



SHARK TANK Walla Walla style

The district has teamed with Whitman College, Walla Walla Community College, Walla Walla University, College Place School District, Junior Achievement and the WVV Chamber of Commerce to plan the Pitch It! Competition presented by Baker Boyer Bank.

Inspired by the TV show, Shark Tank, "Pitch It" provides an opportunity for students of all ages to design and develop innovative business, products and services concepts. The Pitch It! Competition will challenge students to create a realistic business model for their entrepreneurial idea. Students will compete in grade brackets, K-8, 9-12 and 13+ and is open to all students at all schools in the Walla Walla Valley. In addition, there will be workshops leading up to the events, volunteer mentors will be assigned to students and a community-wide entrepreneurial panel will judge the final event.

The preliminary competition for all students is Wednesday, November 4 from 5:30-8 p.m. at Walla Walla Community College. The winners from each grade bracket at this event will move forward to compete in the final event on November 18 at the Gesa Powerhouse Theater. The first place winner will receive a \$500 cash prize from Baker Boyer Bank and three coaching sessions on the fundamentals of building a successful business.

Learn more at: www.pitch-it.info



Walla Walla Public Schools

Education building wins prestigious state fair award

During this year's Walla Walla Fair and Frontier Days, Washington State Fair Commissioner James Beck awarded the coveted Black and White Award to the Educational Building and Exhibit at the Walla Walla County Fair. This special award is given by the Commissioner for an area within the fair that exhibited notable exceptional excellence as rated amongst other fairs within the state. The award is given solely at the discretion of the State Fair Commissioner and is considered an honor to be received.

Commissioner Beck was particularly impressed with the partnership of the Walla Walla educational system with the Walla Walla Fair. He noted exceptional educational value in the exhibits displayed by area students as well as the partnership with the fair that allowed for many students to participate in the fair's "Education Day" by busing area students to the fair with an organized educational tour of the grounds.

Accepting this special award were Mark Higgins, Communications Director and Bill Jordan, Superintendent, both with the Walla Walla Public Schools, Margo Piver, Superintendent of the Walla Walla Fair Educational Building, and Daryl Hopson, Interim Manager of the Walla Walla Fair.



Technology helps make learning math interesting

Walla Walla High School math teacher Monica Nelson is taking advantage of today's technology to peak the interests of her students. A recent grant opened the door for Nelson to purchase Chromebooks, software and curriculum for her classroom. Students are able to create graphs, conduct research and use their creativity. Nelson is also able to



Freshman Tayler Whalen uses a new Chromebook.



Monica Nelson

quickly identify if students are understanding the curriculum thanks to interactive features which provide instant feedback. Washington state students are required to take three math classes to graduate high school -- Algebra, Geometry and Algebra II. These rigorous standards are part of a new state push to prepare students for careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Experts, including the Washington Roundtable, report thousands of these high skill jobs will be in demand for years to come. Nelson says she wants her students to have the skills necessary to be competitive in today's changing world.

"We teach students how to persevere, communicate and justify their answers. This new technology helps the students investigate these areas and learn."

-Monica Nelson

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Focus on Education

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Walla Walla Public Schools

Prospect Point PRIDE!

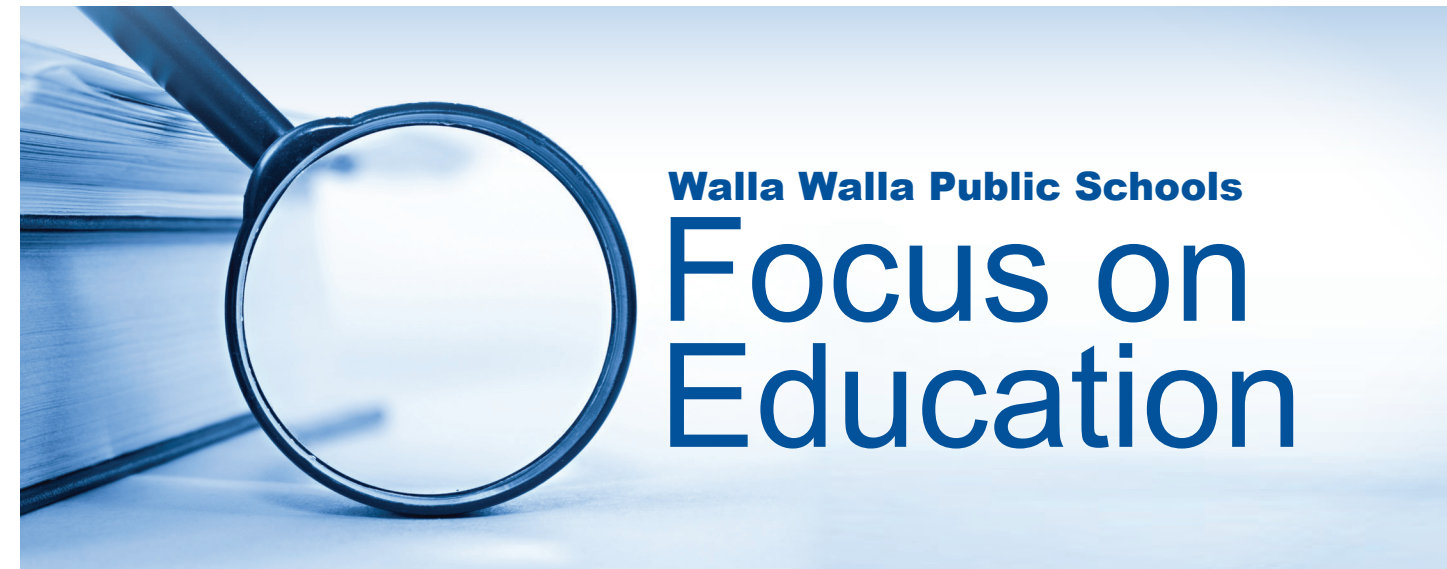


Prospect Point 5th grade students Chloe Moon and Micah Case recently recorded radio Public Service Announcements to raise awareness of the school's P.A.L.S (Peer and Leadership Support) program. This program allows students to learn leadership skills and promote a positive school culture. P.A.L.S. goals are to welcome new students to Prospect Point, establish good work habits, set goals and ask for extra help.

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L-R: Marcos Medina and Jose Beleche

Former students role models for area youth

Class of 2011 graduate Jose Beleche and Class of 2012 alumn Marcos Medina are focused on success as they prepare for their careers. Beleche graduated from Whitman College in May and Medina is in his senior year with the Missionaries. Both students, who were considered at-risk during their youth, excelled in college after receiving scholarships. Beleche never knew his father and was raised by a single mother. English was a second language for both students and money was always tight. But, they always believed

"I made a promise to myself to make good choices."

-Marcos Medina

in themselves and both had a strong desire to be role models in their community. Soccer was another love they both shared which helped them land spots

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Quality
Integrity
Accountability
Respect
Courtesy
Innovation
Diversity

Walla Walla Public Schools...



Superintendent's Message

Walla Walla Public Schools mails the Focus on Education newsletter to the homes of residents quarterly. This publication serves as a platform to keep our community informed and connected to the school district.

We value your involvement and support. Please contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for making public education a priority in Walla Walla.

William L. Jordan

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Community involvement key

Welcome to the 2015-2016 school year. We are excited for the opportunities to connect with the community as we strive to provide a quality education for all Walla Walla youth.

Soon the school board will embark on an expansive search to land a successful leader to be the next superintendent. There will be many opportunities during this process for community members to provide input on this important assignment. The school board expects to name a new superintendent in March or April and have the new leader assume the duties July 1, 2016. It has been a privilege to serve the community and I will do everything in my power to ensure a smooth and successful transition of leadership.

We also have several important studies underway. Ted Cohan, who oversees Business Services, is leading a "Sleep Study" to determine if the district should start secondary schools later to better align with teen sleep patterns. He also teamed with local business owner Paul Schneidmiller to update the district's long-range facilities improvement plan. Our facility needs are great, but we must work with the community to find the right package to take to the public.

The district is reviewing its Bilingual Education and Highly Capable Programs. We look forward to sharing the results of these studies as information becomes available.



Pioneer Middle School Principal Mira Gobel and the entire staff rolled out the red carpet in front of the school to welcome students back for the new year. Gobel says their goal is to make school the best part of each student's day.

The staff also wore bright red Pioneer Middle School shirts to show school pride. There were plenty of smiles and high fives as the students entered the school.

From all of us at Walla Walla Public Schools, welcome back and let's make it a great school year!

High fives ...welcome back!

Laser sharp focus on college and careers



Teaching & Learning Department

Assistant Superintendent Laure Quaresma and her team are working tirelessly to ensure all Walla Walla children are academically successful.

The state's new learning standards ask the district to prepare students for college and careers. Longtime educator Assistant Superintendent Laure Quaresma is leading the Teaching and Learning Department as it aligns resources to meet this 21st Century opportunity. A Washington Roundtable Report states 50,000 jobs in our state will go unfilled by 2017 for skilled workers. The district is committed to helping area students compete for these jobs.

First up for the department is creating a new Curriculum Advisory Committee representing staff, parents and community. A complete inventory of all assessments is also underway to find ways to improve efficiency and cut down on testing time. The district has also reached out to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory to enhance professional development for the Next Generation Science program.

State test scores offer new baseline

In August, school districts across the state of Washington received results from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments taken electronically this spring by students in grades 3-8, 10 and 11. The exams were in English Language Arts (reading, writing and listening) and mathematics.

This was the first year of full implementation of the new tests which are designed to measure the Washington State Learning standards (Common Core State Standards). The SBAC exams will gradually replace the High School Proficiency and End of Course exams by the Class of 2019. Student results from this year's assessment establish a new baseline for data that will be able to show progress toward college and career readiness.

Nearly 4,000 Walla Walla Public Schools students participated in the state exams this spring. District students generally are on par with students across the state in English Language Arts. The district plans to continue to refine school improvement plans, with a focus on math improvement.

Test Results: Visit www.wwps.org for a complete listing.

The department also renewed its pledge of support for the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program. It is increasing support to the Bilingual Education and Learning Assistance Programs by reassigning staff and improving communication. College and career readiness is the department's highest priority.

Gates supports professional learning

The district received a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant to work alongside 33 other school districts -- including Seattle, Sunnyside, and Highline -- to enhance instructional practices. This competitive grant rewards districts for demonstrating readiness to implement district-wide, aligned professional learning.

"Washington's vision is for all students to be college and career ready and this requires attention to professional learning for all instructional staff."

said Assistant Superintendent Laure Quaresma.

Pedroza to support bilingual education

Longtime Sharpstein Elementary dual language teacher Angélica Pedroza has a heart for helping students acquire English and be successful academically. As the district's new Bilingual Coordinator, she will have a greater role in helping close the achievement gap of English Language Learner (ELL) students.



Her primary responsibility is monitoring the progress of ELL students and guiding educators in implementing the best teaching strategies.

"This position allows me to impact the learning of more students by working with teachers and administrators," Pedroza said.

Pedroza was born in Mexico and moved to Touchet when she was four-years-old. After graduating from Touchet High School, she attended Whitman College where she majored in Spanish and received her teaching certification. She has three sons and enjoys spending time with her family.

Track clears hurdle

This fall, Walla Walla Public Schools broke ground on construction of a new all-weather track at Walla Walla High School. The \$875,000 project will take approximately 90 to 110 days to complete, weather permitting.

The new blue track will have nine lanes and eliminate the need for the track program to use Martin Field. Currently the district spends \$8,000 annually to transport students to and from Martin Field for track practices and competitions.

Two-thirds of the funding for this project was raised privately by the Big Blue Boosters under the leadership of Scott Krivoshein. Thank you Walla Walla for your support!



National anti-bullying specialist

Bullying Prevention Specialist Mark Thompson met with fourth and fifth grade students at Berney and Sharpstein Elementary to talk about treating people kindly and making good choices. His discussion focused on character development, self regulation, self reflection and thinking before you speak or act.

"The message this year is to see fellow students as ice bergs," Thompson said. "You only see 10 percent of who someone is and it is what is below the surface that is important."

Thompson has 20 years experience in risk management and bullying prevention. He speaks nationally on the topic with large organizations, including NFL teams and NCAA athletic programs. Thompson's presence in schools is part of the district's risk management program in partnership with the Safe and Civil Schools Committee.



Role models - continued from cover.

on the Whitman soccer team. Beleche and Medina say their success in college started with a foundation from Walla Walla Public Schools. Both enrolled in numerous honors and Advanced Placement courses during their years at Wa-Hi. They also participated in the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program which aims to prepare students for college. AVID students develop organizational skills, utilize tutors from Whitman College, learn from successful professionals and visit colleges. They also develop strong, positive relationships with their AVID teachers.

"Our teachers taught us to believe it wasn't a matter of if you were going to college, but where," Beleche said.

Medina said the note-taking and time management skills he learned through AVID have been essential in college.

"As a soccer player and

college student my time is always limited" Medina said. "The organizational skills I learned in AVID help me manage my time."

Beleche is coaching soccer at Whitman this year with dreams of one day becoming an engineer. Medina wants to live in Seattle and have a career in business.

Both young men have lived up to their promise of setting a good example for other Walla Walla youth.



Jose Beleche celebrates with his AVID teacher Sherry McConn during the 2011 Senior Celebration.



Join the Conversation

Walla Walla Public Schools invites you to "Join the Conversation" through a community engagement process known as ThoughtExchange.

Parents, staff, students and community members will have an opportunity to participate via this online learning process beginning Oct. 6 through Oct. 16. Parents, staff and those who sign up for Enews will receive an email inviting them to engage. Community members and students will have the opportunity to self-register by visiting the district's website (www.wwps.org) and clicking on the ThoughtExchange logo. This process is available in English and Spanish.

ThoughtExchange Process:

- It is a three-step process. Stakeholders begin by sharing their thoughts online. Then each participant has the opportunity to review and star the thoughts of other ThoughtExchange contributors. The benefit of the process is discovering what the community values. Results come out in November.
- The process is confidential. The names and email addresses of participants will never be publicly associated with a thought or response. However, participants will see each other's thoughts.

Fall 2015 Questions

Question 1:

What are some examples of experiences your child or a child you know has had at Walla Walla Public Schools that illustrates what quality education means to you?

Question 2:

What are some opportunities you feel would contribute to quality education that are not available for students right now?