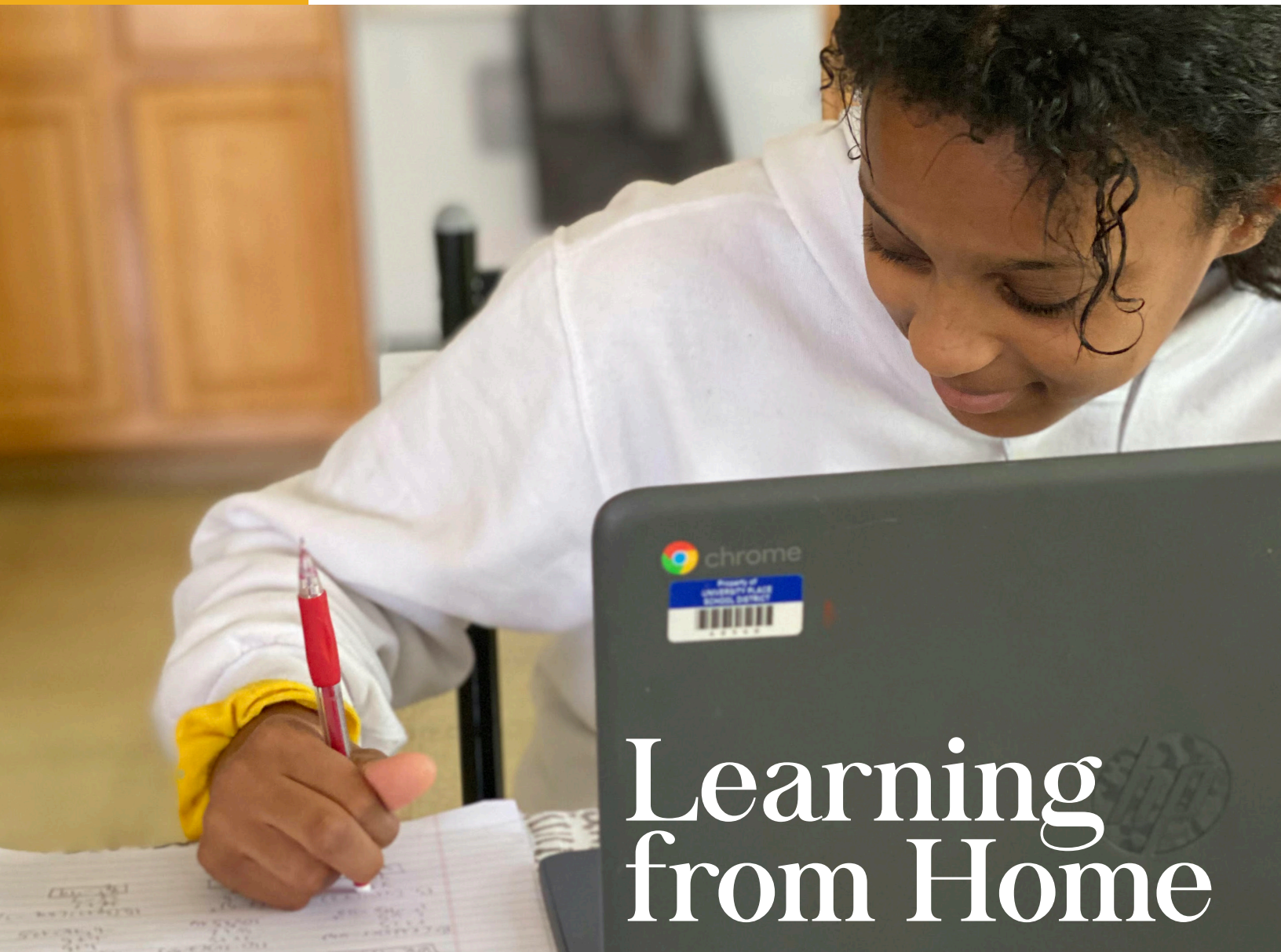


# Dialog

SPRING 2020

VOLUME 40.3

A University Place  
School District  
Quarterly Publication



## Learning from Home

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UNIVERSITY  
PLACE  
School District



# We're In This Together

*A Message from School Board President Mary Lu Dickinson*

During the Covid-19 pandemic, our community has been adjusting to the drastic changes in education and in life. The health and safety of students, families, faculty and staff remain our top priority. As you know, distance learning for the UPSD is in full swing and will continue through the end of the school year. I appreciate our teachers, staff and administration for their flexibility, positivity, and dedication during these challenging times. I also appreciate the flexibility of students and parents as we work through this situation together.

Every day brings new developments in how to address this unprecedented public health crisis. The district is here to make sure students get the education they need, families

get the meals and other support they need, and faculty and staff get the resources and support they need to provide top-quality education to our students.

We can't predict what the next few months will bring, but I have never been more proud of the work being done by our dedicated educators who are committed to meeting the needs of each individual learner and putting their students' wants, needs and interests first.

The UPSD will continue to thrive well into the future with the strong and generous support of our parents and citizens who believe that education is fundamental to the success of each young person. Thank you for your support. We're in this together.

## Chambers and Narrows View Receive State Recognition Awards

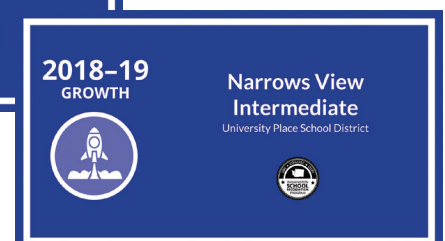
This spring, the Washington State School Recognition Program recognized 391 schools for closing gaps, demonstrating achievement, and showing growth during the 2018-19 school year.

Chambers Primary and Narrows View Intermediate were recognized for growth of different student subgroups. Chambers was recognized for growth of students identifying as Asian. Narrows View was recognized for growth of students identifying as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, students who are English learners, and students who qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Washington State Board of Education Chair Peter Maier said that the awards "recognize the outstanding efforts of our schools and their positive impact on students."

"Right now, the whole world is understanding the significance of our public schools," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal. "Public education provides each student with an opportunity for success; it's the foundation of our democracy and our society."

To learn more about why Chambers Primary and Narrows View Intermediate were recognized, and to see the data behind the recognition program, visit [www.sbe.wa.gov/schoolrecognition](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/schoolrecognition).



# Parents & Teachers Working Together During Closure



## *A Message from Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin*

I hope this issue of the *Dialog* finds you healthy and well during a very difficult time. We are sending this “spring edition” out a bit later than normal because of some last-minute changes. Originally, our feature article focused on the many clubs and after-school activities that are part of a typical year. But this year is not typical and, sadly, there are no after-school activities at the present time. We will share more about these activities when they resume next year. For now, I’m pleased to share more about the tremendous efforts of our district as we work to support students in an entirely new way.

During the last few months, our community has experienced a sudden and unprecedented shift from traditional in-person learning to a new and more challenging “distance learning” model. As you know, Governor Inslee ordered the closure of all Washington schools on March 13 to help slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus. On April 6, he announced that schools would be closed to traditional teaching and learning for the remainder of the year.

A tremendous amount of work has been taking place to ensure that we continue to provide the highest quality academic support that these unexpected circumstances allow. While this work has been much less visible to the common citizen, our staff, students and parents have been hard at work forging a partnership to deliver instruction to kids while they remain safely at home during this pandemic.

Immediately following the governor’s decision to close schools in March, UPSD leadership teams began developing plans for both a temporary and long-term closure. Food services for all UPSD families began almost immediately and a day camp was opened just one week into the closure to support the families of essential health care workers and first responders. In addition, we began efforts to shift our academic work to a remote learning format with a combination of online and “paper-packet” learning activities. This work continues today, more than two months after our doors first closed.

I encourage you to read more about the amazing efforts our staff have made to connect with and support families on pages 5-8. While we miss our students very much and eagerly await their return, I am very proud of the new systems established by our teachers and leaders in the midst of so many challenges. We have more room for growth as we “learn by doing” and I know that, with the ongoing support of this wonderful community, we will make the best of these tough times and emerge stronger and smarter.

*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](mailto:jchamberlin@upsd83.org) or call (253) 566-5600.*



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# Up Spotlights

## Alumni Spotlight: Shanley (Besett) Deal

While at Curtis High from 2001-2005, Shanley (Besett) Deal was a model student, athlete, valedictorian and leader. She continued her hard work, dedication, academic excellence, and leadership throughout college, medical school and her general surgical residency at Seattle's Virginia Mason Medical Center.

Dr. Deal played volleyball, ran on two state champion track and field teams, and was in ASB at Curtis High School. Her senior year, she initiated the CHS Athletic Hall of Fame and participates in the ongoing new member selection and induction.

Dr. Deal played Division II volleyball at Western Washington University on a full scholarship and graduated with a biology/anthropology degree. She received her medical degree from Oregon Health & Sciences University and earned many awards and published numerous articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

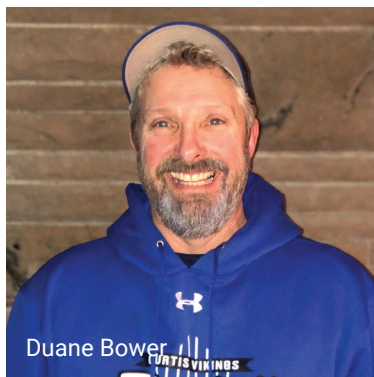
Her parents are long-time Tacoma educators Dan and Elaine Besett and she married high school teacher and coach Scott Deal. "I have a deep and enduring respect for educators," she says. "The teachers I had in U.P. remain examples to me as I become a surgical educator. I strive to model their compassion, support, drive, and ability to push learners to their potential."



Shanley (Besett) Deal



Doug  
McKinney



Duane Bower

## Faculty Spotlight: Duane Bower and Doug McKinney

The "Dynamic Duo" of Duane Bower and Doug McKinney have worked together for 36 years as skilled maintenance technicians in the UPSD Auxiliary Services Department. "We are very compatible," says McKinney, "and we always work as a team to get the job done."

McKinney has worked since 1984 on building maintenance for the district. Together, the two perform a wide variety of maintenance work for UP schools, primarily plumbing, roofing, smart board projection installation and more. McKinney's areas of specialty include welding, carpentry, plumbing, glazing and locksmith services. He says he enjoys working for the district because it has good staff and good programs including academics, sports and music. But what he most likes about working for UPSD is the diversity his job brings him.

Bower lived in University Place while growing up and attended UP schools. After graduating from Fort Steilacoom Community College with an associate degree, he earned his boiler certification from Bates Technical College. During and after high school, he worked in construction until he was hired at UPSD in 1982 as a skilled maintenance technician. Bower says he and McKinney work well together because "we have lots of experience between the two of us. If one of us can't fix it, the other one usually can."

## Student Spotlight: Shane Ok



Shane Ok

An extraordinary second grader at Sunset Primary is seven-year-old Shane Ok. Shane persevered through obstacles since he was three-and-a-half when he was diagnosed with stage four, high-risk neuroblastoma. He has high-pitched hearing loss due to fighting the cancer and uses adaptive tools like hearing aids and a microphone system for his teacher.

During the last few months of his treatment in 2017, Shane started preschool at Sunset Primary. After treatment, Shane needed physical and speech therapy to relearn skills and gain strength. "His physical therapist, Lisa Snyder, was instrumental in helping him graduate from that service," says Shane's mom

Krista Ok. "He is still thriving and making big improvements in speech therapy (his hearing loss caused speech deficits), and we hope that someday, he will graduate from that as well," she adds.

Shane was declared in remission prior to entering kindergarten. Through all this, he has stayed at his academic grade level, advocates for his hearing needs, and enjoys being a second grader.

Shane is in Engineering for Kids, takes swim lessons, plays baseball, and is active in cub scouts. He helped raise almost \$3000 for cancer research at Seattle Children's Hospital through a coin drive at Sunset and inspired a blood drive that benefitted 76 people in the community.

## Community Partner Spotlight: UP Police Department

We're grateful for and pleased to recognize the University Place Police Department (UPPD) as an important community partner for UP schools. The UPPD assigns a School Resource Officer to the district full-time. Dedicated to the schools for the academic year, the officer provides a uniformed presence and works with school security staff, teachers, and administrators to address safety and security issues. The UPPD is also a resource for UPSD on student and staff personal safety and violent incident response procedure training.

"There are many components to a safe community," says UP Chief of Police Greg Premo. "A well-staffed police department to patrol the area and readily respond to incidents is certainly a factor," he says. The school district also fosters a sense of safety in the community says the chief. "I believe UPSD nurtures a sense of belonging and pride in this community for its students and staff, and the district administrators value partnering with the city to provide the best service possible," he says. "Through this commitment to our community and the continued partnership, we can directly impact safety in our city."

The chief encourages University Place residents to sign up for the city's e-newsletter that he frequently uses as a platform to share messages: <http://www.cityofup.com/HeadlinesSignUp>



UP police work with school security staff, teachers and administrators to address safety and security issues.

# District Responds to Pandemic with New Strategies for Learning & Support

## Our Commitment to Families Has Never Been Stronger

As the coronavirus (Covid-19) reality evolves and forces changes in all of our lives in ways we could never have imagined, we are reaching out to update you on our response and how we continue to support students, parents and the community through this period.

The health and safety of our students, staff and community is our highest priority and UPSD is closely monitoring the spread of the virus. We are adhering to guidance from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the State Department of Health, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, and Governor Jay Inslee.

## Your Efforts Make UPSD Great

*"I love the support you and your staff are giving our students. Please pass along my gratefulness to your team over their hard work and adaptability. Your efforts are what makes the UP School District so great!" - UP Parent*



## Dedicated to Helping All Students

District staff and our parent partners have shown tremendous patience, flexibility and creativity as they have adapted to new roles and new work. Teaching remotely creates serious issues of equity and fairness as some kids are better able to learn at home than others. We are committed to helping all students get connected and keep learning.

## Amazing Commitment of Teachers and Staff During School Closures

On March 13, 2020, Governor Inslee announced that schools throughout the state would close due to the dangers of the Covid-19 virus. UPSD staff jumped into action. While schools may look empty, an incredible amount of work and communication is happening behind the scenes to bring learning into homes using email, video conference technology, teacher websites, regular mail, phone calls and more. The commitment, flexibility, talent and ingenuity of our teaching and support staff have been amazing.

## Nothing But Impressed

*"I continue to be nothing but impressed with your staff. They are doing such a good job. They keep connecting with kids, teaching from afar and are keeping the kids engaged. Thank you for all of your hard work. I appreciate all that you and your teachers are doing for our kids. You guys are the best." - UP Parent*

## Food for Kids

While school closures may be necessary to slow the spread of the virus, they can adversely affect both parents, who might have to take off work to care for their child, as well as students. Those who rely on school meals for breakfast and lunch are especially harmed by school closures.

On Monday, March 16, the district began a food service program at four schools for families to pick up two

meals a day for students—breakfast and lunch. To ensure safety, we are using a “grab and go” system where meals are handed to students as they wait in their cars. We served about 800 meals on the first day. Today, we have thirteen sites up and running and are serving nearly 2,000 meals a day to our kids. Nine buses transport food to locations around the community in addition to service provided at UPP, Evergreen, Chambers and Narrows View Intermediate.

## Caring for Children of First Responders/Health Care Workers

On Monday, March 23, the district started a day camp program for the children of first responders and health care workers to make sure that these vital workers were free to report to work where they are so needed during the crisis. Many activities are done throughout the day that are fun and educational. The camp is organized to maximize

social distancing. A nurse is on site every day and temperatures are taken at check-in to make sure everyone is healthy and safe. Kids work on art and science projects, play outside, and eat breakfast and lunch.

## Teaching from Afar: Distance Learning & Academic Support

The largest endeavor during these challenging times is our distance learning program. Teachers began working and planning immediately to learn new skills for delivering instruction and providing academic support at a distance. Using a variety of technologies such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Screencastify, Jamboard and others, teachers are connecting with kids, sharing lessons, and engaging students in learning activities daily.

These include convening small groups or whole classrooms of kids virtually, sharing educational videos created by UPSD teachers, and teaching online lessons for students to watch. District leaders developed online

trainings for teachers during the first week out of school focused on new technologies to use for distance learning. Many teachers took the lead on their own to learn how to use technology to support remote instruction and then taught colleagues how to use these tools.

In addition to online work, thousands of work packets have been created by teachers, district leaders and support staff. These packets contain targeted learning activities and have been mailed to homes (or picked up at educational “drive thrus” by parents). The packets provide additional support to students and connect to the online work that teachers are doing.



## 2,000 Chromebooks Loaned to Families

The first step in making distance learning work was to help all UPSD families get connected to quality internet and to make sure they had the technology tools for students to complete work and connect. Local support of schools

in the form of technology levies over the last several years has allowed the district to purchase Chromebooks for instructional use. To date, nearly 2,000 Chromebooks have been checked out to families who need them.

## Helping Families Get Quality Internet

District staff also collected data on students to see who needed help with an internet connection. The schools and district staff have helped connect families to resources available within the community for affordable internet access, says Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Jeff Loupas. "Many families are unaware of available resources and some resources are difficult or complicated to access. We are here to partner with families to remove barriers and help guarantee educational opportunities for all."

The district purchased and activated more than 100 "hotspots" for family use. More than 95% of students have a confirmed internet connection and we continue to work with those families who don't.



## Maximizing Flexibility and Maintaining Sense of Community

"Because our goal is to maximize flexibility for families, these videos can be viewed at any time and are intended to require as little at-home support as possible," says University Place Primary Principal Willie Keith. "Teachers are also participating in virtual small and whole group

meetings with students and families to provide additional direction and feedback to students as well as to maintain a sense of connectedness and classroom community," he explains.

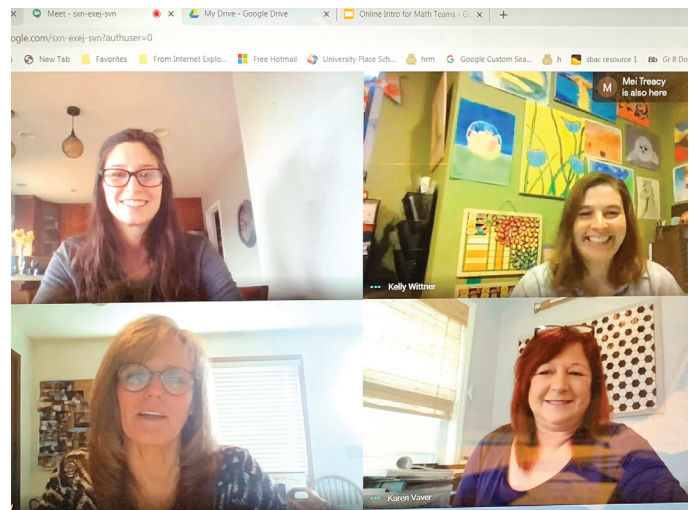
## Teachers Collaborate to Share Ideas and Successes

To plan the best quality learning possible, and to make sure that students are learning in an organized, systematic way, administrators and teachers are working together regularly using the Google Meet video conferencing tools to share lessons and ideas, make plans, and share

successes. Teams of teachers meet to plan lessons and to determine what content is most important to teach during the school closure. At some grade levels and in some content areas, teachers make videos of instructional activities and then share them for use by colleagues.

## How to Keep Students Engaged

When asked how teachers are keeping students engaged with distance learning, Keith adds, "Foremost, we are providing quality, accessible materials that are intended to reduce the burden on families to teach from home. We are also creating regular opportunities for students to engage directly with teachers and other classmates to maintain critical personal relationships." For those families who require more help during this challenging time, "we also have a team of dedicated certificated teachers providing additional one-on-one support," adds Keith.





## Seniors on Track to Graduate Will Do So

This closure is hard on everyone, but hardest on seniors. The State Board of Education passed emergency rules to allow waivers to ensure that all seniors on track to graduate before closure will be able to do so. The district is working to plan activities (allowable and safe) to honor seniors such as yard signs, a virtual graduation ceremony, graduation photos with cap and gown and a community celebration tour when diplomas are handed out.

The State Board of Education passed emergency rules to allow waivers to ensure that all seniors on track to graduate before closure will be able to do so.

Seniors and other students earned grades up to the point of school closures. These students will not be allowed to fail classes or receive no credit due to the closure. They can improve grades from the point of closure, but not fall back. Student support teams at Curtis High School are connecting with students – senior by senior – to help make sure they graduate, and their futures are unharmed by this unprecedented and unexpectedly sudden closure.



## Allowed Kids to Have Smooth Transition

*"Your staff seemed to transition to this change so seamlessly, making it all look so easy, when I know what a challenge it is. The phone calls, class meets, small group meets, video lessons – it's all been very helpful and allowed the kids to have a smooth transition."*

- UP Parent



## No Matter What Happens, We Will Be Ready for Fall

We realize our families are dealing with many challenges including food security, employment concerns, childcare, and the shared focus on ensuring our students' social/emotional and academic needs are met. We know that the trauma caused by the extended closure of our schools and the impact of being separated from treasured friends and teachers will have an impact.

It is not clear what school will look like this fall. We hope to be back to in-person learning at that time as there is simply no substitute for in-person education. However, if we are not able to come back right away, our team will continue to serve students at a distance and support families by providing meals, technology, learning and educational resources.

# English Language Arts Curriculum Improves Reading Comprehension

**CKLA™**  
Core Knowledge  
**LANGUAGE ARTS**

Zach Moore teaches 5th grade English language arts and social studies at Narrows View Intermediate. When he first started teaching and saw that Don Quixote, Renaissance literature, and one of Shakespeare's plays were part of the 5th grade English language arts curriculum, he thought

the advanced content would be overwhelming for his students. But because of the district's Core Knowledge® Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum, he found that the students were very well prepared for higher-level content.

## *Students Well Prepared*

The CKLA program provides students with background about history and literature in a meaningful progression and "builds students' background knowledge in a way that prepares them to tackle and really enjoy these difficult texts," says Moore.

"When we begin the Renaissance unit," he explains, "students already have background about Ancient Rome

and Greece and early democracy, which allows them to understand how these early civilizations inspired the Renaissance." But what he says is always exciting is "when the class starts a new unit and students' eyes get huge and all the hands in the room go up and they want to share all that they have learned about the topic from previous grade levels."

## *A Rigorous, Content-Rich Curriculum*

Core Knowledge® Language Arts is a content-rich, research-based curriculum for teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking. It builds students' knowledge and vocabulary in literature, history, geography and science and provides a systematic approach to learning that's consistent across classrooms and schools throughout the district. The curriculum is organized so topics across subject areas build on one another to broaden and deepen students' knowledge and skills. This wide array of subject matter enables strong reading comprehension and critical thinking—the keys to educational success.

## *Research-Based Curriculum*

Research emphasizes that the ability to be a critical and strategic reader depends on having a wide breadth of knowledge and related vocabulary. While reading comprehension strategies can be helpful, the less the reader knows about the topic at hand, the less he or she will grasp. Building broad background knowledge and vocabulary to build strong comprehension are the core premises of CKLA's philosophy.



## *Sequenced Progression*

Knowledge builds on knowledge. Children learn new knowledge by building on what they already know. For this reason, the Core Knowledge® sequence provides a clear outline of content to be learned grade by grade. This sequential building of knowledge helps ensure that students enter each new grade ready to learn.

# Students Use CKLA Curriculum Remotely

During the school closure, students in second through fifth-grade continue to use the CKLA curriculum—but remotely. Teachers have mapped out the content students need most to acquire during the closure and are selecting the texts, question and writing assignments based on this map.

## How to Help Students Build Academic Background Knowledge

Adults can help children build academic background knowledge related to science, nature, art, history, geography and other subjects at home by:

1. Encouraging students to read non-fiction or “informational” texts
2. Watching educational videos on the computer or television about non-fiction topics
3. Helping students access “online museums”
4. Talking with students about all of these experiences and helping them learn the meaning of new words. The more students know about these subjects, the better readers they will become.

### Aligned with State Standards

The CKLA curriculum is sometimes confused with the Washington State K-12 Learning Standards says Director of Teaching and Learning Angie Franklin. “This is a curriculum in and of itself and aligns well with the Common Core State Standards for English language arts,” she says. What is significant, she adds, is that “it allows students to be increasingly more successful as they progress through the grades.”

### Implementation of CKLA

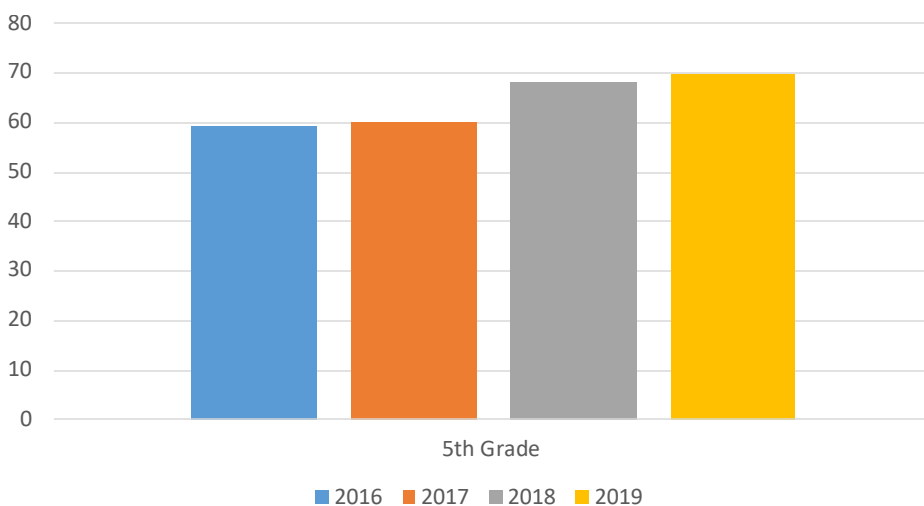
“CKLA is a significant shift from our old curriculum,” says Franklin. While the previous curriculum helped maintain students’ reading comprehension test scores at an above-average level, “we were looking for more content-based instruction,” says Franklin. The previous curriculum was based on learning isolated skills and strategies such as summarizing text or finding a main idea after reading a story.

“Research suggests that for students to comprehend text, they need background information on the text subject,” says Franklin. “Research supports that content-based curriculum is a better strategy to help students learn—especially as they progress to more complex text.”

### Reading Comprehension Scores Increasing

Results from 2016-2019 demonstrate that UPSD 5th graders have performed increasingly well every year in reading comprehension and are comprehending at higher rates than their national peers. Administrators feel these steadily increasing comprehension rates are a direct result of the implementation of the district-wide CKLA curriculum introduced in the 2015-2016 school year for students in second through fifth grade.

Reading Comprehension: End of 5th Grade Percentile Rank





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## Special 2020 Graduation Edition Coming Soon.



### Upcoming Events

- June 5** Virtual Graduation
- June 6** Senior Celebration Tour
- June 19** Last Day of School

For more information on events and the district calendar, please visit our website at [www.upsd83.org](http://www.upsd83.org)

### Upcoming Board Meetings

- June 10 at 6:30p** See website below for information & location
- July 8 at 6:30p**

**BOARD MEETINGS PUBLIC & VIRTUAL:** By the order of the governor, all board meetings must be public, virtual and limited to necessary and routine business related to COVID-19 activities, for as long as the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order is in effect. Anyone wishing to join a meeting on conference call, please contact Courtney Ydstie at (253) 566-5600 or via email at [cydstie@upsd83.org](mailto:cydstie@upsd83.org).

For additional information and location, please visit: [www.upsd83.org/school\\_board/meeting\\_schedule](http://www.upsd83.org/school_board/meeting_schedule)



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