

PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT

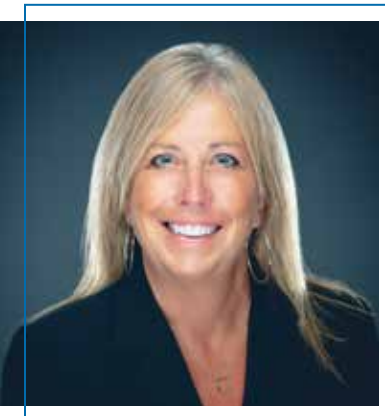
COMPASS

Spring 2024



INSPIRING AND EMPOWERING EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY





A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT KRESTIN BAHR

Spring is in full bloom and we are in the final stretch of the 2023-24 school year. As we countdown to summer and get ready to celebrate the Class of 2024, I'd like to share some recent highlights and news from around the Peninsula School District.

Our district is proud to be a 2024 Purple Star Award recipient! Only 12 districts in our state received this award, which is given to military-friendly school districts that show a commitment to support and provide resources for military students and their families.



We just kicked off a new program for our Transitional Kindergarten (TK) classes. Evergreen and Voyager Elementary outdoor TK students are learning together virtually about nature with Barnebage students across the world in Bodø, Norway.

Our elementary students celebrated academic nights focused on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math), literacy and cultural connections. From hands-on experiments to reading stations and inspiring guest speakers, these events bring families together to explore learning in a fun, interactive way.

In this Compass, we are featuring a student writer from Harbor Ridge Middle School. Be sure to read Camila's article on page 3, and share with incoming 6th graders. Read more about our two new Green School nominations on page 5. And on page 7, read about language arts curriculum updates and Peninsula Reads and Writes.

As this school year wraps up, join me in celebrating our students' growth, accomplishments, and the promising roads ahead. The future is filled with possibilities, and our students will continue to soar to new heights. Let us keep encouraging their dreams and aspirations.

Sincerely,
Superintendent Krestin Bahr



PHS AND GHHS BOTH NAMED UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

Congratulations to Peninsula High School and Gig Harbor High School for being named the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools of the Month for February and March, respectively. Unified Sports joins students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team and is a path to friendship and understanding.

Unified Sports have seen tremendous growth at PHS this year, with many students getting involved in this program. PHS offers Unified Basketball, Soccer, and Cheer, and they recently added Unified Esports, where they play Mario Kart and Rocket League. Next year, PHS will add Unified Track in the spring, and students will be given the opportunity to run relays at the state track meet.

GHHS students celebrated their first Unified Basketball season with more than 30 students coming together to play and build community, and many more partners showing up to support students on and off the court. Because of how popular the first season was, GHHS will add Unified Soccer at their school next year.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A 6TH GRADER

By Camila J., Harbor Ridge Middle School Student

Going from elementary school to middle school is a big change. There were a lot of things I wasn't sure that I was ready for but now, I feel like I'm ready for anything!

Before I go to my classes I have to drop my backpack off at my locker. Learning to open a locker takes a little time to learn but, over time, it gets really easy.

Going to different classes was one of the biggest changes about middle school. On the first day, I really had to think about where I was going and what class was next. Now, I don't even think about it. It just became a habit!

Lunch is really fun! Unlike elementary school, there is no more recess. But, at Harbor Ridge, our lunch is 30 minutes. After the first 15 minutes, you can either go outside to something that's called honor time, or you can go to the student store. At the student store you can bring money to buy a snack, which is one of my favorite things to do.

Meeting new people in middle school is definitely a highlight. It is a big change not to be with the same people in every class. This gives me an opportunity to meet new people. I think it's important to make new friends and put yourself out there.

In middle school there are a lot of clubs and sports that can be really fun. Right now, I manage the girls soccer team since only 7th and 8th graders can play. Doing clubs and sports can give you an opportunity to belong at your school and be a part of something.

Although there may be some challenges transitioning from elementary school to middle school, there are a lot of benefits from the change. I've enjoyed the independence I get in middle school. I look forward to the challenges ahead!



HRMS STUDENT GIVES DISCOVERY TEACHER GIFT CARD FROM BOOK PROCEEDS

Camila J. wrote and illustrated The Christmas Carrot, which her great grandfather published. Invitation Bookshop featured The Christmas Carrot at their store in December and sold 8 copies. Jason and Allyson Howard, Invitation Bookshop owners, matched the proceeds, and Camila was able to donate a \$160 gift card to Invitation Bookshop to first year teacher Alizabeh Mercurio at Discovery Elementary.



TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS TAKE LEARNING OUTDOORS AT EVERGREEN AND VOYAGER

At Evergreen Elementary and Voyager Elementary, Transitional Kindergarten (TK) classes spend at least an hour outdoors each day, rain or shine. Being outdoors provides a great opportunity for imaginative and creative play. Students can look for patterns and shapes in nature, and use leaves, rocks, flowers and more to learn about sorting.

Evergreen TK students recently filled garden beds with soil donated from Purdy Topsoil and Gravel and spread wildflower seeds donated by Heron Landscape and Design, who also provided supplies to make the beds. Students use leftover scraps from the school kitchen to feed the compost bins. The compost will then be used in the garden beds, to help grow pumpkins and wildflowers.

Voyager TK students recently gave two visitors from Bodø, Norway a tour of their outdoor spaces and open air classroom. TK classes at both schools are learning virtually with students across the world in Bodø, teaming up with a Barnehage to learn how pollinators contribute to the beauty and biodiversity of our world. Thank you to our community and Norway partners for helping students get outside and learn about our environment!



PROJECT BASED LEARNING ABOUT PHYSICS AND ENERGY AT PIONEER



Pioneer Elementary kindergartners and first graders shot for a hole in one as they applied learning of forces and motion to design the best hole for a mini golf course. Students learned vocabulary like kinetic and potential energy, push, pull, and force to help them create the perfect hole in one. Students also had an opportunity to explore the concept of cause and effect throughout this unit.

First grader Trey H. said, "This is the best day ever!" and his classmate Gordy B. said, "I love this, can I take this home to my family?"

"I really enjoy being able to teach science standards in such an enjoyable and relatable way," said K/1 teacher Stacey Martin.

Pioneer's project based learning model fosters collaboration, communication, and real-life application, which are priorities as students learn and make sense of the world around them. And best of all, students have fun while learning!



CELEBRATING THE ARTS AT OUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



Students at Purdy Elementary recently explored dance and movement to boost confidence and unleash creativity. Teaching artist Sabien Pleasant showed students how to craft their own dance moves culminating in a joyous soul train.

Dance is just one way Purdy Elementary, Minter Creek Elementary and Discovery Elementary infuse arts into education to enrich the learning experience for all students. At Minter Creek, students act out the main ideas of stories they read with Mr. Pleasant.

Through dance, performance, music, and visual arts, our schools are creating meaningful opportunities for every learner across all subject areas. Teachers develop innovative lessons combining literacy and science with drama. Students also enhance their knowledge by creating tableaus to depict story elements and the water cycle.



Purdy Elementary will hold an "ARTS AROUND THE WORLD" community event on June 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. This cultural event transforms hallways into representations of continents worldwide. Experience student artwork, learn about different cultures, enjoy musical and dance performances, and sample delicious cuisine from around the globe. Everyone is welcome!

PSD ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS HONORED WITH GREEN RIBBON AWARDS

The Peninsula School District is proud to announce Artondale Elementary and Evergreen Elementary have been nominated by the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to be recognized as U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Honorees for 2024.

In 2023, Pioneer Elementary was recognized as a Green Ribbon School Honoree by the U.S. Department of Education. Swift Water Elementary, Voyager Elementary, and Evergreen Elementary were also named 2023 Washington State Green Leader Schools.

"It's a tremendous source of pride for our district to have our schools honored for their environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts," Superintendent Krestin Bahr stated. "This recognition highlights the collaborative efforts to equip our students with the knowledge and values crucial for our planet's future."





CYBERPATRIOT COMPETITION HELPS PHS STUDENTS FOCUS ON CAREER PATHS



Two students from Peninsula High School competed for the first time in CyberPatriot's National Youth Cyber Defense Competition. The competition challenges teams of high school and middle school students to find and fix cybersecurity vulnerabilities in virtual operating systems.

The two students, freshman Amelia B. and senior Zachary G., are both in the district's Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC), but CyberPatriot is open to all students. The pair competed remotely and made it to the first round of state competition, despite some technical issues. CyberPatriot was key for both students as they considered future career paths.

Zachary is graduating from PHS and just enlisted into the United States Navy's Cyber Warfare Community. He will go to school in Florida and then be assigned to a cyber warfare command. He credits his Advanced Placement classes and CyberPatriot for helping him figure out his postsecondary plan. NJROTC Command Master Chief Robert Stockton said cyber warfare is a difficult career path to enter, but the skills Zachary used during the CyberPatriot competition identified him as a potential fit for cyber warfare.

"I heard about CyberPatriot from CMC Stockton and thought the idea of exploring cybersecurity was very interesting," Zachary said. "On my first day in the program, I learned about its value in organizations and how it influences millions of people's lives. From that day on, I started looking into the cyberwork field."

Amelia is active in both the district's NJROTC program and the McChord Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, and she hopes to continue with cybersecurity as a future career path, or cryptography which is hiding or coding information like messages.

"I have been interested in cybersecurity, so I joined CyberPatriot at my school to get better for the future," Ameila said.

Coach Anne Bunker is hoping to grow the program next year with multiple teams from across our district's middle and high schools. Each team can be up to five students, and Bunker is hoping to recruit three technical mentors from the community to help students compete.

SAFETY AND SECURITY UPDATES AROUND THE DISTRICT

Thank you voters for approving the Safety, Security and Technology Levy in 2023. Levy funding began in April 2024, so the district has already started updates and upgrades to make schools more secure and increase access to technology.

Upgrades to come during the rest of this school year include increased security cameras, two-way radio communication upgrades, Promethean boards at Purdy Elementary and Minter Creek Elementary, and emergency notification system upgrades at Harbor Heights Elementary and Discovery Elementary. Additional chain link fencing is also being installed at Gig Harbor High School and Peninsula High School to improve safety at both campuses.

In the 2024-25 school year, Vaughn Elementary, Harbor Heights Elementary and Goodman Middle School will all receive Promethean boards. Watch for more updates in the fall!

PSD SELECTED FOR PIONEERING AI IN EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM



The Peninsula School District was recently selected to participate in the Pioneering AI (Artificial Intelligence) Maturity in K-12 Education Pilot Program, partnering with the Consortium for School Networking and the Council of the Great City Schools, with the generous sponsorship of Amazon Web Services.

Amazon Web Services.

"This opportunity allows us to take work we have already done in implementing AI in our schools and use it to guide districts throughout the country on how they can strategically implement AI in their schools," said Kris Hagel, Executive Director for Digital Learning. "Our district leadership team will also learn best practices from national experts on the safe and purposeful expansion of AI in our schools."



K-12 TEACHERS EMBARK ON NEW ELA CURRICULUM ADOPTION

The Peninsula School District is currently undertaking a significant initiative: adopting a new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum across all grade levels, from kindergarten to 12th grade. This process is being rolled out with varying timelines by grade, but the objective remains consistent: to equip students with a rigorous ELA curriculum that aligns with standards and utilizes evidence-based methodologies.

Our primary aim is to select a curriculum that aligns with Washington State ELA standards within an evidence-based framework, ensuring equitable access to high-quality learning for all students. The selected curriculum must include robust support for teachers. Alignment with the district's Literacy Task Force's Guiding Principles and compatibility with the current elementary educator Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional learning are crucial.

The Teaching and Learning Department is collaborating with classroom teachers, principals, special education staff, and our multilingual team to meticulously review and assess potential curricula. This evaluation is based on a comprehensive rubric designed to measure each curriculum against district, state, and national educational standards and goals. As part of this inclusive process, we will also provide opportunities for family and community input, to consider a wide range of perspectives.

For updates on the adoption process, timelines, and opportunities to get involved or provide feedback, please visit the ELA Curriculum Adoption webpage at psd401.net/academics/ela-curriculum-adoption.



PENINSULA READS AND WRITES PROMOTES LITERACY AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Our elementary schools are celebrating Peninsula Reads and Writes with an array of literacy-promoting activities. Our efforts continue to foster a love for reading and writing among learners of all ages. Each school has created their own plan, but here are some of the favorites so far.

VOLUNTEER/GUEST READING

Thank you to all volunteers who signed up to read to our students, bringing stories to life for our youngest readers. Swift Water Elementary students especially enjoyed reading with Heron's Key residents.



LITERACY NIGHTS

Schools invited families to celebrate the joy of reading together.

SCHOOL WRITING CONTESTS

Schools have inspired students to share their voice.

TAILS AND TUTORS

Students get to read with dogs at Evergreen Elementary.

Plus book clubs, reading challenges, book reviews, mystery reader podcasts, book swaps, community read-ins, Pierce County library visits, and so much more.

Our district's goal is to create a community where literacy thrives at every school. We are immensely grateful for the enthusiasm and support of our volunteers, families, and local organizations. Let's continue to write this story together, fostering a love for reading and writing that will last a lifetime.



PSD Website: psd401.net
 Facebook: facebook.com/psd401
 Instagram: instagram.com/psd401
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KINDERGARTEN Registration

NOW OPEN

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

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