

May 2019

# PT SCHOOLS



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## School Funding: State and Local



by Dr. John Polm

In 2018, Washington state property owners saw an increase in their state property taxes to fund schools. The increase was legislated to resolve the “McCleary” lawsuit, which re-defined “ample” K-12 education funding as required by the State constitution. This increase, coupled with new local limits on levy amounts, created further confusion on how schools are funded.

Many of us are familiar with the McCleary lawsuit – originally filed in 2007 – as a continuous topic of discussion and Supreme Court review for several years. The Supreme Court ruled that Washington State had not been meeting its paramount duty to fully fund basic education. Finally, in 2018 the legislature committed new money to K-12 public education to meet the court’s standard, thus settling McCleary. Many citizens interpreted this to mean that K-12 schools would now have enough dollars to support everything we want our students to receive. But two basic problems appeared. First, the state-level increase on property taxpayers was coupled with a mandated decrease in local levy funding. This has meant there is less flexibility for districts to fund programs and services beyond what the state prototypical model<sup>1</sup> provides. The second problem is the prototypical model. The prototypical school funding model – codified in SHB 2776 – helped to define “basic education”. It includes specific funded categories with funds driven to schools for each category based on student enrollment and class size assumptions. Basically, it is a formula that generates staffing and other resources to schools, but because the formula doesn’t reflect local school district’s actual needs, the discrepancy is put back onto local levies which have been reduced.

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Student at Salish Coast conduct a waste audit to learn about the importance of composting to reduce waste traveling to a landfill.

## Building The Salish Coast Elementary School Garden

Thanks to a dedicated school garden committee, and garden coordinator “Farmer Emily,” Salish Coast Elementary school garden is starting to grow. This spring students participated in garden classes and are learning about the phases of developing a garden. Even when Salish Coast Elementary was under construction, students were planning for the new garden space.

Current 4th graders helped design what the garden will look like last year. This year those kids are moving around dirt and mulch in wheelbarrows to make their designs a reality. When completed, the fenced in garden is to be used as a teaching and learning garden and the mulched area in front of the school will be transformed into a production garden, growing produce for school meals.

Students the the elementary multiage program, OPEPO, are working with parent volunteer Chris Axling to design and build

benches and picnic tables for outdoor learning spaces and garden lessons. Support from local donors will help build a new garden shed and kiosk to replace the aging garden shed that was brought over from the old Grant Street garden.

Thanks to a Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools grant from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the high school and Salish Coast gardens both have commercial grade compost bins from Green Mountain Technology to turn food waste from all three school cafeterias and kitchens back into soil.

The composting project started this spring with a waste audit at Salish Coast by Lisa Olsen’s 4th grade class and OPEPO students with teacher Heather Sanders. School board director Laura Tucker works at the Jefferson County Environmental Public Health Department in solid and hazardous waste education and helped guide the waste audit. The process

started with students collecting all the trash from the school cafeteria after 500 students had eaten lunch for the day. Four trash cans were dumped out on a large tarp for students to sort into piles for compostable food waste, recycling, and trash. Through the waste audit, students saw that a significant portion of trash was compostable food waste. They will compile the data and provide suggestions to the compost committee. Salish Coast plans to pilot composting throughout the spring and expand composting to the other two schools in the fall.

An additional grant from the Tri-Area Garden club will be used to support new tools for students as they build the new garden. Interested volunteers who may want to join the garden committee can email Emily Hiatt, ehiatt@ptschools.org. Volunteers are needed at garden work parties throughout the summer and beyond.

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The increased investment in school funding has been largely focused on compensation for teachers and other staff members. According to the National Education Association (NEA), the Washington State compensation has been around 24th or 25th in the nation.<sup>2</sup> The recent state increase significantly helps, but unfortunately the increase is not for all employees. Nor does the state pay for any staffing beyond what is called for by the prototypical model. Serious gaps remain. The most significant gaps in underfunding are in special education, counseling, nursing, and other staff supports. Other areas include paraprofessionals, custodians, technology specialists, maintenance workers, and administrators. This means that in Port Townsend, we are funded for about half of the classified employees we need. This includes people who work as secretaries, paraprofessionals and custodians. While the new legislation resulted in an increase of state funding for education, some districts face significant decreases in local funding. Port Townsend has relatively high property values, which keeps our rates low<sup>3</sup>

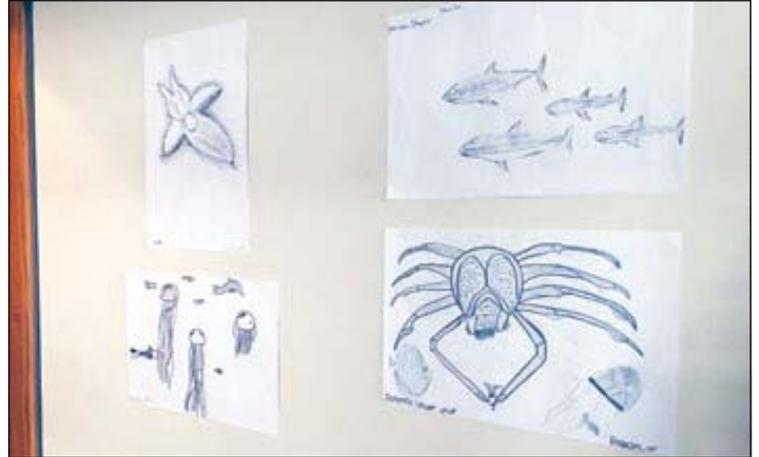
and helps us avoid some dramatic financial impacts facing some other districts. However, property poor districts cannot make up the loss of local revenue and are now proposing significant cuts in personnel and programs. Without a legislative fix, these district leaders are bracing for cuts to staff and programs in the coming years in order to maintain financial viability. There are several districts making cuts.<sup>4-6</sup>

Port Townsend is fortunate and our district is thankful for the community's support of its schools. By approving levies and the school construction bond, developing community partnerships and volunteers, and nurturing a strong professional, certificated and classified staff, the school district's ability to provide and support our community's children has been greatly enhanced even in these times of constricting funding.

The chart below has been provided by the Jefferson County Assessor's office. It shows the rate per thousand that district's ratepayers are providing for local schools. As a district, we will continue to be diligent, thoughtful and good stewards of the resources we receive.

WHAT PROPERTY TAXPAYERS PAY FOR SCHOOLS IN PORT TOWNSEND SCHOOL DISTRICT				
	RATE PER THOUSAND OF ASSESSED VALUE			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
STATE SCHOOL REGULAR LEVY	\$2.03	\$1.90	\$1.87	\$1.80
STATE SCHOOL NEW LEVY*	-	\$1.04	\$0.70	\$1.00
PTSD BOND	\$1.18	\$1.12	\$0.92	\$0.80
PTSD OPERATIONS LEVY**	\$1.55	\$1.53	\$1.06	\$1.08***
PTSD CAPITAL PROJECTS LEVY	-	-	-	\$0.45***
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$4.76</b>	<b>\$5.59</b>	<b>\$4.55</b>	<b>\$5.13</b>
*Added by McCleary Decision 2018 full funding, and a \$0.30 drop for 2019 only				
**Reduced as offset by McCleary Decision starting 2019 establishing new limitations				
*** February 2019 Vote				

1. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.260>
2. [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2017\\_Rankings\\_and\\_Estimates\\_Report-FINAL-SECURED.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2017_Rankings_and_Estimates_Report-FINAL-SECURED.pdf)
3. <http://test.co.jefferson.wa.us/WebLinkExternal/0/edoc/1952084/Value,%20Levy%20and%20Data%20for%20Tax%20Year%202019.pdf>
4. [http://www.ifiberonewsradio.com/news/local\\_news/shelton-school-district-announces-proposed-layoffs-budget-cuts/article\\_3ab15cc2-6554-11e9-ad56-0fad2d6a737a.html](http://www.ifiberonewsradio.com/news/local_news/shelton-school-district-announces-proposed-layoffs-budget-cuts/article_3ab15cc2-6554-11e9-ad56-0fad2d6a737a.html)
5. [https://tdn.com/news/local/longview-school-board-approves-budget-cuts/article\\_fe2574cd-090b-506c-88e0-ca0f72ae561c.html](https://tdn.com/news/local/longview-school-board-approves-budget-cuts/article_fe2574cd-090b-506c-88e0-ca0f72ae561c.html)
6. <https://www.kxly.com/news/standing-room-only-for-public-meeting-on-proposed-mead-school-district-cuts/1071528195>



Fifth grade student drawings created through lessons with teaching artist, Jessie Watson, on display at the Northwest Maritime Center.

## PT Artscape in the Schools

PT Artscape began in 1988 as a collaboration between the schools and the community in response to the limited arts offerings at that time. Through this continued partnership and a district commitment of levy funding, music and visual arts is available to all students, including weekly visual arts and music classes for preschool through fifth grade students as well as a variety of music and visual arts offerings at the middle and high schools. Through the support of an annual grant award from the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) and local fundraising, PT Artscape has provided support for the visual and dramatic arts across the Port Townsend Public Schools.

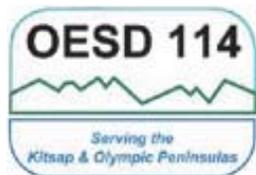
PT Artscape enhances the curriculum through bringing local artists into the classroom to work with students and teachers, supporting arts enrichment activities in the school day and providing opportunities for students to share their artwork with the community. This year, teaching artists Jesse Joshua Watson, an artist and illustrator, and Margie McDonald, a sculptor and wearable sculpture artist, have taught PT Artscape funded art lessons. Margie worked with high school students on their maritime-themed wearable art pieces, several of which were in the November 2018 Port Townsend Wearable Art Student Show. One of the many projects Jesse participated in this year was a collaboration with the 5th grade classroom teachers to provide drawing lessons to students as part of their yearlong study of Ocean Acidification. Jesse remarked, "One of my favorite aspects of this exchange is sharing my personal enthusiasm for visual art with these students. I often highlight

individual expression and perspective as a key element in successful artwork. Lots of kids struggle with some areas of school and feel like they are constantly being told what to do and how to do it, but within the arts, they get a chance to be in charge of their expression. It is their creation and they get to determine what it should look like and when it is finished."

Throughout the month of May the creativity of Port Townsend students is celebrated through the annual month-long Art Wave exhibit where student art work is showcased in business across Port Townsend. In June, Perspectives – a compendium of children's creative efforts, student art, and literary work is published as a four-page insert in The Port Townsend Leader. With support from PT Artscape, Blue Heron 6th graders participate annually in Tales, Texts & Theater, a week-long arts immersion program at Centrum. The program concludes with a student showcase for families and the community in the Wheeler Theater at Fort Worden.

To learn more and view lesson plans visit [ptartscape.com](http://ptartscape.com).

*Thank you Helen Gumm, Dawn Pierson, and Wanda LeClerc for organizing the May Art Wave; Brett Nevin for coordinating publication of Perspectives; PT Schools staff, teachers, teaching artists; PT Main Street, Centrum, December Kiwanis Choo Choo rides, the Food Co-op Beans for Bags, painted chair affair auctions, and the Port Townsend community for 21 years of PT Artscape support.*



# Community Partnerships Expand Support for Student Wellness

Port Townsend School District has many strong community partnerships that support a culture of wellness for Port Townsend students. Here are a few:

## Port Townsend Empowered Teens Coalition

Partnering with Port Townsend School District, Jefferson County Public Health secured a WA Health Care Authority grant to fund a community coalition that supports Port

Townsend students. The coalition, known as the Empowered Teens Coalition, brings together community members who lend their expertise and passion to assess current community resources and develop a strategic action plan. This plan will help create an environment where it's easy for youth to make healthy choices and avoid alcohol, vaping, marijuana and other drugs. Examples of potential activities from the plan include: prevention education at local schools, community events, and building additional resources for

students and parents. Parents can find tips about talking to kids at [www.starttalkingnow.org](http://www.starttalkingnow.org) or by visiting [jeffersoncountypublichealth.org](http://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org). Interested in joining this effort, we need your voice, contact Lindsay Scalf at Jefferson County Public Health: [Lscalf@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:Lscalf@co.jefferson.wa.us)

## Student Assistance Professional

Through a partnership with Olympic Educational Services District 114, Port Townsend School District gained two full-time positions funded in part by a WA Health Care Authority grant. The Student Assistance Professionals (SAPS) in both Port Townsend High School and Blue Heron School provide support for Port Townsend students at risk of substance use. The SAPS will organize school-wide awareness activities related to substance abuse prevention; provide counseling support, coaching, and referral to students who are at risk of dropping out of school or who are impacted by alcohol, tobacco, and drug use/abuse. They will also deliver proven effective curriculum in classroom settings or small groups. Additionally SAPS can provide information and guidance to parents on effective strategies to support their child to be successful and make healthy choices. Contact Blue Heron or Port Townsend High School for more information about Student Assistance Professionals.

## School Based Health Center

For over a decade the School Based Health Center (SBHC) has been providing both physical and mental health services to students on campus at Port Townsend High School. This strong partnership between Port Townsend School District, Jefferson County Public Health, and Jefferson Healthcare makes it easy for students to access confidential healthcare. School based centers meet the unique needs of adolescents and promote lifelong wellness by providing access to high-quality, comprehensive health services and education in a safe, nurturing on-campus environment. It's like having a doctor's office in the schools. SBHC services include: Sports Physicals, Acute Illness / Injury, Stress Management, behavioral health services, and Wellness and Nutrition, etc. SBHC staff are trained to understand and treat

the health care needs of teens and include a nurse practitioner, a mental health counselor and office assistant. The care is coordinated with the teen's primary care providers where appropriate, including the school nurse and local physicians. SBCH accepts all insurances for physical health services; however, students will not be turned away because of inability to pay. Mental health services are covered by local tax revenues and are not billed to patients. For more information about the SBHC visit [https://highschool.ptschools.org/general\\_info/pts\\_school-based\\_health\\_clinic](https://highschool.ptschools.org/general_info/pts_school-based_health_clinic). Students can make an appointment at the SBHC office on campus or by calling Jefferson County Public Health at 360-385-9400.

## Wellness Committee

Healthy students are better learners. The Wellness Committee guides the implementation of the district's overhauled Wellness Policy 6700 -- adopted in 2014 -- that encompasses this district's nutritional standards, education and promotion; physical education and activity, parameters on fundraising and the sale of foods at school concession stands. The Port Townsend School District Wellness Committee is a partnership of the Port Townsend School District, staff and parents, students, teachers, public health, health professionals, and other interested citizens. Students benefit from the many community partnerships that support student health. For more information contact Port Townsend School District Food Service Manager, Stacey Larsen: [slarsen@ptschools.org](mailto:slarsen@ptschools.org).

Brandi Hageman's PTHS AP Biology students utilize the newly acquired Polymerase Chain Reaction Machine (PCR) to extract DNA from their cheek cells. Researching their inheritable ability to taste bitterness, this experiment relied on equipment awarded to the Science department in 2017 and 2019 (PCR Machine and Mini One Gel Electrophoresis) from the Port Townsend Education Foundation.

It's the grant that keeps on giving!

## School Board Directors

The Port Townsend School District has five school board directors that serve four year terms. Each position is elected by all the voters within the school district's boundaries. In 2018, district voters approved a measure allowing for the Director Districts to be redrawn into three geographic district and two at-large positions. For director positions in Districts 1, 2 and 3, the elected director must reside in the geographic district. For the at-large positions 4 and 5, the director may live anywhere within the Port Townsend School District boundaries. This year, Director positions 2, 3, and 5 are up for election in November. Directors Keith White and Laura Tucker will not be seeking re-election. For more information about the school board director district maps visit: [ptschools.org/directors](http://ptschools.org/directors).



Director District 1, Connie Welch Board Chairperson

Ms. Welch grew up in Port Townsend and is a graduate of Port Townsend High School. Her graduation photograph hangs in the high school on the third floor. She attended Washington State University,

with post graduate work at Seattle Pacific University. For more than 25 years, Connie taught in Port Townsend School District in grades one through six. Connie became interested in joining the school board when she recognized the many important issues facing the district, including a bond for the new elementary school, and hiring of a new superintendent. "I know the challenges and joys of teaching and working with students. I understand the inner workings of this district and believe passionately in providing the best possible experiences for all. I enjoy the work and feel this is for me the best contribution I can make at this time to our community," says Ms. Welch.

A school board director's primary responsibility is to steer the direction and mission of the district, approve budgets, hire and evaluate the superintendent and establish policies. Directors attend two board meetings a month and also sit on committees, Connie currently serves as Board Chair and participates in the technology committee, instructional materials committee, and periodically reviews accounts payable. School board meetings are held the first and third Thursday of the month at 5:30pm in the Gael Start Building, 1610 Blaine Street.

# Port Townsend Education Foundation Grants for Biology Research Equipment



Brandi Hageman's PTHS AP Biology students utilize the newly acquired Polymerase Chain Reaction Machine (PCR) to extract DNA from their cheek cells. Researching their inheritable ability to taste bitterness, this experiment relied on equipment awarded to the Science department in 2017 and 2019 (PCR Machine and Mini One Gel Electrophoresis) from the Port Townsend Education Foundation. It's the grant that keeps on giving!

Port School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

Title IX Coordinator, Laurie McGinnis 360-379-4602, lmcginnis@ptschools.org	ADA Coordinator, Sandy Gessner 360-379-4267, sgessner@ptschools.org
Section 504 Coordinator, Shelby MacMeekin 360-379-0166, smacmeekin@ptschools.org	Compliance Coordinator, Amy Khile 360-379-4603, akhile@ptschools.org
Mailing address: 1610 Blaine Street Port Townsend, WA 98368	

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## Teaching Environmental Stewardship

The Port Townsend School District mission is for all students to engage in community focused maritime place-based projects, to demonstrate meaningful accomplishments as engaged citizens. This can clearly be seen in the diverse environmental stewardship projects happening across the district with the support of community partners.

Salish Coast students in first and second grade start the school year by visiting Chimacum Creek to see the salmon running. There they learn about a nature preserve and the importance of salmon in the ecosystem with Jefferson Land Trust. In the spring students raise salmon eggs, and then return to the same creek site in the to release salmon fry.

In fourth grade, students visit the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe where they study habitat restoration along Jimmycomelately Creek. Students learn about how the environment is both culturally and economically important to the Jamestown S'Klallam people.

Alongside the staff and volunteer of the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, all seventh grade students participate in a year long study of salmon habitat restoration. Students apply their learning, by designing their own riparian restoration plot, and then put their plan into action planting trees and native plants.

With the support of a NOAA Bay and Watershed Education and Training grant, fifth graders and high school students study ocean acidification. To start the project high school students teach fifth graders, and help prepare the fifth graders to write an essay on the causes and impacts of ocean acidification. As a part of this project, high school students have an opportunity for hands-on learning with the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. The project culminates with a Climate Summit where students share their learning with families and the community.

These unique place-based learning experiences, supported by community partners and volunteers, mean that students in Port Townsend are taking on important roles as environmental stewards and are prepared to be engaged citizens.



Salish Coast Students release their salmon fry into Chimacum Creek.



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