

Dialog

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A University Place
School District
Quarterly Publication



Phasing In Hybrid & In-Person Learning

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LEARN MORE ON WHAT UPSD IS DOING TO TRANSITION OUR STUDENTS TO IN-PERSON LEARNING AND HOW WE ARE TAKING EVERY PRECAUTION FOR SAFETY.

District Efforts to Uproot Systemic Racism



A Message from School Board President Rick Maloney

“Proactive people focus their efforts in the circle of influence. They work on the things they can do something about.”

- Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Over the past year, we have gone through a roller-coaster as a community and as a nation. Thank you for your resilience and support to students as we continue to face multiple challenges. We acknowledge with gratitude the many sacrifices made by families and staff to assure a sense of continuity in our education program. As a district, we faced a shutdown, then a sudden shift to an online world for which few were ready.

As a society, we reopened wounds and relearned lessons that many thought had been learned about race and the debilitating effects of systemic factors on racial justice. Our board has spoken out about these challenges in our statement on racial equity and our commitment going forward, but there remains much to be done if our words are to be translated into long-lasting results. In the long run, we will be judged, not by our words, but by our actions and the results of those actions. We are aware of the difference between global feel-good statements and results obtained in our own community by working on those things we can do something about.

A critical step in helping short-term good intent lead to long-term results is to draw our own circle of influence around those things. They include taking a good look in the mirror to determine how our current policies, programs, and practices are helping – or hindering – all students to become competent and contributing citizens in a changing world. District staff have been hard at work putting our commitments into action over the last 10 months. This work is shared in greater detail on page 9 – but it’s only a start.

We look forward to a hybrid of online and in-school classes, then to a more complete program of face-to-face teaching and learning. The board is committed to refining and maintaining a stable vision of the destination we have set for students, and enduring values that guide everything we do to get there. We are committed to following up our statement on racial equity with a

series of conversations within the community, that will inform our voice and ensure we remain proactive.

We take full responsibility for district efforts to uproot systemic racism wherever it might exist. Our goal is to contribute to making this country a “more perfect union” –doing all we can within our community to improve the education of every student entrusted to our care. We will not allow ourselves to be distracted by that which we cannot control. Instead, we will focus our energy on national goals within our own circle of influence—the local school system. Please join us for the first of our equity listening sessions, scheduled for March 24, 2021. (For details, visit www.upsd83.org.)



Kindergarten Registration Open

If your child will turn five on or before August 31, 2021, you can now register your child online for kindergarten for the 2021-22 school year. Early registration is encouraged. Visit www.upsd83.org and look for registration under the “Family Resources” tab.

If you don’t have access to a computer, call the district office at (253) 566-5600.

Learning Matters, for Students & Ourselves

A Message from Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin



Learning matters. At UPSD this belief has consistently been central to everything we do. Student learning matters most of all, but this goal can only be achieved when adults commit to learning, too. Efforts made by UPSD leaders, board members, teachers, paraeducators and support staff to learn, grow and adapt -- in service to our kids -- have been impressive and essential. Here is some of what we've learned in the last year:

First, and most importantly, we've learned about the science of the coronavirus and how to protect ourselves and others from getting sick. This learning allows us to safely bring students and staff back together for in-person learning. Staff have been working on site all year and we've been serving small groups of learners in all of our schools since October. During this time, we were able to implement safety protocols with great success. Students are now back in grades K-7 and students at Curtis Junior and Senior High will soon follow. We've learned to deliver remote instruction consistently and equitably using Chromebooks, hotspots, Google Meet and Google Classroom technology. More than 4,500 Chromebooks have been put into service for online instruction. This learning allowed us to offer a fully online program for all UPSD students with daily attendance rates above 95%. We've also learned to deliver this instruction effectively by applying the science of learning to an online environment using new online tools. These new resources allow us to engage kids in the best remote instructional practices possible. Nothing compares to in-person learning, but the commitment made by UPSD staff to quickly learn methods to support high-quality remote instruction is noteworthy.

We've also learned that each of us has important work to do to promote racial equity and eliminate racism in our schools and community. Our predominantly white work force now serves a majority non-white student body. We know that we must strive to learn more about how to best serve our students. UPSD staff have engaged in multiple equity literacy training sessions with more to come. In addition to these formal, required trainings, staff at nearly every school have convened book and discussion groups to learn more about how to better serve families of color.

All this learning has served our students well under difficult circumstances. Our collective commitment to ongoing learning and continuous improvement will remain both a critical value of our organization and a benefit to students well into the future.

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 or call (253) 566-5600.



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Up Spotlights

Alumni Spotlight: Morgan Weaver

From the Curtis Vikings to the WSU Cougars to the professional Portland Thorns Football Club, success has followed Morgan Weaver (CHS 2016) throughout her soccer travels. After leading the Viks to three South Puget Sound League championships and four consecutive WIAA state tournaments, Morgan committed to WSU to continue her outstanding career at the collegiate level. The commitment of one of the South Puget Sound League's most decorated players in history became the foundation for the Cougar women's soccer success for the past half decade.

The four-time SPSL all-star, three-time *News Tribune* All-Area Player of the Year, and senior season All-State MVP became the cornerstone of the Cougar's offense for four seasons on the Palouse. Morgan scored 43 goals and tallied 12 assists while starting 85 games and becoming a permanent fixture on All-PAC-12 teams throughout her career. A four-year starter, Morgan led the Cougars to three NCAA tournaments, and in her final year, a first-ever Cougar trip to the College Cup – the women's soccer version of the Final Four.



Morgan Weaver,
Professional Soccer
Player

Morgan was rewarded for her outstanding college career when the Portland Thorns selected her with the 2nd overall pick in the 2020 NWSL draft making her the second highest draft selection in the history of Cougar athletics. Morgan made her professional debut in the Thorns' NWSL Challenge Cup opener against North Carolina in June 2020. She appeared in nine games with six starts and has quickly become one of the bright spots on the Thorns' young roster. Congratulations Morgan on all your accomplishments. Vikings everywhere are proud of you and wish you well in your professional career.



Greg Fisher

Staff Spotlight: Greg Fisher

A PE teacher at Drum Intermediate for 11 years, Greg Fisher teaches health and fitness education to 5th, 6th, and 7th graders. "I truly enjoy having the opportunity to have a positive impact on almost every student who comes to Drum," he says. As a PE teacher, Fisher says he has the opportunity to "demonstrate, encourage and inspire the kids to see the joy and benefit that comes from being physically active."

But what makes Fisher stand apart, says Drum Principal Maile Carr, is that "He is the epitome of a team player." During the district's online/remote learning, Fisher has been giving PE lessons online to both Drum and Narrows View students. Check out one of his YouTube videos here: <https://tinyurl.com/y3pjpcwg>.

Carr says he has taken on his new role as this year's 5-7th grade district PE teacher with positive energy and grace. "I have received countless positive remarks from parents and other staff members about his lessons because he makes staying active fun and entertaining," she says. "UPSD is lucky to have him as a member of the team and I am thankful I get to work with him."

Student Spotlight: Sara Feltamo & Sarah Newland



Sara Feltamo

Two CJH students are demonstrating strong leadership and a commitment to making their world a better place by helping form a Black Student Union club at the junior high to complement the BSU club at Curtis Senior High School.

Sara Feltamo: Curtis Jr. High freshman honors student Sara Feltamo is President of the school's Black Student Union (BSU). Formed last summer during the the Black Lives Matter protests, "The BSU is made up of black students who need a safe place to talk about their personal issues about race," says Sara. Sara's learned to create a community and be a leader. "School can be tough, especially if you do not fit in, like being black in a majority white school. That's why I make an effort to help my peers feel comfortable in their own skin," she says.



Sarah Newland

Sarah Newland: Sarah Newland has a busy schedule. A four-year freshman honor student with a 4.0 GPA, she plays soccer for CHS and for the Washington Premier Football Club. She's also Vice President of the Black Student Union (BSU). The BSU was created to "bring awareness and educate each other, our teachers and our community about current issues facing the black community," she says. BSU is led by black students and is open for anyone to join.

"The goals of BSU are to make a change in our community and society as a whole," she continues. "The club grows and learns together, and we hope to educate our classmates and staff as well. I think BSU at Curtis Junior High is necessary for our community. Change starts now, in our schools, and with this generation. We need to be the change," she says.

Community Partner Spotlight: HopeSparks

UPSD has been privileged to work with the staff at HopeSparks (www.hopesparks.org) for many years. An early intervention service provider, HopeSparks' programs serve children and families in Pierce County who face trauma, abuse, and overwhelming life challenges.

Its Children's Developmental Services division provides early intervention for children birth to three years old with developmental delays or disabilities. Services include: family resource coordination, infant and early childhood mental health, occupational therapy, physical therapy, specialized instruction, and speech language therapy. Lou Olson, Director of Children's Developmental Services, says, "Our goal is to help infants and toddlers be active and successful during their early childhood years as well as in the future." HopeSparks' Family Resource Coordinators work with UPSD's preschool transition team and families to transition children to preschool who may qualify for the district's special education services. The district's developmental preschool is at Sunset Primary.



Ideally the transition team starts this work nine months before a child turns three. "The coordination of transition meetings with HopeSparks is incredibly important to establish strong, trusting, and positive relationships with families right from the start," says Amy Royster, UPSD's Assistant Director of Special Services. "These are our youngest students and are often our most impacted." Sybille White, Lead Family Resource Coordinator at HopeSparks agrees. "During the first three years, it's important for us to give parents the tools and advice they need to support their children for years to come. Some families will need services for the rest of their lives."

UPSD Phasing in Hybrid, In-Person Learning...

Primary Students Were First to Come Back

“We were so excited to have our youngest learners back on campus,” said Sunset Primary Principal Steve Hagen when asked what it was like having some of his kindergarteners back in school. Although small groups of students in all grade levels had been attending in-person classes since October, kindergarteners were the first full grade level of students to start in-person instruction on February 2. Some of them came back to school for two-and-a-half hours Monday-Fridays in groups of up to 15 students. About 60% opted to return to school for hybrid, in-person learning, and 40% remain at home in online school.



Transition to Hybrid, In-Person Learning

The transition to a hybrid, in-person learning model by kindergarteners was followed by other grade levels in the following weeks. Hybrid learning is a mix of in-person and online instruction. Since the beginning of the school year, most UPSD students had been learning at home except for some special needs students and those unable to connect to learning from home.

State Guidance Creates Opportunities to Return Students to School

The decision to start bringing students back to school was based on revised guidance issued in December by Governor Jay Inslee and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). The changes are based on new science about transmission of COVID-19 in schools from local, national and global sources. The revised guidance created new opportunities for gradually returning students to school on a part-time basis for in-person learning with close attention to key safety procedures to keep everyone safe.

Forty Percent Opt to Remain Fully Remote

UPSD students did not have to return to school for in-person learning. About 40% of parents opted to remain in the fully remote model for the rest of the school year. Based on Washington State DOH guidance, the district gradually phased in students back to school for in-person learning—starting with the youngest students.

Back-to-School Timeline

Using a phased approach with staggered start dates, kindergarteners, first and second graders started back to school in February. Third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh graders are starting back to school this month. As of the *Dialog* publication date, the district was still planning specifics for a phased-in approach for eighth through 12th graders.

The Hybrid Model: Part-Time, In-Person Learning



Primary and Intermediate Students

K-7th grade students attend in-person school for 2.5 hours in the morning or afternoon every day, Monday-Friday in cohorts of up to 15 students. In-person, students attend their English Language Arts (ELA), math, and homeroom classes. These students attend a science or social studies class online.



8th-12th Grade Students

Students will attend in-person school two full days (6 classes) per week – either Monday and Thursday or Tuesday and Friday. The model is a blend of in-person and online learning and includes athletics and activities.

“We are excited to return all students to campus who want to come back this year. Many families are choosing to stay in the remote learning model and we are pleased to be able to offer that model, too. The efforts of UPSD staff to provide two entirely new learning models in the same year – at the same time – has been amazing to watch and be part of,” says Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin.

Continued on next page

Planning in the Works for Months

UPSD has been planning for a return to in-person learning in a hybrid model for some time. Planning focused on extensive safety protocols to keep staff and students safe at school. Even last fall, the district was serving small groups of students in-person and was able to implement safety measures successfully. New data from the state, and from across the nation, shows that these rigorous safety measures do limit the transmission of COVID-19 in the school environment even when case rates in the community are high.



Back to School Dates

Kindergarten – February 2
 1st Grade – February 16
 2nd Grade – February 22
 3rd & 4th Grade – March 1
 5th Grade – March 1
 6th Grade – March 8
 7th Grade – March 15
 8-12th Grade – March 22-29



The Hybrid Model:

Part-Time, In-Person Learning (Continued)

Student and Staff Safety Measures for In-Person Learning



Face coverings (masks) are required for students and staff. The school provides masks for students who forget or don't have one.



Daily health screenings help monitor wellness and keep sick kids at home.



Physical distancing is required inside the classroom and outside (when possible).



Students are kept in small cohorts (15 or less) wherever possible to reduce mixing and increase spacing.



Additional cleaning and disinfecting is done daily.



Ventilation systems have been adjusted to increase airflow and improve filtration.

A Giant Puzzle with Moving Parts

Adjusting to the year of a pandemic has been a giant puzzle with many moving parts says Executive Director of Primary Education Becky Owens. "But we continue to learn what an excellent community we have in our staff and in our families," she says. "We will continue to learn through this process of school during a pandemic. There are more shifts and discoveries to be made at every turn."

Safety and Well-Being of Students & Staff is First Priority

"Thank you to our parents and the wider University Place community for your incredible patience and support this year. We've had to adapt to constantly changing circumstances and this has been a challenge for everyone, says Chamberlin. "Through it all, the safety and well-being of students and staff has remained our first priority."



Science Changes at Junior High and High School Lead to Updated Chemistry Lab

Curtis High School is excited to announce the updating of its chemistry lab as part of several science curriculum changes at the junior high and high school. The changes include moving biology from 10th to 9th grade, and starting chemistry in 10th grade. Previously, honors freshmen who had enough math background and some juniors and seniors took chemistry. Now nearly all students may enroll in chemistry in 10th grade.

Goals to Increase Rigor & Opportunities for Higher Level Science

Two main goals for the changes are to: 1) increase the rigor for 9th graders and 2) increase students' opportunity to take higher level science in high school. "For our students' third year of science to lead to industry standards or collegiate-level courses after high school, more of them needed to take chemistry," says Assistant Superintendent Jeff Loupas.

Opening Doors for More AP Courses

Starting with the 2021-22 school year, Loupas says, "Nearly every student will have enough math and have finished biology by tenth grade. That drastically increases the number who can take chemistry and higher level courses their junior and senior years." This also opens the doors for more Advanced Placement (AP) and college credit-bearing courses he says.



Project Funding

Strong support from the UP community made adding new chemistry labs possible. Funds made available by the district's capital projects levy were used to pay for the upgrades. These improvements to the CHS facility will serve kids well for many years.

Safer, Accessible Spaces

Chemistry Teacher Tess Goodnight is pleased with the new chem lab. "The science curricula we have adopted are supported by engagement in laboratory-based, hands-on activities. The updates to several science classrooms at Curtis High School have built safer, accessible spaces for all types of curricula and student experiments," she says. "I am excited to see the work these students will do and the learning they will gain in these new facilities when we return to in-person learning."

Updates at Jr. High and New Chem Labs at High School

Loupas expects the number of students taking chemistry to more than double next year compared to previous years. Accommodating more chemistry students led to updating resources and lab equipment at the junior high and building new labs at the high school. Chemistry labs require better/specific infrastructure (plumbing, gas, ventilation, chemical showers, etc.). Although there are two modern, existing chemistry-ready labs available at the high school, "That's not enough for the new influx of students," says Loupas.

Supporting More Students

"By next year, we will end up with two completely up-to-date chemistry labs and the infrastructure to support as many students as want to take chemistry or higher level science courses," he says. "We also anticipate that this change will increase AP enrollment in science and physics, and that we will need to expand offerings for higher level science in the years to come."

► Curriculum Changes

- Moved biology from 10th grade to 9th grade
- Nearly all students may now complete chemistry in 10th grade (previously, less than half of our students could enroll in Chemistry prior to 11th grade)

► Results

- Increases rigor for 9th graders
- More science access to all students at a higher level of rigor
- Students have more options for third year of science (AP courses)
- Anticipate increased AP enrollment in science and physics
- Anticipate number of students taking chemistry to more than double

► Chem Lab Updates

- Increased square footage in 2 classrooms
- ADA-compliant lab station tables
- Improved infrastructure for gas & water
- SmartBoards
- Ventilation hoods for chemical safety
- Chemical showers
- Eyewash stations
- Fire blankets/extinguishers

UPSD School Board Member T'wina Nobles Elected to State Senate



Congratulations to twice-elected UPSD School Board member T'wina Nobles who was elected to the Washington State Senate representing the 28th legislative district in the November general election. The 28th district includes University Place, Fircrest, Lakewood and Dupont. When she assumed office on January 11, 2021, Nobles became the first black legislator elected to the senate in 10 years.

Nobles is a leader in the Lakewood/Tacoma community with more than fifteen years of experience as an educator, school board member, and PTA activist. In kicking off her bid for the state senate, Nobles laid out her vision for the 28th district. She pledged to fight for safe and healthy communities, strong schools, transportation solutions, and housing affordability. "My career has been devoted to helping students prepare for college and career," Nobles said.

Racial Equity Initiatives Expanding & Changing

Much has been accomplished over the past decade to advance racial equity in UPSD. But there is more work to do. Fighting racism, building deeper understanding, and making schools more representative and inclusive is more important and more urgent than ever. UPSD is committed to improving racial equity.

School Board Policy & Development

The School Board is committed to ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education in an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. The UPSD board published a statement on racial equity last fall (www.tinyurl.com/2m7gxbp7) citing beliefs and making commitments to the community. The board hired consultant Erin Jones to provide board-level professional development and discussion around race, social justice, and the foundation of an anti-racist organization. They believe that increasing board members' knowledge and understanding is an important step toward leading others in this critical work. The board is seeking community input this month on racial equity, social justice and anti-racism. Following community input, the board will review district policies to ensure that racial equity is properly reflected in policies.



Staff Professional Development & Partnerships

The district is committed to ongoing professional development to strengthen each staff member's understanding of social justice, racial equity and anti-racism practices. Over the last several years, many employees have engaged in racial equity professional development activities. Additional extensive training has taken place this year and more is planned.

UPSD began implementing a comprehensive, long-term training plan to increase equity literacy last fall for all 600+ employees. The district partnered with the Equity

Literacy Institute (www.equityliteracy.org), that has helped other school districts embrace anti-racist practices and beliefs. The Equity Literacy Institute has facilitated a series of district trainings with more to come. The training includes multiple sessions for teachers, administrators, paraeducators, office staff, bus drivers and everyone who works for the district. Another partnership with the Race and Pedagogy Institute at the University of Puget Sound is focused on training staff to improve equity in curricula.

Making the Curriculum More Equitable and Inclusive

The district is committed to ensuring its curriculum is inclusive, complete, accurate and representative of the diverse student population in UP schools. The district's long-term curriculum work is grounded in the idea that students will build understanding of anti-racist ideas over multiple grade levels. Much of this work will take place in English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies coursework.

Last fall, the district made policy changes that mandate an ongoing review and evaluation of the district curriculum in terms of equity and prioritizes changes to establish a more equitable curriculum. The first content areas under review are U.S. history in grades 5, 8 and 11. Multiple teacher teams are partnering with University of Puget Sound professors to develop a common approach for evaluating curriculum.

The policy changes implemented this summer mean that students will see changes more immediately and that teachers have a method to make these changes in the long term. Teachers who identify areas in need of change or improvement may work with their administrators to

insert high-quality supplementary materials immediately, then bring these changes to the team who can make the improvements permanent.

In some ELA courses, dozens of small scale changes were identified last year and are being implemented during the current year. ELA teams at several grade levels are currently reviewing new novels that they believe will better reflect the perspectives and experiences of students of color. Students in some of these classes may try out these new resources this school year. Through these new processes, the goal is to have a continuously improving, more equitable curriculum.



District Equity Advisory Team Coordinates Efforts

The District's Equity Advisory team, established in 2017, includes classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and district administrators. The team, co-chaired by Executive Director of Secondary Education Lainey Matthews and Curtis High Assistant Principal Jackie Thomas, helps coordinate the district's efforts to monitor and evaluate student outcomes related to achievement, attendance, discipline, and program access that advance equity.

For more information on the district's Racial Equity Initiatives, visit:

https://www.upsd83.org/about_upsd/racial_equity_initiative



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Upcoming Events

- April 5-9** Spring Break
- May 3-7** Teacher Appreciation Week
- May 31** Memorial Day
- June 18** Last Day of School

For more information on events and the district calendar, please visit our website at www.upsd83.org

Upcoming Board Meetings

- March 24** Board Listening Session
- April 28** Regular Meeting
- May 12** Regular Meeting
- June 9** Regular Meeting

BOARD MEETINGS PUBLIC & VIRTUAL: All public meetings will be held virtually until further notice. Anyone wishing to join a meeting on conference call, please contact Courtney Ydstie at (253) 566-5600 or via email at cydstie@upsd83.org

For additional information or to make public comment, please visit: www.upsd83.org/school_board/meeting_schedule.

SAVE THE DATE!

The University Place School Board of Directors will be hosting a listening session on racial equity in UPSD on March 24, 2021 at 6:30 pm. This meeting will be virtual. Details and additional information can be found on the district website and on social media.



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www.upsd83.org