

Port Townsend School District No. 50

Learning Through a Sense of Place



Superintendent Polm's Newsletter – Vol. 19-20, No. 3, September 20, 2019



Board Meeting Summary from September 19, 2019

The Board of Directors met on Thursday, September 19 for their regular business meeting. The agenda included recognition of Shani Watkins, West Sound Tech Director, Kelley Watson, CTE Maritime Instructor, and the Northwest Maritime Center for their efforts to develop, gain state approval, and launch the new WST Satellite Maritime Academy Program here in Port Townsend. We are hopeful this program will flourish here in PT enabling students from the region to gain maritime skills and pursue potential careers here in PT and around the world.

The Board also received reports from Fine Arts, MDS, summer Title/LAP, summer WST, and the summer Public Library Collaboration that took place at Salish Coast.

Some may have seen the Leader article regarding Middle School football. The initial turn out for our program was about 15 students. This seemed too few to have a viable team, and we were considering whether it should be discontinued. Thanks to the efforts of Lysa Falge, Theresa Campbell, the Chimacum administrators and many parents, we were able to create a combined team of PT and Chimacum players. This enabled us to keep the program. Now the team has enough players to go 11 on 11 in practice. Good job ladies!

Enrollment in September is at budget, which means our first count is very close to predictions. Specifically, we are 1.3 FTE over predicted enrollment. We typically see a slight increase from September to October. Should that trend continue, we should see an overall increase of about 4% from 2018-19.

The Board meets on the first and third Thursday of each month for their regularly scheduled study sessions and business meetings. Further, the Board at times holds special meetings on particular topics. For more information, please see: http://ptschools.org/board_supt.

Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education ~ Sandy Gessner-Crabtree

Dyslexia: What It Is and What It Isn't

The term dyslexia is used a lot lately in the education community. You might even hear folks say they have it or that it runs in their families. You may have been told that dyslexic readers see letters backwards and write letters backwards.

OSPI and the Washington State Legislators have defined dyslexia this way: *Dyslexia means a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin and that is characterized by unexpected difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities that are not consistent with the person's intelligence, motivation, and sensory capabilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (E2SSB 6162)*

This doesn't mean that people with dyslexia cannot read. It does mean that folks with dyslexia need to specifically be taught how the sound/symbol relationship words in order to decode written language. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people have dyslexia. So,

while the majority of people do not have dyslexia, many people do. What we know is that there is a neurological difference in the brains of those with dyslexia compared to those without it. Learning to read takes both hemispheres of our brains to work together and for those with dyslexia, simply put, it is harder for the language learning areas in the brain to connect. This is considered a phonological deficit. But with explicit instruction, folks with dyslexia can learn to read.

This also doesn't mean that people with dyslexia are not intelligent. Most often the opposite is true.

As a district, we are taking time to help everyone learn about dyslexia and to learn more about instructional practices that can have an impact. Dyslexia is categorized as a phonological deficit and that is one of the three main categories identified under the umbrella of reading disabilities. The other two are language comprehension and fluency/naming speed. A person with dyslexia does not always need special education services or an IEP to get the direct instruction needed.

If you'd like to learn more about dyslexia, please visit these sites:

1. <https://www.k12.wa.us/about-osp/workgroups-committees/currently-meeting-workgroups/washington-state-dyslexia-advisory-council/about-dyslexia>
2. <https://dyslexiaida.org/>

Place-Based, Maritime and Professional Learning ~ Sarah Rubenstein

Maritime Discovery Schools - The Fort Worden classroom is again available for all teachers to use with their classes. Many 1st and 2nd grade classes have already signed up for monthly use of the classroom space. Port Townsend staff can access the directions for [reserving the classroom here](#). Sarah Rubenstein can answer any questions.

Professional Learning - This week teachers worked on Differentiating place-based projects to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers identified the process, product, and content involved in a project and selected methods to differentiate based on the needs of students.

A slight change was made to the topics being offered for the district professional learning Wednesdays. More information will be provided to teachers as dates get closer.

- October 16, Place-Based Learning and Partnerships, 1:30-3:15 PM
- November 6, MTSS, 1:30-3:15 PM
- December 11, Thinking Strategies and Workshop Model, 1:30-3:15 PM

Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) - All teachers in their first and second year of classroom teaching are receiving support from the BEST grant. This includes a mentor who meets regularly with them, a building peer support if their mentor is not a teacher in their building, and support for other professional development. Nine teachers across the district are receiving support this year. If an experienced teacher is interested in learning more about the program, and getting trained as a mentor for a future school year, contact Sarah Rubenstein.

Highly Capable - The first book study of "Differentiation and the Brain" started with 8 teachers registered. Two more book studies are available this year for teachers of highly capable students. Contact Sarah Rubenstein if you are still in need of the link to register.

Communications - Families and staff can update their communication preferences for the school messenger automated calling system if they are getting too many or unwanted messages. For example,

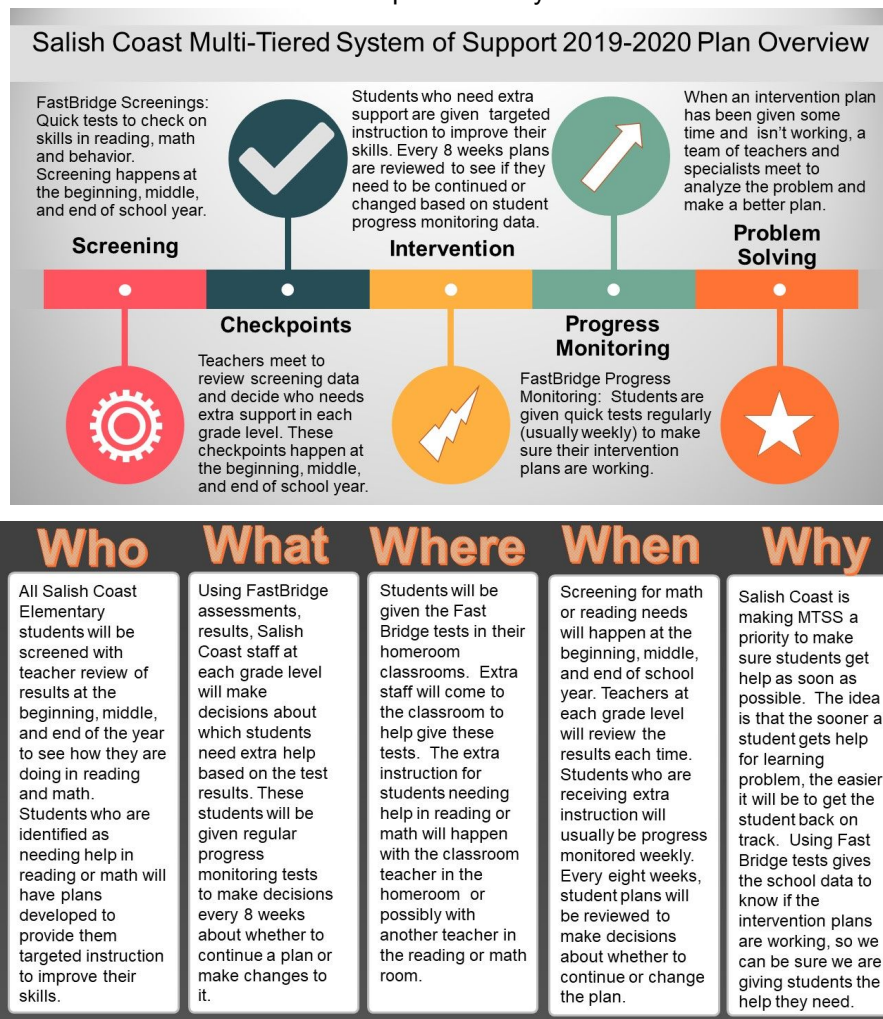
families can opt out of lunch balance notifications, or only get emails. Directions are on the district website: <https://ptschools.org/departments/communications>

If anyone needs to update their contact information, families should contact a school secretary and staff should contact Human Resources.

In the News: [Port Townsend students learn about maritime careers at Wooden Boat Festival](#)

Salish Coast News ~ Lisa Condran

Salish Coast Elementary completed its first step of its Multi-Tiered Systems of Support with the completion of academic screening in mathematics and reading of all K-5 students. Below is some information on the overview of the Salish Coast plan for the year.

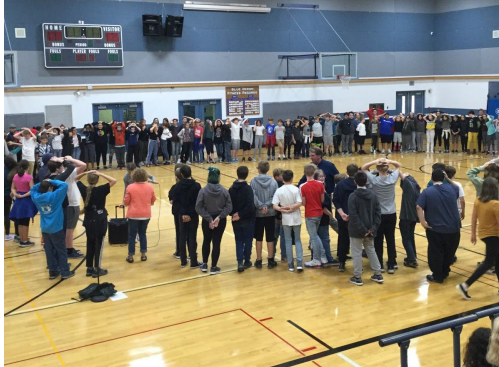


Other highlights so far this school year include:

- The beginning of swimming lessons for our students, starting with third graders in Allen Fox's and Lois Polley's classes.
- A successful assembly on our Positive Behavior Intervention Supports expectations performed by grade leaders under the direction of Ellen Thomas.
- A successful first and second grade field trip to the Wooden Boat Festival.

- A group of three teachers attended The Wilson Language training to learn new strategies for helping struggling readers.

Blue Heron ~ Principal, Theresa Campbell



What do you get when you put together a T-Rex (Mr. Mills), a Hula Dancer (Mrs. Bledsoe), and a sailing fish (Mr. Waibel)? One confused party host (Mr. Navin). The Blue Heron ASB kicked off the assembly season with a PBIS/Welcome Back theme that included staff playing the "Party Game" and participants dancing to the Macarena. Our ASB Emcees were amazing and we look forward to many future opportunities to celebrate.



PTHS ~ Carrie Ehrhardt

Elevator Update

With the expected delivery of our new elevators in the next week, the construction crew has been busy finishing off the exterior framing of the elevator shafts on both buildings. Students have been very patient as they navigate the construction barriers around campus. The hard working crew from Merit Construction and their subcontractors have braved the rainy, chilly weather this past week to stay on track with the schedule.

Friday Salon - *The Weight of Water*



For our first Friday Salon this year, and in conjunction with the Port Townsend Film Festival, students had the opportunity to hear from director Michael Brown, about his documentary film, *The Weight of Water*. Michael Brown delivers the awe-inspiring story of a blind adventurer taking on an absurdly improbable challenge: kayaking the Grand Canyon, after he became the first blind climber to



summit Mt. Everest. Erik Weißenmayer continues his quest to be present and independent, difficult to achieve without sight. *The Weight of Water* chronicles Weißenmayer's trip as he joins a team of guides and new friends on an emotionally weighted journey down one of America's most iconic canyons. As they paddle, they confront loss, fear and anxiety. They exemplify what people can achieve and overcome through selflessness, teamwork and courage. The result is a triumph and the ride is exhilarating.

We've had a full menu of athletic events this week, with either a home or away game every day! Don't forget to come out and support your Redhawk athletes! Admission is only \$6.00 for an adult admission. The Booster Club also sells annual passes which are good for all home games. These can be purchased at our home football games or through a Booster Club member. Call the high school if you need help connecting with a Booster Club member to purchase your pass. Additionally, activities and clubs are getting started for the year, with Mock Trial, Visit History, Interact and Key Club already holding meetings. The fall play cast list has been posted and rehearsals have begun. We are off to a great start!