

10-10 Staff News

School Board Meeting Recap »

November 17, 2020

Red Stage Extended

COVID spike pushes district to stay in distance learning through December

Walla Walla Public Schools will remain in Red Stage, keeping students in distance learning through Dec. 18, which marks the beginning of its winter break. Currently there are 471 active COVID cases in Walla Walla County, 436 of them stemming from the Walla Walla and College Place communities, based on the county's COVID Activity Report received Monday.

This represents a ten-fold increase over the last month. According to local Department of Community Health officials, the county's COVID positivity rate is at 15 percent and has been climbing in recent weeks, in addition to a 20 percent increase in cases that could not be sourced to a contact.

"We are very concerned about the uptick," said Dr. Larry Jecha, Walla Walla County Public Health Officer, in a recent correspondence to district officials. "The Washington State COVID-19 Surveillance Report, issued by the federal government, identifies Walla Walla County as being in the top three counties with the greatest increase of COVID-19 cases in the past three weeks in the State of Washington."

"While we desperately want to be serving students in person, the current virus activity simply doesn't permit us to do so at this time," said Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith. "We have to do our part to protect our students, staff and families from this serious health crisis, and not exacerbate community spread by prematurely opening."

At Tuesday night's board meeting Superintendent Smith reviewed additional measures the district is implementing to support students and families during extended distance learning. "I am so proud of our staff who are doing everything in their



Dr. Wade Smith
Superintendent

power to support students and families during this extremely difficult time," said Dr. Smith. "We understand the incredible burden that families are going through and we need to put every resource available to us on the table to support our students and parents."

The district has invested in additional para-educator and intervention specialist time to support students through home visits and helplines, partnered with internet providers to provide free, high speed internet to families without service and developed a website to coordinate mental health and other counseling services. The district is also providing free meals for all students over winter break to ease the hardship so many of our families are experiencing.

The district will closely monitor COVID case counts, in coordination with local health officials, and will communicate with families over winter break regarding January learning options.

"We urge everyone to follow the safety protocols set forth by health officials including wearing masks, social distancing and maintaining good hygiene," said Dr. Smith. "By working together we can get COVID case counts down to safe levels and begin the transition of students back to campus."

More information regarding the district's Safely Reopening Schools Plan, visit: <https://www.wgps.org/safely-reopening-schools>

Board Meeting Highlights

APPROVED »

Minutes from the Nov. 3, 2020 regular study meeting, personnel report, Nov. 17 accounts payable, Oct. financial report and Resolution 21-2020: Certification of 2021 Excess Property Taxes.

POLICY ADOPTIONS »

3120 - Enrollment

3143 - Notification and Dissemination of Information about Student Offenses and Notification of Threats of Violence or Harm

3144 - Release of Information Concerning Student Sexual and Kidnapping Offender

3205 - Sexual Harassment of Students Prohibited

4314 - Notification of Threats of Violence or Harm

6112 - Rental or Lease of District Real Property

BUDGET/ENROLLMENT UPDATE »

District enrollment continues to dip following a statewide trend linked to COVID. Enrollment is down 55,000 students statewide. District revenue projections will be reassessed based on current enrollment.

HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE »

High School Board Student Representative Jaden Bergevin said virtual assemblies have been successful and ASB clubs are planning several fun activities for students.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE »

Board Vice President Derek Sarley and Lobbyist Marie Sullivan provided a legislative update. State revenue shortfalls will be a focus of this session. District leaders are meeting weekly with elected officials to discuss education issues.

SUPERINTENDENT EVAL »

Board members reviewed the timeline and process for Superintendent Smith's annual evaluation.

EMPLOYMENT ...**Classified:**

LORI GRIMES | HEALTH RM ASST, SHARPSTEIN

RETIREMENT/RESIGNATION ...**Classified:**

RUTH TRIEBWASSER | LINCOLN HS, 6 YEARS

Quote of the Week

"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education."

Martin Luther King Jr.

**American Education Week - Nov. 16-20**

Walla Walla Public Schools is joining the nation in celebrating American Education Week – November 16th through the 20th. American Education is always celebrated the week prior to Thanksgiving. The National Education Association was one of the creators and original sponsors of American Education Week. Distressed that 25 percent of the country's World War I draftees were illiterate and 9 percent were physically unfit, representatives of the NEA and the American Legion met in 1919 to seek ways to generate public support for education.

The conventions of both organizations subsequently adopted resolutions of support for a national effort to raise public awareness of the importance of education. In 1921, the NEA Representative Assembly in Des Moines, Iowa, called for designation of one week each year to spotlight education. In its resolution, the NEA called for: "An educational week ... observed in all communities annually for the purpose of informing the public of the accomplishments and needs of the public schools and to secure the cooperation and support of the public in meeting those needs."

The first observance of American Education Week occurred December 4-10, 1921, with the NEA and American Legion as the co-sponsors. A year later, the then U.S. Office of Education joined the effort as a co-sponsor, and the PTA followed in 1938. Other co-sponsors are the U.S. Department of Education and numerous national education organizations.

American Education Week presents all Americans with an opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring every child receives a quality education. The week-long celebration across the nation will spotlight distinguished individuals who are critical in building great public schools for the nation's 50 million K-12 students.

October Bond Update**Walla Walla High School**

- Jackson Contractor continued to complete punchlist items on the New Science Building.
- Jackson Contractor continued selective demolition inside the Old Science & Library Bldgs.
- Abatement specialists worked on removing hazardous materials from the Old Science Building.
- Local subcontractor Premier Excavation continued work on the Library and Auditorium additions and grading for the Gym addition.
- Jackson Contractor poured footings and set forms for the Auditorium Addition.
- Local subcontractor Gillespie Roofing began to work on re-roofing the VoAg Building.
- The project team formalized plans for accelerating the Commons Bldg and provided pedestrian traffic routes across campus in preparation for students.
- The design team worked through administration duties to ensure that the project is as planned.
- The district, Jackson, the design team and Wenaha Group worked together to address unforeseen issues and provide effective solutions.

Pioneer Middle School

- The district, Wenaha Group, and Jackson Contractor Group worked to provide temporary heating while the existing boiler plant was relocated.
- Demolition of portions of the building continued.
- Abatement of hazardous materials was ongoing with new areas discovered and addressed.
- Work to provide temporary water was completed.
- Grading was initiated for the new parking lot.
- Excavation and grading for the new entry way.
- Jackson Contractor Group coordinated with the public to allow for items to be preserved by local artists. In addition, Jackson allowed the local police department to salvage one of the modular structures scheduled for demolition for their use.
- Similar to WaHi, there were challenges of discovering unknown conditions during the construction activities that were addressed.

Lincoln High School

- Design documents are nearing completion.

Walla Walla Center for Children & Families

- Through October the contractor continued to work through punchlist items in an effort to complete both the roof and the landscaping.