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 update you 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

IHS Robotics team wins Girls Generation contest
Issaquah High’s Robotics team competed against 30 other all-female robotics teams at the Girls Generation competition in October at Tahoma High School. After nine qualification matches and four elimination rounds, the young women won the championship and brought home the trophy!

Congratulations to Creekside and Clark Elementaries
Both were recognized as 2013 Schools of Distinction. The schools were among the top 5% in the state showing outstanding improvement in student achievement over the past five years.

Lifting spirits—one soldier, one letter at a time
Former Liberty High School student Stacey Hurwitz has always admired the men and women in the military and the sacrifices they make to protect our country and way of life. Now a University of Washington freshman, Stacey comes back to her former schools—Newcastle Elementary, Maywood Middle, and Liberty—and engages students in writing letters to the troops she cares so deeply about. King 5 TV learned of Stacey’s outreach efforts and spent a day filming her working with students on a story about gratitude. They aired a special report for Thanksgiving Day. Here, Stacey is pictured with her former fourth grade teacher Ms. Keller.

Complete stories at www.issaquah.wednet.edu
Focus on sustainability

Facilities and Capital Projects

The Issaquah School District is committed to integrating sustainable practices into our work as an organization and as individuals. We believe in the importance of teaching good citizenship and stewardship and the concept of conserving now in order to benefit future generations. To that end, the district has a three-pronged approach involving our facilities, curriculum, and student leadership.

In this issue of FOCUS, we’ll look at facilities and capital projects. Watch for future FOCUS editions featuring curriculum and student leadership that will highlight the ways we encourage our students, staff, and community to embrace sustainable practices and understand why they matter.

The Issaquah School District is committed to sustainability and excellent stewardship of your tax dollars. Construction projects completed and underway, funded by the 2012, $212M school bond approved by voters, are all being built to meet or exceed state efficiency and sustainability standards. In addition to these major projects, we are working to increase efficiency and reduce costs in all of our facilities.

The district has just completed an energy efficiency project, supplemented with state and PSE grants, addressing lighting and water consumption district wide. Buildings that had older interior lighting technology have been upgraded to more energy efficient fluorescent lighting. Exterior lighting has been updated to fluorescent or LED lights and motion sensors with bi-level lighting. These sensors keep the...
light level at 40% of maximum when there is no activity in the parking lot or grounds. To reduce water consumption, older plumbing, faucets, and fixtures have been replaced. The district expects these enhancements to save approximately $170,000 in utilities costs on an annual basis.

Since 2000, we’ve increased building square footage by 23%, and yet the district is consuming less energy. This is important because reducing our operational costs saves more of our general fund dollars to invest in the classroom.

The movement towards sustainability goes beyond saving money. Our goal is to maintain a high quality environment with natural light, ventilation, and comfortable temperatures that provide staff and students a safe and comfortable atmosphere in which to teach, work, and learn.

To accomplish this, as we renovate and rebuild our schools, we are installing efficient heating, ventilation and cooling systems with higher levels of outside air. This allows greater air exchange that helps maintain indoor air quality at a high level. We’ve installed ceiling fans in classrooms and office spaces to move air and maintain comfort levels while reducing the need for air conditioning. We’ve also been increasing the amount of daylight in our buildings as we remodel and build.

As with the newly renovated Issaquah High School, buildings with open campus plans are being reconfigured to enclose the open areas, creating interior corridors. This reduces exterior exposure, keeping temperatures consistent and reducing heating costs. Most importantly, the enclosed campus enhances safety and security for our students and keeps them from having to be outside in poor weather. This process is well underway at Apollo and Issaquah Valley Elementaries and will begin at Issaquah Middle School in 2014-2015.

As a district, we are moving toward multi-story buildings. The benefit is a reduced building footprint, which is less costly to build and maintain. It also increases the amount of landscaping around the building. This allows more rain to be naturally absorbed rather than collected on a hard surface and stored in a detention pond before being sent back to the streams. For the days it doesn’t rain, we are using native plant materials and drought tolerant plants that require less maintenance, but are still aesthetically pleasing.

The district is conscious about using materials that are durable, have a long life, and are easy to maintain. In high traffic areas within our buildings, we are moving away from carpet to recycled flooring materials. While we encourage the use of recycled materials whenever possible, to be sustainable, a material must be durable. Materials must be able to hold up to the wear and tear of a school setting so that we don’t pay high maintenance or replacement costs.

The Issaquah School District has an excellent track record of fiscal responsibility, efficiency, and reducing operational costs, while providing a safe, pleasant environment for teaching and learning in our schools. For more information about the district’s capital projects and facilities please visit the district’s website at www.issaquah.wednet.edu and look under District>Administrative Departments>Capital Projects.
Gargoyles at Maywood?

Using everything from Popsicle sticks, corks, and Legos, to paper, clay, and wood, students in Kristina Voskes’ Social Studies classes at Maywood Middle School poured their creativity into building replicas of medieval cathedrals.

According to Kristina, the students had shown a lot of interest in a chapter in their textbook on Medieval Architecture. The idea to build the model cathedrals was sparked by a subsequent discussion with her students about a model she had built from toothpicks as a fifth grade student. “I’ve never done anything like this in class before, but it seemed only natural to build off of their enthusiasm,” she explains.

The students could choose to model any cathedral in Western Europe and build it out of any materials they wished. All they were asked to include were stained glass windows, arched ceilings, peaked rooftops, and gargoyles, which are all features of gothic architecture.

The students completed the historical research for their cathedrals in class and studied the “flying buttress,” a feature of gothic architecture, to help them with their designs. With the assistance of Google Earth, students sketched out the floor plans for their models in class as well. They then completed the modeling at home.

Students were given an extra credit opportunity to try to funnel water through the mouths of their gargoyles. Voskes said, “The results were incredible! Not only did every student turn the project in on time, but more than half of the students from each class figured out how to funnel water through their gargoyles. I truly have never seen students so excited or engaged in a project before. They not only had a sense of ownership over their projects, but over their learning as well.”

Skyline teacher is state-level finalist for presidential award

Mention the name Gretel Von Bargen around the district and immediately people begin singing her praises. Now, the Skyline science teacher is being recognized as one of eight state-level finalists for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The finalists were selected during the summer by a statewide committee comprised of content-area experts and award-winning teachers.

The national award recipients will be announced this spring. State-level finalists are recognized by regional and state math and science associations and invited to several annual state events for award-winning educators.
Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) outline grade level goals in math and English Language Arts (ELA) for all K-12 students. The goals are designed to prepare students for the advanced literacy skills needed for college, career success and to compete in the global economy. The CCSS communicate what is expected of students at each grade level. Until now every state had different learning standards. CCSS bring consistency among districts and states, and increase the rigor of the learning goals.

Common standards allow for collaboration among states on best practices and professional development. The standards are the result of a state-led initiative overseen by organizations of the nation’s governors and state education commissioners. Hundreds of teachers, education researchers, mathematicians, and other experts across the country collaborated in developing the CCSS. A final version of the CCSS was released in June 2010. The Issaquah School District is currently transitioning to these new standards. In Washington public schools, these new standards will be assessed beginning in the spring of 2015. Nearly all states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

The Common Core State Standards have been developed to be:

- Clearly focused on fewer and higher standards;
- Aligned with college and career expectations, so that all students are prepared for success upon graduating from high school;
- Inclusive of rigorous content and applications of knowledge through higher-order skills;
- Internationally benchmarked, so that all students are prepared for succeeding in our global economy and society; and
- Research and evidence-based.

A common set of standards ensures that all students, no matter where they live, will be focused on graduating from high school prepared for postsecondary education and careers. In an increasingly mobile society, families with children transferring to new schools will not have to adjust to new learning expectations. Standards will be the same for all students in states adopting the CCSS, making transitions smoother for students.

Major Shifts in Math

- **Greater Focus:** Common Core dives deeper into key concepts, such as fractions and proportions, to ensure students establish a strong foundation before moving to the next level of difficulty. More focus allows students to apply what they are learning to real-world math problems.
- **Coherence:** Common Core asks students to connect back to learning they have previously mastered in order to reinforce concepts and see mathematics as a subject that makes sense.
Rigor: Common Core requires a balance of conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and real-world application. Although memorization is required, students will also be asked to work beyond memorization and communicate the thinking behind answers.

Major Shifts in Language Arts

- Include more informational text: Students will still read fiction and literary classics, and will also be asked to read and understand non-fiction informational texts like the Gettysburg Address in English or history class or a scientific article in biology or chemistry class. The majority of required reading in college and the workplace is non-fiction informational text, so this change will help prepare students for the next step.
- Focus on literacy in all content areas: All teachers of specific content areas, such as history or science, are expected to instruct students on how to be master readers in their subject. This is also called “disciplinary literacy.”
- Expose students to more complex texts: A student’s ability to read complex text determines his or her college readiness more than any other factor.
- Develop evidence-based, opinion and argumentative writing: Students will be able to write in a clear, concise, and compelling manner, just as they will in college and the workplace.

How will the CCSS be assessed?

Teachers will monitor student progress on the CCSS throughout the school year. This monitoring allows teachers to adjust their instruction to meet students’ needs.

Additionally, our statewide assessments will be changing in 2014-2015. Washington is a leader in the state-led Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which includes teachers, researchers, policymakers, and community groups working together on new exams. These new tests will align with the Common Core standards to better measure what a student is learning and how they progress year by year. Washington’s students will take the new Smarter Balanced exams during the 2014-15 school year. The assessments will be designed to test higher level thinking skills. The tests will be given on computers, and will be adaptive, meaning the test will automatically adjust its level of rigor for each question based on how each student answers the questions.

To take a Smarter Balanced Practice Test, go to www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/.

For additional information, go to the Common Core State Standards page on the Issaquah School District website at www.issaquah.wednet.edu/academics/commoncore.aspx.

School Board News

The Issaquah School Board of Directors welcomed Marnie Maraldo to her second term and new member Lisa Callan to the board. Maraldo and Callan were sworn in at the December 11, 2013 school board meeting held at the district administration center.

School Levy Renewals

Voters in the Issaquah School District will be asked to renew three expiring levies in February, 2014. These include a four-year maintenance and operations levy to support classroom learning; a one-year school bus levy to support health, safety, and efficiency; and a four-year capital levy to support classroom technology and critical repairs. Please watch your mailbox in January for information on each of these renewal levies. Full levy details are available on the district’s website at www.issaquah.wednet.edu. Look under “What’s Happening.”

Annual Community Report

The Annual Community Report is on the homepage at www.issaquah.wednet.edu. It provides in-depth information on the state of academics, finances, and programs and services. The report is updated with new facts and figures every November. For individual school reports including progress towards annual goals and qualifications of staff, select “Our Schools” from the homepage, choose your school, and access the report card from the right-hand column.