pena (WHS), Michael Stella (ERHS) and Rejae' Williams (RHS).

Puyallup School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator: Gordon Brobbey, brobbg@puyallupsd.org, (253) 840-8863; 504/ADA Coordinator: Almai Malit, malitaa@puyallupsd.org, (253) 840-8849; Title IX Coordinator Staff: Amie Brandmire, brandmah@puyallupsd.org, (253) 841-8645; Title IX Coordinator Students: Gordon Brobbey, brobbg@puyallupsd.org, (253) 840-8863. 302 2nd St. SE, Puyallup, WA 98372.



Connections

Fall 2023

Community update from the Puyallup School District



Raising Student Voice

Meet the 2023-2024 School Board Student Representatives

Last year was the first school year that student representatives served alongside the school board. The goal is to elevate student voice in a way that provides perspective and experiences to the board as topics are considered and discussed.

This year's group of student representatives are: (Clockwise from top left) Alejandra Gonzalez (PHS), Annabelle Pena (WHS), Michael Stella (ERHS) and Rejae' Williams (RHS). These outstanding students were selected based on clear written communication, their ideas for gathering input from the larger student body, and a clear vision for service to the district and larger community.

Learn more about these students and their roles:

www.puyallupsd.org/boardstudentreps



PHS Student Builds American Flag Disposal Box as Part of Eagle Scout Project

Earlier this year, Alexander Christian, a junior at Puyallup High School and member of Boy Scout Troop #692, completed an Eagle Scout project to assist PSD schools in collecting and appropriately retiring American flags when they are worn and no longer able to be displayed.



Over the summer, Christian contacted our Operations Department with a special proposal regarding the storage and collection of retired flags. His solution? Creating a beautiful wooden box for the Operations team to store the flags in until they could properly be disposed of. Prior to this, the Operations team did not have an official process for storing and retiring flags, as they would collect in an informal area in the department until someone would take them to the local VFW or other community organization for disposal. Now, flags are collected in the wooden box Christian designed and built until his Boy Scout troop is notified for pickup.

In general, Boy Scout Troops may choose to retire flags in conjunction with a “Court of Honor” ceremony. After this ceremony, scouts will meet around a campfire, and retire flags by respectfully disposing of them in the fire. The ceremony includes remarks by scout members and current or former military members. Troop 692 holds a Court of Honor ceremony four times a year.

“I am glad to have had the opportunity to work with the school district in order to install a better system for the disposal of American flags across the district,” said Christian. He also thanked the members of his troop that assisted in the creation of the box, his family who supported him throughout the project, and the Operations office for their partnership.

Alexander Christian, Eagle Scout, Troop #692

PSD Strategic Plan’s Safety Focus Brings New Security Leader

This past spring, PSD adopted a new five-year strategic plan. One of the focus areas of the new strategic plan is centered on safety and security throughout the school district. This led to the creation of a district-level director of safety, security and risk management to help align and lead this important work.

Gus Wessel was hired this summer to fill the new position that was created in response to PSD’s new strategic plan, which prioritizes safety and security.

He and his family join the Puyallup community from the North Idaho area, where he had served in law enforcement for over 18 years. His most recent roles have included serving as a detective for the Coeur d’Alene Police Department (CDAPD) and as a school resource officer at North Idaho College (NIC). In his work, he has developed student threat assessment teams and been a member of NIC’s Crisis Response Unit and CDAPD’s Critical Incident Stress Management Team and Peer Support Team.

His areas of oversight for PSD include: campus security, school resource officers, emergency operations and response, physical safety, threat assessment and district risk and liability.

Wessel looks forward to the work involved to continue to improve school safety districtwide. “Moving to Puyallup has been a wonderful experience,” said Wessel. “We have some of the best people I’ve ever met working for us and I really want to help align our work so we’re all moving in the right direction and encourage a safety and security mindset.”

You can learn more about school safety and watch a recording of our recent School Safety Forum at www.puyallupsd.org/safety.



New addition to the PSD family, Gus Wessel, director of safety, security and risk management.

School Board Unanimously Approves Capital Levy for February Ballot

The Puyallup School Board took a critical step towards securing the future of education in our school district. At their Monday, October 16 meeting, the school board unanimously approved Proposition 1, a Capital Levy that will be on the February 13, 2024 special election ballot. This decision comes in response to the critical state of the Puyallup School District's Capital Budget, which is running low and projected to be depleted by 2026.

The Capital Levy would support 906 needed projects to restore, improve and replace infrastructure and systems districtwide. Without additional funding, our ability to address aging and failing systems and infrastructure is at risk, impacting teaching and learning environments for students and staff.

This marks the third attempt in two years to secure funding for these critical projects. The proposed six-year Capital Levy, totaling \$175 million, would support building, site and traffic improvements and technology infrastructure, safety, and improvements to outdoor spaces.

Passage of Proposition No. 1 would allow Puyallup School District to levy taxes over a six-year period to restore, improve, and replace school infrastructure, including:

- **Replacing** heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and equipment, plumbing, lighting, roofing and flooring;
- **Improving** energy efficiency related to Clean Buildings Act requirements; improving student, staff, and community access to technology by upgrading audio/visual classroom equipment, hardware, software, and wireless network infrastructure;
- **Updating** fire, intrusion, and security systems and equipment;
- **Improving** school grounds, fields, and junior high athletic tracks;
- **Improving** accessibility for buildings and playgrounds related to the Americans with Disabilities Act; and
- **Enhancing** pedestrian safety through improved traffic flow during student arrival and dismissal.

What happens if the Capital Levy doesn't pass?

Without this funding, the district's ability to address critically deficient buildings and sites would be impacted. If the levy does not pass, we would need to divert funds from basic education to pay for the most critical projects impacting the safety and security of staff and students. Other impacts include:

- Less than optimal teaching and learning environments.
- Continued inequitable access to technology.
- Some students continue to be excluded from playgrounds that aren't accessible by wheelchairs.
- Buildings will continue to deteriorate, creating an even larger backlog of critical projects.
- Closure of facilities to prevent safety risks to student and staff.
- Energy conservation and related operational savings would be impacted.
- Non-compliance fines resulting from the Clean Buildings Act requirements.

Capital funds are vital to care for our district assets and ensure all students have high-quality learning environments. You can learn more about the Capital Levy, find frequently asked question and see a video of the school board presentation and approval vote at www.puyallupsd.org/levy.

How would the Capital Levy be used?

The Capital Levy would support 906 needed projects to restore, improve and replace infrastructure and systems districtwide.

Building Improvements 45%

Maintaining safe and conducive learning spaces.

- Heating & Cooling
- Lighting & Electrical
- Roof Repairs & Replacements
- Portable Classroom Improvements
- Interior & Exterior Improvements
- Elevator Replacements
- ADA Accessibility Improvements
- Flooring

Technology Improvements 18%

Staying current with changing technology.

- Internet Access
- Classroom Technology

Safety 10%

Keeping schools and facilities safe

- Fire and Security Systems
- Access Controls, Security Cameras, Security Systems, & Alarms
- Districtwide Lock Upgrades
- Intercoms & Emergency Notification Systems

Site & Traffic 16%

Ensuring safe access to district sites.

- Traffic Safety
- Fences & Gates
- Field Renovations
- Paving Improvements
- Walking Paths
- Reader Boards

Outdoor Learning 11%

Supporting outdoor learning spaces.

- All-weather tracks at Junior High Schools
- Playgrounds and Fields

Tax Impact: The estimated tax rate for this levy would be \$0.87 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The total tax rate increase for a home assessed at \$500,000 would be approximately \$36.25 per month.

Top left: PSD maintains more than 221 portables districtwide. Some portables have been in service for more than 20 years.

Top right: Woodland Elementary's secondary pump malfunctioned, failing to pump waste down to the tanks, resulting in a temporary school closure.

Bottom: Aging cooling lines to the HVAC system at Karshner Elementary.



RHS Senior: Communications Intern for State Board of Education

Last year, the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) selected Rogers High School student Estrella “Star” Mendoza as one of the first SBE Communications Interns.

Mendoza, who hopes to study digital media in college, assists the SBE with community outreach and creates print and digital communication materials for families and students to help them learn more about the state board.

While her work is adding a lot of value to SBE’s communications, the internship has also allowed her to learn a lot of things that she can use as she progresses through high school, college and career.

Through various projects, such as interviewing, video editing and graphic design, she’s been able to narrow her focus on what she wants to do after high school. “When I started my internship, my sole interest was in making movies and telling fictional-narrative stories,” said Mendoza. “However, I have since found a renewed passion for storytelling and a desire to help others share their own stories/experiences through video. It’s been incredibly fulfilling to meet different people and use the SBE’s platform to share their stories.”

Additionally, Mendoza also interned with the PSD Communications Department this past summer, helping support the launch of the new www.puyallupsd.org website.



RHS Senior, Estrella “Star” Mendoza serves on State Board of Education as a Communications Intern.

Emerald Ridge Alum Umpires His First World Series



2005 Emerald Ridge graduate Quinn Wolcott (right) umpiring at an MLB game.

If you watched this year’s Major League Baseball (MLB) World Series, you may have seen a familiar face behind one umpire’s protective mask.

Quinn Wolcott, a 2005 Emerald Ridge graduate, made his World Series debut as an umpire during the series between the Arizona Diamondbacks and the prevailing Texas Rangers. Wolcott, who became the first MLB umpire from Pierce County in 2013, was the home plate umpire for game two of the series.

Earlier in the season, Wolcott added another first to his professional baseball officiating resume as he worked his first MLB All-Star game in Seattle. Wolcott also had a standout 11th season in the majors as one of the most accurate umpires in the league.

According to Umpire Scorecards, a platform that measures MLB umpire statistics, Wolcott finished the 2023 season in the following:

- Highest percent of pitches called correctly (97%)*
- 2nd least incorrect calls (172)*
- Tied for 5th most games umpired (29)
- Ranked in the top third of correct calls (4,186)

* Ranking based on umpires who worked a minimum of 20 games

Congratulations to Quinn for this amazing achievement! The PSD Community is proud of you!

Discover More!

Meet 'Millie' and 'Mini Millie' Mobile Innovation Labs

PSD’s mobile STEAM labs (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) provide the opportunity to experience hands-on activities, allowing students to explore different CTE career pathways before reaching high school. This technology is funded through the district’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department.

Foundations for Our Future Video Series

Did you know that our operations team maintain 5930 doors and 204 portables, or that our technology team powers 34,000 computers across the district? Learn more in our “Did You Know” video series.

Join Us for the January 9 PSD Patron Tour

This Patron Tour will provide attendees with an ultimate inside look into Emerald Ridge High School, Glacier View Junior High and Ridgecrest Elementary. You’ll also get a sneak peek inside our central kitchen, EdTec, print shop and warehouse.

PSD Patron Tour

January 9, 2024, 8:30 a.m. –1 p.m.



Link to these topics and the latest information by scanning the QR code to the left or visit us online at www.puyallupsd.org