

Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Learning Community Striving to Meet the Individual Needs of Each Student as a Whole Child

Our theme for the month of March is perseverance. The following shares some information on efforts towards one of our newer expectations:

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)

As you may know, we are entering that time of year where the state of Washington assesses third, fourth, and fifth graders. In the past, we have had the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) and the MSP (Measurements of Student Learning). Starting this school year, third, fourth, and fifth graders will start participating in the SBA (Smarter Balanced Assessment).

What Have We Learned?

We have been working to learn more about the new and upcoming SBA. Information on the assessments has been coming in slow. Staff have been looking online, reading, and attending meetings to find any new information being released. We have continued to do our best to support our students in learning toward the state learning standards, which the SBA is designed to assess. We will continue to seek further understanding on the SBA format to support our students.

There are many new things to learn, such as new acronyms, titles, expectations, claims, and targets. The SBA is even being given in a different way than in the past. The vast majority of the state is expected to participate online using such things as Chromebooks, tablets, Wi-Fi, and the internet. We are one of the few schools who are choosing to pay a fee to participate using paper and pencil. We felt there were too many variables impacting students' potential efforts to participate electronically this first year. We have been working to develop a plan to phase in electronic participation at the elementary over the next two years.

We have learned a lot and continue to seek further understanding. An example is our proctor training (training for teachers on the rules and how we are allowed to give the test). We were less than a week out from the third grade ELA testing and the parameters and training had not yet been released by the state. Amy Neiman worked the week before testing to develop and implement a paper and pencil proctor training developed from other districts' electronic versions.

Who Participates?

As mentioned, our third, fourth, and fifth graders will continue to participate in the state assessments, which includes the SBA this school year.

What Are We Tested On?

The SBA does have similarities to our past state assessments. Our third, fourth, and fifth graders will all be tested on reading and math skills. Fifth graders will again be assessed on their science learning. In the past, our reading test mainly only involved reading skills. This year the reading portion for each grade will be called the ELA (English Language Arts) and include writing and reading. New this year, all three grade levels will have an extended performance task for the ELA and Math portions where students integrate their learning (one in math and one in reading) in an extended writing composition.

When Will Testing Take Place?

In the past, we were required to schedule specific testing days that all students had to participate in the testing and finish their work on. We recently learned that we can extend the number of

days they test. This could help our students participate in the SBA more like we do our learning at school. In the past, fourth graders would have to write a composition by doing their pre-writing, draft, and final draft all in one day. This year we believe students can do their performance task over more days, like we tend to do compositions during the school year.

The schedule below shares our tentative schedule for the SBA. You will notice that our third graders are participating in the ELA portion earlier than others. This is because we are using the pencil and paper version of the ELA and the state requires that we get our test results back for our third grade ELA before the end of this school year.

Tentative Testing Schedule:

March 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	-3 rd ELA
April 30 & May 1	-5 th Science
May 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	-4 th /5 th ELA
May 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	-3 rd /4 th /5 th /Math

We are choosing to view the Smarter Balanced Assessment as a learning opportunity. We have learned a great deal. I am sure we will learn a great deal more.

Community Member(s) of Mystery

Our March Community Member of Mystery has been with our school for thirteen years. She grew up in Portland, Oregon and now lives on a small farm in La Center. This is only the second house she has lived in her whole life. She has been married to her husband for twenty-six years. An interesting La Center education fact, her father-in-law was the first La Center High School student president in 1938. Our Community Member of Mystery and husband have three adult sons and currently raise cows, chickens, and pigs. She has just started her own quilting business and is in “the pioneering stage.” Other than quilting, she enjoys many other activities. She loves gardening, long walks on the beach, cooking, and decorating. Many may not know that she has also served as assistant girls wrestling coach at the high school. She also loves watching college football and basketball. “Go Zags!” Who do you think our Community Member of Mystery for March is?

Our February Community Member of Mystery is in her first official school year working at La Center Elementary. She was born in Romania and lived there until moving to the United States at the age of seven. She still speaks Romanian, though her English would not give hints she originally spoke Romanian). She spent time in various U.S. cities growing up, spending more time in Portland and Chicago. Salmon Creek is now the place she calls home. Prior to working at the elementary, she graduated from Concordia University. She has three children, ages 13, 14, and 20. She enjoys watching her children in soccer and swimming. She has also been known to enjoy raising boxers. There are currently two living at her home as pets. Who do you think our Community Member of Mystery for February is?

If you guessed Michelle Apahidean, special education teacher, you are correct.

