

LONGVIEW SCHOOLS Review

New curriculum grows readers, thinkers

Longview elementary students are making notable gains in reading just months after starting a new curriculum.

"We're actually seeing some of our more struggling students make significant growth," said Crystal Allen, a literacy specialist at St. Helens Elementary.

The new program, adopted districtwide, is called *Journeys*, and it offers teachers a variety of materials and strategies to reach readers at every skill level.

At St. Helens this has meant getting away from pulling students who need extra help out of their regular classrooms. Now several adults—a literacy specialist, a para-support person and a special education



teacher—visit every classroom, where, along with the classroom teacher, they conduct small reading groups.

"These key adults are all being consistent, using the same vocabulary and focusing on the same skills," said

Allen, who works with third through fifth graders. "Yet they embrace each of our students where their learning is—whether they're struggling or on-level readers."

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Meet the candidates for LPS Superintendent—and let the School Board know what you think!

The School Board has selected three candidates to move forward in the superintendent selection process. Each will spend a day meeting with the Board, students, staff, administrators

and the public.

Community members are invited to attend open sessions Feb. 2, 4 and 5 from 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 to

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Message from the Superintendent

Dear Longview Schools Patrons,

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe the school year is already half over. I am thoroughly enjoying my time serving as your interim superintendent, working with members of this vibrant community and visiting classrooms where the exciting work of teaching and learning is taking place each and every day.

The Board of Directors has taken a big step in its search for a new superintendent, narrowing the pool of candidates to three. I have been impressed with the community's support and interest in this process and am optimistic that our Board will find a well-qualified, enthusiastic leader who will be ready to take the district to the next level.

You also will read that our staff has been making positive changes in Longview's classrooms, including an exciting new reading curriculum in the elementary schools, and social studies and English in the high schools.

Our teachers have approached all of these changes with great energy, and the students are responding enthusiastically.

The district continues to take good care of its brick-and-mortar assets, evaluating facilities and setting priorities to keep them in good working order. Our 2015 project list is in this newsletter.

Most importantly, our highly trained staff and emergency protocols are keeping students safe. You might be interested to read how one of our bus drivers responded when a tree fell on his vehicle during December's big storm.

Our students and staff have plenty of exciting work ahead as they pursue the LPS vision: Ready to Learn. Ready for Life. Together We Aspire and Achieve! Feel free to get in touch with me if you have any questions or concerns. My door is always open, and I am available at supt@longview.k12.wa.us or 360-575-7016.

Sincerely,
Dr. Greg Kirsch
Superintendent

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While *Journeys* is helping bring some student readers up toward grade level, it is encouraging already-achieving students to conduct deeper analyses of texts. "They're not asked just to be readers," Allen said. "They're asked to be *thinkers*."

Overall the curriculum encourages students to consider the larger ideas behind the stories, such as the author's purpose and point of view, said Ken Hermanson, district executive director of Leadership

and Learning. "It's less about the information than what you can do with the information."

And the material is fun. Third-grade teacher April Flanders-Lee says recent reading assignments have focused on sports and dogs who have jobs, and the readings capture the children's imaginations. "They're eating it up," she said.

On a recent classroom visit, Hermanson heard a fifth-grader comment: "Reading's my favorite part of the day—sitting with my teacher and having discussions."

School buses safe from falling timber and more

When Longview school bus driver Ray Johnson set out on his route Dec. 11, he had no idea he'd be putting his emergency training to use. But as Johnson drove a winding rural road through a wind storm that raged through Southwest Washington, a tree crashed down on the roof of his bus.

"It shook the whole bus," he told *School Bus Fleet*, which shared his story online. "There was a big loud bang, and the emergency buzzers went off."

That's when Johnson sprang into action, just as he was trained to do.

Whether driving a bus, teaching in a classroom or coaching on a field, Longview Public Schools staff are trained to respond to the unexpected. The district has detailed emergency response procedures to guide staff in each facility with what to do in case of fire, earthquake, intruder, tornado or crash.

"We've tried to think through every possible emergency," said Rick Lecker, district safety officer and transportation manager. In regards to his bus driver

but uninjured, and called dispatch. The vehicle had lost its rear emergency hatch, and part of its roof had caved in nearly a foot.

Since it was still drivable, dispatch advised him to move to a safer place, one without as many trees. Minutes later, Lecker and a bus from a nearby route met Johnson's bus, quickly transferred the children and drove them home.

"Watching Ray in action," Lecker recalled, "he did an outstanding job. The kids listened to him and stayed calm. They were more curious than scared."

All in a day's work at Longview Public Schools.



Longview bus driver Ray Johnson poses with the dented roof of his bus, which was damaged by a falling tree.

Longview Public Schools sets facilities projects for 2015

The casual observer might not get excited about the facilities work Longview Public Schools has planned for 2015—new roofs, fire alarm and climate system updates, repairs to pavement and dry rot—but each task has been chosen carefully and is eagerly awaited by school folks.

"These improvements will help the district maintain its quality educational environments," said Assistant Superintendent Chris Fritsch, who quickly added, "There is much more work to be done."

The projects were identified through the district's Preservation, Renovation and Modernization (PRAM) process. School principals and other district administrators suggested possible projects. Facilities Manager Troy Lomax analyzed roofs, heating, electrical,

plumbing and other systems in the district's 20 facilities and rated each as Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor or Unsatisfactory using an industry-standard rating scale. Based on those ratings, the possible PRAM list grew to include 89 projects that would cost \$15.3 million to complete.

That list was whittled down to the top eight and a price tag of \$1.2 million by the Facility Advisory Committee, a group of parents/grandparents, citizens, and district board members and staff. The list was then approved by the district's Board of Directors. Work will be conducted this summer after a competitive bid process.

"We have a lot of facilities and more needs than funding," Fritsch said. "The PRAM list helps us prioritize those needs and make the most of our resources."

Upcoming Facilities Projects

- » New roofing and fall protection at R.A. Long High School
- » New roofing and fall protection at the bus garage
- » Fire alarm replacement at Mark Morris High School
- » HVAC control replacement at Kessler Elementary School
- » Pavement repairs at Monticello Middle School
- » Pavement repairs at R.A. Long High School
- » Parking lot repair at Broadway Learning Center
- » Dry rot repair and stone sealing at R.A. Long High School

ANNUAL NONDISCRIMINATION NOTIFICATION: The Longview School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its program or activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The Longview School District offers classes in many Career and Technical Education program areas. For more information about the application process and particular course offerings, contact the Director of the Career and Technical Education Department at (360) 575-7991. Lack of English language proficiency will not be a barrier to admission and participation in Career and Technical Education programs.

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:
ADA/Students: Rod McHattie, Director of Special Services, (360) 575-7008
ADA/Employees: Chris Fritsch, Assistant Superintendent, (360) 575-7003
IDEA and 504: Rod McHattie, Director of Special Services, (360) 575-7008

Affirmative Action: Chris Fritsch, Assistant Superintendent, (360) 575-7003
Title VII and Title IX: Chris Fritsch, Assistant Superintendent, (360) 575-7003
Athletic Equity: Chris Fritsch, Assistant Superintendent, (360) 575-7003



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Making dreams possible

Mint Valley Elementary School students perform an experiment with the school's Science Club, one of 10 projects made possible this school year by grants from the Longview Public Schools Foundation. The Foundation has distributed \$75,300 since the 2012-13 school year to 16 projects. Its goal is to help meet the needs of the district's 6,500 students and help them pursue their dreams.

Would you like to make a difference in the lives of Longview's students? Consider giving to the Longview Public Schools Foundation. For more information, contact the Foundation at 360-575-7046 or foundation@longview.k12.wa.us.

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6:30 p.m. at the administration building, 2715 Lilac St. Written comments for the Board will be collected at the open sessions.

The candidates, in order of their visits, are:

Feb. 2—Daniel Zorn, Assistant Superintendent of Kalispell (Montana) Public Schools

Dr. Zorn has worked with his 5,778-student district for 16 years. Previously he spent five years as an elementary principal in Cut Bank, Montana, and has nine years' experience teaching in Whitefish, Montana, and Fort Benton, Montana, in third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms, as well as teaching music to first through fourth grades. He also coached

high school football and basketball. He received the University of Montana's Educational Leadership Excellence Award in 2010.

Feb. 4—Michelle R. Curry, Superintendent of Orting (Washington) School District

Ms. Curry has led her 2,300-student district since 2009. Prior to that she spent 10 years in Seattle Public Schools' central administration with her last position being deputy academic officer. She has 12 years of experience as a teacher in Snohomish and Renton school districts in special education and fifth grade classrooms. In 2012, Ms. Curry was a semi-finalist for the Superintendent of the Year award from the National Association of School Superintendents.

Feb. 5—Mervin Daugherty, Superintendent of Red Clay Consolidated School District, Wilmington, Delaware

Dr. Daugherty has been with his 18,300-student school district since 2005, serving as professional development and curriculum director for two years, assistant superintendent for two years and superintendent for six years. Previously he worked as a middle school principal, high school principal, building administrator, athletic director and high school social studies teacher. He was a finalist for the Maryland Secondary School Principal of the Year Award in 1998.

The School Board hopes to name a new superintendent by Feb. 9 to assume leadership July 1.