

Superintendent's Newsletter

April 16, 2021

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Superintendent's Message by Sandra Gessner-Crabtree

Do You Believe?

I'm going to spend the last three Superintendent messages for this year addressing what William Daggett, Ph.D. calls the three R's for school improvement: Relationship, Relevance, and Rigor. But before I even get to the first R, relationship, we have to address the question above.

Do you believe that all students can learn? Let me ask that in a different way. Do you believe that under the right circumstances all students can reach a proficiency level that makes them ready for a career or college?

This is where we have to start with the first R. Because if you believe, then it can happen. If you don't believe it, it will not happen. Isn't that crazy to think about? Did you know it mattered so much what you believe about the basic nature of your learners? There is a famous teaching study where teachers in one group were told that they were going to have the advanced students for the full year. That all of the students in that class had been tested and qualified to be in the advanced class. And yet, they weren't given a cohort of advanced learners, but instead were given an average range of learners. And then the other group of teachers in the control group were given what each teacher expects to be given each year, a group of students with a wide range of abilities coming into the school year. Well, guess what? The first group of students outperformed the control group. To be more specific, the IQs of these students in the experimental group rose. This study is known as the Rosenthal study. It was done in the 1960s in San Francisco. Here is a piece from [NPR](#) that reviews the study and a bit more about the topic.

After this study the research world went wild trying to figure out what this meant on a broader scale and for the last five decades different tangents of the same topic continue to be researched. And there were differences in how the other researchers approached the topic. Some sought to identify what beliefs teachers held. [Ripley \(2010\)](#) and [Askew, Brown, Rhodes, William, and Johnson \(1997\)](#) found that effective teachers believed that all children can learn. This is why this is still a prime question on the CEE Survey for staff. Even more research studies found that effective teachers believed that errors were part of learning ([Spencer & Spencer, 1993](#); [Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1995](#)) and that it was their duty to motivate students and to provide challenging differentiated instruction ([Walden, 2008](#)). Carol Dweck also added to the body of work on this topic with her book [Mindset](#). And then



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some researchers found that effective teachers also believed that they must hold students accountable for the learning and that good teachers accomplished tasks, respected their students, and valued their diversity ([Walden, 2008](#)). And now my favorite book on this topic is Zaretta Hammond's Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain.

If you are interested in a great meta-analysis of this work, please see this research brief from the SAGE Journal(1): [Pockets of Excellence](#): Teacher Beliefs and Behaviors That Lead to High Student Achievement at Low Achieving Schools.

There is no Spockian Mind Meld we can do to create a common belief and mindset in all our district staff to get everyone on the same page with the belief issue. This is an individual thing. However, we do know that individual behavior is greatly influenced by the tribe as a whole. And we also know that what we say out loud greatly impacts our actions. Therefore let's start at square one with our relationships with our clients and let's collectively agree to stop labeling kids in a manner that conforms to historic institutional pedagogy of public education: at-risk, troubled home, lacking motivation, SPED kids, Tier 3 kids, failing kids, work adverse, bad, poorly taken care of. You can think of others that you have heard or said to add to that list. And let's also come to some sort of peace with where they come from. During my younger teaching years when I was so on fire and full of myself, I was complaining to a school secretary about the family of one of my students, and she just looked at me and said, "Sandy, parents only send us their best and brightest."

So, what if we start again at square one in relationship building with all of our students as we continue to expand in-person learning and everyone is emerging from their pandemic daze? Daggett's point about relationships was that learning is personal. When teachers have strong, trusting relationships with their students, they work harder and achieve more. What if we look every student in the eye when we get to see them again and smile with your eyes and let them know how glad we are that they are back, believe that good progress will be made and that they can do hard things? What if we slow down for the first week of getting them back on campus and focus on taking 30-60 seconds per kid to check in and see how they really are doing? If we slow down to begin with and reestablish these relationships, you will be able to go faster later. If you'd like a great TED talk to remind you of the power of relationship between teachers and students, my favorite is right here: [Rita Pierson: Every Child Needs a Champion](#)

As of Monday, April 19th, 78% of all students will be receiving more in-person services. The Board is very grateful for all of the hard work, effort, and dedication it took to make this happen for our students. They all are the benefactors of this work. Thank you for your part in making this happen. This entire year has been an amazing team effort on everyone's part. No one had the privilege of

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having a "normal" year and everyone experienced the same amount of uncertainty as we journeyed through this process. YOU are ALL amazing! YOU Make a DIFFERENCE! THANK YOU for making this final push for the last nine weeks!

[Regula Schmid](#)¹

¹University of San Diego, CA, USA



Salish Coast Elementary News from Principal Lisa Condran

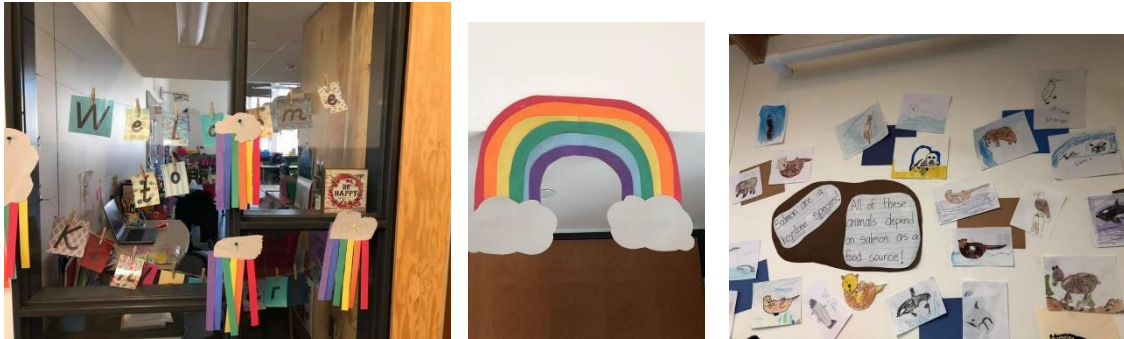
The big news at Salish Coast Elementary is that the students in our blended learning program came back this week full-time. Students in grades Kindergarten through 2nd grade returned on Monday, April 12th. Students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 returned on April 14th. Students, teachers, and families are thrilled to have five days per week of in-person instruction.

Beautiful student work is on display around the school.



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The Show Must Go On!

Salish Coast Elementary Virtual Talent Show

Salish Coast Elementary Virtual Talent Show Details

Two shows:

- Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd Grades
- 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grades

Submissions:

- Performances submitted and videotaped at home by the performer
- Performances cannot be longer than three minutes
- All performances must be appropriate for school
- Deadline to submit will be May 14th following the instructions below
- Productions will be shared during the week of June 7th



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Blue Heron and OCEAN Highlights by Theresa Campbell, Principal



Spring is in the air at Blue Heron Middle School. As we move into the fourth quarter of this unique school year there is a sense of optimism and excitement to have more students in our classrooms more frequently. Starting Monday, April 19th students will be receiving instruction four times a week for in person instruction and four times a week for distance learning instruction. We continue to pivot and change as health guidelines allow, providing optimum learning opportunities for all Blue Heron students. None of this would be possible without the flexibility and adaptability of our amazing staff.



Blue Heron after school sports clubs and activities are up and running. Kim Clarke continues to offer the running club for students who chose to continue participating two days a week. Coed Volleyball Club started this week and will continue through May 7th. A coed Flag Football Club will round out the year from May 10th - June 4th. In addition, there will be an after school mural club enrichment opportunity starting on May 1st for any student who wants to participate in creating a new Blue Heron mural.



Port Townsend High School News by Carrie Ehrhardt, Principal and CTE Director



The high school is excited to be opening our school for in person learning, beginning April 19. Students at the high school will no longer be cohorted, but will be allowed to move through their six period day schedule. All of our health and safety protocols will remain in place to keep students safe. Due to the large class sizes at the high school, students will return two days per week, and will continue to learn independently at home based on their class playlists, the other three days per week. To support students in their academic studies, the high school will hold an after school academic/homework support session, from 2:30 - 4:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, in the library. And our Skillmation mentors will continue their tutoring efforts with students on Wednesday mornings from 9:00 am to noon.

Spring Sports are in full swing for the combined East Jefferson teams consisting of athletes from Port Townsend and Chimacum. Spring Sports began on March 15th for Baseball, Boys Soccer, Co-Ed Golf, Girls Tennis, and Boys and Girls Track. Over 100 athletes are out enjoying the spring weather and participating in the various sports. This year, there is a small overlap between seasons and Winter sports are scheduled to begin Monday, April 26th with Spring sports ending May 1st. This also occurred the last week of Fall sports this year. Athletes have the choice of finishing the sport they are in, moving on to the next sports season, or even working with both teams in cooperation with coaches for whatever works best for the student athlete. Once again a big thanks goes out to everyone who makes this possible. This has been a great effort on behalf of the Port Townsend and Chimacum school districts to provide opportunities for our young people.

This past Saturday April 10th the PT Symphony sponsored the 2nd annual Young Artist Competition open to young musicians of Jefferson County. The solo competition was held live at Grace Lutheran Church of Port Townsend using safety protocols. The four judge panel included members of the PT Symphony. Port Townsend High School was well represented with senior violist Yarrow Dean, junior trumpet Maya Dow and freshmen violinist Aliyah Yearian performing extremely well. Sophomore Magdaline Ferland was named third place on viola while Junior violinist Tusker Behrenfeld earned second place. Freshman bassist Mateu Yearian earned the Conductors Prize award. Many of these students will next perform at the North Olympic Solo/Ensemble festival on May 1st.

Student artwork from the High School, Blue Heron, and Salish Coast will be placed in storefronts during the month of May once again for 'Art Wave'. The exhibit celebrates children's creative expression through art and is a collaboration with participating Port Townsend businesses, PT



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Mainstreet, and PT Artscape. Look for various Masquerade Masques created by Michele Soderstrom's high school art students, at home, in the window of Olympic Art and Office. This project was led by PT Artscape's teaching artist Margie McDonald and based upon the theme of Wearable Art.

Graduation is on the minds of many people this time of year. Due to Covid and restrictions on the number of individuals who can safely gather based on the guidance from the health department, we will again be modifying our program for this year. PTHS is scheduled to graduate the Class of 2021 on Friday, June 11th at 7:00 pm at Memorial Field. Admission will be by ticket only, and the number of available tickets will be restricted to comply with the health department limits. Tickets will be prioritized for graduates and their families. At this time, we do not anticipate being able to include entry for staff members. We hope that future graduations will be held back at Fort Worden. All of our current plans for Graduation are considered tentative, as a shift in Covid restrictions or county phases, could affect our planned program. Being diligent with your social behaviors, and continuing to maintain safe practices at this time will help provide our seniors with a special graduation experience. Stay tuned, stay safe, and stay healthy!

Professional Learning

On April 15 teachers participated in a professional learning session to focus on place-based learning projects. In break out sessions teachers could explore the latest research about the impact of project based learning on research, or to focus on project development in alignment with the district profile of a Port Townsend Student.

15 teachers from Port Townsend and Chimacum School Districts are participating in a Highly Capable Differentiation Workshop with Dr. Cash. This five part workshop will help teachers focus on the needs of HCP learners.

Highly Capable

The referral window is now closed. Testing for referred students and screening for 2nd and 3rd graders will happen over the next nine weeks.

Teacher Recruiting

Staff attended two different job fairs over the last month to help recruit teachers and staff for anticipated openings. These successful virtual events will help us reach out to high quality candidates across the state.



PORT TOWNSEND

School District

LEARNING THROUGH A SENSE OF PLACE

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Port Townsend School District Annual Report

Here is a link to our district's annual report [PTSD Annual Report](#)

Each district in Washington State is required to publish an annual report providing an overview of how financial resources such as levy funds are used.



Port Townsend School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, immigration status, national origin, age, honorably-discharged veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. The district provides equal access to school facilities to the Boy Scouts of America and all other designated youth groups listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

Laurie McGinnis, Title IX Coordinator

Shelby MacMeekin, 504 Coordinator & ADA Compliance

Amy Khile, Civil Rights Compliance