



ISSAQUAH SCHOOL DISTRICT

565 NW Holly St. Issaquah, WA 98027

www.issaquah.wednet.edu/news/FOCUS.aspx

Non-profit Org.

US Postage

PAID

Permit No. 42

Issaquah, 98027

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



Lunar challenge

Briarwood Elementary's Science-Technology students worked in teams to build toy vehicles that could carry lunar rocks (represented by blocks), and it had to move across the workspace in 4 to 6 seconds being pulled by a

rope simulating gravity on the moon. Oh, and the teams only had 30 minutes to complete the challenge!

Students named Aerospace Scholars

Nine juniors from the Issaquah School District have been named Washington Aerospace Scholars and will study an online NASA-designed curriculum to learn the history of space exploration. The primary goal of the program is to excite and prepare students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Cell phones to save gorillas

Biology students at Liberty High School teamed up with Zoo Atlanta and Eco-Cell to recycle cell phones, help the environment, and raise money for gorilla conservation. Zoo Atlanta gives 100 percent of the proceeds from the donated cell phones to the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International to benefit gorillas and their habitat.



Feeding the community

Issaquah High School students, teachers, and staff members—in a show of true school and community spirit—collected over 25,000 food and clothing items for the Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank.

Complete stories at www.issaquah.wednet.edu



Focus on new leadership

Associate superintendent Ron Thiele will take over top spot

"Seamless" transition ahead as superintendent Dr. Steve Rasmussen retires from the district

Moving from one experienced school leader to another, the Issaquah School District will be in good hands when a new superintendent takes over in July!

Following Dr. Steve Rasmussen's recent announcement that he will retire from the district at the end of the school year, the school board in February voted unanimously to hire associate superintendent Ron Thiele to take his place.

"Ron has the proven track record and positive relationships to seamlessly continue the major initiatives that we have in place," said board president Brian Deagle. "At the same time, he cares deeply about this district, and he wants to pursue ideas and partnerships that continue to challenge us to impart to our students the education, skills, and experience that will set them up for success throughout their lives."

Thiele has almost 25 years of educator experience, eight years as a classroom teacher and the rest as an administrative leader: He came to the Issaquah School District in 2001 as principal of Issaquah Middle School before being promoted to executive director of elementary and middle school education in 2004. He earned his Washington State Superintendent Certificate in 2008, the same year Dr. Rasmussen named him associate superintendent.

Incoming superintendent Ron Thiele is pictured on this page.

continued on next page





continued from front page

Thiele received his bachelor's degree in International Studies from the University of Washington and his teaching and principal certification and master's degree in school administration from Seattle Pacific University.

"I am humbled, and I want to thank the board for this opportunity, as well as the entire Issaquah education community for its support over the past twelve years," Thiele said when he was offered the superintendent's position. "I am excited to work together to create and implement a vision that builds on our outstanding record of achievement while continuing to pursue smart innovation."

Board members said they were impressed by Thiele's deep knowledge of day-to-day operations of the district as well as his passion and vision for education. He will be able to continue with ongoing initiatives—such as the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Project—without any learning curve while proactively moving the entire school system forward.

Board members also valued Thiele's positive, trusting relationships with staff, students, community members, and organizations such as the PTA and Issaquah Schools Foundation. These connections will help him forge ahead with new projects in a collaborative way, they said. Thiele has proven himself to be a strong, honest, ethical leader with a sincere interest in talking to and hearing from the school community, board members added.

One of Thiele's first priorities is to set up meetings to get to know community members in his new capacity. Look for these upcoming dates at www.issaquah.wednet.edu.

Capping four decades of education

Dr. Rasmussen's retirement from the Issaquah School District on June 30 will cap 40 years in Washington state public education and 24 years as a superintendent.

"First and foremost, there's plenty of good and hard work that I am going to see through to the end of the year," Rasmussen said. "Without getting too far ahead of myself—there will be many chances for me to connect with you in the months ahead—I want to take this opportunity to say that I could not be prouder of a school community. I have never been in a district that cares more passionately for students and believes in the power of learning."

Since coming to Issaquah from the Franklin Pierce School District in 2007, Rasmussen and his administration have focused on achievement for students in the areas of academics, citizenship, technology, personal awareness and expression, and life management.

Retiring superintendent Dr. Steve Rasmussen is pictured on this page.



Blazin' bulldozers!

Liberty High School's brand new performing arts center is open for occupancy, and the drama students are preparing for their first big production in the facility, "The Wizard of Oz" coming in May. The school is now gearing up to begin its final stage of construction. When all is done, Liberty will have a new, expanded commons, gym, locker room, training room, kitchen, library, and—most importantly—modernized classrooms.

With funding from last April's bond, construction work will also begin this summer at Apollo Elementary and Issaquah Valley Elementary, where expanding student populations and aging conditions require space additions and renovations. At the same time, field facilities at Maywood Middle, Pine Lake Middle, and Skyline High will be upgraded to provide for greater usage, safety, and operational efficiency.

The 2012 bond provided funds for all major construction and critical repairs of facilities through 2019, including rebuilding our oldest schools and renovating classrooms to expand career and technical training. The new Issaquah Middle School campus is in design with construction set to begin in the spring of 2014.

Go to "Construction updates" at www.issaquah.wednet.edu to follow the progress of all our bond projects.

Liberty's Performing Arts Center has grown from scaffolding and construction (top left) to a production-ready venue (lower left) in just a few months! Bulldozers (center left) have become common sights around school campuses.

Warning: This first line won't let you go!



Out of more than 3,000 entries, Issaquah Middle School sixth-grader Keya Roy wrote the most intriguing, attention-grabbing first line for a short story that will now

be written by famous author Lisa Yee. The Fabulous First Line Contest was sponsored by Scholastic "Scope" magazine, and the resulting short story will be published in the May 2013 edition. Roy's prizes include \$50, a free year's subscription to "Scope" for her Humanities Plus teacher, and copies of Yee's latest novel, "Warp Speed," for her and her classmates.

Thanks to funding from the Issaquah Schools Foundation, "Scope" subscriptions are available in all middle-school Humanities Plus classes for the first time this year. Teachers use the magazines to integrate social studies, science, current events, and language arts with higher-level thinking skills. So Roy's peers across the district—not to mention nation—will soon study the story inspired by her first line.

Yes, but what about that opening sentence?

"I wrote it in one of our school assignments, 'Funny College Essay,' and I wanted to come off really arrogant, so I started out with this line," Roy said.

Okay, okay—here it is: "At the first sight of me, I guarantee you'd want my autograph!" Now you'll have to wait until May to read the rest ...

Help form our next levy measures

Every four years, the Issaquah School District asks local voters to approve levies to pay for educational essentials that the state does not fund, including school buses, classroom technology, and about 20 percent of the operations budget. Because our current levies expire next year, we are forming a community committee now to help plan the renewal levy measures. We need representation from the business, senior-citizen, and at-large community to attend three or four meetings on Wednesday evenings in April and May. If you are interested, call 425-837-7024 or email Levy2014@issaquah.wednet.edu for more information.

New school board member

In January, school board member Chad Magendanz vacated his seat to tackle another civic role—state representative for the 5th District. “I am proud to say that I will continue to be a champion for education as my role as legislator has offered me the opportunity to participate on committees for K-12 Education and Higher Education,” Magendanz said.

The school board has begun the process to appoint Magendanz’ replacement, who will fill the position until the term’s expiration in November 2013. Five community members applied in February, and on March 6, the pool was narrowed to two, Lisa Callan and Alison Meryweather—both involved PTA members. They will go through another round of public interviews March 20. The announcement will be posted online at www.issaquah.wednet.edu.

Building bridges from school to multi-language homes



Sixty-four. That’s the number of different primary languages spoken in our students’ homes, from the prevalent Spanish and Chinese to the lesser-expected Tamil and Urdu. Since 2005, this population of English Language Learners (ELL) has almost doubled.

“With our parents who do not speak English yet, we need to communicate the most essential information to them about their schools in a language they can understand,” said Liliya Stefoglo, ELL Curriculum Specialist. “Our ELL families need to be empowered and feel confident to make decisions about their children’s education.”

Schools now have a powerful new tool, TransACT, to help make that type of communication possible, thanks to funding from the Issaquah Schools Foundation. TransACT includes access to a database of professionally translated notices and letters that cover all the major languages spoken in our district. Topics include absence alerts, bullying resources, health documents, applications for free/reduced lunch, and many more.

Some of the benefits of TransACT: All staff have access to the documents, communication is consistent; there is no wait time for translation; we can reach a much greater number of ELL families; the documents are certified to meet federal requirements; and there is no restriction on the number of uses.

“Since bringing TransACT into the district, our ELL families have a much better understanding of the American educational system and have greater opportunities to participate in their children’s school life,” Stefoglo said.

That sounds like a win—in any language!

Platinum Pass program for community seniors

See you at the next show! Education is truly a community endeavor, and that’s why the Issaquah School District is delighted to begin



the **Platinum Pass** program for senior residents 65 years and older. The Platinum Pass is

good for FREE entry into any of our schools’ artistic, athletic, and community events.

To get a pass (available beginning in April), visit the front desk of any district school or the Administration Building, 565 N.W. Holly St., Issaquah.

Around the District

Students taking over Twitter and Facebook with kindness

Calling all kindergartners: Register now!

It may be cold and flu season, but it's something entirely different that's spreading virally through district high schools: kindness. At Skyline, for instance, the commons was recently lined with posters encouraging students to "Pause before You Post" and "Don't Throw Cyber Stones." The effort paid off with students taking to social-media sites to say nice things about each other.

The resulting Twitter posts include raves such as "Jack ... has such a big heart, cares about everyone and everything!" and "I swear Jessica ... will be president one day."

Skyline senior Macey Knecht began the campaign as part of a DECA (marketing) project to show "the power of every day posts," which can include very real-world consequences even when something is published online with the intent of being a hoax or joke.

"Such a simple idea—recognizing the positive aspects of followers—took off like wildfire, and I couldn't believe how involved everyone became in the campaign," Knecht said. "There were even several schools in the area that heard about it and began their own versions."

All kindergartners who intend to enter Issaquah schools for the 2013-14 school year must register with the school district ahead of time to make sure we have the correct amount of classrooms and resources next fall. Official registration was in early March, so please contact your neighborhood elementary school to sign up right away. If you need to find out which school your kindergartner will attend or have district-related questions, call Jane Tull in the Elementary Education Department at 425-837-7025.

Getting green

King County recently recognized the Issaquah School District as a Level Two Green School, a distinction shared with only two other districts. The honor was for reducing energy consumption by more than 20 percent and supporting school efforts to engage students in conservation action and education (including composting in cafeterias and partnering with utilities to install and learn about alternative, renewable power sources). Of our 24 schools, 21 have been honored by King County for their individual green efforts.

"The district and schools can be proud of how they've involved their students and staff in learning about conservation and improving conservation practices," said Dale Alekel, King County Green Schools Program manager.

