

PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT



COMPASS

Winter 2024



INSPIRING AND EMPOWERING EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY



A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT KRESTIN BAHR

As we reach the midpoint of our academic year, I want to thank you for your continued support of the Peninsula School District. Through the collaborative efforts of students, families, educators, and the broader community, we are making great strides toward achieving our strategic plan

goals, with a focus on innovation, academic excellence, and empowering students.

Building on those efforts, we are integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into classrooms, providing students with valuable exposure to emerging technologies that will shape their future. We have also prioritized early literacy by ensuring our elementary teachers have access to enhanced training, as we work to meet our objective of 100% grade-level reading proficiency.

Our students continue to blow us away with their intellect, creativity, and leadership skills. We couldn't be more proud of the collaborative problem-solving our high schoolers demonstrated at the Superintendent Student Advisory Team. We are committed to amplifying student voices and creating optimal learning environments together.

The thrilling atmosphere at recent rivalry basketball games showed our school spirit and community bonds. We must maintain focus on our student athletes' hard work and values like teamwork and integrity. By celebrating these principles from players, coaches and fans, we can build an environment where school spirit stems from sportsmanship and mutual encouragement.

Thank you for embracing what brings our school community together – the love of learning, culture of caring, and pride in our district, making PSD a wonderful place for students to grow and thrive. Together, we can inspire and empower every child, every day!



STRATEGIC PLAN



MAPPING THE COURSE 2026

Peninsula School District's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan sets the direction and priorities for the next five years.



VISION

To inspire and empower every child, every day.



MISSION

To be the best school district in the state that prepares every child to be a successful global citizen by providing innovative, rigorous programs set within a culture of belonging.



VALUES

- EXCELLENCE
- CHARACTER
- CONFIDENCE
- CULTURE
- CURIOSITY



GOALS

- ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
- INNOVATION
- FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY
- LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



GHHS AND PHS DRAMA DEPARTMENTS JOIN FOR THEATER FESTIVAL





SUPERINTENDENT STUDENT ADVISORY TEAM SHARES CELL PHONE POLICY FEEDBACK

High school students shared about issues affecting them during December’s Superintendent Student Advisory Team gathering. Facilitators led thoughtful discussions with students from Peninsula, Henderson Bay, and Gig Harbor High Schools. One of the key topics was the new cell phone policy, which prohibits students from using devices during class. Most students shared how limiting phone access has improved focus and attentiveness in the classroom. Here are some of their anonymous comments.

- **H** “I think the policy is good because I have seen the school community be brought together and make us feel more connected and seen.”
- **H** “Not being able to use my phone helps my learning and focus toward school. It keeps me on track through the school day.”
- **H** “The new phone policy is good for teachers and students. I have improved both mentally and academically a ton.”

Some students shared that they would like better enforcement of the phone policy or said that they liked using their phones for reminders or to listen to music, and others thought the phone policy shouldn’t be such a focus.

- **H** “Why is this the main concern in our schools? I wish we’d focus on community, rather than cell phones. Each student learns differently, and everyone should feel safe and heard.”
- **H** “The phone policy definitely keeps students accountable, but I would like a little more leeway.”

Thank you to our students for coming together and sharing about the cell phone policy and reviewing the State of Play report from Pierce County. The Superintendent Student Advisory Team embodies the power of student voice, and we will continue listening to our students.

In January, Gig Harbor High School and Peninsula High School came together for our district’s first ever joint theater performance: PSD One Acts. More than 80 students from the two high school drama departments collaborated to perform five student directed one-act plays.

“Our incredible students, understanding the power of the arts within their own schools, were eager to demonstrate how this could extend to inter-school activities,” said PHS drama director Bryan Bullock. “Students took the lead in running the entire show, and their collaboration resulted in a fantastic performance, showcasing their unity.”

HIGH SCHOOLERS UNITE TO FOCUS ON HEALTHY COMPETITION AND SPORTSMANSHIP



Peninsula School District has recently been working to address and support the growth of healthy competition, and recent athletic events have resulted in improved sportsmanship from fans, coaches and players. High school leadership students recently created a video to help the community focus on healthy rivalry in advance of Gig Harbor High School (GHHS) versus Peninsula High School (PHS) basketball games.

“The spirit of the game lies not just in the victories but also in the support and respect we give to each other,” PHS president Alec K. said. “Let’s set an example for everyone: players, fans, parents and even rival teams, that we can compete fiercely and still show respect. Sportsmanship and fan support is paramount to our growth as students and athletes.”

“When we come together, we’re not just rivals, we’re united in spirit,” said GHHS president Cassius V.

To maintain a healthy competitive environment, our school leaders, coaches, student leaders, athletes, fans, and community attendees must learn and grow together. Thank you to our student athletes who continue to inspire us with their work ethic, camaraderie, and integrity on and off the field.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR JAYME LENKER CONNECTS WITH MIDDLE SCHOOLERS AND FAMILIES

School counselor Jayme Lenker connects with and encourages students at Harbor Ridge Middle School every day, with a hallway conversation, a reassuring smile or a one-on-one meeting. Once students head home, Lenker takes her role beyond the school day with monthly evening workshops. The events are open to all families in our district and offer guidance on parenting and difficult discussions.

Recent topics Lenker has featured include Drug Awareness with Safety and Security Officer Brent Campbell, Executive Functioning with School Psychologist Kari Aleshire, and High School and Beyond Planning with College and Career Counselor Lillian Amrine.

“Parents have appreciated the open communication on a variety of topics and the many professionals committed to the safety and education of our students,” said Lenker.

School counselors across the Peninsula School District help students with academic concerns, social-emotional needs, student support and crisis intervention. At Harbor Ridge, Lenker works closely with teachers to coordinate small groups focusing on topics such as building friendships and helping regulate emotions. She also coordinates the after school Homework Club and Kindness and Community Service Club and helps students use the college and career readiness program, Naviance.

“Mrs. Lenker helps me express myself and with anxiety, so that when I go home I feel like I can do some things and be happy,” said 7th grader Breanna.

Recreational Therapist Justin Washington will join Lenker for this month’s parent workshop, to discuss Overcoming Obstacles in Anxiety and Depression. The workshop is on February 27 at 6:00 p.m. in the Harbor Ridge Middle School library. The following workshop is April 8, to discuss Technology and Cyber Safety with Kris Hagel, Executive Director of Digital Learning.



PLANT SALE HELPS GOODMAN STUDENTS FUNDRAISE FOR OUTDOOR GREENHOUSE

Talented gardeners at Goodman Middle School hosted the Plant Extravaganza plant sale in December, to help raise funds for an outdoor greenhouse. Students in the Options Program chose their plants, helped them thrive, researched and prepared care plans, priced their plants based on garden shop comparables and prepared custom displays.

“We love the excitement our students are showing as they become experts in learning about the benefits, care, and propagation of various plants,” said teacher Kari Hyatt. “We are cultivating plants through hydroponics and aquaponics, so it will be fun to document the differences between plants grown in soil and plants grown in water.”

Goodman received an initial \$1,000 grant from the Peninsula Schools Education Foundation, and students are raising the rest to construct the greenhouse. Options is a part of the district’s special education programming and teaches life skills and functional academics to help prepare students for high school and beyond.

“Students have measured the proposed site for an outdoor greenhouse, researched codes and footing that is ADA approved and affordable, and presented our plan to the district grounds crew,” said Hyatt, noting they are waiting on final approval for the greenhouse. “Budgeting has been a huge eye opener for our students.”

For now, students are adding additional grow lights, shelving, hydroponic stations and aquaponic stations in their classroom to continue their horticulture projects. The community is invited to visit the next Plant Extravaganza at Goodman in May.



HUSBAND AND WIFE BUS DRIVERS ENCOURAGE AND CELEBRATE THEIR 'BUS KIDS'

Husband and wife Kurt and Sue Olson are bus drivers for the Peninsula School District, and they each drive six bus routes daily: three in the morning and three in the afternoon. Sue has been with PSD since 2018 and Kurt since 2019, and they both enjoy getting to know students and appreciate the job's flexible schedule and benefits.

Our district's 62 bus drivers transport thousands of students a day and drive almost 1.3 million miles every school year. Sue drives Bus 130 for Gig Harbor High School, Goodman Middle School, Pioneer Elementary and Discovery Elementary. She worked in accounting for many years and as a business owner, and she said being a bus driver is a "fun second career."

"Our children are now grown, I feel grateful that I get to spend my mornings and afternoons with my 'bus kids,'" said Sue. "I enjoy getting to know them, encouraging them and celebrating their accomplishments."

Kurt drives Bus 125 for Peninsula High School, Harbor Ridge Middle School, Pioneer Elementary and Discovery Elementary, which allows him to still have time for his other job as a yacht broker.

"Driving a bus is a great job for anybody that needs a flexible schedule, good benefits and wants to work with a great group of co-workers," said Kurt.

"I also like that Sue and I are able to enjoy our weekends and time off together. I find that having a good rapport with the kids is a rewarding experience."

In her free time, Sue loves to collect cookbooks and cook, and Kurt likes to fish, hike and work on their house. Together they enjoy traveling in their motorhome during school breaks and riding electric bicycles with their two Shih Tzu dogs, Fozzie and Rigby.

"Our son was still in high school when we started driving," Sue said. "If you have children in the district, this is a great job to have as you have the same breaks that they do. And you cannot beat the benefits."



**THE PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT IS
HIRING FULL AND PART-TIME BUS DRIVERS!**

No experience is required, paid training and benefits are provided. Become an important and steady person for our students and help them get to and from school every day.

APPLY NOW at psd401.net/jobs.





DISTRICTWIDE COLLEGE AND CAREER FAIR CONNECTS HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS WITH FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

More than 500 students and their families attended the Peninsula School District College and Career Fair in October, which included over 80 vendors. This was our district's largest fair ever, and it was open to students of all ages from all schools.

Attendees met and visited with representatives from two and four year colleges, technical schools, internships, military branches, local businesses, medical professionals, first responders and civil servant opportunities. PSD partnered with the Tom Taylor YMCA to host this event at their facility.

"We strive to offer exposure to a wide range of future opportunities for all students," said Kelly Jackson, Career Center Specialist. Look for another districtwide College and Career Fair in the fall of 2024.

February is NATIONAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH.

We celebrate the achievements and contributions that career and technical education programs provide in preparing students for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers.



NAVIANCE HELPS STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR POST-HIGH SCHOOL PATH

A new college and career readiness program called Naviance was recently introduced at our middle and high schools, to help students complete their High School and Beyond Plan. Naviance is an innovative web-based tool that inspires and empowers every student through high school and supports their unique journey to excellence.

Naviance is the leading college, career, and life readiness (CCLR) platform that enables students to discover their strengths and interests, build critical social emotional learning skills, create actionable goals, develop career and military plans, access regional and state-specific data, and find their best-fit path and career after high school.

Naviance offers college matching tools, personality tests, career assessments and course planning, which helps students establish a course of study and make their High School and Beyond Plan.

"Naviance has helped students match their interests to higher education programs and discover more about their personalities, learning styles and career interests," said Lillian Amrine, Postsecondary and Career Counselor. "It has also helped them in being intentional about next steps for finishing out high school and their postsecondary plans."



PSD PARTNERS WITH EIGHT COLLEGES FOR GUARANTEED ADMISSION

Peninsula School District is a proud participant of the Washington State Council of Presidents Guaranteed Admissions Program (GAP), which offers the opportunity for 11th and 12th grade students to apply to in-state colleges and universities with guaranteed admission.

Our district has partnered with eight colleges and universities through our state's GAP. We have agreements with public and private schools, ensuring seniors who qualify receive guaranteed admission to Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Evergreen State College, Pacific Lutheran University, St. Martin's University, University of Washington Tacoma, Washington State University and Western Washington University

Students can qualify for guaranteed admission if they have a minimum 3.0 GPA and are on track to complete the College Academic Distribution Requirements. Interested students should talk with their college and career counselor to learn more and apply.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN

Our district is leading the way in incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the classroom. Two recent community “AI for All” events highlighted our commitment to integrating AI into our educational framework and offered participants an exciting glimpse into the future of learning.

At the two events, students at recently renovated Key Peninsula and Kopachuck Middle Schools shared about how they are using AI technologies in the classroom, demonstrating the practical applications of this cutting-edge technology in their learning journey.

Peninsula High School (PHS) teacher David Stitt has taught students how to use AI as a personal tutor, to self-check for understanding. Through guided prompt creation, students are able to feed AI a topic of study, and AI will ask students to restate concepts, construct meaning from scenarios, check for misconceptions, and provide extra explanation.

“It’s really helpful to be able to quiz myself on things I study and get instant explanations for what I miss,” said a PHS junior.

Stitt embraces AI large language models like ChatGPT and Google Bard, to help students access high level information and break down college level explanations into high school language. For example, his astronomy class uses AI to re-word scientific research papers into quick summaries.

“I use AI to better understand what we are studying,” said a PHS senior. “I can use it to say things in a way I can relate to.”

As we continue to explore the vast potential of AI in education, our district remains committed to providing our students with the tools and skills they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

“AI creates space for students to interact with material in ways that were previously impossible,” Stitt said. “This has been a game-changer for education. I can see a marked improvement in the level of achievement between my class using AI this year versus previous years, and a confidence in their ability to tackle material.”

PSD is not just embracing the future of education; we are actively shaping it. For more information about our district’s principles and beliefs around AI, visit psd401.net/ai.



OUTDOOR HIGHLY CAPABLE PROGRAM TO LAUNCH AT EVERGREEN IN FALL 2024

Peninsula School District will introduce the Eagle Quest Outdoor Learning Program at Evergreen Elementary, launching in fall 2024. The program’s mission is to create an outdoor learning infused inclusive and enriching educational experience that prioritizes Highly Capable identified students while also welcoming other students to join, and it will be aligned to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Outdoor Education for All Program.

Eagle Quest will guide students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) project-based learning set amidst Key Peninsula’s state parks, streams, and forests. This innovative program will provide authentic learning experiences that foster independence, confidence, creativity, and problem-solving.

We look forward to building a vibrant and inclusive educational environment in this unique program. Applications for fall 2024 will be opening in early spring 2024.



PSD Website: psd401.net
 Facebook: facebook.com/psd401
 Instagram: instagram.com/psd401
 YouTube: youtube.com/psd401



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KINDERGARTEN Registration

☆ ☆ ☆ **OPENS**
FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Register online at psd401.net/registration

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

The Peninsula School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Inquiries regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to the District's Title IX and Compliance Officer, Dan Dizon, at (253)530-1041, email Dizon@psd401.net or Section 504 and ADA Coordinator, John Yellowlees, at (253) 530-1081, email yellowleesj@psd401.net. Mailing address: 14015 62nd Ave. NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98332.