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

Maple Hills WATCH D.O.G.S
Spend time in any elementary school and before long you will notice how few male teachers or administrators are working in the building. And, while many moms volunteer in their children’s classrooms, it is very rare to find a father at school. At Maple Hills Elementary, one dad is leading the charge to change that. Meet Mark Abel. Mark was approached by Maple Hills Principal, Sondra Maier, last school-year to organize a local WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) group at the school. WATCH D.O.G.S. is a national program developed by the National Center for Fathering encouraging fathers, grandfathers, step-fathers, uncles, and other male role models to take a day off work and volunteer at least one day a year in their child’s school.

Student Art Exhibit Draws Crowds
Energy filled the air as an appreciative crowd of parents, students, District staff and community took in the sights and sounds at the Issaquah PTSA’s annual Reflections Art Reception and Gallery held at Issaquah High School this week. On display, more than 280 pieces of art submitted by students in visual arts, photography, music composition, literature, dance choreography, and film production.

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

Curriculum

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, 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 how we integrate sustainability into our curriculum. Watch for a future Focus edition featuring student leadership that will highlight the ways we encourage our students, staff, and community to embrace sustainable practices and understand why they matter.

“Students will live as responsible citizens.” This Issaquah School District Student Learning Goal embodies our commitment to educating students to be responsible citizens who will contribute in positive ways to the local and world community. One of the most important issues facing our future generations is sustainability. Our students must develop the knowledge, skills and ability to find creative solutions to the problems we have created and make choices today that preserve and protect tomorrow’s world.

We integrate sustainability into our curriculum to ensure students learn strategies for decision making, problem solving and working collaboratively to solve complex issues that challenge the well-being of our world. We achieve this by offering opportunities for students to encounter the environment in personal
ways through field experiences and in classroom projects and lessons. See the examples that follow to learn more.

**Biodiversity Field Trip with Mountains to Sound Greenway**

Issaquah School District science teachers and Mountains to Sound Greenway educators developed a field study experience to benefit ninth grade students needing additional preparation for tenth grade General Biology. Nearly 170 students from Issaquah, Liberty, Skyline, and Tiger Mountain High Schools enrolled in a new Biodiversity and Lab Concepts class designed to incorporate a field study experience as an integral part of the course.

Teachers prepared students to make the most of their experience by introducing them to vocabulary integral to the concepts presented while completing field work. Mountains to Sound Greenway educators then taught an hour-long lesson in each of the classrooms, followed by a daylong field study experience and stewardship event at Lake Sammamish State Park. A grant from the Issaquah Schools Foundation helped cover expenses for this outing.

Each class broke into four subgroups to study the question: “What makes a healthy forest and stream environment?” Each subgroup researched a different aspect of the environment to study both in the classroom and in the field including macro invertebrates, riparian zones, water quality, and the impact of human activity on wildlife. Students worked in small teams collecting and recording data, developing conclusions, and then presenting their results to the whole class.

By the end of the course, students had progressed through the material beginning with classroom presentations and large group discussions, followed by field study and engagement in small groups. Students then presented and shared their findings, and finally acted on what they learned to better the environment. Many of the students said the course sparked a new interest in science and interacting with the Mountains to Sound Greenway educators gave them insight into job possibilities they hadn’t previously considered.

**Classroom Projects and Lessons - Making it Real**

As part of its recent remodel, an energy monitoring system was installed in the performing arts center at Liberty High School. Baseline data on energy consumption is being collected and students will evaluate the data, produce reports, and make recommendations to improve energy conservation based on their findings. Another unique collaboration happening at LHS involves the school’s solar power array. Two of the school’s Physics and Math teachers are working together to gather performance data on the solar panels. This data will be studied and analyzed by Advanced Placement Statistics students.

Salmon preservation is the focus of a unit in third grade science that challenges students to design and create a model watershed similar to that of the City of Issaquah. Students investigate the consequences human actions have on the watershed and salmon.
Classroom Projects continued...

Students discover what is detrimental to the watershed and what positive actions can be taken to support healthy salmon populations.

In Partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, third grade students at Newcastle Elementary raise salmon from eggs provided by the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery. The tank conditions are closely monitored by students, teachers and parent volunteers. The fish will be released into our local watershed in April 2014.

In fourth grade, students explore the connection between the water cycle, the need for clean, safe drinking water, and the responsibility of humans to maintain water quality. Learning is reinforced with a hands-on classroom experiment to test the effectiveness of various filter materials on different types of contaminated (non-toxic) water. Students investigate how air, water, and soil contamination occur and how they can lessen the impact of pollutants on the environment.

Third graders at Newcastle Elementary are getting to see firsthand what it takes for a salmon egg to develop and survive in our world. The student excitement is very evident by the clusters of kids surrounding the tank and the continuous monitoring of the salmon changes. “This tank is awesome! Can we name all the salmon?” one student exclaimed.

A Green Success Story!

Congratulations to Pine Lake Middle School! PLMS attained the King County Level Three Green School recognition in February. Level three focuses on water conservation practices. To earn this designation, students have been promoting water conservation with signs posted near sinks to remind staff and students to turn off faucets. Earth Service Core students tested the flow of each school faucet and recommended adding additional aerators where needed.

Staff Green Team members have been presenting information, goals and success stories related to water conservation during staff meetings. Additionally, Pine Lake has been approved to receive a rainwater collection system and a drip irrigation system for their interior courtyard from Cascade Water Alliance. The system will be used to water future garden projects.

Featuring nonfiction books in elementary school library collections is one of the ways schools are working to engage students in sustainability issues.
Thank you Issaquah Voters!

Voters in the Issaquah School District approved the renewal of the District’s three levies in the February 2014 special election. “The support for our school levies shows that education and maintaining strong public schools is a priority in our community,” said Superintendent Ron Thiele. “The renewal of these levies will directly benefit our students and our community during the next four years.”

The Maintenance and Operations Levy will provide between $44 million and $54 million each year through 2018 to fund general classroom and operational needs including special education services, textbooks and materials, extra-curricular activities, and staffing.

The Capital Projects Levy will provide $41.8 million for education technology to replace aging computers, printers, and servers, make upgrades to the District’s wireless Internet, purchase software for safe and efficient school bus operations, provide technology training, and develop online classes.

Another $10.2 million will be used over the next four years for critical facility repairs such as roof replacements, upgrades to safety and security systems, and maintaining heating and cooling systems.

The School Bus Levy will provide $1.7 million in 2015 to purchase 71 buses, enabling the District’s fleet to run as safely, cleanly, and efficiently as possible.

Serving Our Most Highly Capable Students

Changes are coming to our Highly Capable Program. A new law in Washington State requires that all school Districts identify their “most highly capable” students and provide a continuum of services to those students in Kindergarten through 12th grade beginning next school year (2014-2015). The new law also includes specific language for Districts about identifying their “most highly capable” students.

Currently, the District provides a continuum of program options for highly capable students in grades 3 through 12. While the law requires us to expand our services to include K-2, the law did not provide for any additional funding. Therefore, our district will receive no additional funds to expand our services to grades K-2.

No changes are planned for students currently in grades 3-5 in our SAGE or MERLIN programs or students currently identified as highly capable in grades 6-12. Secondary students will continue to have options including honors courses, compacted math courses, AP, IB, Running Start and College in the Classroom.

As is our current practice, all students in second grade will be tested to determine eligibility for placement into the MERLIN self-contained program and our pull-out program. However, a higher bar for identification of students will be in place. Again, this is due to the state language around identifying the “most highly capable” and the lack of additional funding.
High Capable continued...
This year kindergarten and first grade students will be identified through a screening process for further testing in the early spring. The final identification determination will occur in late spring 2014.

District – City Partnership
Sustainability Literacy

The strong partnership between the City of Issaquah Office of Sustainability and the Issaquah School District is even stronger now with our initiative for Sustainability Literacy.

Students are citizens of now and the future, and as such they play a vital role in our sustainability efforts. The City’s Office of Sustainability and the Issaquah School District are working together to ensure that our citizens are sustainability literate and are able to develop habits of the mind and practice sustainability.

The District and the City have worked together to inspire students and the broader community by:

- Supporting students learning about resource conservation, including recycling, composting, and energy and water conservation through activities and field experiences.
- Working with students and educators to develop gardens, water conservation features, and demonstrations throughout the school district.
- Providing volunteer and practical field opportunities.
- Working with King County to establish award-winning Green Schools and Earth Heroes.

Students learn that they have power to change behavior beyond the classroom: at home, in their neighborhood, and in their community. This City-District partnership for Sustainability Literacy will empower the next generation of sustainability leaders.

Issaquah Valley Elementary School students get their hands dirty planting native species in a rain garden.

Building a Culture of Sustainability in the Issaquah School District: STARTalks - April 3 at Liberty High School

Inspired by TED Talks, Liberty Principal Josh Almy and Sustainability Coach Peter Donaldson are introducing the first annual STARTalks (Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating) at Liberty High School on Thursday, April 3. Three 12-minute talks will be given on topics related to green building. Presented together as a 45 minute assembly in the new Performing Arts Center, the talks will be offered three times during the day to accommodate many different classes. The talks are open to the public and will be videoed and edited by the Liberty High Video Production class for sharing district wide. For more information visit: http://tinyurl.com/me5hbdq