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Focus on personal awareness and expression

Students will understand and develop their personal gifts and strengths

Maybe it's a U.S. History class that leads a student to consider the importance of the role of government, which ultimately motivates her to become a political organizer. Maybe it's an art teacher who creates special projects to match the particular talents of one student who goes on to design characters for a prestigious animation studio.



Inspiration can spark at any time during a student's education. Often it's enough to last a lifetime. That's the idea behind the Issaquah School District's End 5 (E-5) learning goal. Entitled "Personal Awareness and Expression," E-5 requires that educators help students discover and grow in the disciplines that mesh with their unique interests and talents.

"In the broad scope of K-12 education, students have to find their individual calling," Superintendent Steve Rasmussen said. "We want our students to leave school ready to share their passion and gifts with the world."

This edition of *Focus Community Newsletter*—the last in a series highlighting each of the District's End goals—explores E-5 at work in Issaquah schools. E-5 specifically states that students will identify their passions and create a corresponding life plan; express themselves through development in at least one physical, intellectual, or artistic mode; understand the historical and cultural significance of different

[continued on next page](#)

Focus on awareness, expression

continued from front page

art forms; and freely create and innovate. Educators across the District agree that exposing students to a broad range of experiences is critical to E-5 because—like sampling food from a gigantic menu—students never know what will pique their taste until they try it.

“It has been my experience that students gain insight while taking hands-on courses like science, math, woodshop, literature, journalism, art, music, and drafting,” said Claudia Coté, Issaquah High Career Counselor. “This age group needs to be encouraged to try all kinds of things: join some clubs, serve their community, work, et cetera. Through those experiences, they get an idea about their interests and talents, and then we need to provide meaningful ways for them to explore how that relates to their future education and career goals.”

Academically, artistically, and athletically, the District strives to maintain a balance of different offerings and opportunities. At a minimum level, every elementary student participates in P.E. and art lessons weekly. At the middle- and high-school levels, graduation credit requirements are structured to ensure that students master core knowledge while rounding out their schedule with fine art, hands-on electives (as diverse as ballet, accounting, and carpentry), occupational-education opportunities, and P.E./health courses.

Every graduate must also reflect on his or



her strengths and interests as part of a culminating project. This is an opportunity for students to identify possible career paths through research and a personal inventory, and to form concrete goals to turn the disciplines and subjects they enjoy most into a post-graduate plan for life.

“Having conducted senior exit interviews, I am proud to say that our graduates’ passions are coming through loud and clear,” Rasmussen said. “They know what they want to do and they have the tools to get there.”

Please flip inside to read the full text of E-5 and explore how students are learning Personal Awareness and Expression.

For more updates on what’s happening in the Issaquah School District—including information about the 2010 Levy—please visit www.issaquah.wednet.edu.

Ends: What every grad needs to know

Mission (E-1):

Our students will be prepared for and eager to accept the academic, occupational, personal, and practical challenges of life in a dynamic global environment.

Ends: Academics and Foundations (E-2), Citizenship (E-3), Technology (E-4), Personal Awareness and Expression (E-5), and Life Management (E-6).

The School Board’s mission and five Ends provide a roadmap of the skills and knowledge every graduate needs to succeed in today’s global environment. It is the Board’s primary responsibility, then, to ensure that the District makes progress toward achieving the Ends.

The Board has embarked on an annual process to monitor the mission and Ends by intensely reviewing student data and evidence of Ends success at its meetings. This will culminate in a comprehensive evaluation before the cycle begins anew. Everyone is invited to participate in person or to track the data—and read the full text of the Ends—at www.issaquah.wednet.edu/board/.

To parallel the Board’s work, *Focus* newsletter has featured one End per issue, culminating in this final installment that explores E-5, Personal Awareness and Expression.

State of the art(s)

Volunteer art docents make a big impact with small artists

Each year, parent volunteers transform a room at Sunny Hills Elementary into a thriving museum, complete with renditions of masterpieces and original creations from local artists. This year, the impromptu gallery highlights Michelangelo, Calder, and Chihuly. Classrooms of eager children visit to *oooooh* and *ahhhh* while carefully assessing the art's technique and meaning. Back in classrooms, they discuss historical context and create their own pieces in the same style.

"I liked the colors and the decorations," first-grader Niranjana Kannan said after her first art walk of the year. "I learned that you can make beautiful backgrounds. I imagined that the world would be so pretty and colorful. I imagined the trees full of colors and everything full of colors."

Elementary students across the District are developing into art virtuosos and connoisseurs through similar projects. Often, teachers combine an artistic element with core lessons, placing the art in a real-world setting while enhancing the learning concepts.

"When teachers can integrate art within their unit of study, that's a win-win," said Jodi Bongard, Executive Director of Elementary Education. "I have seen classes that are studying the salmon life-cycle painting water-color fish, I have seen classes that are studying planets reproducing 'Starry Night'—and it makes the curriculum that much richer."

At elementary schools, the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) run docent programs to supplement art education. Armed with common sets of materials and lessons—many developed in conjunction with professional artists—the docents support hands-on classroom lessons that align with the state's art standards.

This early foundation prepares middle- and high-school students for more advanced courses such as drawing and painting, photography, graphic arts, ceramics, design, and advanced art (for college credit). All graduates must complete at least one year of a fine-arts elective.

Best of all, the art lessons are inspiring students to create on their own. For instance, more than 1,000 students regularly participate in the annual Reflections art contest sponsored by the PTA. For the past several years, many of the District winners have gone on to take top honors at the state and national levels.

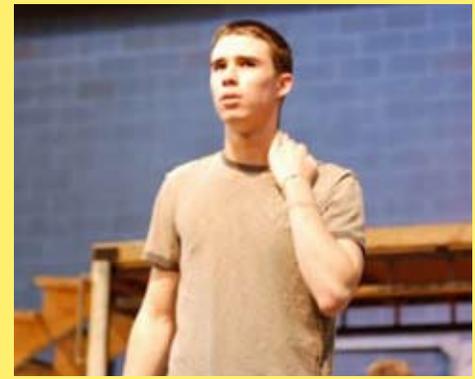
Want more art? Through the Kateri Brow Memorial Art Fund, the District purchases outstanding student art pieces every year and publicly displays them at the Administration Center, 565 N.W. Holly St., Issaquah. To volunteer as an elementary art docent, contact vicki.hoffman@comcast.net.



E-5: Personal Awareness and Expression

Students will understand and develop their personal gifts and strengths. Students will:

- (5.1) identify personal passions and create a vision for life;
- (5.2) express themselves through personal development in one or more physical, intellectual, or artistic modes;
- (5.3) understand and value the historical content and cultural significance of different art forms;
- (5.4) be able to create and innovate to develop higher-level thinking skills.



Alumni turn personal visions into reality

How did your school experience help you identify your personal passions and create a vision for life?

"Seeing my natural gifts and passion for the arts, my art teacher quickly began inventing new art courses that would help sharpen my skill sets. We set up a separate workspace that was available to me throughout the day to spread out and work on my painting projects." That teacher "did such a great job at cultivating a fun, creative environment, encouraging me to push myself."

-Tim Lamb, Skyline High 2002,
visual development artist,
DreamWorks Animation Studios

"My teachers and coaches encouraged me to follow my dreams and gave me the flexibility and support I needed to participate in various school related activities—soccer, tennis, drama, ASB—and professional theater productions outside of school, including some at the Issaquah Village Theater."

- Vicki Noon,
Liberty High 2003, Broadway actress
currently starring in "Wicked"

"My A.P. U.S. History and Government teacher was 'that teacher'—the one who shapes your life without even realizing it. He nurtured passionate-but-informed debate and imparted a depth of understanding that developed my confidence and helped me see myself as a citizen, not just a student. It became the foundation for my future career."

- Lilian McCombs, Issaquah High 1999,
grassroots advocacy organizer
and co-founder of Australia's
Make Believe political engagement service

"The students, staff and community in the Issaquah School District are wonderful. My experiences throughout elementary school at Briarwood, middle school at Maywood, and high school at Liberty were positive and when it came time to choose a school district in which to work, Issaquah was the obvious decision. I continue to love my time within the District and hope that some of my students may someday return to teach alongside of me."

- Andrea Noon, Liberty High 1999,
Spanish teacher at Issaquah High

Character development

Senior Steven Shulkin has played a wide variety of roles—both onstage and backstage—since taking the plunge into drama participation as a sophomore in Skyline High School's widely acclaimed theater arts program. His many accomplishments include being among eight gold medalists out of 160 participants at the prestigious Lenaea Drama Festival held at Sacramento State University.

Shulkin, who credits his older sister with giving him the initial push into drama, says while performing and practicing is "an awesome experience," the deeper value of acting is what it teaches him about human nature—and about himself as a person.

"The roles we play let us see people at their most dramatic—and there's nothing more dramatic than high school. Everything each character reacts to teaches me something about human nature and something about myself. Even if there's no obvious link between me and a character I'm playing, it teaches me a lesson about how people interact. And I think that makes my real life character more versatile."

The sound of music — for all

Issaquah's Evergreen Philharmonic is a resource for the entire community



There's music everywhere you turn in the Issaquah School District.

From fifth grade, where musically motivated District students can begin once-a-week participation in orchestra, to middle school and through high school, Issaquah students have many opportunities to develop and express their musical aspirations. Issaquah middle schools boast regular and jazz bands, and in high school, the opportunities grow even more, with marching bands, symphonic bands, and a wind ensemble to choose from.

But there's more. For over 20 years, the District has been home to a unique musical resource: the Evergreen Philharmonic Orchestra.

"We currently have a full symphony orchestra—72 members representing all three District high schools. I don't think the community realizes how unusual this particular arrangement is," orchestra director Doug

Longman explained.

"Since less than a quarter of high schools nationwide offer orchestra programs at all, this rich variety of music makes the Issaquah District unique. It's like having the Seattle Youth Symphony located within the District—and that's just really, really rare. As far as I know we're the only school district in the nation to have a professional training orchestra that draws the most talented students from all of its high schools."

This unique model does more than just make great music. It also creates lasting friendships and a deeper sense of community engagement among orchestra members.

"Most people always think in terms of schools being autonomous. We probably get that from sports. But in reality, our students enjoy being with kids from different schools. They develop deep, lasting friendships—it's a unique opportunity to build pride in the

larger community and District. Lots of them make college choices based on what kind of music programs there are. Not usually because they want to be music majors, but just because they want to continue to participate and enjoy all the personal benefits of performing at this level."

Longman explains that music incorporates such varied disciplines as art, math, science, history, foreign language—even physical education. And does it all in a social, emotionally and spiritually satisfying way. Music education, especially participation in organized ensembles such as the Evergreen Philharmonic, promotes discipline, self-esteem, poise, memory, creativity, and more.

District music programs receive extensive support from a dedicated parent group aptly called "Noteworthy." Visit www.noteworthy-orchestra.org, or the Evergreen Philharmonic site, www.evphil.issaquah.wednet.edu, for concert dates and more information.



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Why am I getting this newsletter?

As a resident of the Issaquah School District, you are an important stakeholder in the education of local children. This newsletter is designed to keep you updated on the work and accomplishments of the District and its students—which contribute to the quality of our community and our future.

Points of Pride *A few of the reasons you have to be proud of your schools*

IMS Green Team and MIT are trash trackers!

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) researchers last month invited Issaquah Middle School students to participate in a high-tech project to understand how waste moves through a city. Students attached tiny digital tracking chips to trash items they brought from home (ranging from food and cell phones to cereal boxes), and were able to follow their garbage's journey using their tracker's unique ID and an Internet map.

Skyline seniors "Play it Forward"

Skyline seniors Emily Baer and Katie Ulrich and their Issaquah Soccer Club have been working with local sports leaders and soccer retailers to collect and send more than 600 soccer balls and nearly 1,300



uniforms worldwide to young athletes in need. Baer has named the project "Play It Forward," and she says it's "designed to not only spread the fun of sports to kids in need around the world, but also to support and encourage others to start their own service projects." This year, the donated uniforms were sent to the Rwanda Girls' Initiative.

12 District National Merit Scholars named

Because of their outstanding PSAT scores and personal accomplishment, 12 District seniors have been named 2010 National Merit Scholarship semifinalists (representing less than 1 percent of U.S. seniors): Gretchen Allen, Emily Baer, John Gerlach, Ariel Goh, Hayley Grandine, Spencer Hildie, Ariel Jacoby, Kevin Lee, Tiffany Lim, Helen Liu, Derrik Petrin, and Evan Shieh. They are now eligible to win scholarships from colleges and corporate sponsors next spring.

Complete stories at: www.issaquah.wednet.edu/news/