

Dialog

UNIVERSITY
PLACE
School District

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Above, Narrows View Intermediate students demonstrate their canoeing skills at Camp Seymour. The camp also complements their science curriculum. See story on page eight.

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A CURTIS GRADUATE

A Message from School Board President Mary Lu Dickinson



With graduation for the class of 2019 just a few weeks away, it is important to think about

the skills, knowledge, traits and habits we expect of Curtis graduates. Ultimately, our goal is to make sure our students grow into competent, contributing citizens. So what does that look like in 2019?

Academic skills and knowledge are essential to the success of every student because they open doors to further educational opportunities and living wage jobs. New, more rigorous graduation standards take effect this year in our state (see the article on “Core 24” on pages four and five). These requirements aim to equip students with a broad, comprehensive set of skills and knowledge across many subject areas. Another article in this issue (page nine) focuses on math programs in UPSD and highlights the exceptional progress made in this academic area over the last decade. Academic proficiency is essential—but not sufficient. Only a more balanced graduate can become a great citizen.

Great citizens also believe in the importance of serving others and act on this belief.

When students serve others, they are happier, and better prepared to learn. As I noted in my last message, our high school students documented more than 31,600 service hours last year. Many more hours of service were given by students in other grades and additional hours were

“Students graduating from our district will leave with a balanced set of skills and knowledge that will enable them to provide well for themselves and their families in the future.”

served—but not recorded. A passion for serving others is part of what makes a balanced citizen.

We also want our UPSD graduates to understand the importance of personal health and fitness and how to achieve it. Good citizens are able to see how personal choices impact their own health, the health of loved ones, and our community’s health. This is also a part of each child’s K-12

learning experience in UPSD. Articles in this issue about social emotional learning (page six) and 6th-Grade Camp (page eight) give examples of several opportunities in UPSD that promote health and fitness.

Students graduating from our district will leave with a balanced set of skills and knowledge that will enable them to provide well for themselves and their families in the future. They will also graduate with the habits of good citizenship and an understanding of their responsibility to contribute to their community and our larger society.

I invite you to read and learn of great things that are taking place in our schools. Better yet, come visit a school event and see for yourself.

THE IMPACT OF A GREAT TEACHER

A Message from Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin



Curtis High School theater students recently put on a powerful, entertaining, and

moving production of *The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson about the life and challenges of Helen Keller, a child who was blind, deaf, and mute living in Alabama in the 1880s. The play focuses on the difficulties that Helen’s disability presents both to her and to her loving family. Tangled in the competing demands of showing love and setting limits for their daughter, Helen’s parents struggle. To overcome these challenges, they need help.

In this story, and in so many others, it is the actions of a great teacher and the power of learning that combine to change the course of a student and her family for the better. The help the Keller family needs comes in the form of a “first year” teacher named Annie Sullivan who makes up for her lack of experience with intelligence, conviction, persistence, and compassion.

The talented cast and production staff of *The Miracle Worker* reminded me of these fundamental values shared by

members of our UPSD team:

First, everyone is capable of growing and learning no matter what challenges they face in life. In this story, a relentless, passionate teacher refuses to let her student fall short of her potential. Annie Sullivan persists through many hardships because she truly believes in her student’s ability to learn. She is extraordinarily patient and will not let setbacks or bad behavior alter her belief in her student’s ability to succeed. I’m proud to say that we have lots of teachers like this on our team.

Second, literacy is at the center of all education. Helen Keller’s teacher knows that language development—knowing and using words—is critical. A teacher’s efforts to help build vocabulary for students and teach them how to use it is the key to communication and future learning. In UPSD, we are very focused on building the vocabulary and background knowledge of students because we know that literacy is the bridge to all other learning.

Lastly, people (students of every age) only reach their potential when held to high expectations. Annie Sullivan’s most powerful weapon is her insistence that Helen be held to the highest of standards—

despite her disabilities.

All great teachers, parents, and leaders know that people rise to the level of expectations set for them when they get the right support. This is a core belief of University Place staff at every level of the district’s organization.

Maybe the greatest takeaway from *The Miracle Worker* is that great teachers make a huge difference. I am very proud of the wonderful teachers we have in University Place School District—both in formal and informal teaching roles. It just so happens that we celebrate teacher appreciation week this month; I hope you will take the time to reach out to an educator who made an impact on you and thank them for helping you on your journey.

Read more about our exceptional theater program in a feature article on page seven of this issue of *The Dialog*.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. If you have any concerns, questions, or suggestions for UPSD, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at jchamberlin@upsd83.org.



STUDENT

Science and candy are twin passions for Chambers Primary second-grader **Zak Hazel**. He has submitted candy-focused science experiments the last two years in the Regional Science Fair, and this year's project—The World of $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$ (sugar)—won both the Regional Fair and the Washington State Science and Engineering Fair. Zak explored the effects of varying amounts of heat, water, and sugar in the creation of different types of candy. “Zak is a bright and curious student,” said Principal Ali Shepard. “When you ask him about science, he just lights up and you can see his passion for learning.” The judges at the State Science Fair, held this year in Bremerton, must have also sensed that passion, honoring him with the Maragaret I. Lugg Young Explorer Award for his excellent oral presentation.



ALUMNUS

Pierce County District Judge **Karl Williams** is a proud graduate of Curtis High School, class of 1977. After attending the University of Washington for undergraduate and the University of Puget Sound Law School, he and his wife—also a Curtis alumna—decided to return to University Place so their kids could receive the same education they did. “This district is a blessing for the type of public education they provide,” said Williams. “I wish they could follow their example in every district in Washington.” He is particularly fond of how close-knit the student body is in UPSD, crediting their model of all students ending up in the same junior high and high school buildings. Williams is also proud to be the first African-American serving on the Pierce County bench.



The University Place School District team is made up of over 5,400 exceptional students, more than 600 talented and devoted staff members, thousands of successful graduates, and many wonderful community partners. In this section of the *Dialog* we hope to shine a light on the work and contributions that selected members of this great team are making in the district and all around our region. We would love to hear from you if you have suggestions on who we might want to feature in this section in future issues.

FACULTY

Running has been a way of life for Curtis High School physics and biology teacher **Ben Mangrum**, shown at right winning the 2018 Tacoma City Marathon. A track and cross-country runner at UPS, he began teaching and coaching the cross country team at Curtis in 2002. His commitment to the sport has been extraordinary, not missing a day of running for the past 15 years. “For me, it’s not entirely about the competition,” said Mangrum. “It’s a way to get outside and keep yourself in a healthy mental and physical state. I try to instill that same sense of well-being in the student athletes I coach.” Among many other accomplishments in his running career, some recent ones include running the Boston Marathon in 2:36:54, competing in the National Masters Cross Country Championships, and finishing a 50-mile ultramarathon.



COMMUNITY PARTNER

UPSD is fortunate to have a thriving educational partnership with **West Pierce Fire & Rescue**. At left, Captain Scott Adams sits with some happy students at a firefighter-hosted ice cream party—a reward for classrooms at Sunset Primary that had 100% completion of home fire exit plans. The visit also included classroom demonstrations of proper booster-seat use and a screening for students tall enough to stop using one. They also partner with the YMCA to provide water safety instruction, teach a Safe Sitter Course to prospective babysitters over the summer, and work with Curtis High School to provide a CPR class to tenth-grade students. West Pierce firefighters, among other things, frequently participate in Read Across America and raise money and donations for families in need during the holidays.



DISTRICT ADOPTING NEW CORE 24 REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASS OF 2019 AND BEYOND

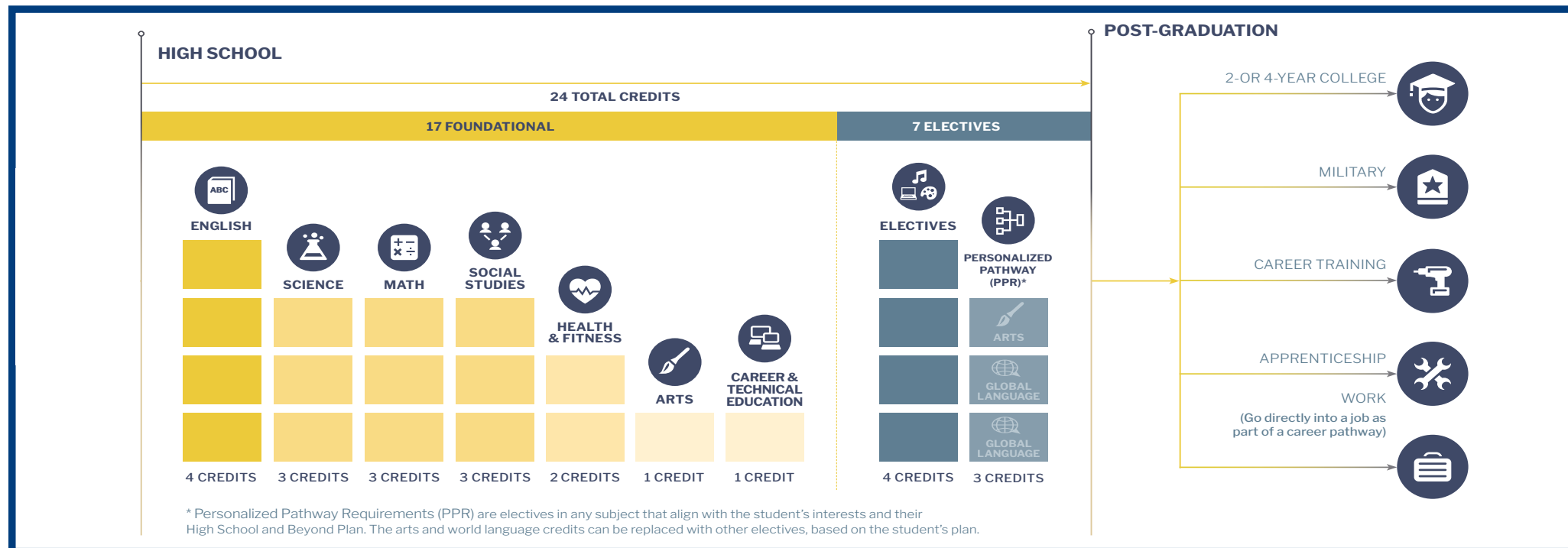
In 2014, Washington State adopted more rigorous credit requirements for students to earn a high school diploma with the implementation of the 24 Credit Career and College Ready Graduation Requirements. The rationale behind this shift was to create a more rigorous pathway that would keep all postsecondary options open for students as the default path to a high school diploma. While some districts have delayed the implementation of these new requirements a year or two, most districts, including University Place, will be implementing these new requirements this year.

WHAT IS NOW REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION?

The Class of 2019 will be the first group in both the state and our district to fall under these new requirements. Whereas students previously needed 22 credits to graduate, they now need 24 credits. As seen in the graphic from the Washington State Board of Education below, 17 of the 24

credits are mandatory, including English, math, science, social studies, Career and Technical Education, health, physical education, and fine arts. Three of the remaining credits are for fine art (1.0) and world language (2.0) or may be used as a Personalized Pathway (up to 3.0) for

students. The remaining four credits are electives for students. In addition to the credit requirements, students must also complete a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP), pass required state assessments, and complete 50 hours of volunteer service to earn their high school diploma.



Source: Washington State Board of Education

HOW ARE STUDENTS BEING SUPPORTED IN MEETING THE NEW REQUIREMENTS?

The University Place School District has been preparing for these new requirements for students for quite some time. Administrators believe it is essential to maintain a strong academic focus and to provide support and opportunities for students to earn and recover credits they may need. Policies and procedures have been added and updated to support students with these new requirements. For exam-

ple, students can now earn proficiency credit for physical education for participation in athletics. Students can also earn credit for passing state exams in math, English, and science, and can earn credit by passing specific world language proficiency exams. Additionally, online classes have been added and expanded during the school day to help students recover failed credits. Support classes are also offered to students who need additional help specifically in ELA, Algebra 1/2, Geometry, and Algebra 3/4.

UNIVERSITY PLACE SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPPORTS AT A GLANCE

- Credit recovery opportunities through the summer achievement academy, APEX online, and J-Term
- Proficiency credit is now offered for PE, world language, math, science, and ELA
- Additional credit opportunities are offered during 0-hour and 7th-hour periods, as well as through the completion of HSBP and community service
- Regular meetings with counselors and administrators to discuss plans for students of concern

HOW ARE OUR GRADUATES PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE?

UPSD has always taken pride in the value of education and having high academic expectations. The new credit requirements provide students with the skills and knowledge they need no matter what path they pursue after their graduation. A diploma from Curtis High School with these

new, more rigorous requirements signifies that our students are prepared to directly enter the work force or military, obtain additional career training or apprenticeship, or attend a technical college, two-year, or four-year college or university.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING GIVES STUDENTS TOOLS TO SUCCEED

University Place School District is committed to developing competent and contributing citizens. This commitment is reflected in both the district's mission statement and school board policy. Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process of learning social and emotional skills that are essential in school, work, and life. This type of learning is most effective when it begins early in preschool and kindergarten and continues through high school. With SEL, students learn to manage their own behaviors and feelings, have empathy, solve problems, make responsible decisions, and maintain healthy relationships. There is strong evidence to suggest that students who participate in social emotional learning are more successful both socially and academically and better prepared to engage in learning. To this end, UPSD has invested in a social emotional learning program, curriculum, and materials. This article highlights two of our social emotional learning programs in UPSD: Second Step for grades kindergarten through eight and Character Strong for high school-aged students.

SECOND STEP

UPSD uses a research based SEL curriculum called Second Step in grades K-8. Students in these grades receive classroom lessons and activities on topics including emotion management, situational awareness, understanding feelings, empathy, and bullying prevention. Through these lessons students learn invaluable skills that help them navigate their way in school and the community. Counselors and social skills teachers at the schools deliver the program, which includes age-appropriate games, activities, and media to engage students in the learning.



Conrado Julian, Social Skills teacher at Chambers Primary, uses visual aids to engage students in a weekly social emotional learning lesson.

CHARACTER STRONG

Character Strong is the SEL curriculum geared towards grades 9-12. The program focuses on kind, positive words and actions toward others. Curtis High School staff intentionally teach and model the five competencies of the Character Strong program: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills. The eight essentials of the Character Strong program are patience, kindness, honesty, respect, selflessness, humility, forgiveness, and commitment. Those values coincide with the CHS Viking P.R.I.D.E. character traits of perseverance, respect, integrity, determination, and excellence. Each week, students and staff are presented with a different student-to-student, student-to-staff, and staff-to-student character dare at school involving these traits and values.



At top, students work on painting and construction for the spring production of *The Miracle Worker*. Above, Briony Schroeder oversees the cast read-through while set designers share the stage. Below is a scene from the fall play, *Mamma Mia!*



ACTING, SET DESIGN, COSTUME DESIGN ALL PART OF THEATER

When Briony Schroeder first started at Curtis High School, there were only two offerings: Acting and Stagecraft. Three years ago the popularity of her classes caused an expansion into three separate Stagecraft classes:

- **Lighting/Sound:** Students learn to use the control boards, use of microphones, and even sound layering.
- **Tools/Construction:** Students construct sets for productions, applying carpentry skills and use of industry tools. They also practice with projects outside of theater.
- **Cosmetology/Design:** Students receive training in traditional theater skills such as hair, makeup, and costumes, but also modern skills such as special effects and how to create old age with makeup.

Each year there are two major theater productions that are voluntary, but almost entirely run by her student actors, set builders, and lighting and sound specialists. "It allows an avenue for students to get their hands dirty," said Schroeder. "They learn best by experimentation in an environment where there are often no right or wrong answers to problems. I try to encourage collaboration and teamwork as strengths, as these productions need every moving part to work for success."



SCIENCE AND TEAMWORK AT CAMP SEYMOUR

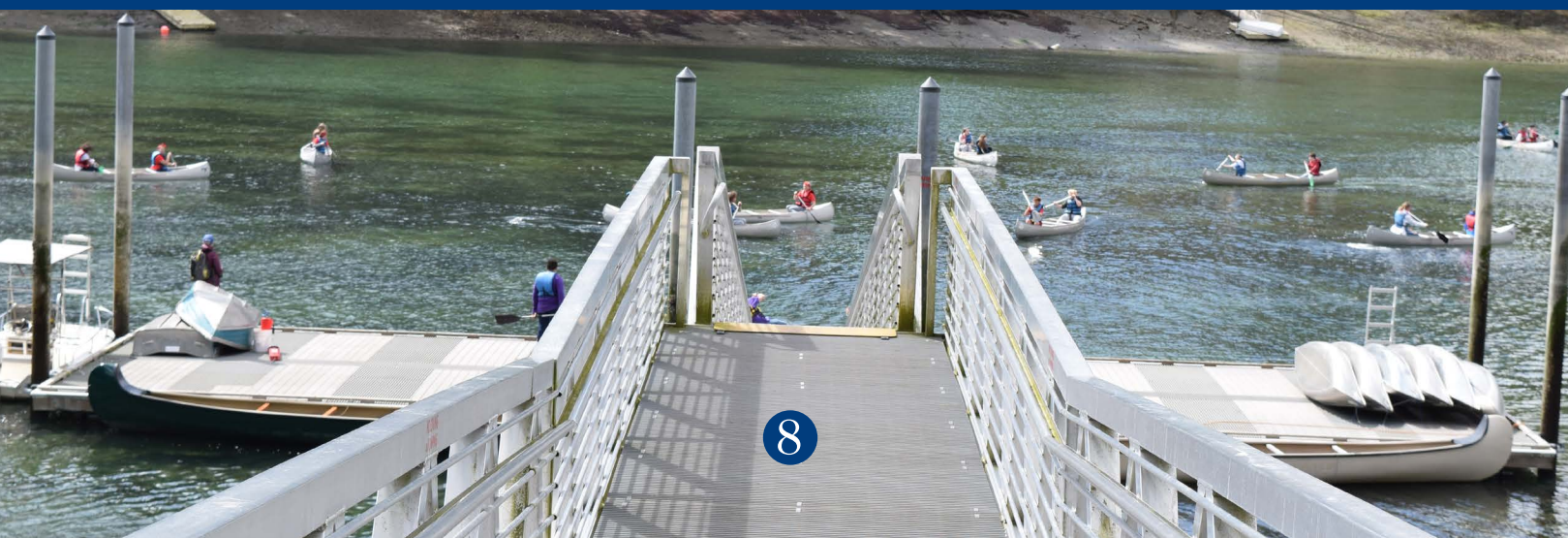
Each year, sixth-graders at UPSD intermediate schools get the opportunity to attend the overnight Outdoor and Environmental Education program at the YMCA's Camp Seymour. Its academic program is aligned with the state's Next Generation Science Standards, with experiential activities (seen in some of the pictures above) in the areas of marine science investigation, wildlife ecology, and sustainability, for example. "We teach a block about the diversity of life, culminating in this opportunity for students to see animals and ecosystems they've studied firsthand," said Dana Missel, an NVI teacher.

Besides providing a great academic opportunity, it is also an invaluable experience in many other ways, according to Narrows View Principal Jennifer Wong. Students are taken out of their routines and social structure at school and given a chance to unplug from technology, bond with their classmates, form friendships with people

they might not get to know in a school setting, and engage with the outside world in a safe space.

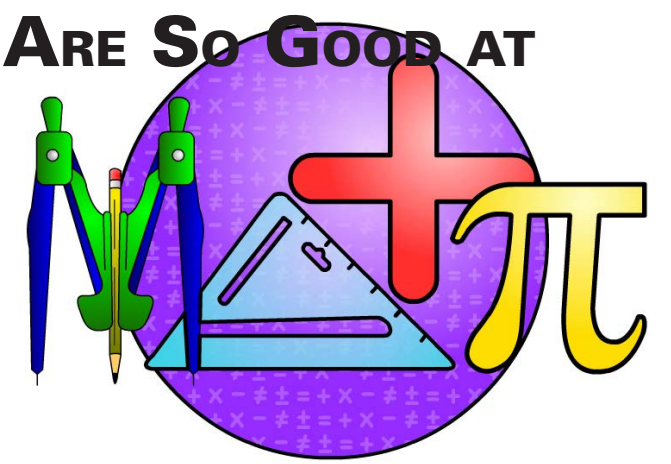
Over the course of the three-day camp, students are challenged to try new physical skills as well, learning how to canoe, complete a challenge course and climbing wall, go ziplining, and try their hand at archery. Each of these activities also serves as a bonding opportunity and team-building exercise with their cabin group, supervised by camp naturalists and Curtis High School students trained as cabin leaders.

The Intermediate PTSAs provide funding to underwrite the cost of sixth grade camp, as well as to a scholarship fund for student registration fees. Private donors also contribute to the scholarship fund throughout the year. While the school ASB contributes funding from walk-a-thons and other fundraisers to keep the cost of camp more affordable for students.



WHY UPSD STUDENTS ARE SO GOOD AT

Students in University Place School District are really, really good at math. Last year in state testing, UPSD students averaged an impressive 20.4 percentage points higher than the average students in other Pierce County Districts. High school students are averaging 57 points above the state average on the math portion of the SAT. What is the reason behind these great results? The answer is threefold:



1

RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

Starting in 2009, the district began to change the math curriculum and instructional expectations with a focus on the foundations needed for success in Algebra. Extensive review of mathematics research led to a focus on three "big ideas" to guide the work.

1. Math learning is organized and aligned between teachers and grade levels. This means teachers know what's important in their grade-level content and how it's taught in grades above and below their own.
2. Some key concepts are much more important than others. These essential concepts are vital to future learning and require more time. These include fractions, place value, and multiplication ideas.
3. Mastery of some key concepts requires much more time and practice than you might think. Just because a student can solve a problem or get a correct answer does not mean it has been permanently stored in long-term memory. Significantly more time is spent in UPSD teaching concepts that researchers have identified as needing more time for long-term storage in our kids' brains.

UPSD is home to an incredibly skilled, knowledgeable, caring, and collaborative group of teachers. It is their dedication to improving math instruction over an extended time that leads to such extraordinary results. Curriculum alignment means teachers must know more content, collaborating with teachers in grades above and below them. Early release days, summer workshops and after-school trainings allow teachers the time to do this vital work. This dedication to consistency between classrooms in math is special, and essential for high levels of learning.

SKILLED TEACHERS

2

Great teachers are also effective in helping students who struggle with math. When students are behind, they need early and targeted intervention by knowledgeable instructors. The expert teachers in UPSD are constantly working to hone their intervention skills. Many of these highly skilled teachers train others during the summer and throughout the school year to support students who struggle.

3

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

UPSD students are performing very well in math, but nobody is satisfied with current achievement levels. Good is never good enough in UPSD. It is also clear that some student groups are performing better than others. These differences cause unacceptable achievement gaps that need to close. The drive for continuous improvement leads teachers and administrators to identify where instructional and curriculum improvements are needed to help all students achieve at even higher levels.

UPSD hasn't always been this strong in math. If you look back as far as 2004-2005, you'll find that students underperformed on the SAT, and state math test scores were only slightly above average. Today, on average, UPSD mathematicians are the highest achieving students in Pierce County.



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Board of Directors
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Annie Fitzsimmons
T'wina Nobles
Marisa Peloquin
Jeff Chamberlin, *Superintendent*

SPRING CALENDAR

- May 5-11** **Teacher Appreciation Week**
- May 16-17** **Curtis High School One Act Plays, 7:00 pm**
- May 20** **CHS Honor Grad/Scholarship Night, 6:00 pm**
- May 22** **CHS Band Finale, 7:00 pm**
- May 23** **CHS Orchestra Finale, 7:00 pm**
- May 24** **Snow Makeup Day**
- May 30** **CHS Choir Finale, 7:00 pm**
- May 31** **Community Transition Program Graduation, 6:00 pm**
- June 3** **CHS Jazz Band Finale, 7:00 pm**
- June 7** **Curtis High School Graduation**
- June 19*** **Last Day of School (Half-day)**

*** The district calendar has been extended to accommodate the school closures in February due to inclement weather. May 24, the built-in snow makeup day, will be a school day. June 14 and 17-18 will be full days of school, while June 19 will be a half-day.**

Upcoming Board Meetings

- May 22** **Education Service Center (ESC) Regular Meeting**
- June 12** **Education Service Center (ESC) Regular Meeting**

Members of the public are encouraged to attend meetings of the Board of Directors.

Board of Directors Contact Information

- President Mary Lu Dickinson — mdickinson@upsd83.org**
- Vice President Ethelda Burke — eburke@upsd83.org**
- Annie Fitzsimmons — afitzsimmons@upsd83.org**
- T'wina Nobles — tnobles@upsd83.org**
- Marisa Peloquin — mpeloquin@upsd83.org**



Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin — jchamberlin@upsd83.org