

Quality Tests Are Essential For Quality Schools

Each Spring students in UPSD and all around our state and nation take a number of tests to measure their knowledge and skills. Students in grades K-12 take exams for a range of reasons on a wide variety of topics between now and the end of the year. Students in grades 3-8, 10, and 11 take state SBA exams in math and English Language Arts (ELA). Students in 5th and 8th grade take state science tests, and high school biology students take an End of Course Exam.

Across grades students take other tests throughout the year to track progress in a variety of ways. Our Kindergarten, first, and second graders do not test much, but they do take a few tests that tell us which students need help to be successful in math or reading. We know that early intervention is very important and we want all kids reading on grade level by third grade at the latest.

Testing is a regular and important part of schooling, and it is critical that everyone understand how tests serve students well. The following paragraphs address a few things every citizen should know about testing in our district in 2017.

Testing is not the most important thing—but it is very important. Nothing is more important than using school time for teaching and learning, but tests can play a very important role in providing the highest quality education to our students. Tests give you, the taxpayer and citi-

zen, objective information about how well your school system is serving students academically. Most importantly, however, test results tell us how much kids are learning and who needs additional help.

Testing takes time—but not that much time. In UPSD, students spend less than three percent of their time in school taking state and district tests. Students attend school for more than 1,000 hours each year and spend less than 25 of those hours completing state and district tests. This leaves abundant time for teaching and learning and the test results help to sharpen the focus and improve the quality of that time.

Testing is an essential tool for ensuring equity and closing achievement gaps. One of the great inequities we face in education is the degree to which students of color, students with fewer financial resources, and other student groups underperform their peers academically. UPSD has long been committed to reducing and/or erasing these gaps. For this work to get done, however, we need robust assessment systems that show us who is learning and how much.

There has been much debate around the nation about the role testing should play in our schools. This is a healthy debate; however, it is important that everyone understand the absolutely essential role that appropriate, high-quality assessments play in any healthy system of education.

FOUR TYPES OF TESTS

Discussions about formal testing often lump all tests together. For teachers and administrators, the tests we give throughout the year serve four different, important purposes:

- 1 Curriculum-based assessments test the content and materials recently taught in the classroom and provide teachers feedback about how well students are learning and what to reteach. Examples of these kinds of tests include chapter or unit tests, quarterly tests, and final exams.
- 2 Nationally normed tests for reading and math tell us how well students can apply the new knowledge they are gaining in the classroom. These exams measure general knowledge and ability to comprehend text, solve problems, vocabulary levels, etc. These tests tell us whether students are gaining the knowledge they need to be successful in school long term. They also help us quickly identify students who need additional support. We currently serve over 700 students in some type of academic intervention to help them close their own learning gaps. Other nationally normed tests are designed for college placement, scholarship, or credit like the PSAT, SAT, AP, and ACT tests. These tests provide students, parents, colleges, and technical schools with information to guide post-secondary academic paths.
- 3 State-mandated tests allow us to measure students' growth over time compared to state and national peers. In addition, these tests measure the effectiveness of our local curriculum and instructional practices. They also allow us to monitor our progress in closing achievement gaps and students' trajectories toward college and career readiness.
- 4 Formative assessments are quick, in-class assessments that help teachers adjust instruction within or between lessons. These may be observations, quizzes, or strategic questions asked during or after a lesson.

We regularly assess how much testing is needed to continue increasing student academic success and to provide information to improve the district. We believe that all four of these types of assessments guide teachers, administrators, and parents in different ways to make decisions that benefit our students.



Music Programs Thriving in Schools

Years ago, the decision was made by the community and the administration to heavily support music in UPSD, and the result has been an unprecedented level of participation and achievement, according to CJH teacher and band director Craig Rine. "The level of support for the arts is what drew me to this district," said Rine. "It's really unique to have a public school, or even a private school that is this committed to music."

Dave Dickerson, who teaches and directs at CHS, agreed, while also stressing how many different areas music can help students. "I

think music tears down walls," he said. "Everyone is part of a team, and they have to learn to work with others to achieve the right sound from the group."

Students' introduction to music starts at an early age, as Kindergarten through fourth grade students have music specialists twice a week for 30 minutes, learning to read music by third grade and beginning to learn instruments and singing. They even have grade-level concerts at each school.

According to Rine, students in intermediate school have 100 percent participation in music,



The District Orchestra Festival played to a packed house at the Curtis Junior High gym. Featured were songs by the Narrows View and Drum 7th-grade orchestras, the CJH String Tech and Intermediate Orchestras, the CJH Advanced Orchestra, and the Curtis High School D.C. Orchestra.

choosing one of three areas to participate: Band, Orchestra, or Choir. They receive 40 minutes of instruction every day as part of the curriculum, and as they enter Curtis Jr. High they are already very knowledgeable.

Said Dickerson, "We love that the students coming in have such a strong foundation. By the time they get to the upper schools, they have a love for music that keeps all of our groups strong. Every year we thrive at various contests and festivals, and it's because of the overall strength of our programs." Curtis Junior High has

almost 100 students participating in choir, and more than 300 in the band and orchestra, while the high school has 130 in choir, 150 in band, and 104 in orchestra. In addition, many students participate in advanced choirs and groups, most of which require auditions and may travel to farther performances—the CHS choir sent singers to Carnegie Hall this year, while band and orchestra members traveled to Washington D.C. for a festival, garnering first place and 11 total awards.



Curtis High School Cultural Assembly Embraces Diversity

The annual assembly is a celebration of the diverse student body in University Place, featuring students, staff, and parents showing off their cultures in costumes, expressing them through music or dance, and speakers telling of their own experiences with other cultures. Above, the Fashion Show. Second row below, the theme of this year, "We Are Strong Together," and Curtis High School Principal Tom Adams speaking about his experiences in other cultures. Third row is a dance group choreographed by student Keoni Dilay that embraces differences in people, and two perform-

ers of the traditional New Zealand Haka war dance in full costume. Bottom row, a group of students perform a Korean pop dance set to current popular songs in Korea, and more members of the Fashion Show. Other highlights of the assembly included an inspirational talk by the guest speaker, Jose Gorospe, a parent of two CHS students and regional executive director of YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties, who spoke about inclusiveness and communication between people of different cultures. There were also international pieces performed by the Acapella Choir and the Jazz Band.



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Dialog

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Our Kids Come First

A Message from School Board President Michael Ehart



University Place School District is focused on the education of every child who resides in our district, regardless of their immigration status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion. This is not only our mission, but is mandated by state law. By working together with students and families, the University Place School District is striving to maintain a safe learning environment for all of our stu-

dents. Our district mission states, "The mission of the University Place School District, in partnership with our community, is to develop competent, contributing citizens." By creating policies with an eye toward all students, we are valuing the cultural, racial, and ethnic background that makes up the population of our beautifully diverse student body.

On the 15th of February, Curtis held its annual cultural assembly. As always, it featured a wide array of presentations showcasing and celebrating the diversity of our community (see the back page for more.) The assembly exposes students to the many different cultures represented in our community, and allows them to see that greatest of American dreams, as the poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty says, a place where "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" find a home, underneath the gaze of that "mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning."

In 1959, soon-to-be president John Fitzgerald Kennedy wrote in *Nation of Immigrants*, "This was the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dared to explore new frontiers, people eager to build lives for themselves in a spacious society that did not restrict their freedom of choice and action." And America today is even more diverse than that young senator from Massachusetts could ever have dreamed.

We are also divided. Much of what makes us part of the greatest nation on earth are our differences, but sometimes the debate grows more heated than perhaps it should. Many people right here in University Place are angry, afraid, and uncertain about the future.

Families sit down to conversations over the dinner table and wonder what tomorrow might bring, arguing questions of race, immigration, religion, and sexual orientation. Some of these concerns are as old as our nation. Some, almost forgotten, have gained new prominence over the last few months, where the political rhetoric of our last election season has spilled over into our daily discourse.

Our role in all of this is simple. Our district policies, state law, and—most importantly—our hearts tell us that we must ensure that students feel safe so they can come to school to learn. Teaching kids, our kids, the kids of University Place, no matter where they come from, no matter if their families have been here for generations or they arrived last week, with no regard for color, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

Our kids come first.

Upcoming Board Meetings*

May 24, 2017	ESC
June 14, 2017	ESC
June 28, 2017	ESC
July 12, 2017	ESC
August 9, 2017	ESC
August 23, 2017	ESC

* For a complete list of board meetings and topics, please visit: upsd.wednet.edu/page/32

Strong, Shared Values Drive our Work

A Message from Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin



All successful organizations engage talented and competent people using effective strategies to get the work done. More importantly, however, such organizations are driven by common values that bring meaning and purpose to that work. In UPSD, as we continue to pursue our honorable and ambitious mission of ensuring that all students grow into competent and contributing citizens, it is essential that we reflect on, recommit to, and share our core values. In UPSD, our work is guided by these essential beliefs:

- We understand that our first responsibility is to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students. We are committed to the physical and emotional safety of every child. We do everything we can to protect our students from harm—including all forms of harassment. Because not all troubles are preventable, we stand ready to help when our kids need it. The district's commitment to guidance and counseling resources, school security, and school administrators—supported by our local maintenance and operations levy—provides trained adults at every school to help kids when they encounter challenges.
- We are committed to providing a great education for every child in our community. We feel strongly that our purpose is to educate students regardless of their race, religion, home language, place of birth, citizenship, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. When conditions inside or outside of school pose extra challenges for a particular individual or group, we take action to remove these barriers so that all kids can learn and succeed. Inside school, we offer a range of academic supports to help all kids learn. These include reading and math “intervention” classes, after-school programs, online credit retrieval courses, summer school options, and other programs for students from all backgrounds. When forces outside of school impact our kids, we work with our community partners to provide support and guidance for students and their families.
- Our schools are better because of our rich and growing diversity. We welcome students from all ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. More than 50 languages are spoken by the families of students attending our schools, and nearly one half of our student population are students of color. As our schools have become increasingly diverse, student academic performance for all groups has increased. The many cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs represented in this community combine to enhance the quality of each student's education and to better prepare our children for success in a diverse world. Our district's growing diversity makes our work—and our lives—more engaging and rewarding.

Dialog

The *Dialog* is published periodically by the University Place School District for University Place residents and businesses. UPSD complies with all federal and state laws, rules, and regulations and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin (including language), sex, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, creed, religion, age, veteran or military status, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability in student education programs, co-curricular activities, and employment practices. The district is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer encouraging application of qualified minorities, women, and disabled persons for employment and other opportunities. University Place School District is committed to providing access to all district programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For elevator access at school sites, contact the principal's office. The University Place School District is a drug-free/smoke-free work place and educational setting. Direct inquiries regarding compliance, grievance, or appeal procedures, or concerns involving students, should be made to the District Affirmative Action Officer/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator/ Title IX Officer/HIB Compliance Officer, Executive Director of Secondary Education, Lainey Mathews, lmathews@upsd.wednet.edu, or Section 504/FAPE/ADA concerns should be made to Director of Special Services, Maria Hetland, mhetland@upsd.wednet.edu. Both can be contacted at (253) 566-5600, 3717 Grandview Drive West, University Place, WA 98466.

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Jeff Chamberlin, *Superintendent*

These values are put to work every day in the programs and services provided to our students by caring teachers, counselors, office workers, bus drivers, kitchen workers, administrators, and teaching assistants. We will stand by these values even when they are challenged. If you are aware of families who are in need of help, please be sure to contact an administrator or counselor at your neighborhood school so that we can provide assistance. Likewise, if you hear of families who are concerned about any form of harassment or discrimination, immediately contact our district's Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator, Lainey Mathews, at lmathews@upsd.wednet.edu. Thanks for your continuing help and support.

Kindergarten Enrollment Now Open

Early enrollment encouraged for the
CLASS of 2030

Will your child be five years old on or before August 31, 2017? Sign them up now by visiting your home school. If you do not know your home school, call the district office at 253-566-5600.

To register, bring your child's birth certificate, immunization records, and proof of address/residency, such as a lease agreement or current utility bill.

New Washington State Graduation Requirements

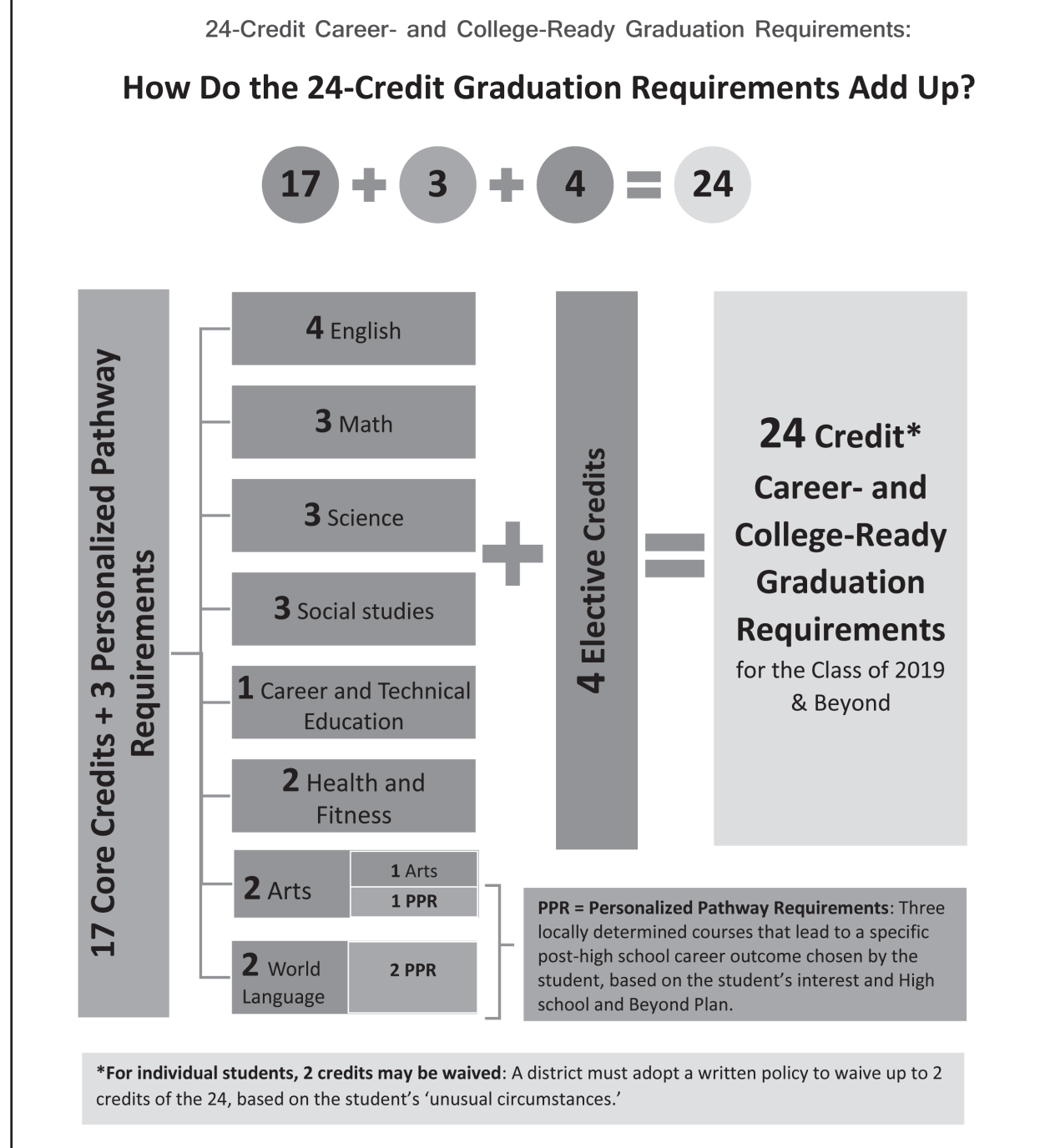
The State of Washington has established new testing and credit requirements for the class of 2019 and beyond. Designed to “prepare all students for college, career and life,” the new 24-credit framework adds two credits (the equivalent of four semesters of classes) to graduation requirements. The class of 2019 will also need to meet a set of minimum scores for the Smarter Balanced assessment system, which is aligned to both career and college readiness.

“We fully embrace the new requirements,” said Assistant Superintendent Jeff Loupas. “They will not be difficult to implement as we already have most of these standards in place for the majority of our students who are working to meet post-secondary requirements for college. Our main challenge will be assisting students who are struggling. We are adding more opportunities before and after the regular six-period day to give extra help to students who are falling behind or failing. Administrators and counselors are developing additional steps to meet individual needs, because the new standards will make it difficult to fail a class and still graduate on-time.”

According to Loupas, the state's new framework is rigorous, though it is also flexible. He points out that the state has developed the “Personalized Pathway” to accommodate students who choose a program leading to a technical certificate or degree. “We know that businesses want more career-ready students right out of high school and we want to make sure that all of our students—no matter what path they choose—are well prepared.”

The graphic at right describes the Personalized Pathway Requirements, as well as giving an overview of how the new Core 24 standards requirements work.

“The State Board's vision is of an education system that prepares all students for college, career and life. In Washington, high school students must meet credit and testing requirements. In support of this vision, the Board worked to create a 24-credit framework designed to be both rigorous and flexible. Elements of this framework are being phased in for the Class of 2016, and the full 24 credits will be required for the Class of 2019.” – OSPI Website



Local Rotary Chapter Is Strong District Partner

Tacoma Narrows Rotary Club (TNR) has a long-standing partnership with University Place School District, maintaining numerous programs and events over the years, said Executive Director of Primary Education Allison Drago. The club serves the communities of University Place and Fircrest and focuses heavily on kids and education. UPSD administrators and teachers often make requests of Rotary, and they are always willing to help.

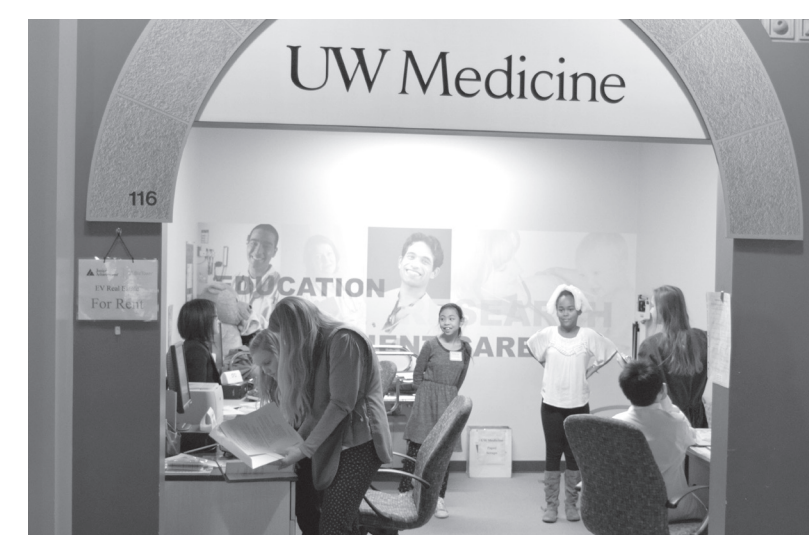
“We are very fortunate to have a community partner like Tacoma Narrows Rotary,” said Superintendent Jeff Chamberlin. “The club's tireless support of public education continues to be a great benefit to our students.” A member of the chapter himself, Chamberlin specifically pointed out their work to promote literacy in the primary grades, celebrate the achievements of junior high students, and provide scholarships to graduating seniors at Curtis High.

A recent example of the club's support of literacy is the “One School, One Book” program at UP Primary. This program provides free books to students to take home with them, encouraging family reading outside of school. “Research has shown consistently that kids with access to books outside of the home do better in school,” said Drago. You can read more about this program at readtothem.org.

TNR also supports a Student-of-the-Month program at Curtis Junior High School, recognizing students for their performance in school. Students are invited to speak at a chapter meeting every other month in front of parents and club members. One such meeting is pictured at right, as Jabez Choi and seven others were presented with certificates by the club and Curtis Junior High Principal Jayne Hofstrand. Each student is given a chance to speak about their accomplishments and future goals.



Above, Student of the Month award winner Jabez Choi speaks to the Tacoma Narrows Rotary in front of fellow awardees and Curtis Junior High Principal Jayne Hofstrand. The bimonthly ceremony is one of numerous ways the club works with the school district to support students.



Fifth-Grade Students Go to Work at Biztown

A little more than 10 years ago, Junior Achievement opened the first Biztown in Auburn, Washington, according to Auburn's director, Kathie Lambinico. Their idea was to partner with local businesses to teach students about such real-world concepts as economics, personal finance, free enterprise, and how to run a business. “Today there are 25 of them open around the country, but this was the first.”

Now in their second year participating in the program, Drum and Narrows View Intermediates use both a visit to the center and the accompanying four-week classroom curriculum to enrich their fifth-grade students' academics. “J.A. Biztown is an excellent opportunity for our students to learn about the free enterprise system,” said Narrows View Principal Jennifer Wong. “They spend weeks studying the principles of business and developing their skills in teamwork, leadership, and customer service. It culminates in a full day, hands-on experience that remains one of the highlights of their time in intermediate school.”

Generous donations by local businesses are key to sustaining the program as a non-profit, according to Lambinico. Each one signs on for up to four years, providing real products, signage, and other support to set up a store in the Biztown “city.” There are currently 21 businesses across various areas, from finance to commercial enterprises to a news station.

Each business acts as both an employer and a commercial ven-

ture, according to Drum teacher Tracy Morgan, who was helping facilitate. Students sign up for their top choices to have a “job,” then periodically rotate through so they can take their paychecks and shop at the other stores. They can purchase real products such as McDonalds and Mariners team gear, as well as utilizing a student-run BECU branch to get a loan or open a savings account.

The news station—set up by Fox Q13—is among the most exciting experiences at the facility, as students get to work in all aspects of producing actual news segments that air on closed-circuit television monitors throughout the complex.

“An important part of our program is the curriculum leading up to their visit to the actual facility,” said Lambinico. “We provide all of the materials teachers will need to do a four-week block of instruction. They cover such topics as what it's like to have a job, teamwork, goal-setting, and budgeting their money to achieve fiscal responsibility—all crucial skills for students.”

“There are a lot of things I love about fifth grade, but Biztown is probably the best thing we have done this year,” stated Berkley Ledesma, a fifth-grade student at Drum Intermediate. “You need to be able to communicate well with people to run a successful business and I think I learned how to do that there.”

Shown on this page, Drum Intermediate students learn what it takes to be both a smart consumer and an employee at 21 area businesses.



UPSD Schools Honored

All six primary and intermediate schools in the district were awarded 2016 Washington Achievement Awards. The awards are given by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction each year to schools demonstrating proficiency or growth in the top 5-10 percent of all schools, or closing achievement gaps by ten points for the 2015-16 school year. Narrows View and Evergreen were honored for Math Growth, Sunset and UP Primary for High Progress, Drum for Closing the Achievement Gap, and Chambers for Overall Excellence, Math Growth, and English Language Arts Growth. Less than 15 percent of schools statewide received these awards.

