

130 Years



Your Pasco Schools Community Newsletter

*Putting students first to make learning last a lifetime.
Celebrating academics, diversity, and innovation.*

Spring 2015

Pasco Pride



***A Look Back**
at Pasco High School,
page 2*

Pasco School District #1
C.L. Booth Education Service Center
1215 W. Lewis Street
Pasco, WA 99301

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*Students are pictured
at a Pasco High School
dance, year unknown*

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,



*Ryan Brault
Board President*

The time to get involved in Pasco schools is now!

I'd like to tell you about a guy I know. He started out attending a Student Shadow event

(now called VIP Days). Next he went on a Superintendent's Bus Tour and started volunteering each year at Enterprise (a week long business simulation for high school seniors). Seeing all of the great things going on in the district inspired him and he decided to get involved by serving on the (then) Bulldog House board. He signed up for the district's business to school partnership program and became a Partner in Educating All Kids! **(PEAK!) Partner. And finally he ran for a vacant seat on the school board.**

In case you haven't figured it out I am that guy. At each step I learned

more about our schools and each time an opportunity presented itself, I wanted to get involved because I believe in the great work that is being done to help each child in our community reach their full potential.

In recent weeks dedicated members of our community have served on focus groups, participated in our planning groups, summits and lent their time volunteering in our schools. As we begin the important work of finding our next superintendent we want to hear from you.

We have a long history of going to our community for direction. We value your input and involvement. These are our community's schools and I know that by working together Pasco schools can continue to be at the forefront of innovative education.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan A. Brault".

President Ryan Brault

Pasco School District Board of Directors:

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Sherry Lancon, Member
Amy Phillips, Member
Adriana Mendez, Student Representative
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Superintendent:

Sandra L. Hill

Editor:

Leslee Caul

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130 Years of Pasco Pride: Honoring the Past A Look Back at Pasco High School



A 1930's view of the first Pasco High School built in 1921 exclusively for high school students.

As we celebrate 130 years of the Pasco School District, we take a look back at the proud history of Pasco High School. Did you know:

- High school classes were being taught in the early Pasco schoolhouse several years before high school was even legalized in the state in 1898.
- The State Board of Education named Pasco High School an accredited school in 1910.
- The District's first high school-only building was constructed in 1921 and briefly went by the name of Washington High School.
- The 1947 Pasco High School boys basketball team was the school's first state championship-winning team.
- In 1953, construction was completed on a new high school at the corner of W. Henry St. and 10th Ave.,

where the modern PHS stands today.

- Former PHS and Washington State University football star running back Carl Talmage "Duke" Washington was the first African-American to ever play in the University of Texas's Memorial Stadium in 1954.
- The PHS four-year cohort graduation rates have risen from 60.1% in 2011 to above the state average at 81.8% in 2014. Gov. Jay Inslee has sited PHS student success as an example for schools across the state.



Pasco High School cheerleaders, 1974

About the Superintendent Search Process and Transition Planning

Selection of a superintendent is the most important decision any school board has to make.



Superintendent Sandra Hill shared her decision to retire with the board in January and announced it to the public on Feb. 20 that she plans to retire in June 2016. As the governing body that

supervises the superintendent, the board will select a deputy/successor superintendent this spring, who will work closely with Hill during her final year as superintendent.

“The District has made many gains in recent years, earning the highest achievement scores and graduation rates in history, and it is critical that the initiatives and innovations that set the district on this success path not lose momentum during this leadership change,” says President Ryan Brault. “The board has adopted this transition model, which has been used successfully in several other large Washington state districts. This approach basically provides for a year-long interview during the transition,” adds Hill.

In addition to working with the superintendent, the deputy/successor will also oversee the Curriculum and Professional Development Department in 2015-16, a position being vacated by the retirement of long time Pasco educator, Executive Director Kathy Hayden, later this year.

The board has retained independent search consultant Leland Goeke who will develop the search and receive all applications. He will present qualified and ideally suited candidates to the board and also help the board develop a competency model to screen the candidates based on the specific needs of Pasco and its stakeholders. The competency model is being developed based on commu-

nity feedback gathered at the district strategic planning summits, online and print surveys, and focus groups, as well as the district goals and key actions established by the board.

The position is attracting a diverse candidate pool from around the region, state, and nation. All candidates who meet the qualifications are welcome to apply whether they are outside the district or currently work for Pasco Schools.

If all goes as planned the deputy/successor will become superintendent in July 2016, however the board will have the option to make any changes as they see fit.

The steps and timeline for the selection process are:

- Early January, Hill informs board of retirement plans
 - January, 15 focus groups involving over 200 people, conducted for new strategic plan
 - Feb. 20, Hill announces retirement and position posted
 - Feb. 27, online survey opens, Strategic Planning Summit (English)
 - March 5, Strategic Planning Summit (Spanish)
 - March 13, online survey closes
 - March 16, focus group held
 - March 17, special board meeting to develop competency model (*executive session)
 - March 24, board workshop, 1st candidate screening (*executive session)
 - April 9 and 10, board interviews
- * Executive sessions are not open to the public.*

The board will also be working with Goeke to develop the schedule and format for the candidate interviews in April. The board hopes to identify a successful candidate by April 28. For further information and updates regarding the search process visit the district website at <http://www.psd1.org/domain/1127>.

CHS Teacher Wins Outstanding Civics Educator Award

Chiawana High School teacher Rob Gutierrez began the morning of March 4 thinking he and his students were going to an assembly on civics with Washington Secretary of State Kim Wyman, but it wasn't long until he learned he was being honored as the state's Outstanding Civics Educator.

Last year his students arranged for a congressional candidate debate for the candidates battling to fill the vacancy in the 4th Congressional District left by the retirement of Doc Hastings. Dan Newhouse went on to



Gutierrez receives his award with daughter Selah looking on proudly

win the election, and CHS students were winners as well. By participating in the debate and mock elections, CHS students got a front row seat

to the electoral process and not merely a lesson in civics, but a real-world exercise in civics.

The debate is believed to be the first national congressional debate ever organized and run by high school students.

Wyman had planned to be on hand and spend the day with Gutierrez and CHS students, but was ill. Stuart

Holmes, Wyman's deputy director, and Franklin County Auditor Matt Beaton presented the award.

District to Host Three West Side Boundary Q&A Sessions

Pasco School District's board of directors will host three question and answer sessions regarding the west side elementary school boundaries.

March 25 at McGee Elementary at 6 p.m.

March 26 at Angelou Elementary at 6 p.m.

April 7 at Franklin STEM Elementary at 6 p.m.

In order to hear from as many parents as possible, the board asks that comments be limited to the parents of the school where the meeting is held. For example, while parents from any school are welcome to attend, questions and comments will be taken from Angelou parents at the Angelou meeting.

Those who are unable to attend can also submit their questions to boundary@psd1.org. The district will also post the questions and answers on the district website and Facebook page, along with any other pertinent information, at <http://www.psd1.org/Page/6869>.

Education Hot Topic in Olympia

District Leaders Meet With Legislators During Crucial Session

There is a lot at stake this legislative session for our schools. Both board members and district officials have visited Olympia to ensure that the best interests of Pasco students, schools and taxpayers are not lost in this education-heavy session.

Under the leadership of Board Member Steve Christensen, legislative representative, PSD's board of directors set two legislative priorities: to support Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn's Construction Assistance Program and to obtain a one-time appropriation of \$7.5 million to construct a pre-K facility.

As Dorn's proposal states, "The state funding formula for construction costs and student space must be significantly increased to the actual cost of construction and the true space needed for learning." Pasco taxpayers have stepped up by approving and building nine new schools since 1999. Yet schools remain overcrowded, the district has nearly reached its debt capacity, and the tax rates are high.

"Our community is acutely aware of the gap between what the state recognizes and the actual cost of constructing schools and Dorn's proposal brings the actual funding closer to the actual cost," says Board President Ryan Brault. "Enhanced state assistance for capital projects is essential."

The board is also hoping to secure a \$7.5 million one-time appropriation to construct a pre-K facility and to take an important step in closing the achieve-

ment gap.

On the first day of school at Captain Gray Early Learning Center than four percent of the students were kindergarten ready, according to WAKids test data. Children who live in poverty have fewer life experiences, including having been exposed to fewer books. According to researcher Steven Krashen, a child from a middle- to upper-income family will have had an average of over 400 books in their hands by kindergarten. For children in poverty the average number of books is .4 (point four).

The achievement gap begins early and Pasco has long worked to close that gap. "Preschool in Pasco has been a priority of our board of directors since 2008," explains Hill.

Among the 2008-2011 Strategic Plan key actions were offering preschool and all-day kindergarten for high-need students. The district was able to offer all-day kindergarten, however preschool has been held up by both the lack funds to build and operate a facility.

Since the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program began, preschool slots, and the funding that comes with them, have been limited. Under Gov. Jay Inslee's vision, and with bipartisan support in the House and Senate, the state is expanding pre- kindergarten opportunities for high needs children.

"We now have a path to fund the operation of a PreK school that was not available in the past," says Hill. "We have

applied, in partnership with ESD 123, for operations grant money. But we still need a facility.”

There is currently no avenue in the state to acquire capital funds for preschool facilities. “We decided to just go ask,” says Hill. “At the onset of the session I thought our chances were zero to none. Now legislators from our districts and across the state not only know who we are in Pasco, but they also know about our challenges and, yes, our successes.”

Inslee had already visited Pasco to find out how our drastically improved graduation rates were being accomplished.

“Now our state legislators are having conversations about excessive testing, and testing children in a language in which they are not yet proficient,” says Hill. “They are also talking about our innovative STEM programs, improved graduations rates and work to close the achievement gap. Pasco schools are very present in Olympia and our legislators are listening.”

PSD Student Reps Rock the Vote with the Gov



Pasco School District student representative to the board Daphne Gallegos celebrated her 18th birthday by registering to vote. Gallegos just happened be sitting in Gov. Jay Inslee’s conference room chair and desk where he signs bills, with him looking on. (Photo above.)

Gallegos, a Pasco High School senior, and fellow student board representatives Adriana Mendez, a Delta High School senior, and Nayeli Cervantes, a Chiawna

High School senior, all signed their voter registration cards while visiting with the Governor.

The three were in Olympia attending the Washington State School Directors’ Association Legislative Conference March 1 and 2, along with Superintendent Saundra Hill and PSD board members Amy Phillips, Steve Christensen, and Board President Ryan Brault.

While in Olympia the Pasco contingency also had an opportunity to meet with Senators Mark Schoessler and Mike Hewitt and Representatives Susan Fagan, Joe Schmick, Maureen Walsh and Terry Nealey, among others.



Cervantes, Mendez and Gallegos (left to right) proudly pose with Gov. Inslee and their freshly signed voter registration cards while visiting Olympia.

PHS Student's Art Featured on Ben Franklin Buses

Pasco High School senior **Carlos Sanchez** won second place in the second annual Ben Franklin Transit poster art contest. Sanchez was one of three top winners to be chosen from approximately 1,000 entries from the Tri-Cities and the surrounding region.

Sanchez was honored Feb. 12 at a BFT board meeting along with fellow winners Aaron Whittaker and Esther Bowen, both of Prosser High School. His artwork will be featured on a BFT bus. Sanchez also received a \$100 gift card for art supplies and a summer bus pass.

Sanchez is a student in Pasco High School art teacher Randi Cruzen's Advanced Placement studio art drawing class. Cruzen also received a \$250 gift card for art supplies for her classroom.

Carlos Sanchez is pictured Feb. 12 with his winning artwork.



Schools Welcome VIPs

Approximately 75 community members and parents recently spent a morning shadowing a student, meeting teachers and administrators, and

witnessing firsthand the innovative teaching and learning taking place in Pasco schools.

Pasco High School welcomed VIP's on Feb. 5. Stevens Middle School hosted its first VIP Day Feb. 12 while Robinson Elementary School hosted its event March 5.

These annual events give guests a chance to sort fact from fiction and experience school from a student's point of view. Contact Public Affairs at 546-2686 or publicaffairs@psd1.org to learn more.



Stevens Middle School parent Irma Barrera attends class with her son, eighth grade student Andrew Velez, during the school's VIP Day Feb. 12.

Bjur and Copsey Named 2015 Crystal Apple Winners

Angelou Elementary School Special Education teacher **Elisabeth Copsey** and Pasco High School music teacher **William “Randy” Bjur** are the 2015 Tri-City Crystal Apple Award for Excellence in Education honorees for Pasco School District.

They joined eight other outstanding educators from across the region at the Crystal Apple awards ceremony on March 12 at Columbia Basin College.

Copsey has devoted her career to special needs students in the Pasco School District. A teacher at Angelou Elementary School since 2005, she has also served students at Captain Gray, Frost, Chess, and Longfellow elementary schools.

In her Special Education self-contained classroom, Copsey nurtures her students in a caring environment while providing each one with a strong foundation of learning. She is always willing to put in extra time to ensure her students have the necessary tools to be successful, says Assistant Director of Special Services Lisa Muchlinski.

A parent says of Copsey, “Mrs. Copsey’s enthusiasm for teaching is not only apparent in her teaching skills, but in her desire for her students to succeed not

only in her classroom but in life. It is because of her love and dedication to our son that we were able to... help him be the best person he can be.”

In 2009 Bjur joined the Pasco School District after a career as a band and orchestra teacher in the Kennewick



School District and Alaska. He directs the Pasco High School band and has taught advanced elementary music at Robinson Elementary

School and fifth grade band at McGee Elementary School. Bjur also leads the PHS basketball band and devotes his summers to the Pasco School District Summer Band Camp. In 2011 he took on the role of chair for the Visual and Performing Arts program at PHS.

Pasco High School Principal Raul Sital calls Bjur an innovative leader and an outstanding teacher, educator, and human being who focuses on educating the “whole student” in enriching and meaningful ways.

Current PHS senior Carrie Nolan says Bjur is the reason she has decided to become a music teacher. “He pushes all of his students to be the best they can be because he knows that each and every one of us has greatness inside us,” she says. “He is truly the soul of the PHS music department.”

District to Embark on Process to Reimagine High Schools

Pasco School District believes that every student needs to graduate from high school globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st century.

During the 2014 legislative session the legislators once again changed high school graduation requirements, beginning with the Class of 2019 (current eighth grade students). This resulted in an increase of credits for students in Pasco. However, districts across the state are allowed to request a waiver from the state, with board approval, of up to two years in order to better prepare for the changes required to meet the new requirements.

In January the board approved a resolution to request the two-year waiver to delay implementation of the new graduation requirements. With board

adoption of the resolution, the District has submitted an application for a waiver to the State Board of Education.

“This means that we have an opportunity to reimagine our high school programs. We can think out of the box to provide expanded, new, and exciting opportunities for our students to better prepare them for life after graduation with the skills and experiences for college and careers in the 21st century,” says Deputy Superintendent Glenda Cloud. “We look forward to the opportunity before us and in involving students, staff, parents and our community in the process. We will also seek input from business and higher education leaders on what they expect and need so we can best prepare our students.”

New State Assessment Exams Underway

The testing season for the new state assessment exams began March 9 and runs through the end of May. Students in grades 3-8 and 11 are taking the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) tests aligned to the new Washington state standards in English language arts and math.

The state officially adopted the new Washington state standards into law in 2011. While the District piloted the SBA exams last spring, this is the first year test scores will be used for accountability purposes for all schools.

In states that have already transitioned to the SBAC, scores have typically dropped approximately 40-50 percentage points in districts transitioning to from former state exams to the new exams. The same results are expected for Washington districts.

To learn more visit www.k12.wa.us/smarter/, or talk to your school principal.

District Hosts Strategic Planning Summits

Hundreds of employees, parents, students, and community members have been working together to craft a new Pasco School District Strategic Plan to map the district's work plan for the next 3-5 years.

After a series of focus groups in January and early February, the District hosted planning summits at Ochoa Middle School on Feb. 27 in English and on March 5 in Spanish. Attendees identified specific actions to guide the District's improvement process and meet the following goals, set forth by the board of directors in December:

- **Leadership:** Create a culture of inclusion and connection which challenges and values every student.

- **Teaching and Learning:** Increase learning opportunities from pre-kinergarten to graduation that empower and inspire students to pursue post high school education and careers.
- **School Environment/District Systems:** Leverage resources to maximize student support.
- **Family and Community:** Engage the whole community in the education of all students.

Strategic planning allows the District to work with the school community to incorporate data from the numerous initiatives currently underway and set the direction for the next three to five years. The plan will also serve as a filter for decision-making.

Pasco Recognized Again For Outstanding Music Education

For the eighth time in 16 years, Pasco has earned the prestigious Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) distinction by the NAMM Foundation for its commitment to music education.

Programs cited to gain this recognition included the Pasco School District's recommitment to a strings program, its Instrument for Loan program, All-State and other award-winning bands and choirs, and innovative programming, such as World Drumming, Mariachi, and award-winning musical theatre programs.

"This award is an affirmation that music can be life changing for students," says Visual and Performing Arts Teacher on

Special Assignment Russ Newbury. "The District's extensive visual and performing arts curriculum creates pathways for tangible student success. Pasco students of every age have opportunities to excel in music."



"We know that students involved in music do better at academics and develop a passion to enjoy for the rest of their lives. We are very proud of our program and its educators. They make a difference in students' lives," commented Superintendent Sandra Hill.

Pasco School District has received this prestigious honor in 2000, 2004, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014.

Pasco School District Facilities Update



Curie STEM Elementary School is pictured under construction Jan. 28, 2015.

Construction continues on time and on budget at Pasco's newest schools: Delta High School and McClintock and Curie STEM elementary schools. All are scheduled to open in August 2015.

West Pasco Elementary Boundaries

With the opening of McClintock STEM Elementary and with 6th grade students staying at their elementary schools, Pasco School District must once again examine school boundaries in west Pasco.

"Changing school boundaries is never popular, but it is necessary when new schools open," says Superintendent Sandra Hill. A springboard boundary proposal to initiate input, discussion and generate ideas was presented to the board of directors at their Feb. 10 meeting, then taken out for input from parents.

The new school, located at 5706 Road 60, had been discussed and described as a Kindergarten or K-2 school since 2011. Patron feedback and comments gathered from meetings on Feb. 17 and 18 were presented to the board. Some families are unhappy about the prospect of students attending different schools, while others do not want their children to change schools with a shift in boundaries.

After hearing additional comments at the Feb. 25 board meeting, the board voted to assess the feasibility, timeline, impacts, and costs to convert McClintock STEM Elementary from a primary school to a K-6 elementary school.

Planning for K-6

Planning continues for sixth grader students to remain in elementary schools next fall. By keeping students currently in fifth grade at their elementary schools next fall, the district will free up much needed space at middle schools. Space at the elementary level is expected to remain tight.

A task force is preparing for the grade reconfiguration and has crafted recommendations based on discussion, research, and input from administrators and teachers. These recommendations center on broad categories of potential impacts, such as instructional delivery, professional development for educators, assessment and grading, students' social and emotional needs, and scheduling. Contact Curie STEM Planning Principal Valerie Aragon at varagon@psd1.org or 546-2803 for more information.

Pasco Facilities Task Force

The Pasco Facilities Task Force (PFTF) is comprised of 24 volunteer parents and community members from across the District. The PFTF has been meeting since January and will continue through May, when it hopes to finalize a report and present recommendations to the Superintendent and board of directors. The group is reviewing a wide variety of issues involved in planning for future facility needs; it will develop recommendations that best meet the needs of Pasco students. A technical team made up of District employees supports the PFTF presenting information and data and answering questions. For more information visit www.psd1.org/Page/6976.