

This special digital edition features links to further information, web pages and additional photos.



Spring 2016 Newsletter

SCHOOL NEWS

The La Center Way



Garden Project Helps Kids Imagine Tomorrow

[Community Gardening](#) has a long history dating back to the [19th century](#) in England. While still a thriving practice, for too many Americans, it's easy to imagine that carrots grow in plastic bags already peeled and that tomatoes just appear neatly stacked in pyramids on grocery store shelves. They don't of course, but our tendency to ignore where food comes from can lead us to act in unsustainable ways. Community gardening is a great way to connect everyone back to the land and the source of our food. It's also a great way for students to learn—and teach what they've learned to others.

Sophomore Laurel Gibson walks over to a number of large models set up in Rebecca Morris' Environmental Studies class, each showing a different area of the Garden Project. Clearly knowledgeable about the ins and outs of the different aspects of the plan, Laurel explains each model in turn. One shows the planned layout of the [terraced gardening beds](#), another the multiple types of [composting](#) they plan to highlight. Yet another shows the biofuel station layout being developed with the help of Jim Neiman's Welding & Woods classes. It's an impressive and ambitious plan. Laurel explains the way the composting area will feed the terraced gardens with nutrients while the [bio-char](#) processor will help the soil hold them in a carbon positive manner (rather than increasing carbon into the atmosphere, biochar actually decreases it). Asked which aspect of the garden she likes best, Laurel replies, "My favorite part of the project is the terraced beds. It'll give people a chance to grow their own food without [GMO's](#) or [pesticides](#)."

[>Continued on p.2](#)

Inside This Issue

[Message from the Superintendent.....2](#)

[FCRC Provides Vital Services.....3](#)

[Home School Academy.....4](#)

Infrastructure Update

The ongoing project to enhance our athletic field continues unabated. A few short years ago the high school football/soccer field was grass surrounded by a gravel ring. Due to the amazing grass-roots efforts of local volunteers, the field has been transformed into a beautiful paved track, football/soccer field, bleachers and scoreboard. This summer will see the next phase of development with the construction of a 150' x 50' fieldhouse that will overhang the bleachers, providing rain cover for the spectators who come to watch our La Center kids compete in football/soccer and very soon—Track! To have this occur without any new taxes on our community is amazing to say the least.



The fieldhouse was designed by Rob Heaney of the Beacon Rock Architecture Group with funding from a Washington State grant sponsored by Senator Ann Rivers. The entire athletic field project has been primarily accomplished through the hard work and generosity of the La Center community and the new field house is no exception. Special thanks to Colf Construction and the [La Center Education Foundation](#) (LCEF) for their work in moving the work forward. The LCEF looks forward to our community's continued generous donations of both time and talent as we take on this next phase of improving our outdoor facilities in the La Center Way.

Other recent infrastructure projects include: an auto lift which allows students to take coursework that offers college credit and the installation of new stage curtains and drapes for the [Drama Department](#).

Message from the Superintendent



Dear Community,

As we wrap up the 2015/16 school year and prepare for the next, I am very excited about the current state of the district. Our students are graduating on-time at record levels, they're receiving scholarship offers at unprecedented numbers (more than \$3 million to date for this year's seniors) and they will be attending schools or traveling to points of service all over the country as the next step in their learning.

Our programs and services are more significant and varied in support of the wide-spectrum of students we serve than ever before in the history of the district. From advanced placement courses to career and technical opportunities; from activities and athletics, to music, art and drama; our students have multiple pathways to find their learning passion. Additionally, we have a wide-variety of supports for students who need non-traditional assistance to maximize their learning success. From our Family-Community Resource Center to enhanced learning support opportunities; from counseling services/supports to special education learning environments; our students have a tremendous range of opportunities and assistance to help them along their learning journey.

The district has also expanded and improved the learning spaces at all levels, we constructed an off-site transportation facility, are in the process of building a multi-million dollar athletic facility, have enhanced technology across the district at all schools and maintained all of our facilities at a high standard of service. All of this expansion and maintenance of facilities occurred without any additional taxes from the voters. In fact, the La Center School District has the lowest M & O Levy collection per student of any school district in Clark County. To me, that is a terrific value (top results at the lowest cost).

As you probably know, this is my last year as your superintendent. My time in La Center these past eleven years has been the greatest joy of my professional career. It has been a tremendous pleasure to serve all the students and support the terrific staff we have in La Center. That said, I am very excited that the Board of Directors has chosen Dave Holmes as our new superintendent to take my place. He is just the person who can take the very good position the district is in and help take it to even greater heights of service, quality and value in the service of our students.

Sincerely,
Dr. Mark Mansell
Superintendent

[>Continued from Page 1](#)

The students plan to take their garden project as an entry into this year's "Imagine Tomorrow

Earth Day Extravaganza
April 20, 2016
At lunch in front of High School

Contest," an annual competition that challenges students to dream big and think about how they can solve the world's energy problems. The Community Garden is the [La Center Environmental Studies Class'](#) answer to how students can inspire people to act in more sustainable ways by giving the



community an opportunity to grow their own food and learn about sustainable practices in the process.

This summer, work will start on the ambitious garden project on the hill leading from the high school to the secondary parking lot. What is now an empty hill will be transformed into a gardening space with terraced garden beds, [a biofuel station](#), a biochar processor, a garden shed, [multiple types of composting](#), a 50'x25' [blueberry orchard](#) (blueberries were chosen because they grow close to the ground), 4-6 [Beehive boxes](#) and a pair of 18'x24' [greenhouses](#).

The garden project was first introduced during the 2013/2014 school year. Ambitious even in its early planning stages, the garden's design involved 4 teachers in 6 different classes including construction, biodiesel, Environmental Studies, health, Special Education transition class and math. Approval of the project involved students talking to both staff meetings and the School Board.

Not just for the school's use, the Community Garden will allow agencies and clubs within the La Center community to lease space in the terraced beds and likely, the greenhouses. Students will use the garden to grow food, as an outdoor classroom to learn about [botany](#), [horticulture](#), health and nutrition, [ecology](#) and sustainable land use. The students aspire to supply fresh produce for the school



cafeterias, allowing their work to literally sustain their fellow students. Flowers will be grown for fund-raising. It is hoped some of the leased beds will be used by local Non-profit organizations to grow produce to donate to the [North Clark County Food Bank](#), Loaves and Fishes and other entities that work to get food to people in need.



Family/Community Resource Center Provides Vital Services

[Family & Community Resource Center \(FCRC\)](#) Coordinator Aften Pankiewicz-Waldram describes an all-too-common description of a child's day in America: A student, let's call her Jane, gets up and gets ready to go to school on her own. There is no food in the house. When she arrives at school, Jane gets some breakfast at the cafeteria, but she doesn't have a snack for the middle of the day. Jane is tired because her father has to travel for work and money is very tight. It's causing problems at home—which is costing her valuable sleep. In class, already tired and hungry, Jane has no pencil, no paper and no backpack—plus she's had a toothache for a week. Feeling isolated and alone, Jane acts out and gets herself into trouble, her mood only made worse by the fact it's Friday and she has no food for the weekend. Jane faces so many barriers to academic achievement and she hasn't even started thinking about her schoolwork yet.

Thankfully, if Jane lived in La Center, she'd have help and therefore, a better chance to live up to her full potential. Due to the forward thinking and generous work of the La Center Family & Community Resource Center—Jane has multiple opportunities to ease the barriers to her academic success that have nothing to do with hard work or intention. The [FUEL UP program](#) exists to provide healthy snacks to kids throughout the day, vital for both concentration and energy. Thanks to the [Jumpstart Backpack program](#), like 250 other students in the previous school year, Jane will have access to all of the myriad supplies she needs for school. The FCRC can connect Jane with **counseling** to help her with her emotions. The [Weekend Packs Program](#) provides food for her over the weekend so Jane won't go hungry even without access to school resources. The FCRC can even help Jane's sore tooth thanks to the free **Dental Services** offered for those who qualify.

In addition to the obvious benefit of alleviating hunger, food programs serve a second, less visible benefit: Saving parents the cost of food can free up money to pay for heat, electricity and school clothes. The effect of the FCRC's assistance ripples out into every aspect of a student's life. Other assistance currently offered includes:



Aften Pankiewicz-Waldram talks to La Center Students about service jobs on Career Day.

[A Welcome Center](#) – for new students and parents

[Continuing Education Advice and Assistance](#) – for those seeking a GED or for information on financial aid, online program options and college/career advice.

[K-8 Checking In!](#) - attendance program designed to give chronically absent or tardy students a chance to become more involved and comfortable with coming to school.

[Building Up](#) – a resume and job service program.

[Parent/Guardian Resource Library](#) – a lending library that provides a range of materials for parents.

A relatively new center, started a little less than three years ago, the FCRC is still growing and discovering what needs are most pressing in the La Center community. Aften Pankiewicz-Waldram describes her work as half-proactive and half-reactive. The more established the center becomes, the more it will be able to put systems in place to help students alleviate hardships before they become problems that negatively impact their academic performance.

In addition to these student and family assistance programs, the FCRC also does extensive work around early childhood education. Focusing on programs to help school readiness in pre-Kindergarten students, the FCRC offers **1-2-3 Grow and Learn**: a program that focuses on parent-child time, socializing with other families, school readiness and healthy snacks. There are also a pair of programs focused on getting children familiar and comfortable with the school prior to their first day. [Kindy Cub Night](#) offers an evening for parents and kids to interact with teachers and learn about school policies, attendance and readiness programs. **Kindy Cub Camp** is a week-long pre-kindergarten camp designed to introduce kids into the La Center school culture.

Of course, FCRC isn't accomplishing all of these great programs in a vacuum. They work with many community partners including [SHARE](#), [Lewis River Mobile Food Bank](#), [Children's Center](#), [La Center Evangelical Free Church](#), the La Center PTO and generous help from parents in the district.

If you would like to contribute to the great work being done in the FCRC, they can always use volunteers, donations of fresh fruit and snack food. Community engagement is welcome and encouraged. As Aften Pankiewicz-Waldram puts it, "If somebody wants to be involved, there is always a way to help."

La Center Home School Academy



In the midst of its third year, the La Center Home School Academy is a primarily online program dedicated to providing instructional materials for kids being home-schooled from K-12. If you have decided homeschooling is the best option for your child, you are going to be thrilled to learn about the La Center Home School Academy. The Academy offers a fully

accredited program that gives students the opportunity to reach their highest potential through a uniquely individualized learning program. At its heart, home schooling is about individual instruction. The La Center Home School Academy is a resource hub for home-schooling parents. It's a place where they can get access to programs and information that are outside their own comfort zones as teachers, ensuring kids have access to a full spectrum of learning.

Primarily an online program, grades K-8 currently use the FUEL Ed program and Grades 9-12 are centered on the APEX Independent Online Program.

The La Center Home School Academy is run by Ruth Schrock, a 20 year veteran teacher who is endorsed to teach K-8. Additional expertise is offered by Rebecca Morris (English/Social Studies 9-12), Sarah Rideout (Art) and Bob Hill (Math/Science 9-12).

If you have a need for materials, computer access, teaching strategies or anything else related to home-schooling your child, the La Center Home School Academy can help.

La Center Home School
Academy
Open House
May 3rd, 2016
5-7PM



CONTACTS

Board of Directors

Cris Yaw, Wendy Chord, Bob Taylor, Todd Jones and Eric Lindberg

Superintendent

Dr. Mark Mansell

Contact Information

District Office

263-2131 PO Box 1840/725 Highland Road
La Center, WA 98629

Elementary School

263-2134 PO Box 1810/700 E. 4th Street
La Center, WA 98629

Middle School

263-2136 PO Box 1750/700 E 4th Street
La Center, WA 98629

High School

263-1700 PO Box 1780/725 Highland Road
La Center, WA 98629

Community Education

Family and Community Resource Center