



SCHOOL BEAT

An e-news update for school district staff

September 15, 2006



Photos feature students from Seattle Public Schools. Photo © Susie Fitzhugh

District News

Superintendent Raj Manhas lays out goals in State of the District

Superintendent Raj Manhas reported on the "State of the District" on Sept. 12, reviewing accomplishments for the past year and setting out plans for the 2006-2007 school year and beyond.

In his speech before about a hundred guests at the Frances Penrose Owen Auditorium, Manhas said although Seattle Public Schools made enormous progress in its fiscal and operational stability, he was even more optimistic about the academic future for our students. "Our single, most important job is to increase academic achievement and close the achievement gap," he said.

The full text of the State of the District is posted on our Web site at https://www.seattleschools.org/area/sup/SOTD_2006.pdf. In addition, the event will be rebroadcast on SPS TV Channel 26 through September at 2 p.m. Sundays, 8 p.m. Mondays, 8 p.m. Thursdays, 9 p.m. Fridays, and 7 p.m. Saturdays.

In his overview of accomplishments, Manhas said:

- Students made academic gains that exceeded the state average in 11 out of the 12

WASL categories for fourth-, seventh-, and tenth-graders – with the strongest improvement in reading and writing.

■ Chief Academic Officer Carla Santorno, hired in April 2006, re-organized the Learning and Teaching Division, hired several new education directors, and filled a new position of director, Department of Education Technology; Research, Evaluation & Assessment.

■ In finances, cost cutting and operating efficiency has enabled the district to rebuild reserves to about \$20 million, a remarkable accomplishment given the district's financial position four years ago.

■ The district completed renovations at five schools, including a new auditorium at Nathan Hale High School, complete renovation of Madison Middle School and Roosevelt High School, and the building of permanent classrooms and other facilities at Beacon Hill and Dearborn Park elementary schools.

■ The district has built strong partnerships with communities. Work with the District PTSA Council, the School-Family Partnership Advisory Committee, Gates Foundation, Broad Foundation, Seattle Education Association, the Simonyi Foundation, the Nesholm Foundation, the New School Foundation, and other organizations has both helped and supported students.



Turning to the work ahead, Manhas said there is still a lot to accomplish, and laid out the Strategic Framework and Academic Vision for the district. The Strategic Framework incorporates all of the goals and action plans developed in a series of plans and recommendations, and includes the four key components listed below:

■ **Academic Achievement and the Achievement Gap:**

A clear Academic Vision, complete with milestones and implementation steps, has been developed. The vision, “Every student a reader, writer, mathematician and ready for college and work,” is supported by six milestones: 1) students ready for kindergarten; 2) third-graders reading on grade level; 4) seventh-graders ready for algebra, 4) ninth-graders ready for high school, 5) tenth-graders passing WASL Math, Reading and Writing; and 6) students ready for college and work.

■ **Leadership and Accountability:** Manhas said he wants to ensure the district has stable, high-

quality leadership in schools and the central office by hiring a diversified and qualified workforce; expanding the Principal Leadership Academy; beginning a training program for central administrators; and establishing performance benchmarks and standards for the central office in terms of customer service and school support.

■ **Fiscal and System Sustainability:** Manhas said he will redouble efforts toward getting the district in good fiscal shape, but also called on state leaders to live up to their constitutional obligation to fully fund K-12 education. “We’re doing our part by making tough decisions to increase efficiencies and to ensure we are using tax dollars wisely. However, it is critical that our elected officials provide an appropriate and stable level of funding to meet the challenges we face,” he said.

■ **Family and Community Engagement:** The goals in this area are to continue to build relationships and communication with families through home visits, newsletters, forums, meetings, and partnerships with businesses and community organizations.

Community Conversations focus on academic vision

Superintendent Raj Manhas, Chief Academic Office Carla Santorno and Chief Operating Officer Mark Green outlined their key strategies and action plan for the district during two Community Conversations on Sept. 13 and 14. The presentation is posted at www.seattleschools.org/area/sup/Community_Conversations_Presentation_September_06.pdf

More than 150 families, staff and community members attended this series of meetings, which was held at Hamilton International Middle School and Mercer Middle School. Future Community Conversation meetings are planned during the school year.

Around the Community



From left to right: Sally Soriano, District I; Mary Bass, District V; Cheryl Chow, District VII; Michael DeBell, District IV; Darlene Flynn, District II; Irene Stewart, District VI; Brita Butler-Wall, District III

School Board Directors welcome feedback

School Board directors welcome and encourage feedback from all constituents. There are a number of ways to provide comments, all of which are listed on the school board's Web page at <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/index.xml>. These include public testimony at board meetings, regular community meetings hosted by board directors, and weekly "office hours" hosted by Board President Dr. Brita Butler-Wall.

■ Dr. Brita Butler-Wall, Board President, hosts weekly "office hours" during weeks school is in session. Please call the board office at 206-252-0040 to schedule an appointment. Best times for meetings are Mondays, 8:30-10:30 a.m. at the community location. Dr. Butler-Wall also hosts monthly District 3 community meetings every third Tuesday of the month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Eckstein Middle School library, 3003 N.E. 75th St. She can be contacted at 206-729-3202 or at brita.butler-wall@seattleschools.org.

■ Board member Sally Soriano holds District 1 community meetings every second Friday of the month from 6-9 p.m. at the Meadowbrook Community Center, 10517 35th Ave. N.E. She can be contacted at 206-252-0052 or at sally.soriano@seattleschools.org.

■ Board member Mary Bass holds District 5 community meetings from 6-9 p.m. at the Garfield Community Center on 23rd and East Cherry Street. To schedule a date, please contact her at mary.bass@seattleschools.org or 206-720-3303.

Free six-week relationship course starts at Whittier Elementary

Sanity Circus, a free six-week series for parents and teachers who want a more cooperative and respectful relationship with children and youth will be held Monday evenings from October 2 to November 6 at Whittier Elementary School, 1320 N.W. 75th St. Register with Puget Sound Adlerian Society at psas@att.net, or call 206-527-4796 for questions. Clock-hour and CE credit available for teachers and counselors.

Whittier School PTA, the Seattle Council PTSA, Puget Sound Adlerian Society, and Horizons Foundation are sponsoring the series. For more information, see the September 6 newsletter link in the Seattle Council PTSA Web site at www.seattlecouncilptsa.org/

Organizations build new playground at John Muir Elementary

More than 150 employees and volunteers from three national organizations (CA, Safeco Insurance, and Kaboom!) came together on August 11 to build and assemble a playground on the grounds of John Muir Elementary School.

The playground will benefit the more than 290 children who attend John Muir Elementary, the children who use the Camp Fire Kids' Corner day care, after-school and summer programs on the school grounds, and many more kids and families in the Mount Baker neighborhood.



Photo by Margaret Saint Claire

Celebrations

Renovated Roosevelt High School opens to rave reviews

Students and staff of Roosevelt High School started the new school year in a beautifully restored and renovated building that included an historic renovation of the 1922 and 1928 buildings; a new gym, cafeteria, performing arts center and athletic field.

Funds for the \$93.8 million project came from a voter-approved \$398 million Building Excellence II capital levy passed in February 2001. The Roosevelt High project is one of 17 projects included in the capital levy. Renovation for Cleveland High School will be completed in fall 2007; and the Garfield High School renovation in fall 2008.

Levy projects already completed include additions and renovations at Madison Middle School; replacement of Brighton Elementary School; renovations at the Seattle Center for The Center School; library and science upgrades at Ingraham and Chief Sealth high schools; a new performing arts center at Nathan Hale High School; and replacement of portables with permanent classroom space and addition of a cafeteria/auditorium facility at Graham Hill, Beacon Hill, and Wing Luke elementary schools.

Thirty students named Merit Scholarship semifinalists

Thirty academically talented students from five Seattle Public Schools were named semifinalists for National Merit Scholarships on September 13. They are eligible to become Finalists and win a \$2,500 Merit Scholarship, as well as other scholarships from various organizations and universities.

The 30 students – 19 from Garfield High School – are current seniors who were among the top-scoring juniors in the state who took the PSAT (Preliminary SAT) in 2005. Finalists will be announced in four nationwide news releases beginning in April 2007 and ending in July 2007.——

The semifinalists are:

- **Ballard High School** – Chester G. Antieau, Marian M. Deuker, Shelly K. Najjar;
- **Garfield High School** – Abraham H. Allison, Rhiannon V. Bronstein, Jian H. Chu, Andrew L. Girardeau Dale, Adam G. Hesterberg, Pranoti G. Hiremath, Kyle R. Johnsen, Jacqueline Lin, Adrian M. McDonnal, Devin K. Mooers, Devin K. Moore, Kari A. Olson, Ian Robinson, Alexander N. Rudee, Todd P. Sigley, Kazimer L. Skubi, Aric P. Skurdal, Maya S. Sugarman, Elliott S. Woo;
- **Ingraham High School** – Alexander Hyde-Wright;
- **Nathan Hale High School** – Ethan J. Brotherton, Zachary A. Hing, Nigel R. Peltier; and
- **Roosevelt High School** – Abraham C. Bae, Elin Rummel, Matthew S. Yelin, Lu Zheng.

Seattle Public Schools earns 2006 Victory Against Hunger Award

Seattle Public Schools received a \$1,000 prize in July and was recognized as a leader in school systems nationwide that worked effectively to fight hunger in their communities.

The Congressional Hunger Center received 84 nominations and made 20 awards. Washington Rep. Jim McDermott nominated the school district. Awards were given to schools and organizations that demonstrated success and creativity in “fighting hunger through developing and/or implementing school meals wellness policies.”

According to the award summary, “Seattle Public Schools has established a multi-faceted wellness policy that promotes the healthy eating habits and fitness of over 44,000 students. Their policies ban the sale of all foods containing high levels of fat and sugar; improve the quality, appeal and access to school meals programs; prohibits contracts with beverage vendors for ‘exclusive pouring rights’ and provides all students with a high-quality physical education program that emphasizes the development of lifetime fitness skills.”

Ballard High students win awards at regional film and video festival

Three student productions in the Ballard High School Video Production Program are among the winners of the 30th Annual Young People's Film & Video Festival.

The productions are:

- "Bittersweet," a short film about a contagious bad mood by Coburn Erskine, Becca Rice and George Westberg;
- "Special Successes," a documentary on the Ballard High School Special Education Program, by Clayton Brendan, Jenna Gregor and Madison Murphy; and
- "Beacon Hill B-Boys," a documentary about the dance culture of the Jefferson Community Center by Nick Davis, Tony Maurice and Fiona Shearer.

This festival accepted entries from students in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Submissions were judged for their storytelling, originality, artistic merit, technical achievement, and investigation of subject matter.

Coming Up

Art auction and exhibit to benefit John Muir Elementary art program



The Art of Hospitality, an annual event that promotes and recognizes the art talents of the hospitality industry in Seattle, will provide funding this year for the art program at John Muir Elementary School.

John Muir student Kaesem Jackson drew artwork for the 2006 Art of Hospitality invitation. Artwork from other students at the school also will be on display at the event.

Under the direction of Principal Awnie Thompson and art teacher Susie Moriguchi, the school's Art Program teaches several hundred students – kindergartener through fifth-graders – the basics in drawing, painting, and ceramics.

The Art of Hospitality

4-8 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 9, 2006
Mayflower Park Hotel, 405 Olive Way
Free event

"Kaesem and Kasem: My imaginary friend"
Artwork by Kaesem Jackson

Arbor Heights Elementary dedicates Jackie Keegan Playground

Parents, students and staff at Arbor Heights Elementary School honored a longtime former employee on September 12 with the naming and dedication of the Jackie Keegan Playground.

Keegan, who is retired and still lives near the area, was an office assistant, playground supervisor and PTA president at Arbor Heights. The plaque, which will be placed on a wall near the playground, honors Keegan for making the playground a fun and safe place for kids.

School and District Events Calendar

If you would like to know about current special school events, fund-raisers or other district events, go online to the [District Events Calendar](#) where you can see what's going on monthly at Seattle Public Schools or search for specific events by date, school and event type.

We Need Your Ideas

The Communications Office is always looking for stories on interesting classroom projects, inspirational people, or events in our schools to share with the greater Seattle community. We often highlight stories submitted by school staff for potential media coverage as well as district and community publications. For examples of stories we have published in the past, please visit this [link](#). We would like to hear from you. If you have a unique story to share, please send your ideas directly to goodnews@seattleschools.org.

In the News

For a sampling of this week's local newspaper stories on Seattle Public Schools, please click [here](#).

SCHOOL BEAT is an electronic newsletter covering district and school-based news and is published twice a month for the employees of Seattle Public Schools.