

# EQUITY AND DUAL PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT



## WINTER NEWSLETTER

### EVERYONE BELONGS IN BOWLING

A message from the Director of Equity and Dual Programs

Greetings from the Equity and Dual Programs Department. As we enter into 2022, we wish you "Happy Everything" as we move forward into a new year. This issue of our newsletter focuses on some special staff and students, involved in various ways of building belonging in our school community. As we embrace and support the words "We All Belong Here," we are celebrating, in its various forms.

Have an excellent beginning of 2022, and please be sure to visit our webpage for updates.

~Dr. Julie Perrón

The Walla Walla High School Bowling Team is a place where students belong. The team began in 2014 with 12 girls. In seven years, this number has grown to 37 girls on the roster, with at least one bowler going to state every year but two. The team has also been to state twice. One only has to be an observer to recognize the uplifting environment of this bowling team. Coach Jason Postlewait and his team of coaches focus on the positive, on growth, on inspiring the team both individually and collectively. So what makes bowling a place where students belong? Here is what a few of the girls had as comments:

Jenna Huntsman comments, "I like how many different kinds of people who come from different backgrounds. It is a more-of-a chill sport and less intense. In fact, in bowling, other teams are nice, and encourage us, and raise us up."

Felicity Matson adds that "I like the tournaments and the Christmas party" and that one of her best moments was "Learning to throw the ball. The other girls help me throw it fast."



Andi Mata concurs, describing the bowling team "like having a second family and a second home. I develop really good relationships with everyone."

Indeed, those good relationships are evident as one observes the girls in both practices and matches. Coach Postlewait adds "The bowling program here at Walla Walla High School is a great way to have fun while getting involved with our high school community. The girls are very supportive of each other, and as coaches we strive to promote that family atmosphere of belonging and caring for each other."

Clearly, the sense of belonging is alive and well with Walla Walla High School Bowlers. In fact, former WA-HI alumni such as Riley Elia and Kerigan O'Connor have returned as volunteer coaches and provide support to the team as well. This team approach creates and sustains this sense of belonging: cheering, encouraging and motivating each other. Senior bowler Jenna adds that "When I get a bad roll, I always see the positive, even if I only knock down one pin, that's one pin less." With a mindset focused on the positive, everyone belongs in bowling!



## ~BUILDING BELONGING~

### SPECIAL SHOUTOUT TO OUR TRANSPORTATION



Kay Cosgrove worked with the transportation department for four years. She rode the bus with her preschool students each day. She loved the kids and enjoyed every moment of it. When she was not at work, she enjoyed babysitting her grandkids, shopping, four wheeling and camping. Her advice for how to make kids feel a sense of belonging was to make sure children felt that they are the most important people on the bus.

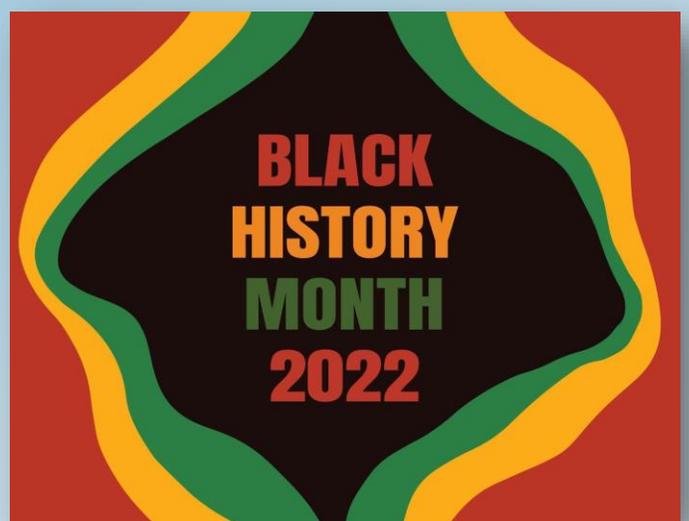
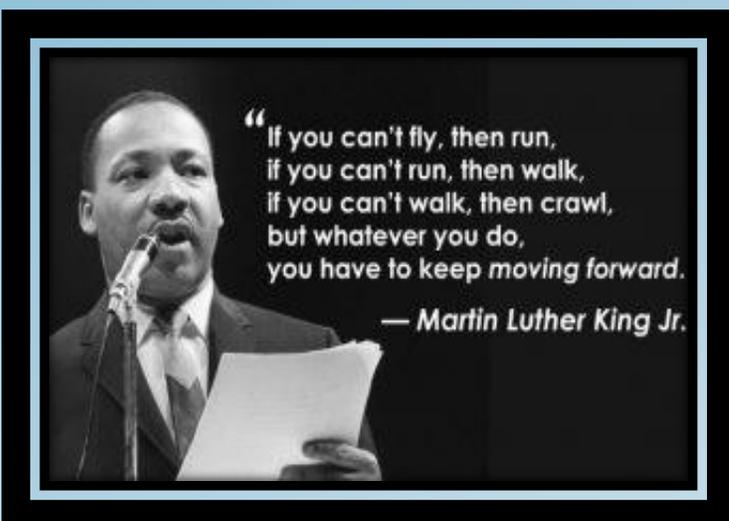


You ARE  
NUMBER  
"JUAN"

~ Pioneer Varsity  
Volleyball

Juan Hernandez has been driving a bus for six years. He likes the kids and to hear and share in the stories they tell. When he is not driving, he enjoys fishing, camping and landscaping. His advice for how to make kids feel a sense of belonging is to make sure the adults smile, play music and be sure kids feel welcome on the bus. He shares that he likes that students call it the "fun bus."

## ~IMPORTANT RECOGNITIONS AND CELEBRATIONS~



Let us remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as we move into the year 2022. Dr. King is respectfully remembered as someone who believed in freedom, fairness, and unity. For more information about the legacy about Dr. King and or about Black History Month, please check out <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/black-history-month>.

# >>STAFF SPOTLIGHT<<

My name is Alex Esparza. This is my first year as a Behavior Specialist with WWPS. This is also my first year living in Walla Walla. My family and I just moved here from Mount Vernon, WA. I spent several years working in juvenile court as a corrections officer and probation counselor. That work helped open the door to working with kids in schools. I began working in a middle school as a behavior counselor in 2018. While working in that position I went back to school and earned my Masters degree in School Counseling.

I feel that my past work experience and education have provided me with so many opportunities for growth and knowledge. Each step of the way, I have had so many colleagues that I have learned from and that have helped mentor me.

Working with the district SEL team is no different. In just a few months I have been able to learn new interventions and expand the level of support I am able to provide students.

Overall, I am so excited that I have the opportunity to work for Walla Walla Public Schools. It has been evident since day one that WWPS wants to provide their students with the most support possible. As this year continues, I can't wait to be a part of providing support and helping remove the barriers that are in the way of our students' education and well-being.

Outside of work, I like to run, golf, fish, and collect shoes. I enjoy family time with my wife and two children. We like to go on road trips and explore. We are currently enjoying checking out what Walla Walla has to offer.

-Alex Esparza  
WWPS Behavioral Specialist



Walla Walla Public School's Long Term English Learner (LTEL) Specialist Amy Kasenga transplanted here after graduating from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania where she graduated with dual majors in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Development. As a student athlete on the Women's Soccer team at BU, Amy was first team All-American, first team All-Northeast Region, first team All-PSAC, ISAA Scholar-Athlete second team All-America, and was twice awarded the NCAA Division II ISAA National Player of the Year and was selected to play in the Senior All-Star game. To cap off her senior year, Kasenga was awarded Bloomsburg's Eleanor Wray Outstanding Senior Female Athlete Award. She was inducted into the Hall of Fame at BU in 2013. Amy's passion for sports is what led her to coach and teach children of all ages.

Throughout her 27 years in education, Amy has added several teaching credentials to her certification. She received a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction with an endorsement in English as a Second Language from Portland State University as well as a Spanish endorsement and has been a National Board Certified in English as a New Language; Early Adolescence Through Young Adult for the past 11 years.

Amy moved to Walla Walla after teaching in White Salmon School District and coaching varsity soccer to become part of the dual language program at Blue Ridge Elementary in 2016. Since her arrival, she has been part of the Guiding Coalitions at Blue Ridge and Garrison Middle School, the Teacher Leadership Cadre for Spanish Language Development, Dual Language professional development K-8, EL Achieve's Constructing Meaning workshops, and now serves as the district's first LTEL Specialist. Amy's extensive experience working with children and families of all ages, experiences and backgrounds, allows her the ability to connect with staff and students across the district to develop English language skills in listening, reading, writing and speaking. She approaches this new role with an equity lens and looks forward to making lasting connections with the families of Walla Walla Public Schools. As a language learner herself, Amy hopes to inspire English-Language Learners (ELs) to enjoy the benefits from being bilingual and help all students in the district appreciate the great skill set of speaking two (or more) languages. Additionally, she is a resource for all classroom teachers, offering support across content areas because regardless of content, we are all teachers of language.

This year, Amy is also completing her Principal Certification at Gonzaga University. She is honored to spend her internship hours at Garrison, where she has gained first hand work experiences and many opportunities to learn knowledge and skills from the amazing staff and students. Outside of work, Amy loves spending time with her family and sweet Goldendoodles. She and her husband Scott (principal at John Sager Middle School) and their two children Dacia (para-educator at Prospect Point Elementary School) and Shea (senior at College Place High School) live in College Place.

-Amy Kasenga  
WWPS LTEL Specialist



# WA-HI'S LATINO CLUB

This winter, over 30 students helped build WA-HI's Latino Club float as the students demonstrated their talents in the Parade of Lights on December 3, 2021. Thank you Andrew Sayers for providing these amazing pictures of our students.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

January 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February 1-28: Black History Month

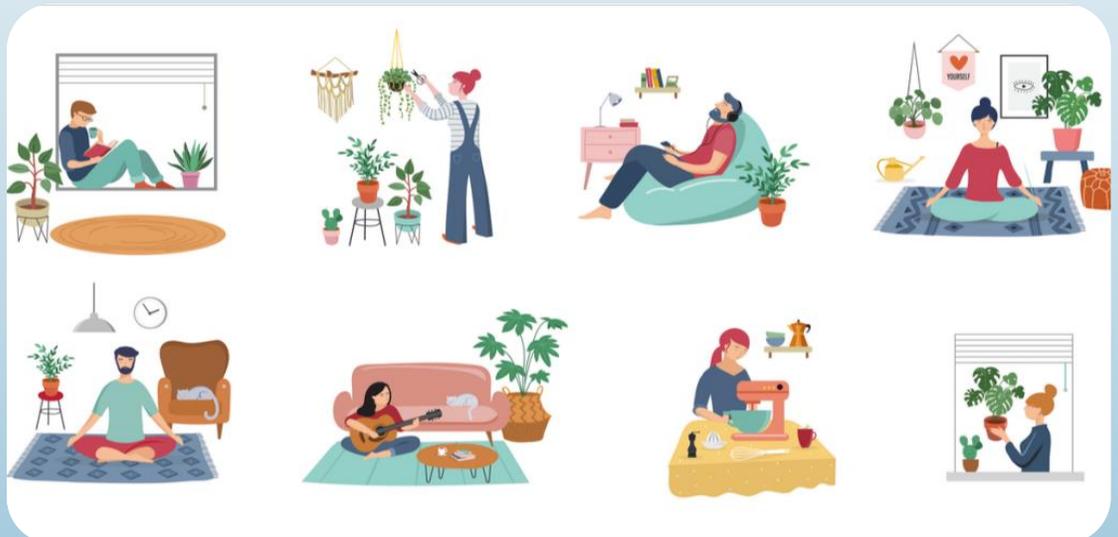
February 10-11: Elementary School Conferences K--5

February 21: Presidents' Day

March 10-11: Middle School and High School Conferences 6-12

April 4-8: Spring Break

## Don't forget about self-care!



Follow us on



Escuelas Públicas de Walla Walla

Equity Outreach Hotline:  
509-526-6787