



2724 S Hillhurst Road
Ridgefield, WA 98642
TEL 360 619 1300
www.ridge.k12.wa.us

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
RIDGEFIELD, WA
PERMIT NO. 26

OCTOBER 2010 | 2724 S HILLHURST ROAD, RIDGEFIELD, WA 98642
TEL 360 619 1300 | FAX 360 619 1397 | www.ridge.k12.wa.us



RIDGEGRAM

RIDGEFIELD POSTAL PATRON

Superintendent's View

OUR MISSION STATEMENT states: "We will develop well rounded students with the capacity to succeed in a technologically driven global society." In order for our students to compete in a global society, we, as education professionals, must reflect upon and improve our practices; our schools must become places where both students and adults are continuously learning.

Our work to improve learning for every student in every class at every school requires a strong commitment from district and school leadership teams. In order for us to be successful in this work, we must focus on improving the "instructional core." The instructional core emphasizes that school improvement and increases in student learning are directly related to the relationship between teacher instruction, student tasks and content in the classroom.

In recent years, we have discussed facility needs, communicated those needs in many venues and brought them to voters seeking approval. Surely, we can agree that it is time to build new school buildings and improve existing facilities for our student body. However important the state of our buildings may be,

we are committed to focusing on the real business of our school district: increasing student learning. We need to direct our energy on what takes place inside our schools, not just the state of the facilities.

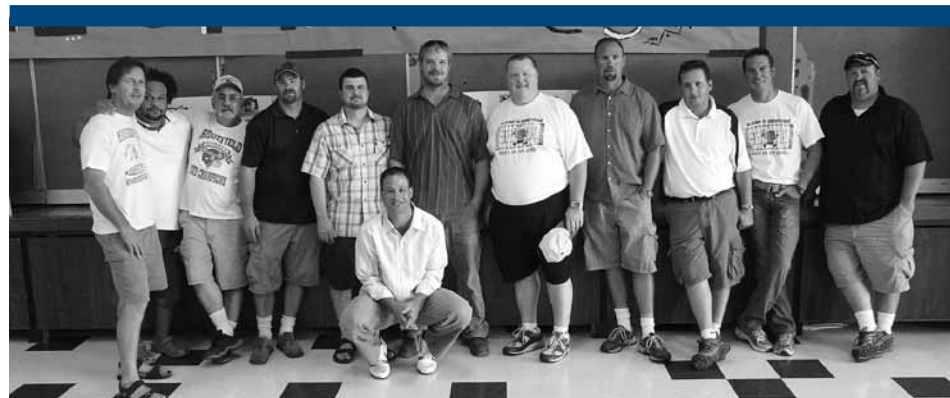
Throughout this school year, we will bring key issues to our community for input and support at our regular School Board Meetings. You are a key stakeholder in the Ridgefield School

District, and I encourage you to come join us!

School Board Meetings are scheduled on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm in Ridgefield High School's library.

Together we can have Small Community Schools with Great Results!

Art Edgerly
Superintendent



The 2010 school year marks the 15th anniversary of Ridgefield winning the State Championship for football. On September 3, the players and coaches of the 1995 season were invited to the first game of the season. A total of 17 players and coaches in addition to the announcer, Kemit Fossand, addressed the current team before the game and attended the reception.

Improving school performance at its instructional core

RIDGEFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT will implement new methodology to improve school performance by changing the instructional core. Inspired by the research and techniques developed by Harvard professor Richard Elmore, Superintendent Art Edgerly and the rest of the administrative team are working toward changing each school's performance.

"Elmore states that you don't change performance without changing the instructional core," said Edgerly. "Student learning finds its basis in the relationship between the teacher, the student and the content."

Elmore defines the instructional core as the relationship between the teacher and the student in presence of content. Regular assessments are key to improving that relationship and increasing the positive effects of the content. "We have gotten ourselves into a situation where testing has become the primary lever of accountability and improvement," said Elmore. "What is the consequence of receiving a curriculum that is based on test preparation versus one that is based on teaching high-level skills?"

In addition to the annual assessments required to fulfill the responsibilities of the No Child Left Behind Act, teachers need to perform daily assessments to ensure that the lessons assigned in class are truly teaching students the lessons at hand. Throughout the year, teacher teams at each of Ridgefield's schools will be working to improve their instructional core through processes of analysis and development.

"Our work to improve learning for every student in every class at every school requires a strong commitment from district and school leadership teams," said Edgerly.

What happens in the classroom affects students most

IMPROVING THE INSTRUCTIONAL core means focusing primarily on the classroom at Ridgefield High School. This year, the staff will target how lessons are taught within the classroom to increase student learning.

"Studies show the activities that actually happen inside the classroom have the biggest effect on student learning," said Ridgefield High School Principal Tony VanderMaas. "The biggest improvements we can make come from changing the way material is presented."

When broken down, the instructional core combines what the teacher is doing, what the students is doing and the content. "Instructional practices drive student learning," said VanderMaas. "The tasks assigned during class are what actually teach the student the lesson at hand."

Weekly collaboration meetings enable the teams to put together student assessment plans and determine what the data means to their teaching practice. Teachers are engaged at the meetings and maintain optimism about their progress. "It's not just what you're testing or how often, but how you set the scene," said Kim Allais at a recent meeting. "I told students that an assessment wouldn't affect their grade, and I think just telling them that may have impacted the results."

Teachers are in working teams based on subject to develop guides on what needs to be taught in the classroom. Each teacher has the freedom to decide how to teach the lesson, and then returns to the group afterward to discuss what worked and what didn't. Once the teams start collecting enough data, they will use it to continue to develop their model with additional assessment and guiding questions to help hone their skills.

"Assessment enables us to look at how the students are learning in addition to how the teachers are teaching," said VanderMaas. "The continued process helps everyone involved become more effective at what they're doing, whether that's teaching or learning."



RHS teachers review assessment at weekly collaboration meetings.



Foundation Corner

THANK YOU TO the participants and sponsors that made the Ridgefield Public Schools Foundation community barbecue and golf tournament fundraisers a success! The money raised will fund mini grants for each school this Fall.

- » Maul Foster Alongi
- » Quetopia Barbecue Company
- » Smokin' Eagle BBQ
- » Port of Ridgefield
- » Group Mackenzie
- » GVA Kidder Mathews
- » Corwin Beverage Company
- » iQ Credit Union
- » Miller Exteriors and More
- » Baumgartner, Nelson & Price, PLLC
- » Ridgefield High School Leadership Class
- » ABM Janitorial
- » Chartwells
- » Tacoma Rubber Stamp

Working together is key to creating a school's future

THE STAFF AT South Ridge Elementary dedicated their opening days to developing core values for the staff, the building and the community.

"Having everyone from staff to students to parents work toward a common goal requires dedication and perseverance," said South Ridge Principal Janice Sauve. "We recognized the importance of establishing that common goal right from the start."

Team meetings started with the development of group norms or rules of conduct to facilitate the best working relationship with one another. Once the norms had been determined, it was time to brainstorm core values for what the staff wants to work toward.

"Working together with one another means that the entire team has 'buy-in' to everything we develop," said Sauve. "We're committed right from the start." Staff members started working in small groups with large sheets of paper. As the meeting continued, the groups collaborated until a consensus was reached with two values:

- » Respect for continued learning for all.
- » Respect for each other.

From there, the staff used the same process to develop a vision statement that encapsulated their view toward teaching and learning as a whole:

- » Each person in our learning community will grow and develop to his/her highest learning potential.

"When we say 'each person' we truly mean every single person in our community," said Sauve. "We want South Ridge to be a learning community for every person who walks through our doors."

Following the vision statement, the staff developed a mission statement that represents everything the school and the staff is working toward:

- » Foster lifelong learners and self-managing citizens. Our students will learn in a safe, caring and academically challenging environment in partnership with families, staff and the community.

"The staff and I feel that in order for our students to succeed, we need everyone to come together and become lifelong learners," said Sauve. "Having that curiosity to learn more in yourself will bring it out in others."

Goal-setting helps students learn the value of planning ahead

IN ORDER TO help students develop goal-setting skills, 7th-grade students will have the same advisor teacher for both years they spend at View Ridge Middle School.

"At this age, many students haven't developed the time management skills necessary to meet long-term goals," said Melissa Gonzales, View Ridge's School Counselor. "Helping students make plans for the future teaches them how to take small steps to accomplishing big tasks."

As part of the program, students take place in personality inventories where they discover what kind of learners they are; whether it be aural or visual. In addition, stu-

dents perform personal assessments like the True Color Test, where they develop conflict resolution skills by learning how to deal with different personality types.

During the True Color Test, students answer a series of questions about the way they solve problems and see others in their lives. At the end of the test, they find out which one of four different colors represents them. Following the test, students learn what each color means about the way people interact with each other and deal with conflict.

Each student sets goals for both their academic future as well as their personal future, and then they meet with advisors twice a

month to discuss their progress. Academic goals include reaching a certain grade-point-average or getting straight A's, while students' personal goals can be to befriend a student or try something new.

In late October, parents and their students will meet with the student's advisor teacher to discuss the goals they set. "Students really take their goals to heart and seek to achieve them," said Gonzales. "Throughout their time at View Ridge, we get to see students change the way they think and act in order to accomplish long-term plans – it's exciting!"

View Ridge's diverse teachers strive to find the love for what they do

DIVERSE AND ECLECTIC teachers are a hallmark of Ridgefield School District, but this year, View Ridge Middle School has an almost all-new staff due as teachers transferred into the school, relocated and retired.

"I'm excited to have such a fresh blend of both experienced and new teachers," said Principal Chris Griffith. "The positive energy and excitement is in the air as they're working together to help one another better their craft."

In preparing for the school year, Griffith decided to help his teachers a little more by helping give them the motivation to love everything they do. At a staff meeting before the start of the year, Griffith showed a short

inspirational video titled "For the Love of It" by Dewitt Jones, a National Geographic photographer.

"I found Jones' video and it struck a chord inside me," said Griffith. "If each of us can fall in love with what we do, that feeling will affect everyone around us."

Jones discusses the importance of keeping a full cup. "This means that each of us should come to school everyday excited to be there by doing things that make us happy and full of life when we're not at school," said Griffith. "If we can keep ourselves 'full,' then we can stay motivated to make a difference."

Griffith's focus for the year will be to continue developing the course frameworks and

tuning each system, "We need to use data to drive every decision we're making every day"

View Ridge's new teachers include transfers from other Ridgefield schools as well as a number of brand-new teachers. Nam Nguyen, Sheila Davis and Justin Nelson are all new to teaching. "We didn't know it when we interviewed them, but not only did they go to the same university, they were in the same learning group together while they were there!" said Griffith.

Rounding out those three are veterans Shelli Colwell transferring from South Ridge and Mary Ford from Union Ridge. In addition, Raechel Cowell and Leilani Lamoreaux are both new to the View Ridge team.

Special Ed and Professional Learning Communities are front and center

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES are driving development with goals for the year while special education remains a strong focus at Union Ridge Elementary.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are formed from groups of teachers working together to analyze their work, help each other wherever necessary and develop new teaching techniques. "For our first meetings, we spent time learning how to actually be a part of a PLC," said Union Ridge Principal Angela Freeman. "Then, we work on the skill development necessary to strengthening the group."

PLCs work on modeling by figuring out what the staff needs which includes the development of learning targets and planning backwards. "The concept means determining the goal first and then figuring out how to get there," said Freeman. "Our teachers are eager for change and very excited about the process."

In addition to PLCs, making sure students who have special education needs are properly served continues to be an important priority. "We need to make sure that students with special needs are receiving adequate regular class time, too," said Freeman. "Special education classes must serve as a supplement to the core curriculum, not a replacement for it."



6th graders learn about water treatment and testing while canoeing

RIDGEFIELD 6TH GRADERS took a trip up Lake River to perform water quality tests and observe the wildlife. The trained canoe guides were from the Lower Columbia River Basin Association who took students in two canoes modeled after historical Voyageur canoes.

"Hands-on experiments truly enrich the entire experience," said Union Ridge Principal Angela Freeman. "The proximity of the river offers a wide variety of interactive learning opportunities."