

What's news in Tahoma schools?

Presented as a community service by the VOICE of the Valley and Tahoma School District

School District highlights

Citizen committee seeks solutions to school overcrowding

Portable classrooms were moved onto the campus at Rock Creek Elementary School and Tahoma Junior High School during the summer, providing more seats for the two overcrowded schools. Though they provide a temporary solution, portable classrooms can't continue to absorb rising enrollment. Tahoma school campuses no longer have places to install them.

That is why a citizen committee is hard at work to identify ways to deal with rising enrollment. The committee, known as the Ad Hoc Student Housing Committee, has met during the summer to brainstorm, discuss and research alternative housing ideas. The committee was created after the school district's \$125 million construction bond measure failed last April. The bond was intended to add classroom and support space across the district and to pay for major maintenance work on existing schools.

The ad hoc committee has discussed a variety of potential alternatives that would enable schools to add students to existing spaces. Its work has even sparked a few rumors that Tahoma schools soon will adopt year-round, multi-track calendars or other major program and schedule shifts. And while everything is still on the table for discussion, no decisions will be made until the committee presents options to the Tahoma School Board this fall.

Preschool has openings

The pre-kindergarten class at Shadow Lake Elementary School has openings for children who are at least 4 years old by Aug. 31. Classes are limited to 12 students each.

The preschool program is focused on preparing children for kindergarten and is open to all Tahoma School District preschool children, regardless of which elementary school they will attend.

The program is held Monday through Thursday and lasts two-and-a-half hours each day. Students can sign up for mornings from 9:20 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. or afternoons from 12:50 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. The cost is \$210 per month, with a one-time \$25 registration fee.

To learn more about the program or to register, please contact the main office at Shadow Lake Elementary School by calling 425-413-6100.

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Principal brings experience, enthusiasm

McGrath eager to get year started at Cedar River MS

There will be many new faces in the building when Cedar River Middle School opens for the new school year on Sept. 6. One of those new faces is the school's principal, Kenneth "Andy" McGrath.

McGrath brings a wealth of experience to Cedar River, where he takes over for Mark Koch, who is now the school district's director of human resources. McGrath was a middle school principal in the White River School District, in Buckley, and in the Eatonville School District. He also served as an assistant principal and athletic director at Eatonville High School and taught high school math and coached soccer and tennis in Renton, most-



Andy McGrath calls Tahoma's education programs "a recipe for success."

ly at Lindbergh High School, for 13 years. Originally from Kent, where he graduated from Kentridge High School in 1975, McGrath and his family now live in Enumclaw. His wife, Julie, is an elementary school teacher in Enumclaw;

son Ryan is a freshman at St. Martin's University in Lacey and daughter Michelle is attending Enumclaw High School.

McGrath said he has been interested in Tahoma for many years and was an applicant for

the Cedar River Middle School principal's job the last time it opened. He wasn't looking for a change but happened to hear about the job opening and decided to pursue it.

"It was one of those things that I thought of as a challenge and I really wanted to do it," he said.

The next challenge for McGrath is getting to know the staff and students and becoming immersed in Tahoma's Classroom 10 education model. He said he likes what he has seen so far. "I think it's a recipe for success," he said, referring to Classroom 10 and the district's education philosophy.

The challenge now is to continue improving and finding new ways to succeed. "The message to our staff is let's not rest on our laurels," he said. "Let's keep getting better."

New staff members already hard at work

More than 20 new teaching and support staff are joining Tahoma School District this year. The newest members of Tahoma's professional teaching staff spent most of last week in training sessions to introduce them to the district and its educational programs.

There also are a few changes at the administrative level, beginning with new Human Resources director, Mark Koch, who was principal at Cedar River Middle School. Koch's predecessor, Bruce Zahradnik, is supervising the Transportation Department this year, following the resignation of former supervisor Doug Sander. Tahoma Junior High has a new dean of students, Chris Feist, who left his position as transition program director at Tahoma High School. Feist replaces Craig Johnson, who retired.

Here the new teachers and specialists that join Tahoma School District for the 2011-2012 school year:

Rock Creek Elementary:



Tahoma's newest teachers attended orientation sessions last week in preparation for the school year, which begins Sept. 6.

Stephanie Aliment, fourth grade; Kimberly Fitzpatrick, third grade; Alynne Greenwood, first grade; Katherine Gronowick, PE; Emily Kroll, fourth grade; Lindsay Rondeau, fourth grade; Alyson Holstein, special education.

Lake Wilderness Elementary: Cindy Hanson, first grade; Jill Reyes, special

education; ShyAnn Simmons, special education preschool.

Glacier Park Elementary: Katherine Gronowick, PE; Maret Unruh, fourth grade.

Cedar River Middle School: Paul Johnson, band; Kathryn Milburn, language arts.

Tahoma Middle School: Scott Hagensen, social studies, science; Paul Johnson, band.

Tahoma Junior High: Lara

Carlson, special education; Colin Connor, science; Christopher Russell, Spanish; David Baldock, band (one semester leave replacement for David Adams).

Tahoma High School: Francis Jequinto, math, science; Jack Ballard, alternative education.

Special Services: Teri Rupp, occupational therapist.

Classroom 10: It's Tahoma's approach to 21st Century basics

Thinking skills emphasized to give students tools to last a lifetime

The beginning of another school year means that it is time to get back to the basics; 21st Century basics, that is.

For Tahoma students, basic education is defined by the school district's Classroom 10 initiative. In Classroom 10, students learn thinking skills and Habits of Mind (thinking skills and traits identified by researcher and author Arthur Costa) that are designed to provide them with tools they can use the rest of their lives.

"Regardless of what path kids choose, we want them to be equipped with skills and abilities that serve them well," said Nancy Skerritt, assistant superintendent and director of the district's Teaching and Learning Department.

Skerritt helped develop Classroom 10, a term she coined years ago to illustrate the progression of how children are educated. Classroom one represents the typical system that was in place during the Industrial Revolution and into the middle of the 20th Century. Students were taught facts and were expected to memorize and repeat them. Classroom five was the next evolution, as education became more interactive. Students could get hands-on as they acquired knowledge in a more active way than simply listening to lectures or reading textbooks. Classroom 10 still requires students to obtain knowledge but it differs over previous educational approaches by also providing students with

thinking and reasoning skills.

Classroom 10 is aligned with state education standards and also points students toward achievement of the district's outcomes, which guide students to become self-directed learners, collaborative workers, effective communicators, community contributors, quality producers and complex thinkers. Tahoma students receive an enriched education that is designed to be flexible and long-lasting.

"We are not short-changing kids on basic content or learning," Skerritt said. "We've married our instruction in Habits of Mind and thinking skills with

content knowledge to create a rich curriculum."

Classroom 10 someday will evolve to meet changing education needs but its core principles will remain the same.

"The content will become outdated but thinking skills never become outdated," Skerritt said.

Skerritt said the Classroom 10 initiative is intended to meet the needs of fast-changing society, where flexibility is a key component of being successful. The basic elements of Classroom 10 were developed through years of research that relies on the work of experts in how people think and how they can adapt to future challenges. But it is grounded in practical outcomes that focus on concrete goals. Ultimately, it provides students with what they will need to compete and succeed in the workplace today and in the future.

"The biggest thing for me is, this prepares kids for the world

of work," Skerritt said. "It's not so much about a specific skill set or information, but it's more about them being able to think and respond to change."

Classroom 10 is part of every grade level in Tahoma schools as the district continues to develop and implement curriculum and teaching strategies related to it. New teachers, who attended orientation sessions during the week of Aug. 22, are being introduced to Classroom 10 as part of their required learning.

As the new teachers became familiar with Classroom 10 it was evident that they see value in using it as a tool to educate students.

"It seems like Tahoma uses content as a way to deliver skills that the students will use the rest of their lives," said Francis Jequinto, who will teach math and science at Tahoma High School this year. "It seems like a concrete example of what we want students to leave class with."



Skerritt