



GOALS FOCUS ON MATH & READING

The push for improvement in these areas falls on the heels of the release of state assessment results where the district is witnessing double-digit dips below state averages in grades 3-8 literacy and math.

The district will also seek continued improvement of its already commendable high school retention trends by further lowering drop-out rates. Superintendent Wade Smith plans to update the school board and stakeholders through detailed progress reports during school board meetings several times this school year.

2016-2017 GOALS SUMMARY

- GOAL 1:
Student Performance Targets
- Increase Elementary and Middle School Literacy and Math Achievement
 - Improve High School Retention Rates

- GOAL 2:
Superintendent Performance Targets
- Successfully Implement Entry Plan
 - Lead Inclusive Strategic Planning Process
 - Demonstrate Excellence in Relationship Building

- GOAL 3:
School Board Performance Targets
- Improve Community Involvement
 - Establish Best Practices for Leadership
 - Ensure Fiscal Accountability and Transparency
 - Support Strategic Planning Process

DISTRICT COMMITTEES FORMED

This school year several committees have been formed to provide recommendations to the Board of Directors. Updates on these committees are available on the district webpage.

BILINGUAL COMMITTEE:
Recommendations due February 2017

HIGHLY CAPABLE/EXPLORER:
Recommendations due May 2017

COMMUNITY FACILITIES TASK FORCE:
Recommendations due December 2017

Walla Walla Public Schools

Robotics program offers students fun way to learn

Program develops engineering, science, technology, math and problem-solving skills

Walla Walla's FIRST Robotics Competition team is providing opportunities for high school students to embrace technology and science through a fun hands-on learning activity. Students build, program and operate these high tech machines in competition. Popular television shows, the allure of technology and the desire to work with their hands is adding to the popularity of this new program which helps students develop mathematics, engineering, communications and problem-solving skills.

Instructor James Polson and his team have their sights on making it to this year's worlds competition. Polson currently has 10 to 15 students participating in this after-school program. They meet Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5:30 at SEA-TECH. All Walla Walla Public High School students are eligible to participate. The build season starts in January with competitions beginning in March.

The robots compete in a game that takes on the atmosphere of a major sporting event. Each team builds a new robot every year to compete in a new game. District leaders are looking into the possibility of creating a robotics class in the future. Polson says it would be a positive move for the Career and Technical Education program since the skills learned translate to career fields.

"The programmers are using the same software as companies like

Nelson Irrigation," Polson said. "The team fabricators are using industry-standard equipment to engineer and make parts for the robot."

Polson says students interested in participating do not need any experience or computer skills. He says there is a job for everyone on the team. To learn more about joining, contact James Polson via email at jpolson@wwps.org or by phone at (509) 526-2000.



Photo L-R: Tyler Vasconcelles, Nathan Hays, Instructor James Polson, Aaron Hays, and Thomas Wilson show off last year's robot at the fair.

English learners graduation rates higher than state

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) recently featured Walla Walla Public Schools for achieving an on-time graduation rate of 77 percent for students in the English Language Learners (ELL) program. The report represents approximately 25 students from the graduation class of 2014. This impressive graduation mark is 23 percent higher than the state average. Everett, Evergreen and Sunnyside School Districts were also in the spotlight for posting significantly higher than state average on-time graduation rates for ELL students.

"All students must be college, and career-ready when they graduate and this is yet another sign we are preparing them for life after high school," said Principal Pete Peterson.

OSPI's publication featuring the graduation rate accomplishment noted equity and access strategies are in place in the district to support students and their learning. Data transparency, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) and home visits were noted as strengths in Walla Walla Public Schools. Dual Language programs

"All students must be college, and career-ready when they graduate and this is yet another sign we are preparing them for life after high school."

-Principal Pete Peterson



Board of Directors:

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BOARD



Focus on Education

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Walla Walla Public Schools

Proud to call Walla Walla home

Chris Young works behind the scenes to support learning

Facilities and Operations Trades Assistant Chris Young has deep roots in Walla Walla and wants to do his part to give back. Since graduating from Walla Walla High School in 1999, he married Stephanie (Fowler), who was also born and raised in Walla Walla. Together they now have two elementary-aged boys and are actively involved in the community.

Chris has been employed by the district for 10 years. He supports grounds maintenance and is a licensed pest control technician. He also assists with HVAC, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical projects as needed.

"I want children in Walla Walla to have a safe and clean learning environment," Young said. "Walla Walla has provided so much to my family and I want today's kids to have even more opportunities."

Chris recently played a key role in the Wa-Hi track project irrigation installation. He also has helped improve irrigation efficiency practices and repair aging infrastructure.



Facilities and Operations Trades Assistant Chris Young.

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Walla Walla Public Schools

Focus on Education

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Local businesses step up to support special needs students at work

During his years at Walla Walla High School, Class of 2006 graduate Jacob Butenhoff was known for his moves on the wrestling mat as a perennial state contender.

Now in his first year in the district as a Special Education teacher, he is using his passion to help special needs students compete for jobs in the newly formed S.T.E.P. program -- Students Transitioning into Employment Possibilities.

The goal of S.T.E.P. is to provide transition

S.T.E.P. BUSINESS PARTNERS

- WorthFit
- YMCA
- Grocery Outlet
- Bicycle Barn
- Andy's Market
- Humane Society
- T-Walla Walla
- Sun Rental
- Dairy Queen
- Whitman Place
- Klicker's
- Odd Fellows
- Big Cheese Pizza
- City of WW

Jacob Butenhoff (pictured above) helps student Jordan Nosworthy learn job skills while working at Sun Rental.

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"Our Core Values are more than mere words; they're our business!"

- Quality
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Respect
- Courtesy
- Innovation
- Diversity



Superintendent’s Message

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

We value your engagement and look forward to your involvement in our Strategic Planning efforts this school year. The Board of Directors and I value your input and welcome your ideas as we strive for a world-class education for all students..

Wade Smith
Superintendent
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e: wsmith@wwps.org
t: @WallaWallaSup

Walla Walla Public Schools...

Listening to Understand

It's been a wonderful three months in Walla Walla as I continue to transition into my new role as Superintendent of Walla Walla Public Schools. To date, I have met individually with more than 170 community members. This group includes previous school board members, elected officials, business leaders, superintendent interview committee members, higher education leaders, non-profit leaders, public service agencies, service groups and parents. I truly appreciate the time everyone has made for me as we work together to provide world-class learning opportunities for our students.

I'm now entering Phase 2 of my Entry Plan – Listening to Understand. I'll spend more time with staff and parents in this phase. These meetings provide an opportunity for me to continue to listen and learn, as well as to begin capturing critical feedback, perceptions, and information to be used in order to develop a picture of both our past and present reality. Soon I'll work with the school board and district leadership team to make sense of what I have heard. This information will be helpful as we develop a new vision, mission and values for the district during our Strategic Planning process this year. I urge you to get involved in this process.

I also want to introduce you to Walla Walla High School Junior Chloe Williams. She is volunteering to provide the school board with a school report during the first school board meeting of each month. She is a bright young lady and we look forward to learning more about student life through her reports.



Chloe Williams

Join us! Superintendent’s Patron Tour

DATE: Wednesday, October 19
TIME: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (lunch provided)
RSVP: by Friday, October 14, to sgolden@wwps.org or call 526-6715

TOUR SITES:
SEA-TECH Skills Center, Pioneer Middle School & Sharpstein Elementary
Join Superintendent Wade Smith for a behind-the-scenes look at district schools. He will also provide an update on critical issues facing the school district and ask for feedback in support of the Strategic Planning process.

Teacher and student cross paths again

Green Park educators team to teach parenting strategies

Green Park first grade teacher Laura Reiter vividly remembers getting an invitation to attend her student Yazmin Bahena's First Communion at St. Patrick's Church. Yazmin was a second grader in Reiter's class at Blue Ridge Elementary at the time. Now more than two decades later the photo of the two of them together on this memorable day is still posted in Reiter's classroom. These days Bahena is also a kindergarten teacher at Green Park and just down the hallway from her beloved teacher.

"I remember how eager Yazmin was to learn and how she was always paying attention," Reiter said. "I was so honored to be invited to her special event and have the opportunity to support one of my students."

This year, Bahena and Reiter are teaming to teach the parenting program "10 Steps to Positive Discipline." The program is designed to help parents communicate effectively with their children, reduce power struggles and develop strategies to reduce trauma and support learning.

For Reiter and Bahena, it's another opportunity to grow their relationship and support others in the community.

"Laura was one of my favorite teachers and she has been a wonderful role model and friend," Bahena said. "I want to support my students and families the way she always did for me."

Similar parenting classes are being scheduled in elementary schools across the district as part of the Family and Community Engagement Program coordinated by Pam Clayton.



Green Park teachers Yazmin Bahena (L) and Laura Reiter (R) have a long history dating back to their days together at Blue Ridge Elementary where Reiter was Yazmin's teacher. Now they are teaming at Green Park to help families be successful by teaching free parenting classes this fall and winter. These courses are an excellent opportunity for learning research-based parenting strategies and networking.

PARENTING CLASSES INFORMATION:
• Pam Clayton: pclayton@wwps.org / (509) 526-6785
• District webpage: wwps.org (calendar of classes available)

District focuses on chronic absences

Washington state scored poorly on a chronic absenteeism federal study. In fact, only Washington D.C. scored lower. The Washington state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction considers a student chronically absent after 18 or more missed days of school. Chronic absenteeism is linked to poor academic achievement. Walla Walla Public Schools is taking additional steps this year to curb this trend.

- STEPS TO REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**
- Positive adult relationships with students
 - Additional home visits
 - Professional development for staff (Trauma-Informed)
 - Attendance plans
 - More strategies for getting students involved in activities
 - Improved school culture

District resumes preschool busing service

A district focus on reducing barriers to education for its youngest learners prompted preschool busing services to resume this school year. Preschool bus services were abruptly halted three years ago due to the federal sequestration which forced the program to cut \$65,000. School board members approved \$138,500 to purchase a new school bus outfitted with special seats and seat belts for preschool-aged children. Parent input supported the decision.

Strategic Plan to chart future

Walla Walla Public Schools is embarking on an exciting journey to develop a long-range Strategic Plan, which will serve as a framework for focusing efforts, allocating resources, and prioritizing initiatives in the years to come. The plan will be completed in June. There are many opportunities for input.

Superintendent Wade Smith is leading this inclusive process aimed at identifying current successes, in addition to needs and challenges, and then addressing them through laserlike strategic initiatives. There will be multiple layers of dialogue involving students, staff, parents and community members every step of the way. The Strategic Planning process will result in a new Vision, Mission and Values statement for the school district as well as measurable goals and detailed initiatives to support today's learning needs.

"This planning process relies on the sharing of your hopes and dreams for the future of Walla Walla Public Schools as we collectively envision a world-class education for all students," said Superintendent Smith.



>>> Take Our Survey! <<<
Please visit the district website to complete a brief survey to provide input in support of the Strategic Planning process – www.wwps.org.

Blue Print for Success

Garrison Middle School students learn to chart academic journey

In a world of high stakes-testing, seemingly endless educational acronyms and numerous hurdles to meet state graduation requirements, Garrison Middle School students are using the newly formed Blue Print for Success program to track their academic journey.

Students are creating "data journals" to gauge their academic standing and find ways to improve while at Garrison Middle School, according to Principal Robert Elizondo.

"Our goal is for all students to articulate their reading, writing and math journey by setting goals to meet or exceed state standards," Elizondo said. "Students will involve parents during the process and will gain the necessary skills to chart a Blue Print for Success."

The student-produced data journals will include test scores and other learning indicators to inform students about where they are now in their learning and where they want to go.



S.T.E.P. Program continued from page 1

services for special needs students 18 to 21 who are moving into their adult roles. Students spend most of their school day at a local business learning job skills. The program helps students learn how to live independently, access public transportation and use appropriate social and behavior skills in the workplace.

Butenhoff, who went to state twice in wrestling before continuing his wrestling career at University of Great Falls in Montana, says the S.T.E.P. program mirrors athletics.

"I have had the opportunity to coach wrestling for a while now and leading this program is much like coaching an athletic team," Butenhoff said. "With our program we are able to truly cater and coach to the strengths and needs that each individual possesses."

S.T.E.P. students work daily on their own goals, which incorporate interpersonal, employability and social skills. Butenhoff says he is honored to guide and mentor these young adults into becoming independent contributing members of our community by teaching strong work ethics, accountability, self-advocacy, resilience and independence.

"It is our hope by the time students are ready to exit the program, they can obtain a job, work independently, foster relationships and thrive in our community," Butenhoff said. "Watching these young men and women become empowered by setting and reaching goals they did not know were even possible is just an awesome perk to the job!"



Jacob Butenhoff



Healthy Living

Providence partnership promotes lifelong health and fitness interests

For the first time ever, the current generation is expected to live five years less than their parents. Currently 12.5 million children and adolescents in the United States are obese.

These daunting statistics are fueling the district's partnership with the Providence St. Mary Foundation through a Healthy Youth Initiative using Squord Activity Pods. Providence is donating Squord PowerPods for every fourth grader in the district. Schools will also receive syncing stations (iPads) for Physical Education teachers.

The Squord lightweight, waterproof devices track all sorts of movement and convert it into points connecting to awards inside the Squord app. Schools will help students track their activity and find more ways to create a culture of physical fitness and healthy behaviors.