Students visit a reading rainforest

A group of Hockinson third graders spent three weeks over the summer exploring a reading rainforest.

It was one of three programs funded with $23,133 in Title 1 reallocation funds that the state awarded to the District late in the 2014-15 school year. The other funds went toward professional development for teachers and a curriculum for struggling readers.

Teachers Cary Delbridge and Stacie Johnson developed the reading rainforest program and offered it to third graders who needed a boost in their confidence and reading ability.

Seven children accepted the invitation to participate in the program, which spanned three weeks. While learning about animals that live in rainforests, students learned how to read for information in fiction and nonfiction, and how to decode vocabulary using context and other basic skills.

“We feel like we made some real progress,” said Delbridge, who with Johnson previously worked as a reading specialist. “We talked with their parents and gave them tools, so they could work on them for the rest of the summer.”

Now Delbridge and Johnson are using the rainforest program with their first graders and planning to invite their summer school students, now fourth graders, for a visit.

“They will be teachers to our first graders,” Delbridge said. “They will tell us something they learned.”

HSD facilities projects proceed

First, some exciting news: Your High School will be fully paid for on Dec. 1! This will mark the final payment on the $16.1 million bond District voters approved in March 2000.

But here in Hockinson, we never stand still. You have probably noticed many changes taking place across the School District—thanks to the $39.9 million bond our community approved in February.

Hockinson Middle School

The Middle School construction project has taken its first steps forward with the relocation of fiber optic lines from the site of the new Middle School. The District has been working with its construction manager to finalize educational specifications for the building, design phase one site work and complete a traffic study. In September, the Board approved a Value Engineering Report, which opens the door to $7 million in state funding assistance. More Middle School construction-related work will begin later this school year, once county permitting is complete.

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Waiver saves families money

Hockinson families are saving money this year, thanks to a fee waiver approved in June by the School Board.

Fees had been implemented a few years ago at a time of declining enrollment and state budget cuts to cover the cost of classes that came with significant material expenses—such as art, elective and AP science, wood tech, drama and film study. The cost was $25 per class, and added up to $12,225 in 2014-15.

Because the new state schools budget allocates more money for materials, supplies and operating costs, Superintendent Sandra Yager suggested the District should eliminate the fees, and the Board concurred.

HSD facilities projects proceed

Hockinson High School

At the High School, a bid is out for the new band room, wrestling room, baseball field, soccer fields and tennis courts, plus public restrooms, seating and security upgrades to the main sports field. Grading has begun in preparation for the new athletic fields, and related wetland mitigation is nearly complete with replacement wetlands slated for planting in late autumn or early winter.

Hockinson Heights Elementary

The Elementary School master plan is in the beginning stages.

Testing update

The release of our state testing scores in August brought some good news to the Hockinson School District: Grades 4 through 7 and grade 11 Language Arts/Literacy scores were above the state average, as were math scores in grades 6, 8 and 11. Our Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) science and End of Course (EOC) biology scores also were above the state average.

Most of the District’s other scores were within a few percentage points of the state average and likely would have been better without some technology glitches experienced in the spring. “These were good results for our first year with this new test, and we are really proud of our students,” said Superintendent Sandra Yager. “As students receive additional years of instruction aligned to the new standards, we are confident that test results across all grades will improve.”

The Smarter Balanced Assessment system was implemented last spring to fulfill state-mandated testing of students in grades 3 through 8, 10 and 11. Because the assessment required students to adapt to the new, significantly higher Common Core State Standards, it was expected that scores would be lower than before, and the 2015 scores are considered a brand-new baseline for individuals and districts.

Please bear in mind that test scores are only a starting point for discussions about the performance of students and schools. They do not necessarily predict students’ futures and should be considered with other sources of information, such as student portfolios and conversations with your child’s teachers.

Our goal is to help students meet the new standards, so they will graduate with the knowledge and skills that will make them competitive with other students across the country and around the world.