A community vision takes shape

During the 2014-2015 school year, the community of Camas came together to pause, reflect, and focus on what’s most important for the future of our school district – today through 2020.

District leaders, staff members, and stakeholders found that developing a strategic plan is as much about the journey as it is the outcome. Together, our district 2020 vision represents the collective thoughts, needs, and aspirations of all stakeholders. Our plan came into focus based on feedback from hundreds of interviews, online surveys, workshops, meetings and listening posts. We collected data from the school board, parent, student, staff, business and community groups. The critical information guided the formation of Our 2020 Vision, which includes priorities, goals and objectives, tasks and timelines – all woven into a detailed action plan.

Our 2020 Vision is a living document. It will be continually adjusted based on feedback and circumstances. It will help us allocate resources, continue to improve instruction practices and enhance student achievement. It will guide us in budgeting and planning for our facility needs to create the best learning environments for today’s educational programs.

This edition of the Camas Flyer provides information about the important work of a community-wide committee of volunteers. Read on to find out more about their work and some exciting next steps!
Focusing on caring, quality & growth

The three main goals of Our 2020 Vision will strengthen current student supports and drive new initiatives focused on maximizing student learning.

TOGETHER WE CARE ABOUT EACH LEARNER and will provide high quality instruction that results in continuous growth and academic success for all students.

1. Promote kindergarten readiness and successful K-3 transitions with proactive assessment and early interventions to establish a firm educational foundation.
2. Ensure alignment between learning goals, curriculum resources, and an assessment system that provides formative data for staff.
3. Provide differentiated instruction and a rich, aligned curriculum that drives student engagement, joy, and accountability, meeting high expectations through demonstrated achievement.
4. Highlight varied pathways by linking student guidance—via partnerships, mentoring and district resources—to the knowledge and life skills necessary to excel in post-secondary pursuits.

TOGETHER WE CREATE A QUALITY SCHOOL CLIMATE that fosters a culture of encouragement and celebrates student success at all levels. The environment is focused on the needs and aspirations of the whole child—enabling a climate of mutual respect, inspired learning, and the development of character and life skills.

1. Empower parents by encouraging participation and by providing supportive tools, facilitating student motivation and academic success.
2. Engage learning partners in the community which includes students, families, businesses, local government, and higher education.
3. Hire and retain inspirational teachers, supported by an innovative and collaborative framework that encourages professional growth.
4. Provide tools and role modeling to help students maximize their learning.
5. Create and maintain safe environments that promote learning.

TOGETHER WE EMBRACE A GROWTH MINDSET and systems that sustain that growth.

1. Establish trust through effective stewardship and intentional, transparent communication that defines the optimal use of district resources and creative solutions.
2. Undertake a collaborative, inclusive growth planning process that addresses facility needs and clearly defines the district’s challenges and opportunities, proposing creative solutions and an effective timeline that best serves our students.
3. Embrace technology as an engine for student growth and district efficiencies in ways that are bold, innovative and seamless.
What does the future hold for Camas schools? That is the question Camas School District has been asking stakeholders all year long. Earlier in the year, community leaders, board members, parents, and staff members responded to a series of general questions designed to help guide priorities for students and assure they have the best facilities in which to learn and grow - well into the future.

After receiving broad survey input from stakeholders last year, about fifty community members stepped up to take the next step in the journey to participate in an in-depth study of the district’s facility needs and identify priorities for the future.

A community-driven planning process was critical to district leaders. “We want everyone who has a stake in this community to examine what education can look like and have a say in our future,” said Mike Nerland, Superintendent.

Data-driven assessment of learning needs

The Facilities Advisory Community of Teachers, Staff, Students (FACTSS) methodically poured over data on all of Camas schools including safety, enrollment projections, building capacities, building utilization, the physical condition of school buildings, and the district’s debt capacity.

Eight different subcommittees helped gather the data by looking into needs across the district including projected capacity at every Camas school; safety and security issues; technology needs; renovation and modernization of schools; stadium, fields and transportation needs; and potential property acquisition.

The subcommittees had their work cut out for them. Each was charged with answering:

» What challenges need to be solved?
» What is the process for developing recommendations?
» What are the best recommendations based on data?
» What are the priorities?
» What is the estimated cost?

“It’s definitely been a collaborative effort. We have people with technical expertise in education, technology, and growth projection to name a few. We have people from the public who bring a different perspective and think outside the box,” says FACTSS co-chair Phil Bourquin who is also the City of Camas’ Community Development Director.

Growth on the horizon

High on the list of challenges is the anticipated growth in student enrollment. By 2020, the number of students in the district is expected to jump from 5,628 in 2010 to 6,566 in 2015 and 7,492 in 2020.

Community input helps District bring priorities for future into focus
Community input helps District bring priorities for future into focus (continued)

today’s 6,566 students to 7,492 students – a 12% overall increase. Planning for this increase takes collaboration with community, business, and city officials. “Knowing where new home construction is planned takes a lot of coordination with the City. Which areas are expected to be impacted by growth will help drive where new schools are built,” said Bourquin. “Whenever possible, the City likes to have new neighborhoods border both parks and schools.”

It’s clear there is need to address the number of unhoused students, especially at the secondary level. “There has been a great deal of discussion about how to accommodate so many high school students in Camas. The committee has looked at adding a second comprehensive high school, a magnet campus, a ninth-grade campus, and even some very creative ideas related to grade-level configuration. Some ideas have been ruled out for various reasons, but we’re still evaluating several options,” commented co-chair Alicia Brazington.

Building safety and security an important priority

The Safety & Security subcommittee is studying school building entry systems with the goal that all visitors enter at one location. Some current Camas schools were built in the California-style of open campus architecture which can be problematic. The committee will recommend a variety of controlled-access scenarios along with other safety improvements for the School Board to consider.

Replacement, relocation and new roofs needed

The Elementary School subcommittee has a list of priorities that includes relocating and replacing the aging 60 year-old Lacamas Heights Elementary. “Our committee proposes to relocate the Lacamas Heights farther north of Lacamas Lake, which makes sense due to current and proposed development in that area,” said subcommittee co-chair Whitney Henion.

Also, two buildings are in need of new roofs including the 33 year-old Dorothy Fox Elementary and the Jack, Will & Rob Boys and Girls Club according to the Renovation and Modernization subcommittee.

It’s all about the learning

Deputy Superintendent Jeff Snell stressed that teaching and learning priorities are crucial to the decisions and recommendations made by the FACTSS sub-committees. “This is an opportunity to leverage growth and learning at the same time. How we teach and how students learn, especially with changes in technology, can always be improved upon,” said Snell. “Our school spaces must be adaptable to student needs. We need to be flexible in what we build,” he added.

Community feedback helps problem-solve

Community input has been an invaluable part of the long-term visioning process. “I’ve been very pleased with this planning process. Breaking it down by subject makes the work more manageable, said Elementary School subcommittee co-chair Whitney Henion.

“Teams analyzed the data and create detailed plans. It was exciting to see what the committees presented to the group to put together a comprehensive plan for the next bond cycle so we can ensure a great future for kids in Camas schools,” she added.

Following the FACTSS committee’s recommendations to the Board, the public input process will continue. There will be opportunities to weigh in on the recommendations through survey and feedback posts.

Based on all available information, recommendations and public input, the Board may eye a construction bond in February 2016.

For more information on the FACTSS Committee’s process and findings, visit the Camas School District website: http://www.camas.wednet.edu/factss/
FOCUS ON: Outstanding Students

Camas High School senior to be published in neuroscience journal

SENIOR RACHEL Greene, who attends the Math, Science, Technology (MST) Magnet Program at CHS, is soon to be published in The Journal of Neuroscience for her research exploring the efficacy of exercise as treatment for Parkinson’s Disease.

Greene, who was an intern of Oregon Health & Sciences University research department, will be given co-author credit in the July, 2015 issue of the prestigious journal. Greene explained, “Using a mouse model of Parkinson’s disease (PD), I analyzed a number of PD and exercise-related proteins, namely tyrosine hydroxylase, in the brain using western blotting and immunohistochemistry procedures. However, I did not find data suggesting that exercise is an effective method to alter the progression of the disease.”

Greene is the third MST Magnet student to be published in major journals this year. The internship programs offer students real-life research experience and mentorship in a professional environment. Greene plans to attend Northwestern University next fall and study biological science with an emphasis in neurobiology. ❖
Dear Camas Patrons,

As I write this letter, it’s a beautiful, sunny day and kids of all ages are outside enjoying the sports fields, parks, playgrounds, and wonderful amenities that make Camas a great place to live, learn, work, and play. I want you to know that inside our schools, our 6,500+ students have thrived this year and we can celebrate a very positive and productive 2014-2015 school year.

This month marks my 10th year as your Superintendent, and I believe I have one of the best jobs in the world. Although it’s not always been easy, together we tackle challenges, face obstacles, and garner successes. In 10 years on the job, I’ve talked a lot about community - and that’s what I love most about Camas. Our education community extends far beyond the classroom walls and into offices, churches, homes, and businesses. Everywhere I see daily visual reminders that it takes all of us to make a difference in the lives of our students. It takes parents, families, teachers, custodians, bus drivers and food service workers. It takes para-educators and office staff, school board members, leaders, citizens, and business representatives. It takes personal relationships, determination and sacrifices. And Camas gives its best to its students – every day.

As the Class of 2015 takes the next step in life’s journey, I hope these graduates will think fondly of their time in Camas Schools and never forget this incredible community that helped shape them. Our graduates will become doctors, researchers, journalists, artists, actors, educators, technicians, and musicians. They will be business owners and accountants. They will serve our country and raise our next generation. No matter what they do, they will have one thing in common – they were part of the Camas community.

This issue of the Camas Flyer focuses on “Our 2020 Vision,” a comprehensive strategic plan that took all of us to create.

How do we continue to assure Camas remains the best? This issue of the Camas Flyer focuses on “Our 2020 Vision,” a comprehensive strategic plan that took all of us to create. And it will take all of us to fulfill the aggressive goals and objectives it contains, to make our great schools even better in the future. Indeed, it takes a community to educate, nurture and serve our students. And I’m honored to be part of this wonderful Camas community.

Sincerely,

Mike Nerland
Superintendent