

# 10-10 Staff News

School Board Meeting Recap »

November 5, 2019

## Jump Start Kindergarten

*District to offer state funded kindergarten to four-year-olds*

The decision to repurpose Blue Ridge Elementary into an early learning center is paving the way for the district to offer a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program to improve kindergarten readiness. Currently less than one in four children in Walla Walla are ready for kindergarten based on statewide Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) results.

The new "Jump Start" kindergarten program will serve four-year-old children who demonstrate a need or otherwise do not have access to high-quality early learning experiences prior to kindergarten.

Per Washington State Law, the Jump Start program will mirror the traditional five-year-old kindergarten program. Classrooms will be staffed by certificated teachers and para-educators.

"The program will be inclusive, socio-economically diverse and responsive to the



**Dr. Wade Smith**  
Superintendent

**"Walla Walla's Transitional Kindergarten Program is committed to participate in coordinated outreach, referral and placement to assure best fit and appropriateness of services based on each child's and family's need."**

**Dr. Wade Smith, Superintendent**

needs of children," said Smith.

Transportation and meals will be offered to students. The program works in collaboration with, and will not adversely impact, enrollment in Walla Walla's community-based preschool programs including Head Start, ECEAP (Early Childhood Education Assistance Program) and those operating in licensed childcare centers or homes, added Smith. The new program will begin next school year.

## Board Meeting Highlights

### APPROVED »

Minutes from the Oct. 15 regular business meeting and Oct. 28 special meeting, personnel report, extracurricular athletic contracts, Nov. 5 accounts payable and October payroll, September financial report, CTE Program Five Year Plan, Annual Highly Capable Program Compliance and Pioneer MS Value Engineering.

### CALENDAR SURVEY »

The WWPS Calendar Committee is seeking staff input for the upcoming school year calendar. Questions include where to place the start and end dates in the school year calendar, in addition to issues such as snow days, professional development days, and the length and placement of winter break.

Staff should check their district email from Assistant Superintendent Chris Gardea for a survey link. Following this survey, the Calendar Committee, which is made up of certificated, classified, and administrative staff, will use these data-driven priorities to create model calendars to vote on. The survey concludes Friday, Nov. 15.

### VETERANS DAY »

There is NO SCHOOL Monday, Nov. 11 in observance of Veterans Day. Several school events are planned in support of our veterans this week. Walla Walla Public Schools is proud to salute all veterans past and present. Thank you for your service!



## Bowen to lead Early Learning Center Transition Plan

Walla Walla Public Schools has partnered with Walla Walla Community College who will be assigning Samantha Bowen to help lead the district's Early Learning Center development process from now through June. Bowen will be directing outreach, engagement and development as the district repurposes Blue Ridge Elementary into a comprehensive center for children and families. Bowen is currently the Director of Early Childhood and Parenting Education at WWCC. She has specialized in early learning programs for 12 years. She is a native of the Walla Walla valley attending Berney Elementary before moving to Milton Freewater for middle and high school. She is married and has three children.



**EMPLOYMENT ...****Classified:**

RACHEL ALINARES | PARA-ED, PROSPECT PT  
 MARNEE CONTRERAS | PARA-ED, PIONEER MS  
 LORI GRIMES | TEMP HEALTH RM ASST, SHARPSTEIN  
 JENNIFER MANN | PARA-ED, BLUE RIDGE  
 MIRANDA MCGEE | PARA-ED, BERNEY  
 ARACELI ROMERO | ASST SEC/PARA-ED, OPPORTUNITY  
 TESSA WESTON | PARA-ED, BERNEY

**RESIGNATIONS ...****Classified:**

ELIA ESQUIVEL | HEAD START, 15 YRS  
 CHAVIS HARRIS, JR | LINCOLN HS, 2 YRS  
 MIKE STROE | TRANSPORTATION, 23 YRS

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE ...****Classified:**

MIA MURRAY | SHARPSTEIN, 2 YRS • MIA WILL SERVE AS  
 BEHAVIOR COACH FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 2019-2020  
 SCHOOL YEAR

**Quote of the Week**

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."  
 John Dewey

**Early Learning Center Update**

Following eight months of study, stakeholder engagement and research, the Walla Walla Public Schools' Board of Directors reached a unanimous decision in October to repurpose Blue Ridge Elementary School into a regional Early Learning Center for children and families effective the 2020-21 school year.

The center will provide birth-to-five services for students and families as a coordinated and comprehensive community learning hub. From parent training and supports to infant care to early learning, the center is far more than just a preschool.

"The center's services will address and help overcome the staggering access gap for many Walla Walla youth and families, promoting an inclusive community resource that encourages integration, engagement and opportunity for all," said Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith. "Every year, fewer and fewer Walla Walla kindergarten students are entering school prepared, primarily due to lack of access from quality birth-to-five experiences."

With less than one in four kindergarten students coming to school kindergarten ready, nearly half the statewide average, this has resulted in dramatic challenges in ensuring social and academic success for all.

"Over the last decade, several groups have convened to explore the needs of young children and to make recommendations on how to address those needs as a community," said Smith. "Multiple studies and workgroups all point to a comprehensive birth-to-five early learning center to address the valley's significant lack of access and streamline coordination of services."

Currently more than two dozen partner agencies have indicated they may wish a presence at the Walla Walla Early Learning Center.

"The WWPS Board and leadership remain committed to working collaboratively with regional partners and programs to ensure that Early Learning Center programs do not adversely impact community early learning providers," said Smith.

More information and the naming of the center will be released in the coming weeks.

## Bilingual Programs Update

### *Dual Immersion program continues to grow*

**Students exiting English Language Development services on the rise**

Last night Director of Equity and Dual Language Programs Dr. Julie Perron provided the school board an annual update on English Language Development (ELD) and Dual Immersion programs. Currently, approximately 800 students are receiving services through Perron's department. Services include English Language Development, Dual Immersion Programs and Supportive Mainstream.

"We have a menu of options for services for English Language Development," said Perron. "We meet students at their level of English proficiency and provide the necessary enrichment and strategies they need to be successful academically."

This school year the Dual Immersion program expanded to Green Park Elementary with two, full capacity kindergarten classes. The growth will continue next year as students progress through the grade levels. Perron also reported students are exiting ELD services just above the state average, with three percent growth since last year.

"Some students need more time than others to acquire proficiency in English, but our goal is to ensure high levels of learning in all of our programs and services," said Perron. "One of our goals this year is to identify and address the needs of long-term English learners so we can exit them from services and ensure they are successful."

Perron also noted significant growth in identification of migrant students so appropriate services can be provided to meet their needs. She thanked the school board for its support and said staff in her department are amazing.