

October 3 • School Board Meeting Recap

## City grant to pave safe walking route for Blue Ridge students

Walla Walla Public Schools is teaming with the City of Walla Walla to make getting to and from Blue Ridge Elementary School safer for students.

Thanks to the "Safe Route to School Grant" recently secured by the city, nearly \$120,000 will be used to improve sidewalks near the school, railway crossing signs and cross-walk stripping.

The grant also improves special needs access ways through the installation of eight handicapped ramps.

The district will receive \$4,000 to help purchase a "Buster the Bus" educational safety tool to help teach district students the safest ways to walk, bike, or bus to school.

Blue Ridge students will also receive safety training this school year.

## District begins tabulating facilities survey results as more come in

After being in circulation for about a month, this week district administrators began tabulating "Let's Talk Schools -- We're Listening" surveys, according to a report to school board members last night from Communications Director **Mark Higgins**.

Higgins said approximately 800 surveys have been submitted to date and will continue to be accepted through Oct. 13. He went on to say final results will be made public at the Tuesday, Oct. 17 school board work session at 6 p.m. The public and staff are encouraged to attend this work session.

Superintendent **Rich Carter** said themes and common messages are surfacing from the surveys, but didn't want to indicate any of the findings until the final report is available at the Oct. 17 work session.

School board members spent the past two weeks talking to staff and parents at district schools before the start of the school day.

Last night school board members held their second listening post prior to the start of their regularly scheduled meeting. This was an opportunity for community members to talk one-on-one with a school board member.

### "Let's Talk Schools -- We're Listening" Highlights

- Approximately 800 surveys returned (to date)
- Board school visits (open house & before school)
- Focus Groups (WWVEA, PSE, Key Communicators, retired administrators, former School board members, Habitat for Humanity, Ad Council.)

## District practices help keep insurance rates stable

Of the 47 school districts in the *School Insurance Association of Washington* pool, Walla Walla Public Schools have consistently had some of the fewest claims of participants, according to a report last night from Business Manager **Aron Rausch**.

"It's been a very successful program for us," Rausch said. "We work at managing insurance risks in our own district which promotes safety for staff, students and patrons."

He said rates increased seven percent this year, but the district's low claim history helped keep rates from climbing even higher.

Rausch explained how the insurance pool of like-sized districts keeps Walla Walla Public Schools adequately covered with a cost effective insurance plan.

"Our insurance covered the \$135,000 expense of replacing the boiler parts at Pioneer last year," Rausch said. "Our pool helps us balance the risk of potential liabilities and lower the cost."

## In other School Board meeting business...

### Board members:

- approved minutes of the board meetings of September 19, 2006, Personnel and Out of State Travel Reports, WWVEA Negotiated Agreement for 2006-07, and Inter-Agency Agreement with City for Safe School Walking Grants.

## Personnel Report

### • New Hires

(Certificated) **Kerri Tucker**, French Teacher, Wa-Hi  
(Classified) **Tara Jasper**, Library Technician, Blue Ridge  
**Gretchen Riley**, Para-Educator, Green Park  
**Jacqueline Scholl**, Para-Educator, Garrison

### • Resignations/Retirements

(Classified) **Christie Forsyth**, Intervention Specialist, Berney, 16 years (Retirement effective at the end of the 2006-07 school year)  
**Joe Selby**, Custodian, Walla Walla High School, 7 years  
**Jane Sporleder**, Outreach Specialist, Paine, 18 years

### • Out of State Travel

**Nora Carillo** and **Maggie Miranda** to attend Love and Logic Instructor Training in Denver, CO (Funding: HeadStart/ECEAP)  
**Jennifer Douglas** to attend Speaker for Mental Health for School Nurses Conference in Baltimore, MD (Funding: No cost to district)  
**Anne Swant** to attend NCTM Conference in Atlanta, GA (Funding: No cost to the district)

### Quote of the Week

“Always do right: this will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

Mark Twain

## Pioneer STARS Camp experience helps 6th graders transition to middle school

Images of students laughing and learning filled nearly every frame of the DVD Pioneer Principal Dana Jones showed school board members last night highlighting this year's STARS Camp.

Jones reported this year approximately 230 sixth graders and 30 staff members and parent volunteers made the trek to Camp Kiwanis for the annual program to help sixth grade students transition to middle school.

“The purpose of the STARS Camp is to create a positive atmosphere for students, one of trust and good citizenship, says Jones. “When the students feel safe and know each other and the staff members, it creates a positive environment for learning.”

Jones thanked her staff for all their hard work and passed out Volunteer Appreciation awards to **Carol Noal**, **Tim Edwards**, **Kevin Halazon** and **Germaine Brown** for their support. (\*An award will also be given to **Caroline Keyes** who wasn't in attendance at last night's board meeting.)



*Pioneer Principal Dana Jones presents Tim Edwards with a volunteer appreciation award for his help organizing Stars Camp fishing opportunities.*

## Summer School offers students more opportunities to learn essential skills

“It's clear we have year-round school,” School Board President Mary Jo Geidl said following the summary report of this year's summer school program by District Assessment Director **Ron Higgins**.

Higgins detailed the numerous Summer School Programs offered this year to help students learn essential skills necessary to be academically successful. He reported programs were offered from mid-June to mid-August.

Although program curriculum varied from site to site, reading was a focus for all summer school students.

Higgins said 10th grade students who did not meet standards in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning in April had opportunities to participate in a five-week program to improve their skills prior to the August retake.

Thirty-four students took advantage of this opportunity. Retake results are not available until later this fall.

Wa-Hi Assistant Principal **Mira Gobel** and Gear Up Coordinator **Mike Gwinn** reported on the Wa-Hi Transitional Summer School designed to help students who struggled during their 8th grade year have success at Wa-Hi.

Thirty students met for seven days in August to get adjusted to the new campus, discuss study skills and develop a personal connection to the school. Transitional School students continue to meet during the school year to stay connected with their adult mentors and track academic progress.

### 2006 Summer School Programs

- Special Services ESY “Extended School Year”
- Millennials Elementary Summer School
- Migrant Services Elementary Program
- ELL Summer Enrichment Program
- Migrant Services Secondary Program
- Credit Retrieval Secondary Summer Program
- WASL Summer Institute
- Wa-Hi Transitional Summer Program