

Stories this week include:

District Stories

- Winter Break Schedule
- School board members sworn into office
- School board approves calendars -- school to start after Labor Day
- School Performance Reports online
- Garrison choir entertains board
- Educational and Operations Replacement Levy Facts Online
- Personnel Report (from 12/13/11 school board meeting)
- AVID program shines at Pioneer
- Finance Officer Johnston reports enrollment decline
- Voter registration forms available
- Winter weather is on the way! School closure and delay procedures

School Stories

- Big Nine Athletic Conference realigns to North-South Divisions
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Workshops
- Walla Walla parent named Parent Ambassador for Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP
- Debate team travels north for second district event - By Coach Jean Tobin
- Homelink's Winter Wonderland celebration rings in holiday season

Community Stories

- Walla Walla Dance Company presents "The Adventures of Alice"

District Stories

Winter Break Schedule

- December 19 to 30
- Classes resume Monday, January 2
- District Office Closed for Winter Break

School board members sworn into office

Walla Walla County Superior Court Judge John Lohrmann swore into office school board members Jim Lehmann, Anne Golden and Max Carrera at Tuesday's night board meeting for another four term on the school board. Carrera defeated contender Veronica Sandau for Position 4 on the school board. Golden and Lehmann won in uncontested races. School board members also unanimously elected Carrera president of the school board and Golden as the vice president.

District Salutes Dr. Jim Lehmann:

Tuesday night School board member Dr. Jim Lehmann concluded his one year service as president of the school board for 2011. During Dr. Lehmann's tenure as school board president, the district recorded numerous accomplishments.

Highlights included: Wa-Hi awarded for closing achievement gap; energy savings program trims usage 22%; district dedicates new Support Services facility; district completes technology infrastructure improvements; and Reser Road is improved. Thanks so much to Dr. Lehmann for his professionalism and dedication to Walla Walla students, staff and parents.

School board approves calendars -- school to start after Labor Day

Tuesday night, school board members approved 2012-13 and 2013-14 school calendars concluding a three month adoption process led by Superintendent Mick Miller.

Miller chaired a broad-based committee of 22 people representing staff, students, parents and community. The group reviewed past calendars and potential new calendars and set priorities. Miller also worked closely with the district's bargaining associations throughout the process. Parent conference dates and times are yet to be determined. Calendars posted online at www.wwps.org

Both calendars feature:

- First day of school after Labor Day
- Spring Break first full week of April
- Thanksgiving Holiday (2.5 days off)
- Winter Break (10 business days off)
- Federal Holidays off (except Columbus Day)
- Two professional days annually (Fall/Spring)

School Performance Reports online

New School Performance Reports for the 2011-2012 school year have been completed and are now available both online (www.wwps.org) and in print form in limited quantities at all school buildings. Reports include information on educational programs and assessment results.

Garrison choir entertains board

Garrison Middle School Music Teacher Nichole Riggs and the Garrison Middle School Honor Choir performed holiday songs for the school board Tuesday night. Riggs reported the students in the choir work hard and have fun performing.

Educational and Operations Replacement Levy Facts Online

Visit the district website (www.wwps.org) for Educational and Operations Levy facts. Contact Superintendent Mick Miller (mmiller@wwps.org) or Communications Director Mark Higgins (mhiggins@wwps.org) for more information.

Personnel Report (from 12/13/11 school board meeting)

Employment

(Certificated) NONE TO REPORT

(Classified) NONE TO REPORT

Resignation/Retirement

(Certificated) Diana Erickson, Bilingual Coordinator, District, 8 years

- Effective June 30, 2012

Leave of Absence

(Certificated) Gayle See, Physical Education, Walla Walla High School, 22 years

- Beginning January 20, 2012 for the remainder of the 2011-12 school year

(Classified) William Heiser, Trades Assistant, Facilities & Operations, 21 years

- Extension of approved leave through March 31, 2012

Mario Uribe Saldana, Para-Educator, Blue Ridge Elementary, 1 year

- Beginning January 2, 2012 to May 11, 2012

AVID program shines at Pioneer

Pioneer Principal Mira Gobel, Assistant Principal Jack Mehn and 7th grade AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) elective teacher Cheryl Herr reported to school board members Tuesday night how this program is changing the culture at Pioneer.

Students reported they are learning how to improve their study skills, set goals and stay focused on their success. Herr said teaching this class has re-energized her career and is an honor to work with these students.

Learn more about AVID online at:

- www.wwps.org
- www.avid.org

Finance Officer Johnston reports enrollment decline

Chief Finance Officer Pat Johnston provided the school board an update Tuesday night on the district's 2011-2012 General Fund budget. Johnston reported the district expects to receive fewer state dollars this year than originally budgeted following a decline in enrollment this fall. Johnston said the district is witnessing enrollment declines in both general education and special education programs. Johnston said based on past trends the district estimates it will miss budget targets for enrollment by 63 students this year.

"Usually we see an increase in enrollment each October and this year we actually dropped students," Johnston reported. "We are estimating a \$623,000 revenue reduction this school year as a result of our current enrollment figures."

Johnston reported despite serving fewer students and receiving less state funding through apportionment, the district is projected to end the year with an 8.8 undesignated fund balance. She said uncertain economic times and state budget woes remain a concern.

Johnston reported the district will begin budget planning following winter break for the 2012-2013 budget. Johnston said the district will continue to closely monitor enrollment reports to determine if adjustments are necessary for next school year. She reported the district's budgeting process will remain an open and collaborative process.

Voter registration forms available

Voter registration forms are available at the district office and all WWPS schools. The district's Programs & Operations Replacement Levy election date is February 14, 2012. There are two deadlines for voters wishing to cast a ballot for the February 14 Replacement Levy:

Monday, January 16 is the deadline for new voters registering by mail, online, or transferring their registration/making address changes within the state of Washington.

Monday, February 6 is the deadline for people who are not registered anywhere in the state of Washington and did not meet the January 16 deadline. They are eligible to register in person at the Walla Walla County Elections Department at 310 W Poplar Street.

For additional information:

Dale Grogan, Voter Registration Coordinator
Walla Walla County Auditor's Office
Elections Department
310 W. Poplar Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362
(509) 524-2535
dgrogan@co.walla-walla.wa.us

Winter weather is on the way! School closure and delay procedures

At Walla Walla Public Schools, we make every effort to post up-to-the-minute school closure information due to inclement weather or any circumstance that would delay or cancel the normal school schedule. Decisions to delay or close school usually are made by 5:30 a.m. or earlier. This triggers the district's comprehensive school closure/delay announcement plan. The district makes every effort to begin announcements by 6 a.m.

Announcements include:

- Media release (radio, tv, newspaper)
- Telephone automated message (staff and parents)
- Web posting (www.wwps.org)
- Staff e-mail (GroupWise)
- E-news message (sign up on the district web site: www.wwps.org)
- Twitter message (twitter.com/wwschools)
- Facebook page message
- Orange signs posted in front of schools

School Stories

Big Nine Athletic Conference realigns to North-South Divisions

Thursday Columbia Basin Big Nine principals voted to maintain the Columbia Basin Big Nine Conference as one league with two geographical divisions -- North/South. Hanford High School President Ken Gosney facilitated the process as the Columbia Basin Big Nine Principals President. The changes take effective for the 2012-2013 school year.

North Division Schools:

- Eastmont
- Eisenhower
- Davis
- Moses Lake
- Sunnyside
- Wenatchee
- West Valley

South Division Schools:

- Chiawana
- Hanford
- Kamiakin
- Kennewick
- Pasco
- Richland
- Southridge
- Walla Walla

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Workshops

Dates and Time: January 4, 18, 25 -- 5:30-7 p.m.

Walla Walla High School and WSU GEAR UP are holding workshops for Walla Walla High School seniors and their families to provide one on one support in filling out and filing their Applications for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA is the document required for college, financial aid (options) including grants, federal student loans, work study, and scholarships.

All workshops will take place in the Wa-Hi library and will consist of open computer time with trained GEAR UP staff. The staff members will be available to walk families through the online process of filing this important document. Parents should bring their 2010 tax statements (2011 taxes are not needed in order to complete the FAFSA process). Please contact the GEAR UP office or the Career Center at Walla Walla High School for a complete checklist of the information needed to properly file the FAFSA.

Washington State University GEAR UP, which is located on campus at Walla Walla High School, involves a variety of innovative partnerships and initiatives to support students in college and career readiness skills.

For more information contact Becky Waggoner at the Wa-Hi GEAR UP office.

Becky Waggoner

509-526-8621

bwaggoner@wwps.org

Walla Walla parent named Parent Ambassador for Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP

Walla Walla parent Nicole Gonzales was recently named Parent Ambassador for Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP. Gonzales is one of 22 parents selected statewide with only three from Eastern Washington.

Gonzales will represent the southeastern Washington region regarding early learning as well as learning advocacy skills. She is the first parent ambassador representing the Walla Walla program in many years, according to Kerri Coffman, district Director of Preschool Programs.

“It is an honor to have one of our parents chosen to join the ambassador team,” Coffman said. “I am excited to watch Nicole grow in her leadership skills and feel she will become a voice in our community for early learning.”

Goals of the Parent Ambassador Program:

- Teach ambassadors about the legislative process
- Train ambassadors how to educate, organize, and mobilize parents in their program
- Give ambassadors the skills to advocate for themselves and their community
- Help ambassadors serve as a liaison between a local program, WSA, and the larger early learning community
- Ensure parents have a voice in policy making discussions and deliberations
- Provide WSA and the ECEAP/Head Start community with a strong grassroots network that can help move positive policy proposals forward

Responsibilities of a Parent Ambassador

- Each Parent Ambassador must be available to participate in two conference calls a month. These calls take place in the evening and are meant to share information and provide updates.
- Each Parent Ambassador is expected to attend four face-to-face trainings put together by WSA.
- Each Parent Ambassador must commit to provide “teach backs” at their policy council meetings and/or other parent meetings.
- Each Parent Ambassador is expected to participate in the legislative process by advocating for ECEAP and Head Start at the state and federal levels.

Program Contact:

Kerri Coffman, Director of Preschool Programs

kcoffman@wwps.org

509 527-3066

Debate team travels north for second district event - By Coach Jean Tobin

We had another great weekend competing in Speech and Debate. We traveled to Wenatchee for our 2nd district debate tournament. Our district has expanded to include 2 additional teams. We competed against: Pasco, Chiawana, Eisenhower, Moses Lake, Cascade, Wenatchee, Quincy, Liberty Bell, Ephrata and Othello. Walla Walla High School again took 1st in Debate, 1st in Speech and 1st Overall! Twenty-two students from Wa-Hi competed and almost all students earned a trophy for their performance.

We are very lucky to have incredible parent support and had 6 parents join us to help supervise and judge: Katie & Carl Christianson, Nancy Forstheofel, Vanessa Prull, Annie Capestany and Joe Cooke.

Speech Events:

- Extemp Open Division: Bryan Preston took 1st and Kendall Dunovant took 2nd. Emily Prull took 2nd in Novice Division.
- Duo Interp Open Division: Marisol Beck and Hope Grant-Herriot took 2nd and in Novice Kurt Funk and Maggie Grant-Herriot took 1st.
- Editorial Commentary: Calvin Brigham was 1st and Machado Mijiga took 2nd in Open Division. In Novice, Jennifer Cho was ranked 6th and this was the first time she competed in the event.
- Expository Open Division: Anna Apostolidis-Morefield placed 3rd. Anna is competing in the top division although she is eligible to compete in Novice as this is her first year competing. Kate Kuhlmann placed 2nd, Maggie Grant-Herriot 3rd and Sabine Vernon 4th in Novice Expository. This was Maggie's first time competing with her speech.
- Humorous Interpretation: In Open Division Konor Clark took 2nd and in Novice Malcolm Gabbard placed 2nd as well.
- Impromptu: In Open Division, Kendall Dunovant placed 2nd and Emily Prull also placed 2nd in Novice Division.
- Interpretive Reading: In Open Division Kera Parsons took 1st place and Marisol Beck took 2nd.
- Oratory: In Open Division Hope Grant-Herriot placed 1st and in Novice Division Emma Gregoire placed 1st. Tristan Moore placed 4th in Novice Division.
- Tall Tales: In Open Division Machado Mijiga placed 2nd and Hope Grant-Herriot placed 3rd. In Novice Ben Parsons took 3rd.

Debate:

- In Congressional Debate Open Division Marisol Beck placed 2nd. In Novice Division Malcolm Gabbard earned 2nd place and Emily Prull placed 3rd. This was the first time Malcolm and Emily competed in Congressional Debate.
- In Lincoln-Douglas Debate Open Division Kendall Dunovant placed 2nd and Konor Clark placed 3rd. In Novice Division Tristan Moore earned 1st place.
- In Public Forum Debate Open Division Calvin Brigham and Rosa Tobin placed 2nd. This was their first time competing in this event. Bryan Preston and Sean Hamilton placed 3rd. In Novice Division the team of Malcolm Gabbard and Emily Prull placed 3rd.
- In Spar Debate Kera Parsons and Machado Mijiga shared top honors.

Thank you for all your support. We will be working over break to prepare for our next tournament at the University of Puget Sound on January 5. We know the tournament will be much more difficult to compete in, as more than 50 schools will be attending. However, we have some very strong competitors and hope to have a good showing.

Lincoln H.S. did not compete with us because many of their students were busy putting on their play this past weekend, however they will join us again at the next district tournament in Moses Lake in mid January.

Homelink's Winter Wonderland celebration rings in holiday season

Friday Homelink students, staff and parents are planning their Winter Wonderland Celebration to begin the winter break. Principal Connie Taylor Randall extends a special thank you to the Homelink Parent Teacher Organization for purchasing the pizza and craft supplies. She also thanks area businesses for supporting the event.

"Big Cheese Pizza is offering Homelink a cost reduction on the pizza," Taylor Randall said. "Coca-Cola is donating the drinks and Snyder-Creclius Paper Company is donating the paper products."

Winter Wonderland activities include:

- Ornaments with Irita
- Graham Cracker Houses
- Graham Cracker Art
- Hamburger Cookies
- Climbing Wall
- Foosball
- Wii
- Ping Pong
- Pool
- Swimming
- Basketball
- Pickleball

Community Stories

Walla Walla Dance Company presents "The Adventures of Alice"

The Walla Walla Dance Company presents "The Adventures of Alice" on Saturday, January 28, 7:30 p.m. at Cordiner Hall. A delightful twist on a classic tale, this full scale production features over 100 local dancers from ages 3-20. Tickets will be on sale at Earthlight Books.