Great schools have great Principals and Assistant Principals

October is National Principals Month! We celebrate and appreciate our principals and assistant principals!

Board updates district mission statement

In its meeting on Sept. 19, the Clover Park School District Board of Directors unanimously agreed to update the district’s mission statement. The update is a result of administrators recommending a change that aligns more readily to the collaborative work of professional learning communities in schools and classrooms across the district. The change focuses on the individual learning of each student. The revised mission statement is:

“The mission of Clover Park School District is to ensure each child learns what he or she needs to know to succeed and contribute to the community.”

Mark your calendars!

Parent-teacher conferences will take place Tuesday through Thursday, Nov. 8 - 10. Schools will be dismissed on their early release schedules during conference days. Contact your child’s school for a conference appointment or if you have questions.

To make the most of conferences, parents should:

• Talk to your students about their progress in school and any concerns they might have, and go over their report cards and assignments before the conference.
• Discuss your student’s progress and areas for growth with family members, child care providers, mentors and others who know your child well.
• Write a list of questions and concerns you’d like to discuss with the teacher.
• Prepare to share any events that may impact your student’s progress (i.e. illness, divorce, or death of a family member or friend).

A career in education runs in the family

When new employees are hired in Clover Park School District (CPSD), they are welcomed as part of the district “family.” In some cases, however, this designation is quite literal. A career in education is a career of service, fulfillment and investment in the dreams of others, and when a person is bitten by the education bug, the effects often cannot help but spread to their loved ones. As a result, education often becomes something of a family business. A number of district employees have relatives who are also colleagues, and most of them could not be happier about it.

Many CPSD employees, after building enriching careers within the district, have inspired a family member to do the same. Nicole Nordi, a third grade teacher at Tyee Park, grew up in a family of educators that includes Scott Nordi, her father and Lakes High School athletic director. The first year teacher explained, “Watching the impact (my parents) made on students’ lives while I was growing up was a big influence on my going into education.”

Nordi says he “could not be more proud” of his daughter. For Tyee Park Elementary head secretary Kim Blackner and Lakes High School attendance secretary Jayme Aalona, public education is something of a family way of life. The mother-daughter pair currently both work in CPSD along with Aalona’s husband and Mann Middle School football and basketball coach Michael Aalona. Several other relatives also have long histories either working or volunteering within the district.

Many CPSD employees who have family ties in the district have been students here as well. Nanette Jimenez and her son Clayton Reiner attended Clover Park schools from elementary through high school, and they now work in the district as a consumer science teacher and an instructional materials processing clerk, respectively.

Board meets with student leaders; more meetings planned


After learning of student dissatisfaction with Clover Park School District leadership, Lakewood Youth Council members representing Clover Park and Lakes High Schools and Harrison Preparatory School, met with school board representatives and the superintendent.

President of the Clover Park School District Board of Directors, Marty Schaefer, along with school board director Paul Wagemann and superintendent Debbie LeBeau met with about 20 high school students. Harrison Prep and Clover Park and Lakes High School principals also attended meeting. Parents of youth council members were invited to observe the meeting.

At a recent city council meeting, the Lakewood Youth Council shared their concerns related to the district’s insufficient funding.
Facilities Advisory Committee

The next meeting of the district’s Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) is Wednesday, Nov. 16. For more information on the FAC, visit the announcements section of the district website.

The FAC was the topic of September’s KLAY Community Conversation. Visit the district website to listen to the conversation and learn more about the committee and its ongoing efforts.

2015 JBLM School Construction Project

Evergreen Elementary School

Classroom finishes are continuing to include final installation of acoustical ceiling tile, cabinetry, carpet, flooring and cubbies. Light fixtures, tack-compatible wall surfaces and wooden classroom entry details are going into the hallways. The mechanical and electrical contractors are working on trim and final connections. Kitchen equipment is installed and being set up and connected to systems. The gym floor has been laid and the final finish coats are being added. Final paving around the site has occurred and parking spaces and other pavement markings are being applied.

Students and staff are scheduled to move into the new school when school resumes after winter break in January 2017.

Parent Connection Council gives voice to district families

The Parent Connections Council (PCC) held its first meeting of the 2016-17 school year earlier this month. The council is comprised of parent representatives from each school. Working with district administrators, the council provides valuable input from parents on a variety of issues, and is conduit of information between families and district administration. Each school principal asks at least two parents to serve as representatives and attend four meetings throughout the school year. Deputy superintendent Brian Laubach stresses the importance of engaging in regular dialogue with families.

“The council was started last year to improve two-way communication between parents/families and the district,” Laubach says. “Through the PCC, we get input from families on a variety of topics and engage parent representatives in communicating with other parents. We ask PCC representatives to share what they have learned at council meetings with their school communities and other families. PCC representatives are also encouraged to bring topics and questions from their communities to the meetings for open, two-way dialogue.”

The council has used different meeting strategies to facilitate better communication between representatives and administrators.

Construction Update

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CPSD students win youth merit incentive award

Congratulations to 10 CPSD students who received 2015-16 Elizabeth Wesley Youth Merit Incentive Awards! Awards are given to African-American 9th-11th grade students in Tacoma/Pierce County who demonstrate great academic and leadership potential. Recipients receive a $350 prize and recognition from the Elizabeth Wesley Youth Merit Incentive Award Program.

This year’s winners are:

Israel Davis, Clover Park High School
Sabrina Ebengho, Clover Park High School
Samual Gakwa, Clover Park High School
Muthoni Ngari Turner, Harrison Preparatory School
Alice Burton, Lakes High School
Jordan Harrell, Lakes High School
Sydney Harrell, Lakes High School
Justin Montgomery, Lakes High School
Alexis Nealy, Lakes High School
Dorien Kenneth-Tross Simon, Lakes High School

Clockwise from front left: Dorien Simon, Justin Montgomery, Jordan Harrell, Sydney Harrell, Alice Burton and Alexis Nealy from Lakes High School.

Spotlight on Schools

The Kiwanis Club of Clover Park recently donated $1,000 to purchase gravel for a walking path around the Park Lodge Elementary School field. After making the generous donation, club members partnered with the district grounds crew to tamp, level and spread the gravel for the path. Students now have a new track for use during P.E. classes, after-school activities and recess. Thank you, Kiwanis Club and district grounds crew, for providing this valuable resource to Park Lodge students!
Board

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progress in reaching its goals.

“The heart of the matter is to communicate in a collaborative way and provide good structures to help students succeed,” said Schafer. “Our intent is to hear what students have to say. I hope this is the first of many discussions with youth leaders in our district.”

LeBeau explained that the district’s accountability plan, which was referenced in the students’ presentation to city council, is currently being updated to reflect current data from the 2015-16 school year. “Some of the data comes from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and it takes a while to finalize,” she explained. “I anticipate the updated accountability plan will be presented to the board in November, which is our typical timeline.”

The superintendent also shared notes she developed that provided youth council members asked questions regarding how the district allows organizations to share information with families who may benefit from their services and events. They also want to understand the laws, regulations and rules district administrators must follow when an incident that may impact student safety occurs and how information is shared about it.

“We want to know what policies are in place,” said one student. “And, what will be done.”

Another student suggested the district utilize social media to better reach students and families. “You can let people know what’s happening and it has a stronger, more community feel,” she said.

Youth council members also wanted to know what options they have to express their concerns and suggested that a collaboration between the youth council and the school district be developed.

Schafer acknowledged the possible solution as a good suggestion and noted that the district can improve its communication as to how community members can express their concerns and provide feedback to the district.

He also encouraged students to talk with their teachers and principals and to attend board meetings.

Schafer agreed that the “student voice” is needed and that the meeting was the beginning of a good conversation.

One student expressed her concern about staff retention. “I’ve been a student here for seven years,” she said. “We need to keep our teachers here. Communication with staff is important. Staff is lacking a sense of pride.”

“This is an important topic. Great teachers are important for a great school district,” Schafer said.

LeBeau and Schafer acknowledged staff retention as a growth area for the district while also noting that statewide and national trends are challenging all school districts to recruit and retain quality teachers and administrators.

It was also noted that the district annually surveys its certificated staff on their perspectives of the district and the professional development training they receive.

Students wanted to know what was being done with the survey data. District representatives and principals assured students the data was used at the district and school levels to improve student achievement, communication and cultural competency. Data from the professional development survey is used annually to improve the professional development offerings teachers receive every school year.

As the meeting concluded, Schafer gave students the opportunity to bring up other topics of concern and reviewed next steps for subsequent meetings.

“It is easy for me to admit I don’t know everything,” said a Clover Park High School senior. “This meeting seems very healthy and like coming together as a family. The conversation and solutions are a lot more tangible.”

Another student commented, “Thank you for holding this meeting and having a conversation with us. This felt good to have no media present and have a chance to ask questions.”

Another meeting between students and the superintendent and school board representatives will be scheduled soon.
Upgrades improve safety and technology

Thanks to the generous support of the community in passing Clover Park School District’s (CPSD) educational programs and operations replacement levy last February, the district made important classroom technology and safety updates in schools throughout the summer. The upgrades improved upon or replaced old and inefficient systems and greatly increased overall security and functionality of district schools.

Safety and security updates included the installation of new security cameras at Larcheum Middle School and Clover Park High School, as well as additional lighting and door locks in several schools throughout the district. CPSD has a new phone system this year, which is designed to make emergency response more efficient and effective. Office and classroom phones have enhanced 9-1-1 features that allow first responders to pinpoint the exact location of an emergency. Staff can also send messages to each phone in the school, and students will be warned of emergencies and drills via the public address system included in the phones.

In addition to improving upon districtwide security measures, CPSD has implemented educational technology updates in 13 schools. The updates provide teachers with new integrated classroom technologies designed to improve students’ learning experience and expand educators’ teaching tools.

“The safety and security of our students, staff and families is a priority for us,” said deputy superintendent Brian Laubach, commenting on the updates. “We thank the voters for helping us with securing funds to further increase and improve the safety and security measures in the district, from improved telecommunications to security cameras and monitoring systems. The work completed this summer also improved the response time of community agencies and district response teams when emergencies may take place.”

Motor Avenue Project Moves Forward

Over the summer, the Lakewood City Council unanimously approved “Alternative 2” as the design for the future Motor Avenue Project, which calls for development of a new street corridor plan for Motor Avenue between Whitman Avenue Southwest and the intersection of Gravelly Lake Drive Southwest and Bridgeport Way Southwest. The city conducted public meetings to collect resident feedback and retained the services of Studio KPG as the lead firm on the project. The design selected by the Lakewood City Council – which is expected to cost $2.2 million, a figure that is cheaper than what designers originally estimated – includes development of a plaza up to the Colonial Theatre, street parking on both sides of Motor Avenue and a redevelopment at Gravelly Lake. Learn more about the project by visiting cityoflakewood.us.

Clover Park School District reaches out through “Community Conversations”

CPSD has contracted with local talk radio station KLAY 1180 AM to open a new line of communication between the district and the community. On the first Friday of every month, a CPSD representative engages in a “Community Conversation” designed to keep listeners informed of the latest district news. Each month’s conversation features a new topic, and the segment generally runs about ten minutes. In October’s conversation, assistant superintendent for educational programs and operations replacement, Ron Banner, discussed the importance of parent teacher communication and how families can best support their students at home.

Superintendent Debbie LeBeau recently explained that “two of the school board’s goals are to increase community engagement and ensure communication with all stakeholders.” KLAY’s Community Conversations are another tool to improve communication with families and community members across the district. Community Conversations can be listened to from the district website at www.cloverpark.k12.wa.us.

Superintendent’s Column

With one month of school already completed, it is important to focus on regular attendance as a critical factor in student success. Considering the district’s increasing high school graduation rates (89% for the class of 2016) and improving test scores, it is clear students, families and educators are committed to achieving this success. Clover Park School District students have celebrated exceptional academic progress over the last several years, and continued growth relies heavily upon regular school attendance.

According to Attendance Works and the Puget Sound Educational Service District, attendance can impact a child’s future as early as preschool or kindergarten. Research shows “poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade” and that “by sixth grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.” Attendance throughout elementary and secondary grades can also predict and impact a student’s postsecondary success. Building the habit of regular school attendance has a long lasting impact.

While attendance affects each student individually, it is important to remember that one student’s absence can affect an entire classroom. Each student in a classroom contributes a unique set of perspectives, opinions and experiences. When one student in a class is missing, those valuable contributions are lost as well. Attending school regularly promotes the success of the individual student and enriches the educational experience of the classroom as a whole.

Of course, some absences are unavoidable. We understand students will need to stay home occasionally when ill. Families should focus on getting their student to school and on time as often as possible and communicating with the school when students will be absent.

We are committed to reducing chronic absences and facilitating student success. By building trusting relationships, providing a welcoming, supportive learning environment and engaging students meaningfully in their education, we strive to ensure students want to come to school. We also want to partner with families to overcome any barriers students might face. Let’s make regular, on-time attendance a common goal this year.

Attend, Achieve, Succeed!

Deborah L. LeBeau, Superintendent

Calling Alumni

If you graduated from Harrison Prep, Lakes or Clover Park High School, we’d love to know how you’re doing. Our alumni webpage highlights Clover Park School District alumni who are positively contributing to their communities. If you would like to be featured, visit the Community Relations Department page on the district website and click “Alumni Information.” An easy-to-use questionnaire has been created for you to add your information. Take a moment to look at the alumni profiles and create your own! If you want to feature someone else, please contact the community relations office at 253-583-5040 and give us their contact information. We’ll follow up with them to create an alumni profile.

Featured alumna Darcy Jansen is the director of E-Learning at University of Washington Tacoma!

Inside Schools

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