

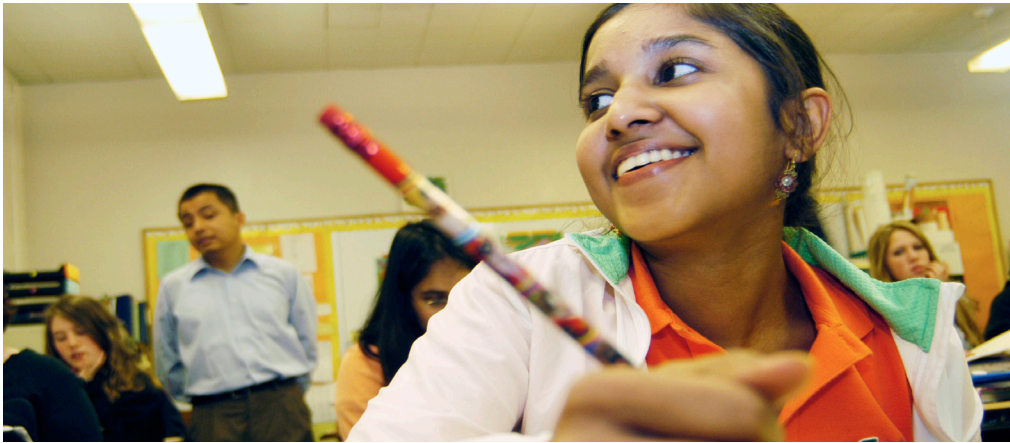


Extra Credit

A brief look at Portland Public Schools programs and issues

November 2011

Schools step up efforts to partner with families



It's a fact: Students learn more when schools welcome and involve families. This year, Portland Public Schools is launching an effort to involve more families as partners in helping students learn.

As a parent or guardian, you have many ways to be involved in your child's education, such as helping with homework, volunteering at school or taking on a school leadership role.

Portland Public Schools' family engagement team is helping schools build strong connections between educators and parents.

Like the different forms of family engagement, this effort is also taking different forms.

PPS Parent Academy offers classes in effective home-school communication, child development and other topics. The family engagement team is also launching **training for teachers and principals**. Non-English-speaking parents are receiving leadership training.

In addition, six schools (**Benson High, Chief Joseph PK-5, George Middle, Kelly Elementary, Markham Elementary and Scott K-8**) are piloting steps to strengthen family engagement. These steps include "action teams" to plan family involvement activities, make schools more welcoming to families, enlist families in improving student achievement and measure family engagement results. The plan is to share and adapt what works in all schools.

Register for Parent Academy at www.pps.net/parent-academy. ▶



Parent-teacher conferences coming Nov. 21-23!

Get the most out of your conference:

- ▶ Talk to your student beforehand about concerns regarding school.
- ▶ Ask the teacher what your student should know by year's end.
- ▶ Ask how you can support your student's learning at home.
- ▶ If you don't understand something, ask the teacher to explain it.

Handbook for a successful parent-teacher conference available at www.pps.net/departments/family-engagement/6547.htm ▶



New teacher evaluation process rolls out



What is good teaching? How can teachers do their best for students? Who helps teachers perfect their craft?

Portland Public Schools' updated teacher evaluation system — the first in 30 years for the school district — offers some answers.

A team of PPS teachers, principals, administrators and Portland Association of Teachers leaders designed the system. They based it on the work of national expert Charlotte Danielson.

PPS' old system — a checklist — was vague and emphasized "minimum standards." **The new system is detailed, and it encourages continuous improvement.**

Under the new system, principals interview teachers and observe their classrooms. They look at specific areas — such as how well teachers are "designing coherent instruction" and "setting instructional outcomes."

If improvement is needed, teachers can see what to shoot for and form a plan with their principals for how to get there.

"It gets not only to the heart of what the teacher is doing, but it helps us focus on whether students are learning and what we need to do to help them improve," says Roosevelt High School Principal Charlene Williams.

See the teacher evaluation tool at www.pps.net/news/6422.htm ▶



Use our QR codes to link your mobile device to information about Portland Public Schools. A search engine will help you find a suitable app so your mobile device can read QR codes.

Changing enrollment necessitates balancing

Each year a new group of children starts kindergarten at Portland Public Schools, and each year a senior class graduates. Families also move around. And PPS enrollment is growing.

These factors result in schools with too many or too few students. As a result, PPS plans to balance enrollment at specific schools over several years — possibly by shifting school boundaries, adding space or changing grade configurations. The Portland School Board must approve any changes.

Schools that may be affected

First up for consideration are: **ACCESS Academy, Alameda Elementary, Beaumont Middle School and Sabin, Rigler and Vernon K-8 schools.** Changes at these schools may also affect **Irvington and Scott K-8 schools.** These schools are holding meetings in November so parents and neighbors can be informed and share their views.

Missed a meeting? **Summaries are posted** on the PPS website within 24 hours.

Visit www.pps.net, then click the **Enrollment Balancing** button. ▶



More PPS news available online



PPS enrollment jumps by more than 500 students
Tri-Met passes may expire in December
November is Native American Indian Heritage Month
visit www.pps.net/news

Schools make educational Milestone gains



Final results from last year show that PPS schools hit five of six targets for student learning at important educational Milestones. What does this mean for your student?

Milestones measure learning in key areas that predict long-term success in school, and into college and work. Milestones are different from federal and state school ratings. In some cases, Milestones set a higher bar than simply meeting state benchmarks. Milestones also include measures that go beyond standardized tests.

Last school year, **Portland Public Schools set a goal to improve student learning by at least 5 percentage points** at three important Milestones: students reading above grade level at third grade; students writing well in seventh grade and students starting 10th grade having passed the core classes needed to stay on track to graduate.

Milestone	2009-10 Actual	2010-11 Target	2010-11 Actual
Reading to Learn (Exceed benchmark by the end of 3rd grade)	46%	Keep up: +5	+5 (51%) ✓
	Largest gap: African-American v. white 43pts	Catch up: Close gap by 5	-5 (38 pts) ✓
Ready for High School (Meet writing benchmark in 7th grade)	52%	Keep up: +5	+10 (62%) ✓
	Largest gap: African-American v. white 33pts	Catch up: Close gap by 5	-4 (29 pts)
On Track to Graduate (Enter 10th grade with 6 credits)	54%	Keep up: +5	+5 (59%) ✓
	Largest gap: African-American v. white 33pts	Catch up: Close gap by 5	-5 (28 pts) ✓

A **second goal was to narrow the “achievement gap”** between white students and the lowest scoring ethnic or racial group by at least 5 percentage points for the same Milestones.

In other words: Help every student make strides in learning, while narrowing the gap for students who need to be served better.

Schools use specific approaches to help students achieve Milestones. Depending on the school, these could include: a focus on early literacy and on developing writing skills in elementary and middle grades; after-school and summer programs; and freshman academies and other personalized support for students in ninth grade, when students need the most help to stay on track to graduate.

The gains that schools registered last year suggest that these steps are working. It also means schools are accelerating learning for students of color and narrowing the achievement gap.

To see your school’s Milestone results (and how they compare to similar schools), go to www.pps.net/departments/milestones. ▶



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