

# 10-10 Staff News

School Board Meeting Recap »

September 28, 2021

## Strategic Plan

### 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Preparation

Last night Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith and school board members discussed the timeline for developing the next five-year Strategic Plan. The district's current plan stands to conclude in 2022. The current plan hinges on four core pillars:

1. High Quality Instruction
2. Aligned and Coherent Systems
3. Social and Emotional Needs
4. Safe and Engaging Environment

Superintendent Smith noted the pandemic has impacted strategic plan initiatives and outcomes over the past two school years and continues to play a role in school operations today. He suggested the district continue with the identified core pillars from the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan this school year and next school year to provide adequate time to recover from the pandemic and develop a new plan. Superintendent Smith unveiled a roadmap to developing the next plan that begins this winter with developing a framework. Under this adoption model, the district will conduct outreach and plan development this spring and next fall. The plan would be finalized



**Dr. Wade Smith**  
Superintendent

**"We want an open and transparent process with multiple opportunities for stakeholder involvement, participation and feedback. The Strategic Plan must focus on our core mission of how to best serve, educate and prepare our students."**

*Dr. Wade Smith, Superintendent*

and adopted during the winter of 2023 with budget priorities identified in the spring of 2023. Full rollout would begin to start the 2023-2024 school year. Board members indicated they prefer an internal process for developing the plan without the use of an outside consultant. School board members will continue to discuss planning for the next strategic plan in upcoming meetings.

## Board Meeting Highlights

### APPROVED »»

Minutes from Sept. 7 regular study meeting, personnel report, extracurricular athletic contracts, September 21 accounts payable, August financial report and Minimum Basic Education Requirement Compliance.

### STRONG CREDIT RATING »»

Walla Walla Public Schools has received good news from one of Wall Street's top ratings agencies by joining only 216 districts across the nation to maintain a favorable credit rating in their recent review. Moody's Investors Service announced the district's strong rating of Aa3 has been maintained during their regular revaluation process.

According to Moody's rating scale, these ratings are indicators that the district is fiscally strong and has the capacity to meet its financial commitments. A strong Aa3 rating means the district is a very low credit risk, and continues to spell good news for local taxpayers if the district goes to sell bonds or refinance debt in the future.

"This strong rating is a testament to our board's leadership and sound fiscal oversight," said Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith. "Moody's recognizes our school board's commitment to maintain sound fund balances, low long term debt ratios and modest fixed costs."

Since Superintendent Smith's hiring in 2016, the district passed the largest bond in school history, at \$65.6M, which also qualified for over \$50M in state match dollars. The district's strong Aa3 credit rating at the time bonds were sold resulted in lower than anticipated bond tax rates for the community. Additionally, voters approved maintaining the replacement education levy at near record rates and student test scores and graduation rates have continued to trend upward.

### District utilizing grant funds to offset enrollment dip

Last night Fiscal Services Director Nancy Taylor reported the district is actively pursuing grants linked to federal pandemic recovery programs to address revenue shortfalls due to another dip in enrollment to start the 2021-2022 school year. The district anticipates it will miss budgeted enrollment targets by 130 FTE students once the official October enrollment count is tallied. This represents approximately \$1.3M in revenue loss to start the year. The dip in enrollment is primarily being felt in kindergarten and first grades, as secondary enrollment numbers remain strong.

Taylor said the district has identified some one-time grants to help offset the revenue loss. She also said the district would remain frugal with its spending patterns this school year and continue to seek ways to improve efficiencies. She said despite the challenges associated with COVID, enrollment and rising costs due to inflation, the district will end the 2020-2021 fiscal year with an \$8.5M fund balance, within the school board's requirement of a 6 to 8 percent reserve.

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

CODY FINN, PARA-EDUCATOR, WA-HI

IAN MOFFITT, PARA-EDUCATOR, GARRISON MS

NANDU NAIR, DATA ENGINEER, TECHNOLOGY

ALINE RABER, PARA-EDUCATOR, WWCCF

MARCIA ROWLAND, PARA-EDUCATOR, WA-HI

LUIS SANCHEZ, CUSTODIAN, WA-HI

**RESIGNATION/RETIREMENTS . . .****Classified:**

MAT ROE, SE WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION, 31 YEARS

YVONNE SEGOVIA, WWCCF, 7 YEARS

VALERIE VICARI, PROSPECT POINT, 12 YEARS

PATIENCE YOUNG, SHARPSTEIN, 1 WEEK

**Quote of the Week**

"I believe that education is all about being excited about something. Seeing passion and enthusiasm helps push an educational message."

Steve Irwin

**High School Update**

Last night Walla Walla High School Senior Rachel Clark, who serves as the school's liaison to the school board, provided an update on high school activities. Clark, who is also the ASB President, reported the Luau Dance held two weeks ago had a record 650 students in attendance. The district's new policy of eliminating fees to attend school activities played a role in this level of participation, according to Clark. This week is Homecoming and activities are planned all week. She said students are planning for the Veterans Day assembly and Winter Wish Week. Clark said students are adjusting to the bond construction projects and it is not impacting their experience.

**SAFELY BACK TO SCHOOL***District COVID safety protocols limiting spread*

Local COVID rates remain in the high risk category according to the Sept. 24 disease activity report released from the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health. The county's latest report revealed there were 64 new cases in the 0-18 age population last week (9/18/21-9/24/21). The previous week (9/11/21/9/17/21) had 75 new cases in the 0-18 population. Washington DOH reports the positivity rate for the previous 7 days for the week ending 9/23/21 is 12.2%, nearly a 10% decrease since the previous week. The WW County cases per 100K/14 days (9/11-9/24/21) was 908.

Despite the elevated COVID numbers in the county, disease spread in schools is minimal thanks to the district's safety protocols.

Since the start of the school year, there have been 76 positive cases of COVID among students and 13 staff members have contracted the virus. However, all of the cases are attributed to offsite exposure.

"We are very optimistic the safety measures we are taking are effective," said Health Services Director Amy Ruff. "All of our cases seem to be originating outside of school. The students who have been identified as close contacts to a positive case have quarantined per DOH guidelines, and have tested negative following the designated quarantine period."

Visit the district's Safely Back to School website at the top banner of the [www.wwps.org](http://www.wwps.org) homepage to review safety protocols and to follow the WWPS COVID cases dashboard.

**Bond Projects Monthly Report & Dashboard**

Construction continues at Walla Walla High School, Lincoln High School and Pioneer Middle School following the successful 2018 bond election. Each month the district publishes a Projects Update Report and Master Budget Dashboard. These reports are part of the Bond Oversight Committee's work to ensure accountability and fiscal transparency.

Wa-Hi staff and students are using the new music building addition, original science building now dubbed the Blue Devil building and an improved and expanded library building. The new fitness center/weight room addition is also in use and gym parking lot is only a few weeks away from being finished. Classrooms in the north-wing of Pioneer MS are renovated and being used. Phase one projects at Pioneer MS will be completed by winter break which include the main gym, auxiliary gym, south-wing, main office, improved entry and expanded cafeteria. Demolition of the interior of Lincoln HS is well underway. Asbestos abatement is being completed and old systems, including the antiquated boiler, are being removed to make way for new components.

Last week, the district released video featuring Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith providing a comprehensive update on district bond projects. He provides walking tours of Lincoln High School, Pioneer Middle School and Walla Walla High School. Superintendent Smith also checks in with Bond Oversight Committee members Dick Moeller and Tony Wenham. Visit the district's website to view the video.