

Richland Schools

Office of the Superintendent

Memorandum

Date: 1/26/24
To: School Board
From: Shelley Redinger
Subject: Friday Packet

Enclosed please find the following documents:

- Board Dates to Remember
- Community Events/Activities
- Student Advisory Notes
- Media



TO: Board of Directors
RE: Event Dates
DATE: 1/26/24

February:

- **2/6/24...Board Workshop-Board Room-4 PM**
- **2/13/24...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30 PM**
 - **Ex. Session-(only if needed)**
- **2/27/24...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30 PM**
 - **Ex. Session-(only if needed)**

March:

- **3/12/24...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30 PM**
 - **Ex. Session-(only if needed)**
- **3/26/24...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30 PM**
 - **Ex. Session-(only if needed)**

April:

- **April 1-5...SPRING BREAK**
- **4/9/24...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30 PM**
 - **Ex. Session-(only if needed)**
- **4/23/24...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30 PM**
 - **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.

January

Monday 29th:

- Parent/Guardian Advisory Meeting
6 – 7:30 PM
ZOOM

Tuesday 30th:

- STEAM Night
6 – 8 PM
Orchard Elementary Gym

February

Friday 2nd:

- Sweeney Todd - The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (*Rated PG-13*)
7 PM
Richland High Auditorium
https://gofan.co/app/school/WA25367?fbclid=IwAR0KvUGaFP_oswkWKB_2p5wIKYtJEQSwD8KsKDURPqGuhphey2INI3KJZf0
- Hello, Dolly!
7:30 PM
Hanford High School Auditorium
https://hanford.booktix.net/cart.php?action=show_pers&show_id=7&show_sec=2d7c47af4d4e4da7

Saturday 3rd:

- Sweeney Todd The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (*Rated PG-13*)
2 PM AND 7 PM
Richland High Auditorium
https://gofan.co/app/school/WA25367?fbclid=IwAR0KvUGaFP_oswkWKB_2p5wIKYtJEQSwD8KsKDURPqGuhphey2INI3KJZf0
- Hello, Dolly!
7:30 PM
Hanford High School Auditorium
https://hanford.booktix.net/cart.php?action=show_pers&show_id=7&show_sec=2d7c47af4d4e4da7

**Hanford + Richland High School
Athletics Calendars**

<https://hanfordathletics.com/events>
<https://bomberathletics.com/events>

February

Wednesday 7th:

- Hello, Dolly!
6 PM
Hanford High School Auditorium
https://hanford.booktix.net/cart.php?action=show_pers&show_id=7&show_sec=2d7c47af4d4e4da7

Thursday 8th:

- Sweeney Todd The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (*Rated PG-13*)
7 PM
Richland High Auditorium
https://gofan.co/app/school/WA25367?fbclid=IwAR0KvUGaFP_oswkWKB_2p5wIKYtJEQSwD8KsKDURPqGuhphey2INI3KJZf0

Friday 9th:

- Hello, Dolly!
7:30 PM
Hanford High School Auditorium
https://hanford.booktix.net/cart.php?action=show_pers&show_id=7&show_sec=2d7c47af4d4e4da7
- Sweeney Todd The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (*Rated PG-13*)
7 PM
Richland High Auditorium
https://gofan.co/app/school/WA25367?fbclid=IwAR0KvUGaFP_oswkWKB_2p5wIKYtJEQSwD8KsKDURPqGuhphey2INI3KJZf0

Student/Superintendent Advisory Committee

1/12/24

Notes

✓ **Welcome/Introductions**

Dr. Redinger welcomed Robert Sorensen-Executive Director of Special Education and Behavioral Health, Angie Withers and Michelle Sorensen-District Wellness Coordinators, Richard Krasner-Executive Director of Operations, and Jen Klauss-Executive Director of Secondary Teaching and Learning.

1. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Advisories

Staff members stated many programs are available to assist students with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) including Character Strong, with each building having a Character Strong Coach for support. This is the first year of Character Strong and staff were provided two days of training with their building coaches. Students gave input on Advisory periods which began this year including:

- need to build stronger relationships/connections, learn names, etc. at the beginning of the year to build culture
 - maybe have advisory daily for the first week to build relationships quickly
- success depends on teacher buy in
 - better when teachers put their own spin on topics/more preparation
- Delta High School students have “advisory” 3 times a week-which they felt might be too much
- activities are too general, change topics too often
- some students would rather have a “study period” instead
- possibly change the day of the week from Friday to Thursday or Monday?
- material for freshman-immature
- modify and make more relevant
- perhaps have teachers partner for advisories

2. Facilities Update (Information shared at Board Workshop)

Mr. Krasner stated we cannot wait to run a bond to address the Hanford High School. Plans for the project are planned to be bid during spring with the project to be completed this summer. A recent report from a demographer shared high school enrollment will not grow by as many students as predicted in the past. Students were asked for input on building a smaller core building and phasing in additions as needed. Students were asked how to populate a new high school. Options and concerns were discussed including starting with only freshman students, transitions to new high school, transportation issues, take away from high school experience, participation in extra-curricular activities, keep juniors and seniors at old school-then phase in. Students were concerned about adequate parking. Some students stated advantages to smaller schools such as better relationships with staff and students, teachers having more time to help students, and staff more able to help with mental health issues.

New FAFSA student aid form giving you headaches? CBC, WSU Tri-Cities can help



BOB BRAWDY • BBRAWDY@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Financial aid experts at CBC and WSU in Tri-Cities say students should be patient applying for the 2024-25 FAFSA.

BY ERIC ROSANE
EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Tri-City families and college students hoping to get their applications in early for federal financial aid are instead finding themselves frustrated with a new process.

The U.S. Department of Education on Dec. 31 “soft launched” a revised and [simplified Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) for the 2024-25 attendance cycle.

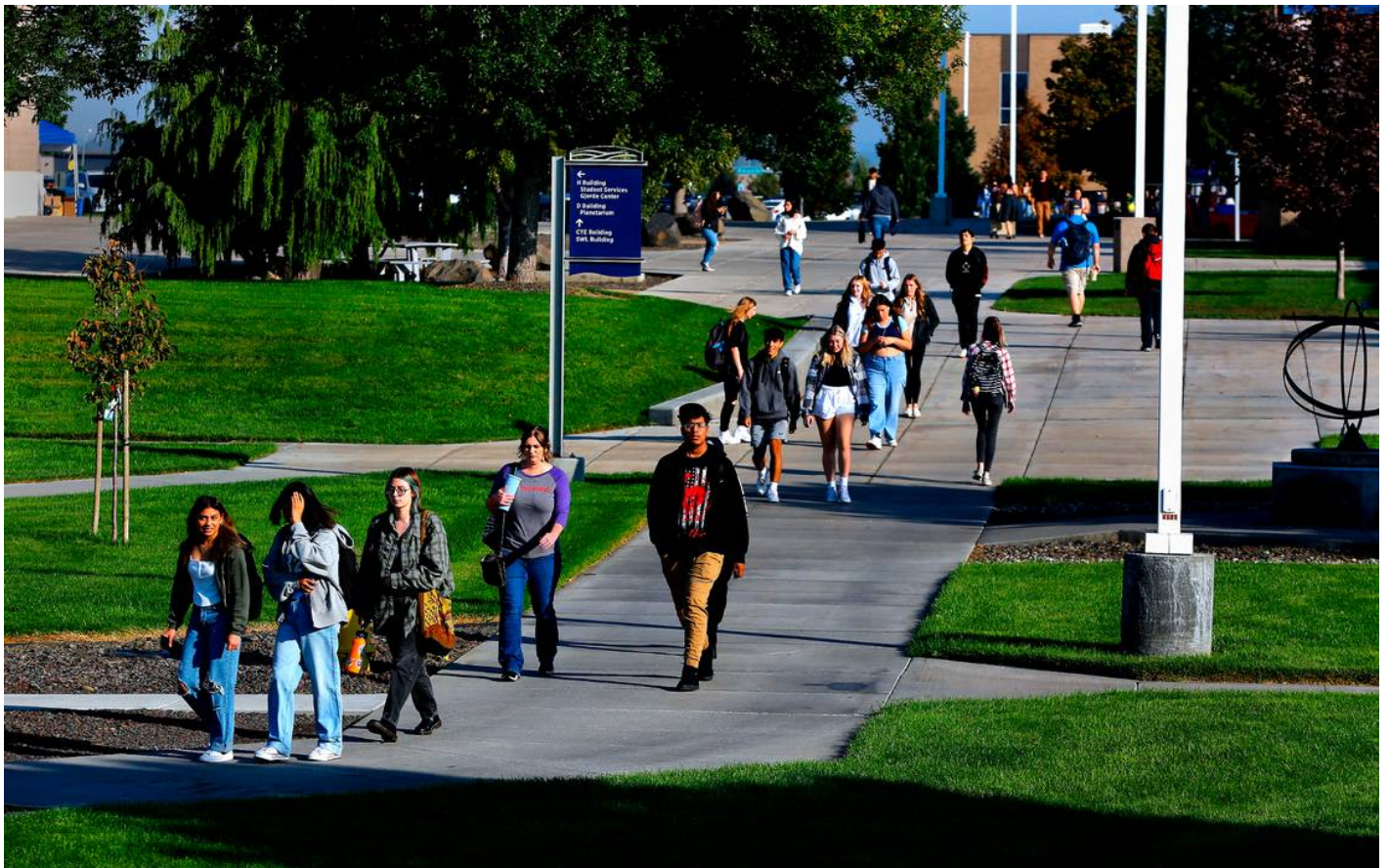
The new application — a mandate of the [2019 FAFSA Simplification Act](#) — was supposed to make the process easier for students by allowing them to skip questions in lieu of a data exchange with the Internal Revenue Service.

Instead, issues with the system have complicated and prolonged what is an annual tradition for college families. Education Week recently compared the new process to [buying hard-to-get tickets to Taylor Swift's Eras Tour](#).

Financial aid experts at Columbia Basin College and Washington State University Tri-Cities are urging students to be patient and seek assistance if they're having trouble with the new application. Many universities and colleges already have extended their priority deadlines to March.

"This is the largest change that has happened to the financial aid application in 40 years," said Melanie Casciato, CBC's director for student recruitment.

More than 14 million students are expected to file a FAFSA this year. The application — in addition to the [Washington Application for State Financial Aid](#) (WASFA) for undocumented students — opens the door financially for many students to further their education after high school.



Nearly half of all Tri-City college students are the first in their family to attend some sort of post-high school education.



But financial aid experts agree: If there's one year to delay filing your application, this one might be it.

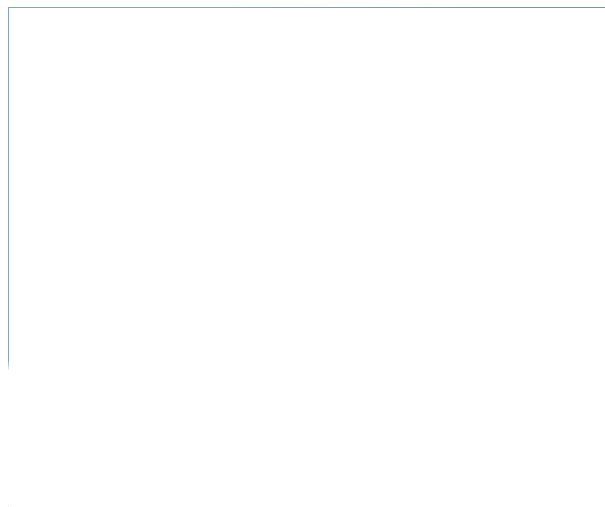
"We're really asking families to pause, let the dust settle and then we'll help you navigate these changes," Casciato said.

FAFSA application issues

The new FAFSA process has worked flawlessly for some students and shaky for others, said Jana Kay Lunstad, WSU Tri-Cities' campus registrar and director of financial aid.

Most of the issues revolve around two errors: Creating their unique Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) and getting information on the application to match the IRS data exchange.

"Students have to agree to a direct data exchange with the IRS and they're not able to manually enter their income (anymore). And if they don't agree to this direct data exchange, then they can't complete the application," Kay Lunstad said.



In some instances, students and parents have had their applications locked up because their names on the form don't match those that are filed with the federal government.

The application process has also been plagued in its first week with intermittent outages that limit access. Students are also reporting long wait times to verify social security numbers.

Kay Lunstad said they're also hearing from some parents who are not comfortable with the data exchange.

"We're trying to reassure our parents and students that this is for the students' education... It's not to be used against them, it is used solely to determine their eligibility for aid," she said.

But all these problems are not for nothing, Kay Lunstad says.



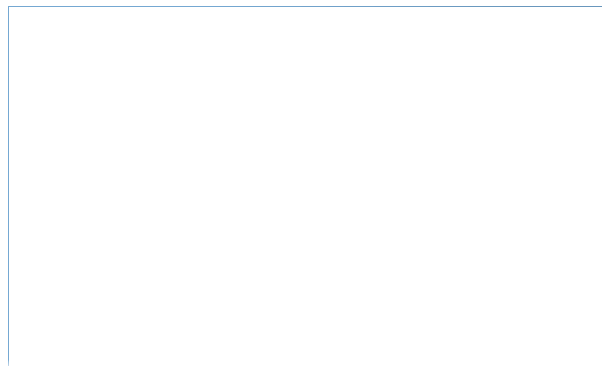
The Department of Education is actively resolving bugs and glitches, and the process is getting better. It's estimated 610,000 more students from low-income backgrounds will be eligible to receive Federal Pell Grants, essentially free money for college, as eligibility this year expands.

On the new FAFSA, students can skip as many as 26 questions depending on their circumstances.

"This is a significant change and we do believe it will benefit more students. It's just an adjustment this new year in learning the new application and helping the students through the changes," she said.

Washington state has long lagged behind others in FAFSA completion rates, [according to the Seattle Times](#).

Roughly 45% of the state's class of 2023 filed an application, ranking it 47th among the 50 United States. Nationally, about 59% of the senior class completed the form.



Financial aid experts, including Kay Lunstad and Casciato, encourage all high school seniors and prospective college students to file a FAFSA because it's the only way to find out if they're eligible for assistance.



SARAH A. MILLER • SMILLER@IDAHOSTATESMAN.COM

Financial aid help events

Need help filing your FAFSA? Experts with CBC, WSU Tri-Cities and Heritage University are available to help. CBC is hosting multiple events this month at high schools and public libraries.

Registration can be found on the listed events on CBC's public calendar at columbiabasin.edu.

- Richland School District Financial Aid Night: 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 30, at the Richland Public Library.
- Kennewick School District Financial Aid Night: 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, at Kennewick High School.
- Pasco School District Financial Aid Night: 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 1, at CBC's SWL Building.
- Regular CBC Financial Aid Assistance Events: Feb. 6 and 27, and March 12. All events 3-6 p.m. and will be held at CBC's SWL building.

WSU Tri-Cities is accepting invitations to come to high schools and will be [at future STCU events](#). The campus' financial aid department is also partnering with several school programs to help current students complete their application.

- STCU Pasco Branch FAFSA Event: 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, at 5677 Road 68.

Heritage University is also hosting several financial aid nights in the Tri-Cities and greater Yakima Valley area.

- Tri-Cities Campus Family Financial Aid Night: 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Mid-Columbia Libraries Pasco branch.

https://www.swxlocalsports.com/tri-cities-yakima/richland-bounces-hermiston-after-weather-pauses-high-school-sports-and-more-prep-hoops-notes/article_39d7ee28-b8f7-11ee-8b1b-374b75d74103.html

Richland bounces Hermiston after weather pauses high school sports and more prep hoops notes

David Graf SWX Sports Anchor/Reporter

Jan 21, 2024

High school sports took a brief pause in the Tri-Cities on Friday due to weather conditions, but they made their triumphant return on Saturday.

Richland swept Hermiston in a pair of boys and girls games.

The Bomber girls holding off a late charge from Izzy Simmons and company for a 69-64 win.

Earl Streufert's squad hit some roadblocks at first, but they were able to cruise to an 84-55 victory behind a big second half.

Big man Luke Westerfield helped power the green and gold with 19 points and 10 rebounds.

Over in Kennewick, the Lions took two from crosstown rival Southridge.

The girls soared past the Suns with a 70-39 win, and the boys outlasted the visitors 64-58.

Up in Ellensburg, there was a monster CWAC clash between the Bulldogs and Prosser.

In the girls game, Ellensburg dominated Prosser 58-41. It was the 66th consecutive victory for Tim Ravet's group.

The Mustang boys prevailed 70-55. Koby McClure notched his 1,000th career high school point in the win.

He became the eighth in program history to achieve the feat and joined his brother, Kory, who accomplished it earlier this season.

David Graf

SWX Sports Anchor/Reporter

13 elementary students, driver hurt when pickup hits school bus north of Tri-Cities

BY CAMERON PROBERT
CPROBERT@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Mattawa, WA

Thirteen elementary school students and a truck driver were taken to hospitals in the Tri-Cities on Monday afternoon after a dramatic bus crash northwest of the Hanford nuclear site.

A Wahluke school bus was taking students home about 3:45 p.m. on a rural Grant County road when a pickup truck failed to stop at an intersection, said Kyle Foreman, the sheriff's office public information officer.

Wahluke School District serves about 2,500 students around the Mattawa area. The 17 students on the bus were third- to eighth-graders headed home for the day.

As the bus approached Road 27 Southwest, thick fog obscured the driver's view of an oncoming pickup truck.

It appears the pickup truck driver also didn't see the bus and didn't stop at at stop sign, said Foreman. The bus driver tried to swerve out of the way, but they collided in the intersection with Road O Southwest.

The bus spun and flipped, Foreman told the Tri-City Herald.

Thirteen students were taken to Trios Southridge Hospital in Kennewick and Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland. None of the children had life threatening injuries.

The pickup driver, Jose Ramirez, 48, of Mattawa, had serious, but not life-threatening injuries. He was taken to Kadlec, said officials.

The bus driver, Marco Bravo Guerrero, 40, of Desert Aire, was checked by medics on the scene, but declined any medical treatment.

Cameron Probert: 509-416-6478, @cameroncprobert

High school conference lineups mostly the same for 2024-28

BY JEFF MORROW
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association executive board finalized the enrollment numbers this week, listened to appeals from some schools asking to be dropped to a lower classification, and then released the classifications for the 2024-28 school years.

The bottom line for Mid-Columbia schools is, for the most part, everything stays the same when fall starts resume in the fall of this year.

There are a few minor changes for some leagues.

Here's a look at our region's athletic conferences:

4A/3A Mid-Columbia Conference: Everything in the MCC stays the same, with it being a mix of Class 4A schools (Chiawana, Hanford, Kamiakin, Pasco and Richland) and Class 3A schools (Hermiston, Kennewick, Southridge and Walla Walla).

4A Sunnyside: The Grizzlies program will continue to play in the 4A Columbia Basin Big Nine conference. Sunnyside stays as a 4A school, and in fact the entire league returns intact. What is interesting is that four of the seven schools — Davis, Eastmont, Eisenhower and West Valley-Yakima — qualify as 3A schools. But they all opted to play up in 4A. Moses Lake and Wenatchee are the other schools in the conference.

2A Central Washington Athletic Conference: Currently a seven-school conference, the CWAC will become a nine-school conference come fall.

Both Quincy and Toppenish are moving up from 1A, coming back into a league they've played in before.

They'll be joining East Valley-Yakima, Ellensburg, Ephrata, Grandview, Othello, Prosser and Selah.

1A South Central Athletic Conference: The SCAC will drop two teams — Toppenish going up to 2A, La Salle dropping to 2B — and start the 2024-25 school year with eight members.

That will be College Place, Connell, Kiona-Benton, Naches Valley, Royal, Wahluke, Wapato and Zillah.

2B Eastern Washington Athletic Conference: The numbers shake out to 12 schools in the EWAC, so there likely will be an East and West Division.

The East Division will have the local schools: Columbia-Burbank, Mabton, River View, Tri-Cities Prep, Warden — as well as Granger likely joining them.

Walla Walla Valley Academy will drop down to 1B starting in the fall.

The West Division is Cle Elum-Roslyn, Goldendale, Highland, Kittitas, La Salle and White Swan.

The EWAC athletic directors are going to negotiate with the Central Washington 2B schools (among them Brewster, Okanogan and Tonasket) about combining state tournament berths for all sports next year.

1B Southeast League: Not sure the exact makeup for next year, but our area schools that should be involved in the league again are Dayton, DeSales, Prescott, Liberty Christian, Sunnyside Christian, Touchet, Waitsburg — and now Walla Walla Valley Academy.

Largest schools: Chiawana gets the nod as the state's largest school, with 2,379 students. Tahoma is second with 2,131, while Pasco is No. 3 in the state at 1,912 students.

That Chiawana-Pasco situation will correct itself in a few years when that third high school is built in a couple years.

PREP BASKETBALL

Mother Nature took care of most of the Mid-Columbia Conference basketball schedule this past weekend. Ice and snow took out all boys and girls games on Friday, and half of the scheduled contests on Saturday.

This coming week, most of the cancellations will be made up.

Meanwhile, here's quick recap of the games played this past weekend:

- Dane Chavez scored 18 points and Adrian Cervantes added 15 as Kennewick's boys beat Southridge 64-58 on Saturday.
- Richland's boys ran past Hermiston 84-55 on Saturday, as Luke Westerfield (19 points, 10 rebounds) and Josh Woodard (18 points, 8 assists) led the Bombers
- Monday, Ken Higgins scored 16 points to lead visiting Walla Walla's boys over Hermiston 55-43.
- In girls' play, Haylee Johnson scored 23 points and Dylun Dress added 17 as Kennewick's girls beat Southridge 70-39 on Saturday.
- Richland's girls held off Hermiston 71-66 on Saturday, as Mackenzie Schulz (18 points, 9 rebounds) and Maya Rowe (18 points, 7 rebounds) led the Bombers. Hermiston's Izzy Simmons led all scorers with 20 points, and she had 13 rebounds.
- Monday, Simmons scored 14 points and Aspyn Inners added 12 as Hermiston beat visiting Walla Walla 54-53. Miriam Hutchins and Madison Reibel both led the Blue Devils with 16 points each.

4A-3A MCC BOYS

Through games of Jan. 22

Richland (4A) 9-0 MCC, 10-3 overall

Kamiakin (4A) 9-1, 13-2

Walla Walla (3A) 8-2, 10-5

Southridge (3A) 6-4, 8-7

Kennewick (3A) 6-5, 7-8

Hermiston (3A) 4-8, 5-11

Hanford (4A) 2-8, 3-11

Chiawana (4A) 2-8, 2-13

Pasco (4A) 0-10, 0-14

Jan. 15 — Eastside Catholic 64, Richland 63.

Jan. 16 — Hermiston 68, Kennewick 57; Kamiakin 71, Chiawana 51; Richland 81, Pasco 21; Walla Walla 72, Hanford 60.

Jan. 19 — Kamiakin at Southridge, ppd.; Kennewick at Chiawana, ppd.; Richland at Hanford, ppd.; Walla Walla at Hermiston, ppd.

Jan. 20 — Chiawana at Walla Walla, ppd; Hanford at Pasco, ppd.; Kennewick 64, Southridge 58; Richland 84, Hermiston 55.

Jan. 22 — Walla Walla 55, Hermiston 43

Jan. 23 — Hanford at Pasco, 7:30 p.m.; Kamiakin at Southridge, 7:30 p.m.; Kennewick at Chiawana, 7:30 p.m.; Walla Walla at Richland, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 26 — Kamiakin at Kennewick, 7:30 p.m.; Pasco at Hermiston, 7:30 p.m.; Richland at Chiawana, 7:30 p.m.; Walla Walla at Southridge, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 27 — Chiawana at Pasco, 5 p.m.; Hermiston at Hanford, 5 p.m.; Kamiakin at Walla Walla, 5 p.m.; Southridge at Richland, 5 p.m.

4A-3A MCC GIRLS

Through games of Jan. 22

Kamiakin (4A) 9-1 MCC, 13-1 overall

Kennewick (3A) 8-3, 11-4

Chiawana (4A) 7-3, 10-5

Walla Walla (3A) 7-3, 9-5

Richland (4A) 6-3, 8-5

Hermiston (3A) 5-7, 8-8

Hanford (4A) 3-7, 4-10

Pasco (4A) 1-9, 2-12

Southridge (3A) 0-10, 4-11

Jan. 16 — Hanford 54, Walla Walla 42; Hermiston 53, Kennewick 51; Kamiakin 60, Chiawana 59 (OT); Richland 66, Pasco 37.

Jan. 19 — Kamiakin at Southridge, ppd.; Kennewick at Chiawana, ppd.; Richland at Hanford, ppd.; Walla Walla at Hermiston, ppd.

Jan. 20 — Chiawana at Walla Walla, ppd.; Hanford at Pasco, ppd.; Richland 69, Hermiston 64; Kennewick 70, Southridge 39

Jan. 22 — Hermiston 54, Walla Walla 53

Jan. 23 — Hanford at Pasco, 5:45 p.m.; Kamiakin at Southridge, 5:45 p.m.; Kennewick at Chiawana, 5:45 p.m.; Walla Walla at Richland, 5:45 p.m.

Jan. 26 — Kamiakin at Kennewick, 5:45 p.m.; Pasco at Hermiston, 5:45 p.m.; Richland at Chiawana, 5:45 p.m.; Walla Walla at Southridge, 5:45 p.m.

Jan. 27 — Chiawana at Pasco, 3:15 p.m.; Hermiston at Hanford, 3:15 p.m.; Kamiakin at Walla Walla, 3:15 p.m.; Kennewick at Central Valley, 5 p.m.; Southridge at Richland, 3:15 p.m.

Jeff Morrow is former sports editor for the Tri-City Herald.

https://www.applevalleynewsnow.com/news/student-arrested-for-bringing-airsoft-gun-to-college-place-high-school-tuesday/article_b5e858a8-baf6-11ee-9778-e7905a8ce72d.html

Student arrested for bringing AirSoft gun to College Place High School Tuesday

Morgan Huff

Jan 24, 2024



College Place High School parent is concerned about knives at school

COLLEGE PLACE, Wash. -- College Place High School administration was alerted Wednesday to a student that potentially had a handgun on them.

College Place School Administration called to the College Place police department and student resource officer to secure and detain the student.

Officials said once officers arrived to the scene, the student was taken into custody, no one was harmed.

According to officers, the student did not have a weapon in their possession at the time of the arrest but did admit to bringing an AirSoft gun to school Tuesday.

The school said it was decided to not place the schools on lockdown to avoid alerting students of the situation.

The student will be facing school disciplinary action as well as charges from the district with College Place Police Department.

ADVERTISING

Which of the following universities have you heard of? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ University of Texas at Arlington
- ☐ Western Governors University
- ☐ Grand Canyon University
- ☐ Chamberlain University
- ☐ None of the above

NEXT

“It is against school rules and state law to bring a gun of any type on a school campus and we will deal with these situations aggressively and harshly to protect our students and staff,” said Superintendent Jim Fry. “Our schools are only as safe as the individuals who are courageous enough to step up to do the right thing, and report when they see or hear something. Today, a student at CPHS did just that and we are thankful,” Fry added.

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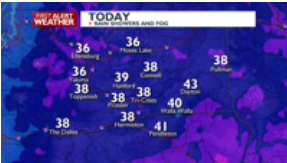
MORE ON APPLEVALLEYNEWSNOW.COM



Columbia Basin College hosts awareness campaign on human trafficking
Morgan Huff

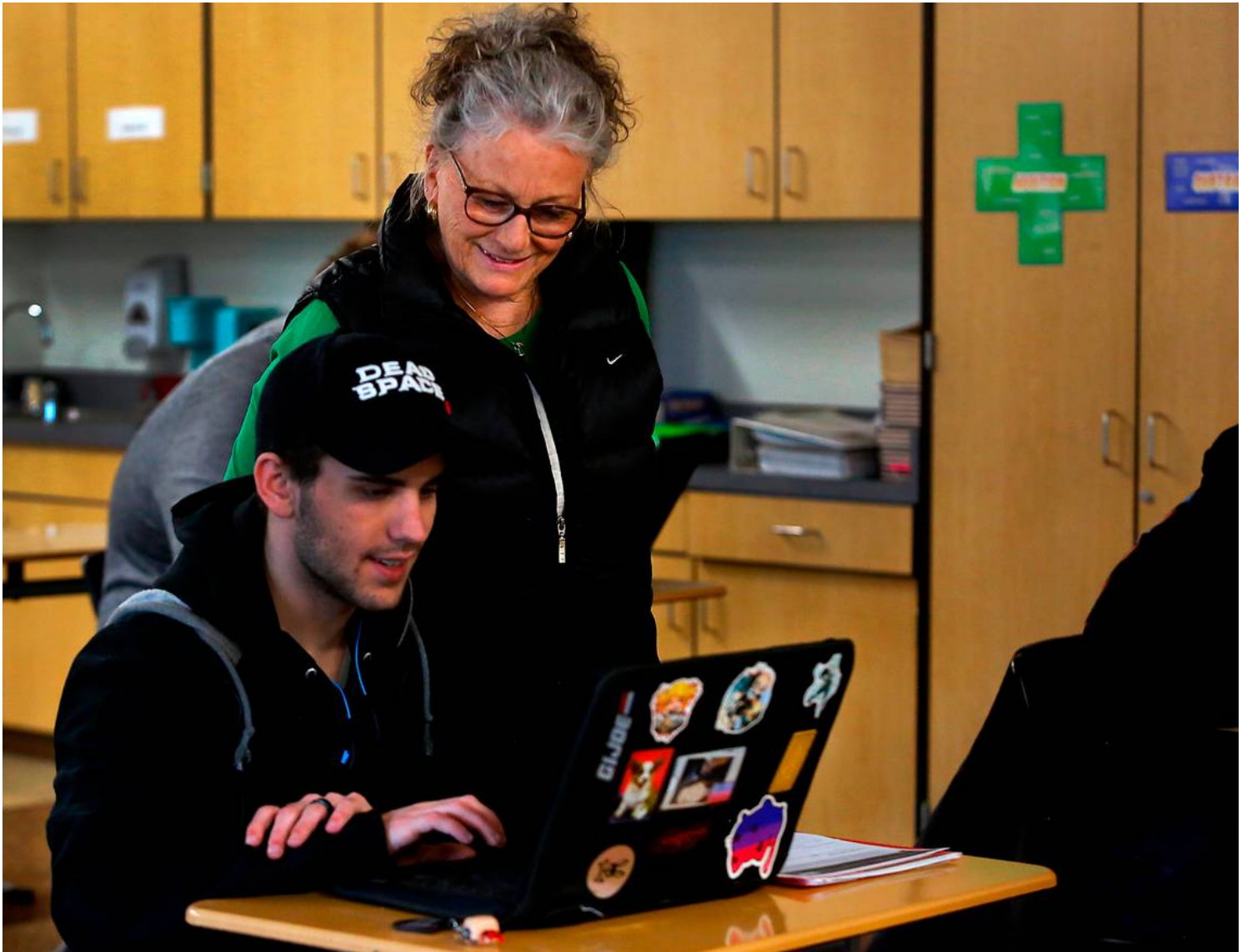


Operation Best Friend: Find Duff a forever home!
Morgan Huff



Wednesday Weather Forecast: Freezing fog advisory this morning, rain on the way
By Rylee Fitzgerald

With schools nearing paraeducator 'labor crisis,' state lawmakers look at ways to raise pay



BOB BRAWDY • TRI-CITY HERALD FILE

Special education paraeducator Nan Duncan helps Richland High student George Murray last year. The Legislature is considering pay increases for paraeducators statewide.

**BY ERIC ROSANE
EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM**

If there was a vehicle that embodies the grit and grind of Cindy Bampton's job, it'd have to be her trusty 21-year-old Dodge Grand Caravan.

It's the quintessential "mom van" and it "gets the job done," Bampton says with a smile.

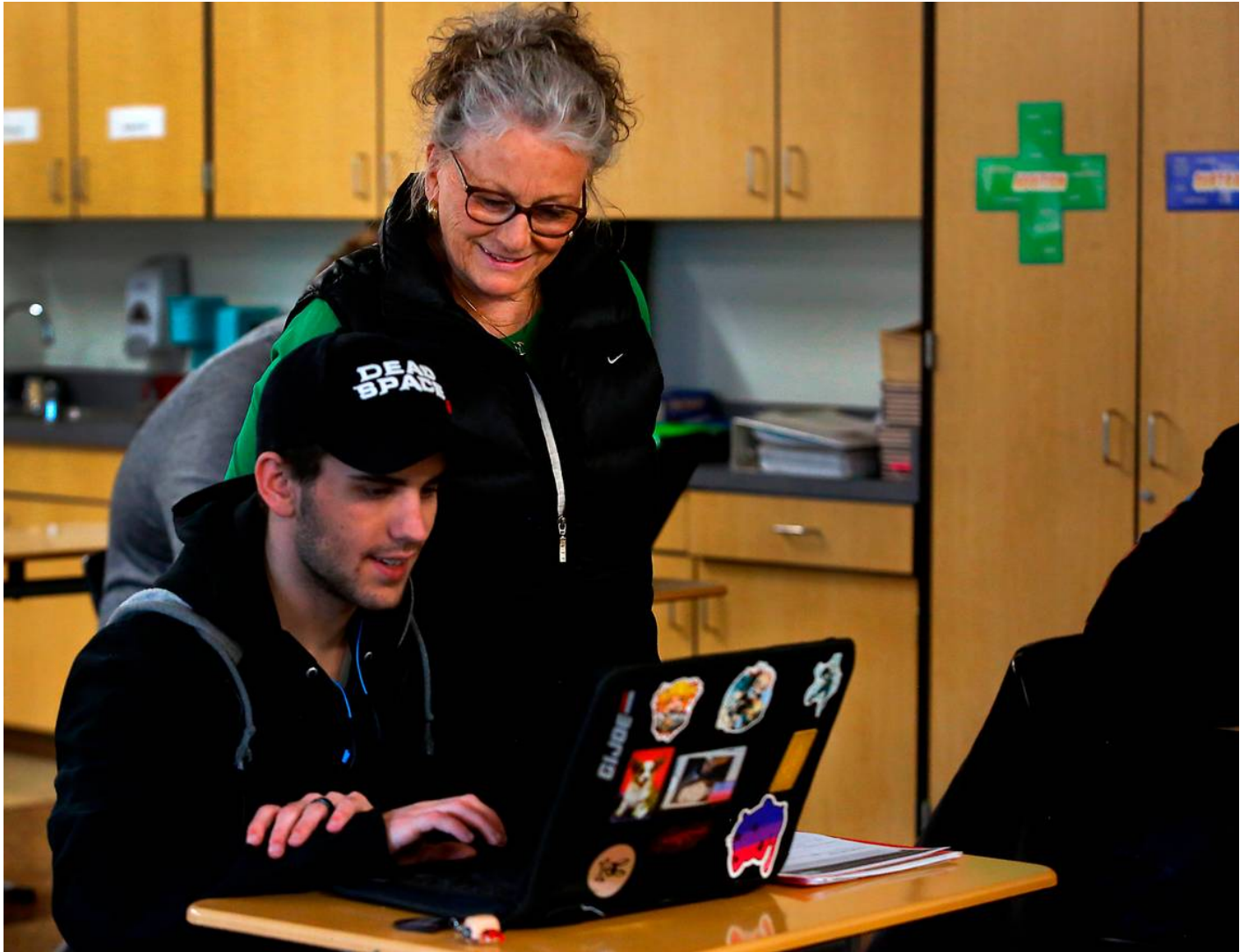
“It conquers the snow, which I love. And I have a fabulous mechanic that just keeps it going for me because his wife is para and she drives the same car. And he goes, ‘I know you can’t afford a car payment. We’ll keep it going,’” she said.

Bampton hopes to buy a new van some day, but can’t on the \$21.80 hourly wage she makes as a kindergarten paraeducator at Desert Sky Elementary in the Richland School District.

Paraeducators — or paraprofessionals, as they’re sometimes called — are classified public school employees who work in classrooms, alongside teachers, to provide direct instructional support to students.

Roughly 1-in-5 school district employees in Washington state are paraeducators, for a total of nearly 38,000.

In the Tri-Cities, more than 1,300 paras to help support public instruction.



BOB BRAWDY • BBRAWDY@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Special education paraeducator Nan Duncan helps Richland High student George Murray in this 2023 file photo. The Washington Legislature is considering pay increases for paraeducators statewide.

While they’re not certificated like teachers, paraeducators are often seen as the backbone of classrooms.

Public school teachers must hold degrees and a teaching certification to be hired in Washington. At a minimum, paraeducators must have a high school diploma and either have an associate’s degree, some college credits, an apprenticeship experience or have completed a paraeducator assessment.

They do a little bit of everything in their support role, including facilitating one-on-one and small-group tutoring, mentoring students, helping life skills students, supporting teachers in instructing students, communicating with families, and are outside supervising students on lunch breaks and recesses and at crosswalks.

But paras are also among the lowest-paid employees in a school building, with some districts paying them only a few bucks above the state's minimum wage. Many say they are forced to work other jobs to get by financially.

While many paras say they feel passionate about the work they do, they also report feeling expendable, burnt out and that their work goes mostly unnoticed. They also put their bodies on the line when responding to student outbursts, bullying and fights.

"I've been spit on. I've been shoved down. I've been kicked," Bampton said.

Senate Bill 6082

Lawmakers in Olympia are considering several proposals in the 2024 legislative session to raise paraeducators pay.



BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT • COURTESY TO THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

The Washington Legislature is considering pay increases for paraeducators statewide. Life skills paraeducator Libby Chenault is shown here during the 2018-19 school year at Carl Cozier Elementary School in Bellingham.

Chris Reykdal, Washington's superintendent of public instruction, has proposed adding \$700 million through 2027 in the state's supplemental budget to increase hourly wages another \$7 to \$8.26, depending on the region. That means the minimum wage would start at \$29 an hour.

Reykdal's request was included in a piece of legislation — [Senate Bill 6082](#) — that had a hearing this week in the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education committee. If the bill doesn't pass, some of the raises could still be included in budgetary negotiations later this session.

Earlier this week, Gov. Jay Inslee spoke to some paraeducators in Tumwater, and proposed the state spend \$64 million in pay raises directly for paraeducators, equivalent to a \$3 hourly raise.

"Paraeducators touch so many lives," he later said in [a statement posted to X/Twitter](#). "They elevate the happiness and development of the kids who rely on them. And they could use a raise, so I've proposed a budget for this legislative session that includes one."

Several paraeducators and former students signed on Wednesday to testify in support of SB 6082, which had [a public hearing in the Early Learning and K-12 Education committee](#).

Reykdal said half of Washington's paraprofessional positions have seen turnover in the last five years. He characterized the issue as a "labor crisis" and said the current wages are "not sustainable" for the state's public schools.

"If we don't invest in paraeducators with a wage structure today, virtually anything in the service economy pays better because they can get more than 1,200 hours," he said.

Khalid Sirad, a high school graduate with special needs students, testified in support of the bill and said the one-on-one instruction he received was critical to his success. Para instructors helped him understand core concepts in easier terms without interrupting class instruction.

Leonardo Salas Ramos, another supporter of the bill, said paraeducators in his school taught him to be a "better man."

"They do things that nobody else would do for us people with disabilities," he said.



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Nan Duncan is a special education paraeducator with the Richland School District, shown here in 2023. The Washington Legislature is considering pay increases for paraeducators statewide.

Paraeducators in classes

Bampton has worked as a paraeducator in Richland in Southeast Washington for about 16 years.

She started as a volunteer at her children's school and soon after accepted a job as a paraeducator.

While her children are now adults, Bampton has stayed on at the school district for the love of the work and because she's dedicated to the kids. She's often the first and last to see students as they arrive and leave school.

"We give everything we have to being loving and caring and thinking outside the box for these kids, some of whom have social-emotional issues, learning disabilities, physical disabilities. I don't think any single one of us should have to work a second job," Bampton said.

About one-third of paraprofessionals nationwide report having to take on a second or third job, [according to a survey from Education Week](#). And a sizeable number also say they're on government assistance.

"We shouldn't have to get off work at 3:45, run home to eat and let the dog out, and then run to our next job, get home at 10:30 at night and do it all over the next day. It's exhausting," Bampton said.

Her husband works in manufacturing. While his income helps pay for much of the family's expenses, she's picked up a part-time retail job to pay for car repairs and to help keep their savings account healthy.

"My biggest fear is something's going to happen to him. Our mortgage is less than a 1-bedroom apartment, but still, to take on that payment plus the maintenance? And if I were to have some medical issues? There's just that constant fear of not being able to survive," Bampton said.

A substantial pay raise from the state would ease the financial stress and burden she and many of her colleagues feel on the day-to-day basis, and would help buoy them as the cost-of-living rises. Bampton says the 3% raise her union won this school year is among the largest she's received in 10 years.



STEVE BLOOM • THE OLYMPIAN

Gov. Jay Inslee visited this week with some paraeducators at Peter G. Schmidt Elementary School in Tumwater. From left are Jaime Dominoski, Evahleigh Hedin-Baughn, Kristin Sperling and Marie Butcher.

On Tuesday, Kristin Sperling, who works with special education students at Peter Schmidt Elementary School in the Tumwater School District, was among those who spoke with the governor.

“My challenges are really just being able to reach kids and meet their needs when a lot of our staff are being asked to do more and more with less resources all the time,” she said.

In her role, Sperling said instruction often goes beyond the textbooks. She’s also teaching students social-emotional intelligence, social skills and good citizenry.

Sperling comes from a military family, her husband works in field artillery at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. She says they feel comfortable with his Army pay and her \$27 hourly pay as a para.

But taxes and the cost of living continue to rise, and Sperling said that’s caused some anxiety. Plus, she’s pursuing her master’s degree to become a school counselor.

“I have been worried that if my pay stagnates, I may not be able to help my husband maintain this household, because we just bought a house,” she said.

As a union rep, Sperling says she’s also heard from several other paras who are single, living on their own and sometimes only have \$60 left to their name after monthly expenses.

“It’s catastrophic for a lot of people, frankly,” she said.