

April 30, 2019



Board Summary

Healthy Youth Survey

Todd Baddley, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, presented to the Richland School Board the results of this year's Healthy Youth Survey given to students in Grades 6, 8, 10, and 12. Survey responses show that many students are increasingly experiencing depressive feelings and one out of ten students who responded to the survey report they attempted suicide. A review of survey results over the past decade show these results are in line with a steady increase in students struggling with mental health concerns. Several students also shared their experiences and their perspective on the causes of student mental health issues, such as accelerated learning and pressure to be preparing for a specific career before high school.

Mr. Baddley says the district is focused on addressing student mental health issues. Schools are working diligently with administrative teams, counselors, check and connect programs, and early warning systems to provide students an adult that they feel safe talking to. He and the principals of Hanford and Richland high schools said mental health counselors continue to be the highest unfilled need at middle schools and high schools.

Role of Elementary School Psychologists

Mandy Cathey, Executive Director of Special Education, presented a report to the Board on the new role psychologists are filling in elementary schools. The district is now using a combination of special education and Learning Assistance Program (LAP) funding to staff full-time psychologists at each elementary. That means that the psychologists, who typically only served students receiving special education services through evaluations, working on student Independent Education Programs (IEPs) and collaborating with IEP teams, can now also provide social-emotional and behavioral support services to all students in their schools. The ability for School Psychologists to support students through a crisis and help reintegrate their minds and hearts back into the learning environment has been a positive step in remediating lost instructional time for all, Mrs. Cathey said. School psychologists Sara Milam and Angie Withers told the Board they have been better able to build relationships with students and staff by not having to be split between buildings and they are seeing this new work they and other school psychologists are doing paying off in improved student behaviors and learning.

Coding

Deputy Superintendent Mike Hansen presented to the Board a report on efforts to integrate coding, or programming, into technology instruction throughout the district's schools. The need for programmers is expected to grow and the ability to read and write code will be a crucial skill many students are likely to need for future jobs, Mr. Hansen said.

Three of the district's four middle schools and all three high schools offer coding classes or programs and more than half of elementary schools either have coding as an extracurricular activity or part of formal classroom instruction.

The district is moving forward on several fronts to increase student access to coding:

- Adding either a fifth special focused on coding or integrating into the science curriculum in elementary schools.
- Coding classes at every grade level in all middle schools.
- Addition of an AP Computer Science Pathways course in high schools and review of further coding coursework opportunities.
- For staff, Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities is offering a Computer Science certificate
- consisting of five classes that teachers can take to prepare them to take a certifying exam. These courses are expected to become an eventual degree endorsement.

Budget

Superintendent Dr. Rick Schulte provided an update to the Board on the district's draft 2019-20 budget. State lawmakers approved a school funding package just before concluding the legislative session. The results were overall positive, with the lifting of the lid on local levy funding to \$2.50 per \$1,000 in assessed property value. That will the district collect an additional \$4 million from the district's Educational Programs & Operations Levy during the next school year. The state also increased special education funding to the district.

However, the state will continue to move school districts to the new State Employees Benefit Board (SEBB) insurance program beginning in November, which is expected to cost the district another \$2 million a year because of higher costs and increased benefits for part-time staff.

Board President Rick Jansons said the latest information on the budget indicates the district won't lay off any staff for the 2019-20 school year.

The district is still moving forward with some proposed budget reductions, including reassignment of district-level administrators to vacant school administrative positions, potentially shortening a planned staff training in August and cutting other non-staff costs.

Policy/RR No. 8700 – Sexual Harassment

Galt Pettett, District Counsel, presented a revised Policy/RR (Rules and Regulations) 8700 to the Board. During the district's recent Consolidated Program Review (CPR) it was determined that the district's Sexual Harassment Policy and RR were out of date. The changes make both documents current with state and federal laws. Currently all new certified and classified staff, student teachers, and substitutes are trained on the policy and RR. One change will require the superintendent or their designee to annually convene an ad hoc committee to review the use and efficacy of this policy and procedure. Based on the review of the committee, the superintendent will prepare a report to the Board including, if necessary, any recommended policy changes.

Next Meeting: May 14, 2019 @ 6:30 p.m.

Richland School District

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