Keeping Our Schools Safe

By Dr. Whitney Meisser, Superintendent

School safety is on our minds every day. When yet another devastating episode of school violence occurs, it rocks all of us to the core. Our schools should be a place of comfort, enjoyment, a place where kids are having fun while they learn. For each of us, parents, staff members, students, and community, we feel a bit helpless as we watch the grief unfold. Again.

I am a firm believer that the best way to keep our schools safe, and to prevent such a tragedy from happening here, is to continue to invest in building partnerships with regional colleges, we very well may be able to expand course offerings on campus. These programs are called “College in the High School” and “Tech Prep”. College in the High School courses provide teachers the opportunity to work with college professors on content and instructional models and give our students the opportunity to earn college credit while being enrolled full time at LCHS. Likewise, “Tech Prep” classes align Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses with community college curriculum. Students have the opportunity to begin working on industry-level standards that lead to a living-wage job.

In addition, we celebrate La Conner High School being ranked 46 of 606 high schools in the state. We know that this success is due in great part to the caring, professional work of all our PK-12 staff. We will continue to build strong, positive relationships, and strengthen our focus on academic rigor. Our kids are worth it!

Raising Standards Through Dual Credit Programs

By Todd Torgeson, Middle and High School Principal

Dual Credit Classes provide students the opportunity to earn high school and college credit simultaneously. Programs like Running Start and courses known as “AP” (Advanced Placement) are familiar to many. The reality is that many options for dual credit exist.

In La Conner, we are striving to provide more dual credit opportunities in our own school. By building partnerships with regional colleges, we very well may be able to expand course offerings on campus. These programs are called “College in the High School” and “Tech Prep”. College in the High School courses provide teachers the opportunity to work with college professors on content and instructional models and give all enrolled students the opportunity to earn college credit while being enrolled full time at LCHS. Likewise, “Tech Prep” classes align Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses with community college curriculum. Students have the opportunity to begin working on industry-level standards that lead to a living-wage job.

In addition, we will be adding a robotics class at middle school next year. The course will integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) principles and provide our students more hands-on educational opportunities.

ESSA: Success for All Students

By Dr. Whitney Meisser, Superintendent

The “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) outlines the new federal guidelines for public schools. This legislation was first adopted in 1965 as the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” and is the revision of “No Child Left Behind.” Our state has developed a process for school and district evaluations, and the results will be publicly available soon. It can be a challenge to explain what ESSA results mean, and also what is not included.

We, like many school districts across the nation, are facing a significant gap in the performance of our students. Race, poverty, and disability are huge predictors in school success. The good news is there are already many people working to address these gaps and create stronger opportunities for success for all kids. Just a few of these programs and ideas are:

• Emphasizing early reading development. There is strong interest from a variety of partners – Swinomish Tribal Leaders, Town of La Conner, La Conner Library – to continue to work with our school district and help every child become a strong reader.

• Strengthening culturally-relevant curriculum. We have a wonderful project called “Science and the Swinomish” that involves partnering with WWU and Concrete School District. We are also working to strengthen and fully implement the “Since Time Immemorial” tribal sovereignty curriculum.

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Keeping Our Schools Safe

When we have to talk with our children about things like this, here is some of the advice I’ve received over the years:

• Let the children take the lead on the conversation. Don’t force the issue, but make space for the topic if they bring it up.

• Answer their questions honestly, but briefly. Avoid sharing too much information that could scare or overwhelm them. If they want more detail, they will ask.

• Focus on feelings. Ask about their thoughts, feelings, and worries. Acknowledge their feelings and assure them that however they feel is okay.

• Provide comfort. Let them know they are loved. Tell them how much they mean to you and the ways in which they enhance your life.

• Give them specific ideas for stress reduction. Talk to them about things they can do when they are scared, angry, or sad.

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Sanford Harmony

By Beverly Bowen, Elementary Principal

At LCE, we are working to help students become responsible citizens both academically and socially. La Conner Elementary School is in the second year of implementing a social-emotional curriculum. The curriculum is called Sanford Harmony and was provided to us through a generous grant in 2016. Topics focus on developing problem-solving skills, kindness, acceptance, and how to react to bullying among peers.

Students learn about how to develop stronger communication skills. They are taught about communication "boosters" and "bloopers." Bloopers include interrupting and ignoring. "Boosters" are developed through listening and supporting. Students learn to listen more intently. They also learn how to recognize feelings and develop empathy toward others.

District-Wide Professional Development

By Beverly Bowen, Elementary Principal

Staff at La Conner School District have been spending a couple hours of professional development each month exploring the concept of differentiation, what it is, and how to make it a practical reality in the classroom. Differentiation is based on the concept that students think and learn in different ways. Differentiation is when a teacher uses varying content, processes, or methods they find are working well within their classrooms.

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Elder Visits

Students in Judy Zimmerman's kindergarten class read with elders twice a month at the La Conner Retirement Center. Here, Emmitt Alvord reads with Trudy Newton; Ms. Newton is 101 years old! Emmitt is a fifth generation La Conner student. His great-great-grandpa, Bill Alvord, was a school custodian and bus driver, and his great-great-grandma, Doris Harmon, was a cook for La Conner Schools.

Braves’ Club: An Outstanding Success

By Marlene Brenton, Braves’ Club Director

The La Conner Braves’ Club is proud to announce there are currently 103 students enrolled in the program. That is one-third of our elementary school! Each afternoon the students are escorted to the building to complete homework assignments and have a tasty snack during Power Hour. After Power Hour concludes, students engage in art, crafts, Lego competitions, table games, fitness, computers, local field trips, and more.

Students in the district also have opportunity to enroll in enrichment programs such as golf lessons, Zumba, computer coding, drama, cooking and gardening, comic book creating, sewing, and more. Enrichment courses are offered for 6 weeks, twice a year.

Did you know the Braves’ Club also hosts fabulously fun, community family nights and facility tours? Visit us at 301 North 6th Street between 2:30 and 6:00 PM any week day and say hello! 🏛️ifice.

Students at the Braves’ Club are offered opportunities to learn in a variety of ways. Above left, Kolton is experimenting with the shapes of molecules through marshmallows; on the right, Officer Tobin Meyers demonstrates a Skagit County Sheriff drone used in search and rescue.

Upcoming Events at LCSD

Eighth Grade Cultural Fair
March 6, 6:00-7:30 PM in the High School Gym

Sports Events
March 14, 3:30 PM Track meet, 4:00 PM Baseball game, 4:00 PM Softball game

La Conner Drama Club
The Rules of Comedy by Peter Blodel. March 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, and 23 at 7:30 PM Auditorium. House opens at 7:00 PM

Geography Fair
March 21, 5:30-7:00 PM in the Middle School Gym

Elementary Science Fair
March 22, 5:00-7:00 PM in the Elementary School Gym

Middle School Science Fair
March 27, 5:00-6:30 PM in the Middle School Gym

Band and Choir Spring Concert
March 28, 7:00 PM in the Auditorium

Spring Vacation
April 2–6

Animation Film Festival Fundraiser
April 28, 3:00 PM Benefitting the LCSD Braves’ Club After School Program, hosted by Soroptimist International of La Conner

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