ISSAQAH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION — ALL IN FOR KIDS

The Issaquah Schools Foundation is fueling success for every student, every school. We are a connector, transforming the passion of parents, businesses and community members into investments that help our students succeed and make Issaquah schools among the best in the state.

An investment in the Issaquah Schools Foundation is an investment in the future of our community. Start Strong is a donor-funded, week-long program that connects “at hope” 9th grade students to teachers and resources at their new school to increase high school graduation rates. The following is a quote from a principal at one of our high schools after Start Strong ended:

“Yesterday we had students show up who were hoarding food from breakfast to take home because they were hungry, we had kids get emotional about us helping them with getting school supplies so they could start the year out right. We had a student set an appointment with a mental health counselor because his parents are in a custody battle that is fairly brutal on him. We had students set really high goals for themselves despite some of the odds they face. These kids so badly need a little extra support. Smaller classes create opportunities for them to build strong connections to their teachers so they are comfortable asking for help. Today they are off to Central to see what college might be like!”

Studies show that at the heart of strong communities are strong schools. When our schools are well supported, people want to live and work here, businesses thrive, and property values increase.

So, whether you have children in school or not, you benefit by supporting the Foundation.

This year, the community will invest more than $1.1 million dollars in our students. From leading-edge STEM curriculum to financial literacy, arts programs to after-school tutoring, you ensure that kids of all abilities have the support they need to navigate their own unique paths to success. Think of the opportunities we could make available to our students if every person reading this newsletter made an investment in the Foundation’s All in for Kids Annual Fund Campaign.

There is a role to play for everyone who shares our vision of making the Issaquah School District the best in the state. If you want to learn more about how you can get involved or about the programs transforming students’ lives, please visit our website at isfdn.org.

Please give today! Our students, schools and community are counting on you!

ISSAQAH SCHOOL DISTRICT CELEBRATES TASTE WASHINGTON DAY

Taste Washington Day celebrates Washington agriculture and promotes good nutrition in our schools. On October 7, school lunches in the Issaquah School District highlighted local produce, grains, and dairy from the fantastic bounty Washington State has to offer. Each school offered Honeycrisp apples from Barton Fruits in Yakima, whole grains for pizza dough from Shepherd’s Grain in Snoqualmie, milk from Smith Brothers Farms in Kent, and Bartlett pears from Trout Inc. in Lake Chelan. Each featured produce item was accompanied by signage in the lunch room with information about the local farm that grew and harvested the food.

Taste Washington Day is organized in partnership by the Washington School Nutrition Association (WSNA) and the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA).
The 2015-16 school year is off to a terrific start with students and staff returning to school with smiles and enthusiasm. Our teachers and support staff worked hard throughout the summer to help ensure a warm welcome back to school and a positive and productive experience for all of our students. This year, in addition to our ongoing commitments to a culture of kindness, safety, and sustainability, the District will be focusing on several key issues.

This year, the District is in the early stages of establishing a new approach to managing student behavior. We call it our Positive Behavioral Social Emotional System, or PBSSS. This approach is being introduced in all of our schools with a special emphasis in our elementary and middle schools. We will also be working on the issues of grade reporting and its connection to homework and examining our school day start and end times.

Student behavior management, grade reporting, and bell times are all very significant and complex issues. A challenge public school systems have when addressing important issues, like the aforementioned, is ensuring that while we study, implement, and look forward, that we remain in the moment. Each day, we come to work committed to creating and maintaining the best learning experience possible for our students.

While academics are always top of mind, we are also mindful that we must meet the demands of current and future enrollment growth in our District. We have commenced work on building a new Sunny Hills Elementary and a new Issaquah Middle School. We will also reconstruct and renovate portions of the current IMS facility to become the new Gibson Ek High School and a rebuilt Clark Elementary School.

Additionally, the School Board has approved a school bond measure to be placed on the April 26, 2016 ballot to expand and remodel schools as well as purchase land and construct new schools. This follows a proposal for future school building projects I brought to our school board last summer and the work of the community school bond feasibility committee that met last spring.

Growth, along with the desire for full-day kindergarten and lower class sizes, all drive the need for more classrooms across the District. The good news is we live in a part of the country that has a very strong economy, beautiful natural surroundings, and an incredible public school system. All of these factors that make this a very desirable place to live and learn.

I am enthusiastic and excited about this school year. All of us in the Issaquah School District are honored to serve our families, students, and community as we work to prepare each and every student for the academic, occupational, personal, and practical challenges of life in a dynamic global environment. Have a wonderful school year.

Ron Thiele, Superintendent

CONSTRUCTION KICK OFF AT SUNNY HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Earlier this summer, Sammamish Mayor Tom Vance, picked up a ceremonial shovel to help celebrate the construction of a new Sunny Hills Elementary at the school’s groundbreaking event. Pictured L to R are Superintendent Ron Thiele; Sammamish Mayor Tom Vance; School Board Director Marnie Maraldo; School Board Director Suzanne Weaver; School Board President Anne Moore; and Sunny Hills Principal Leslie Lederman.

ISSAQAH MIDDLE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY

Dirt was flying on the construction site this past summer as the Issaquah School District held a ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the construction of a new Issaquah Middle School. The Mayor of Issaquah and the “King of Issaquah” from the Chamber of Commerce both stopped by to lend a hand. Pictured L to R: IMS Principal Seth Adams; Issaquah Mayor Fred Butler; School Board Director Marnie Maraldo; School Board President Anne Moore; School Board Director Suzanne Weaver; Superintendent Ron Thiele; and the “King of Issaquah” Ed Pinge.

INTRODUCING GIBSON EK HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Issaquah School District Community,

In 2014, the ISD began a conversation about opening a new choice school for our high school students. It is with great anticipation and excitement that Gibson EK High School will open on September 1, 2016, welcoming more than one hundred 9th and 10th-grade students.

During this planning phase for Gibson Ek, I have been asked many questions. How will the school model be different? How many students will attend? How do I apply? To help answer those questions, I am pleased to announce the launch of the Gibson Ek High School website! Please take a moment to visit www.gibsonek.org to learn more about Issaquah’s innovative high school.

The school is named after the first graduating class in the city of Issaquah in 1911: Mary Gibson, Olive Gibson, and Mabel Ek. With the naming of our new school, we honor these three women who pioneered education in Issaquah and connect our history with future innovations. The two-story wood-framed schoolhouse that Mary, Olive, and Mabel attended in 1911 was located where the new high school will be, originally known as “Schoolhouse Hill.”

Sincerely,
Ron Thiele, Superintendent
JOURNEY TO THE WHITE HOUSE –
WASHINGTON STATE’S 2015 PRESIDENTIAL
AWARD WINNING SCIENCE TEACHER

Gretel von Bargen’s vacation plans took an interesting twist this past summer. One hundred and ten miles into a “lifetime bucket list” backpacking trip on the John Muir trail with her husband, Gretel received a special invitation. The invitation was to fly to Washington, D.C. to meet President Obama and be recognized by the National Science Foundation with a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Although it meant cutting the hiking trip short, there was no way Gretel could miss this once in a lifetime opportunity. Gretel says this is when the real epic journey began as the couple proceeded to “hike, boat, hitch-hike, train, bus and drive home from California” in time for Gretel to catch a flight to Washington D.C. and participate in the awards ceremony.

The ceremony in Washington, D.C. was the culmination of a process that began in November of 2012 when Gretel’s then principal, Lisa Hechtman, nominated her for the award. For six months, Gretel worked on an extensive application packet that included essays, videos of her teaching, and letters of recommendation. She received word in late summer of 2013 that she was a Washington State finalist. And then... nothing. Nearly two years later, Gretel had almost given up on hearing any news. It was the day she and her husband were set to begin their hike in California that the letter arrived. Gretel had been selected as the Washington State Awardee in Science Teaching! But there was no word as to when the ceremony would take place. They decided to press on, and, well, you know what happened next.

Gretel did make it to Washington, D.C. and had an opportunity to talk with teachers from all over their country and learn about their school systems. After these conversations, Gretel says that she “was often left with a sense of gratitude for teaching in Issaquah. It is wonderful to live and work in a community in which parents and students value education. My biggest sense of gratitude was for my teaching colleagues. Our schools are filled with teachers and staff who care very deeply about student learning and are willing to go above and beyond to do what is best for our kids.”

President Obama greeted the group in the White House after the award ceremony and, according to Gretel, joked that “the water glasses we’d been drinking out of were all being saved so that the government could clone us.” The President spoke about the impact a teacher makes on students and made reference to his own daughters learning of math and science, noting that students need STEM subjects, not only so they can get a job, but so they can understand their world. After taking a group photograph, each of awardees had an opportunity to shake hands with the President and introduce themselves. Gretel reports that she received some extra attention when she slipped slightly on the wooden floor. The President reached out to make sure she was OK and joked that he could run and get crutches for her if she needed them. “Conspiracy theorists will claim I slipped on purpose for the extra 15 seconds of attention,” says Gretel, “but I assure you that it was unintentional!”

The Issaquah School District community is proud of all of our teachers and thrilled that one of our own has received recognition for excellence in teaching at the national level. Our District is supportive of professional growth and values teamwork and collaboration. Gretel sums it up this way, “I work with teachers who encourage me to reflect on my practice and who challenge me to be a better instructor and I am very grateful for them. I must also thank my husband Curtis and the Skyline staff who have been extraordinarily supportive of the time and dedication I have for teaching. Curtis doesn’t blink an eye when I tell him I need to work long nights or weekends. I know I wouldn’t have been nationally recognized had he and my teaching colleagues not been so supportive.”

2016 SCHOOL BOND

Anyone who has driven past the many construction sites in the north and central corridor areas of our District is aware of the growth our region is experiencing, but did you know that in the past ten years, the Issaquah School District’s enrollment has grown by 4,600 students? In fact, the District has grown by 1,000 students in the past two years alone. Conservative projections estimate that our District will grow from 19,000 students today to 20,500 students by 2020. The District is currently housing students in 200 portable classrooms. New schools will need to be built in order to meet our current and future student housing needs. In April, the District will ask voters to consider a construction bond to enable us to buy land to build a new high school, middle school, and two new elementary schools. If approved, the bond would also allow us to rebuild Pine Lake Middle School, upgrade Beaver Lake Middle School and remodel and expand several additional elementary schools. Full details are available on the District’s website. Visit www.issaquah. wednet.edu and click the “2016 School Bond” tab at the top of the page.
FOCUS ON ISSAQUAH SCHOOLS

THE BEST IDEAS ARE LIVING INSIDE YOU: AUTHOR RALPH FLETCHER VISITS ISSAQUAH

Kindergarten and first grade students at Sunny Hills Elementary School laughed and giggled as author Ralph Fletcher pretended to shower in the rain while reciting one of his favorite poems. As the oldest of nine children, Ralph shared how many of his children’s books, poems, and novels were inspired by his childhood experiences and family members—especially his trouble making younger brother.

Throughout his presentation Ralph read stories and explained what experiences had inspired the story and how it had evolved into the published piece.

Along with visiting Sunny Hills, Ralph visited Cascade Ridge, Creekside, Endeavor, and Grand Ridge Elementary schools, where he shared his passion for writing and how to use life experiences as inspiration. While at Sunny Hills Elementary school, Ralph was surprised and delighted that fifth grader, Irina Stoteca, brought her own stories to share with him.

Ralph also partnered with the Teaching and Learning Department to offer two teacher workshops at which he shared ways for teachers to find wiser ways of teaching writing. Ralph was also the key speaker at the parent night event “Engaging Boy Writers.” During his parent workshop, Ralph awarded Joshua Daley a prize of his book “Marshfield Dreams.”

“He encouraged teachers and parents to give boys more leeway in their writing—to allow for more choice,” shared Emilie Hard, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.

SUNSET STUDENTS GET ACTIVE WITH THE SEAHAWKS DURING PLAY60

An electric excitement filled the Sunset Elementary gym as blue and green clad students and staff eagerly waited for their surprise guests to appear. The lights dimmed low and a montage video of the Seahawks played on the big screen. Students cheered for touchdowns and were amped up by the excitement of the players and the fans.

After the video, Principal Dorey and Emily, the Play60 Announcer, declared that Sunset Elementary was in for a treat. They were about to experience a National Football League (NFL) Play60 event. With this announcement, the room exploded into chants and cheers; both the Seahawks mascot Boom and Seahawks cornerback Tye Smith burst into the gym, sharing high-fives and smiles.

During the assembly, Tye emphasized eating well and staying active. The NFL Play60 campaign encourages kids to be active for 60 minutes a day to reverse the trend of childhood obesity. “I didn’t really like veggies when I was younger, but now I eat them with every meal,” shared Tye. “Fruits, veggies, and nutritious meals are important for staying active and being healthy.”

Beyond football, Tye shared that his other favorite activities include bowling, basketball, and running and that on his cheat days, he enjoys a good burger. While Boom isn’t much of a talker, he also shared that when he’s not at a game, he loves to dance.

After the assembly, Mrs. Randolph’s second grade class and Mrs. Hart’s fifth grade class get active with Tye and Boom. Together they threw footballs, jumped rope, did sit ups and push-ups, and climbed the climbing wall.

2014-15 ANNUAL COMMUNITY REPORT NOW AVAILABLE

The Issaquah School District’s Annual Community Report reviewing the 2014-2015 school year is now available online. In our report, you will find easily accessible charts and information about student achievement, our programs and services, and finances. For those who wish to dig deeper, many links are provided to guide you to the data you need. The annual report is available at: http://apps.issaquah.wednet.edu/communityreport/

SKYLINE HIGH SCHOOL HONORED TO RECEIVE THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Irish President Michael D. Higgins, made Skyline High School one of his stops during a four-day visit to the Seattle area. The President was interested in Skyline for its Gaelic football program, not commonly played in American high schools. During his visit, the President and his wife, Sabina, looked on as Brendan Hyland’s P.E. class practiced Gaelic football, visited music classes, and addressed students gathered in the school auditorium with a message of peace, collaboration, and a love of the arts. The President also met with members of the local Gaelic Athletics Association who joined students and staff in celebrating Irish sport.