

ANACORTES SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Anacortes Pride

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OCTOBER 2023



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## Ready for a new year



The 2023-24 school year has been off to a smooth start! Staff around the district welcomed students back and quickly got to work on establishing classroom routines, building a positive culture, and setting students up for a successful school year.



Top to bottom, left to right: AMS students Alex Pelletier and Audrey Garcia; AMS Assistant Principal Erica McColl and Brennen Redding, a student success coach from Communities in Schools, high-five student Farren Henry; Island View teacher Emily Mansfield works with Toben Schneider; Hugo Dole and Mia Schmitt-Rodriguez work together in Lisa Crinklaw's classroom.

## Grants fund mental health professional

### NWESD, Anacortes Schools Foundation grants provide full-time elementary MHP

It's been three years since elementary schools have had a mental health professional (MHP) in their buildings, not for lack of trying. The district had secured funding, but could not fill the position, despite multiple postings.

This year, through grant funding from the Northwest Educational Service District (NWESD) 189 and the Anacortes Schools Foundation, the district was able to contract a full-time elementary MHP. Abi Yrorita splits her time between Fidalgo, Mt. Erie and Island View elementaries. While this is her first year in the role, she has had five years experience in school settings.

The intention of this position, according to Assistant Superintendent Becky Clifford, is to provide services to students with the highest clinical need who are not able to access outside

sources. The district provides social-emotional learning (SEL) programs for all students (tier 1) and specific SEL interventions for some students (tier 2). Students with mental health needs beyond what can be provided by school staff (tier 3) now have access during the school day to clinical mental health interventions.

"We are grateful to be able to provide access to necessary services by removing barriers [no insurance required and no out-of-town travel]," Clifford said.

What exactly does a mental health therapist do? Before a student is scheduled with Yrorita, a staff member (usually the counselor) must complete a referral. Counselors meet weekly with Yrorita to go over referrals.

MHP  
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AHS seniors Lilly Prue, Wesley Hunter, and Clara Jeong worked together with staff, students, and community members to bring the AHS alma mater back to life.

## Art brings clarity to AHS Alma Mater

### Previously missing from new gymnasium, student-led mural project now displays lyrics

"Long ago our Seahawks fought for fame for purple and white..."

For the last couple of years, the AHS Alma Mater has predominantly been mumbled by students until the final rallying line of "Anacortes High." Thanks to efforts of the leadership class and art club, with generous donations from the community, this is no longer the case.

When senior Lilly Prue was a freshman, she had no clue the school even had an alma mater, and when the band played the tune at pep assemblies and home games, she, along with her classmates, moved their lips but had no idea what the actual words to the song were.

Prior to the gym renovation, the words were painted on the wall of the visitor stands, so

students and AHS fans could easily sing along at home events. But the new gym walls remained blank. Students returning from COVID noticed immediately at the first assembly that the lyrics were missing.

Senior Wesley Hunter, who

ALMA MATER  
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## Anacortes·Pride

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# Shout Outs



AMS ELA teacher Melinda Moore received a shout out for her warmth and positivity.

## DOESN'T GIVE UP

We would love to give a shout out for all the work Victoria Obermeier has done with Kache and other students. She's a great teacher and person. She deserves it. Doesn't give up on her students and finds different ways to keep them interacting with each other and their school work.

— April Rogers, parent

## OVER AND BEYOND

Shout out to Breanna Bulteri, AMS 7th grader, for going over and beyond on her history class project, creating her own ancient civilization, and getting a 100%. Her teacher even said she wanted to use it as an example for future classes.

— JK Krowl, parent

## A SAFE PLACE

I would personally love to give a big shout out to Mrs. Riccardi. Both my daughter and I were very nervous about how starting kindergarten was going to go, but she has been absolutely wonderful in being a safe place for my daughter when she's been nervous and being patient with all the kids and giving everyone the attention they need. I have been very impressed and very grateful for the comfort her skills have provided both me and my daughter in starting school for the first time!

— Breanna Borlin, parent



Romany Kerr

## AN EXCELLENT TRAINING SESSION

A huge shout out to Romany Kerr for taking the time to put together and host an excellent training session for all the new AHS SABA reps. It was well presented, much needed and will be very useful moving forward. Thanks for all you do Romany!

— Stephanie Hunt

## CREATIVE, ORGANIZED AND COMPASSIONATE

Shannon Gilbert has been an absolutely wonderful addition to Anacortes Middle School. Her creativity, undaunted work ethic, organized consistency and sincere compassion are a true gift for her students. And she managed to fit in a baking activity within a shortened, thirty minute class time! Holy cow!

— Eric Mithen, paraeducator

## A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

Shout out to ALL the Island View Eagles and their families for supporting our Chocolate Bar Fundraiser! Special thanks to the volunteers in the PTA office for their help keeping this incredible effort going--Falon Hudson, mother of three Eagles, dove in and helped immensely. Thank you all!

— Molly Johnson, parent

## WONDERFUL ISLAND VIEW TEACHERS

I would like to thank all the teachers I have had so far, they are all so great I cannot put it into words. Ms. Shainin, Mr. Lincoln, Ms. Ross, and Mrs. Dotzauer are the best and they help us so much. They make learning the subject a lot easier and more fun. I am so glad that they are here at Island View, they have made my years here so great! Thank you Ms. Shainin, Mr. Lincoln, Ms. Ross, and Ms. Dotzauer for being so wonderful.

— Caitlin Worthington, Island View student

## ALWAYS PATIENT AND KIND

Shout out to Naun Gallardo in tech. He is always patient and kind when helping staff with technology problems. He is easy to talk to, and always cheerful. It is a stressful job, but he never seems to mind our questions!

— Kim Dotzauer, Island View teacher



"Allie (Pangelinan) helped me feel better when I felt sad and got hurt on the swing. She walked with me and put her arm around my shoulder."

— Liam Cox, Mt Erie 1st grader

## AN OUTGOING ROCKSTAR

So much gratitude and appreciation for all Torhil Ramsay has done for the district and for keeping the show running smoothly. If I ever had an issue or a question, Torhil had the answer or offered to find one. She will be greatly missed!

— Aimee Rudge, AHS Assessment Coordinator

This shout out goes to Torhil Ramsay. It seems that we get used to saying goodbye to colleagues in this work. I can say without exception, Torhil will be greatly missed by so many of our ASD family and that saying goodbye to her is very difficult. Day in and day out, Torhil has been a tremendous

source of support and encouragement to so many. I can't tell you how many times someone has said, just ask Torhil, she will know the answer. Anacortes has been blessed to have her dedicate so much of herself to our staff, students and families. Thank you, Torhil. We are a better district because of you.

— Kevin Schwartz, Mt. Erie Principal

## WONDERFUL POSITIVITY

Mrs. Melinda Moore showed warm and welcoming hospitality to our granddaughter Sophie in her first week of middle school. I also felt that wonderful positivity during the parent orientation. We appreciate you, Melinda!

— The Coyne family

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

# Hope shines through as ASD makes progress

In recent editions of the Pride, we've had the chance to explore the myriad opportunities available to our students. Each article emphasizes the outstanding prospects we offer, ensuring our students thrive despite financial challenges faced by our district and across the state. We trust that you have enjoyed and continue to be inspired by what our students can access and accomplish. We are proud of them,



Dr. Justin Irish, Superintendent

and we know you are too.

Our spring academic data from the state brings hope, revealing significant progress. We consistently surpass state averages - which underscores our dedication and commitment to our students' success. Despite continued funding shortfalls that present formidable challenges, we persevere in providing students with high-quality education.

Hope resides in the voices of our students, who have demonstrated that what they are learning truly matters to them. Furthermore, hope thrives in the inclusive and caring environment we have fostered within our community. Students are not just faces in a crowd; they are

known and valued for their individuality. Our community members, including parents, guardians, neighbors, and staff, have come together to ensure that every student receives the support they need to succeed academically and emotionally.

In this environment of support and care, hope shines brightly as our students achieve academic success. They demonstrate that with the right resources, guidance, and a nurturing staff and community, they can overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Our students' achievements are a testament to the strength of our district and the hope that propels us forward, no matter the challenges we may face.

Hope also lies in our collective ability to overcome adversity. Our community has demonstrated remarkable unity and resilience, enduring challenges such as the financial constraints districts across the state of Washington experience. Through these hardships, we've emerged stronger as a community, and our students continue to thrive.

Hope isn't born from an absence of challenges but from our determination to conquer them together. As superintendent, I have immense belief in our collective strength and resilience. Together, we can navigate these challenges, ensuring a continued bright and promising future for our students.



# Athletic directors partner for student success

## Middle, high school ADs stress importance of putting studies first



Athletics and Activities Director Justin Portz believes that sports and clubs build students' character and pride.

Students who are involved in extracurricular activities are 57 percent more likely to graduate than their peers who don't participate in a sport or club. They attend 21 more days of school per year on average. They are 49 percent less likely to use drugs, and they perform 50 percent better on standardized tests.

These stats, which come by way of the 2023 WIAA Athletic Directors Conference, are impressive, no doubt. But what drives the philosophy of Anacortes High School's new athletics and activities director (AD) Justin Portz, is heart. For him, all roads lead back to strong character. The same goes for Assistant Principal Erica McColl, the new AD at Anacortes Middle School. They both know that sports and clubs enrich students' educational experiences.

McColl stresses to her middle-school athletes that they are student athletes, with the "student" coming first.

"There's pride and ownership when students wear their uniform, on the field and off. They know they've worked hard to earn the right to wear it, either academical-

ly or behaviorally, and they hold each other accountable," she said. "Having an 'A' on their chest means they're representing something bigger than themselves: their peers, their school, their families, and their community."

For Portz, it's all about building relationships, with all the kids on the team/club, not just the first string. He urges his coaches and advisors to build trust with their players, then coach. Not vice versa.

"You'll get so much more from kids if you get to know the person before the player," Portz said.

Portz has worked hard himself to build relationships and trust with the coaches and advisors, to listen, and to support them.

Choir director Carole Leander appreciates the support she has already felt from the new AD.

"To have a fresh set of eyes and ideas on some of our athletic/



AMS Assistant Principal Erica McColl (pictured with William Boger and Jennie Barton) works with students to prepare them for both competition and academics.

activities systems has been helpful. It is clear from how he has tackled the job so far that he desires to support all of our AHS programs in order to continue providing excellent opportunities through athletics and activities that get kids connected to school and positive experiences," Leander said.

The role of an AD is layered, said Portz. Scheduled games and practices, reserving facility space and transportation, hiring and evaluating coaches and advisors, and securing officials for each game are a few of the job requirements. Fortunately, Portz and McColl have assistants who provide immeasurable help in Kirsty Croghan

and Rachel Esposito, respectively.

There's also a partnership between the middle and high school that helps set middle schoolers up for success at the high school as athletes, performers and learners. AMS students know that McColl and Portz are in communication and that what they do in middle school can affect them in high school

McColl has invited high school coaches to come have lunch with the middle schoolers simply to start forming these relationships. Likewise, Portz has invited and encouraged middle school coaches to get to know the high school coaches. When possible, the coaches from both schools attend each other's practices and games.

One of the goals of middle school athletics, McColl said, is to be a preview of what's to come.

"We want them to know the expectations and to look forward to all the great opportunities ahead of them," McColl said.

A long-term goal is to offer athletic study hall during

practice time so that middle school students can keep up, bring up their grades and also get practice time. McColl notes that currently, only seventh- and eighth-grade students can participate in athletics because many of the schools AMS competes with do not have a sixth grade in their schools. However, she added that a golf club will be starting later in the year and will be open to sixth-grade students.

Budget cuts have taken their toll on all areas in every school, and athletics is no exception. Increased participation fees have helped cushion the blow, according to Portz. But cost should never be a barrier.

"We want athletics, activities and clubs to be accessible to all," he said. "We encourage families to fill out the fee waiver/free and reduced lunch form because this waives all fees, including sports participation," Portz said.

For more information about fee waiver forms, contact Juanita Malstberger at [jmalstberger@asd103.org](mailto:jmalstberger@asd103.org).

## District continues to proactively plan for budget shortfall

The Anacortes School Board adopted its 2023-24 budget in August. The \$46 million budget reflects nearly \$3 million in reductions that the district proactively planned for throughout the last year and a half. The adopted budget also leaves the district with a three percent (3%) ending fund balance (reserves), while the board's target for its reserve account is four percent (4%). The board has directed the district to build back its reserve account to four percent over the next two years.

"Our budget is balanced, but not without some difficult decisions made by the board and administration," said Board President Jennie Beltrami.

"We are confident, however, in the district's plan to continue reviewing expenditures and revenue, and in building back our reserves."

The district's budget reflects a significant investment in staff, with salaries equaling 87 percent of the budget.

"Our goal all along has been to minimize the direct impacts on the classroom as much as possible," said Superintendent Justin Irish. "Our staff are com-

mitted to providing the best education to our students. I'm proud of our workforce, our union groups, and our community for working collaboratively to tackle this challenge."

The district will continue to engage the Budget Advisory Council, and the community, as it prepares its 2024-25 budget, which will include at least \$1 million in reductions.



# Java with Justin

Join us for coffee and conversation with Superintendent Justin Irish



Open to anyone: families, students, staff and community members.  
Please pre-register: <https://bit.ly/44lQY4o> or scan here:



Multiple dates/ times throughout the year.  
Questions? (360) 503-1211 or [information@asd103.org](mailto:information@asd103.org)





# Athletes suit up for fall sports season



Sienna Paggao said competitive cheer has taught her to be more outgoing and welcoming, and she plans to continue cheer at the collegiate level.



Sawyer Nichols plays both singles and doubles tennis, and his time playing tennis has taught him leadership and the importance of hard work.



Ella Ocampo hopes to make it to swim districts this year, and she loves swimming with her teammates and contributing to the team's score at swim meets.

## Sienna Paggao — Cheer

Senior Sienna Paggao has been competitively cheering since 4th grade and loves absolutely everything about it. From stunting to tumbling to flips, she does it all. For her, the performance aspect is the best part, but she also likes that it's a chance to get involved and get other students involved. "It's helped me become more outgoing and has taught me to be welcoming to all kinds of different people." The most challenging thing about cheerleading is that it's physically demanding, something that's often overlooked, she said. Next year, Paggao hopes to attend Grand Canyon University, and if possible, continue cheerleading at the collegiate level.

## Sawyer Nichols — Tennis

There are key differences between playing doubles and singles, and senior Sawyer Nichols knows them well; he plays both, depending on the given day or opponent. He appreciates the mental aspect of being on the court alone and enjoys the strategizing involved in playing with a

partner. He also is grateful to have a partner to train with off season for state playoffs, which occur in the spring. "Playing on this team has taught me how I want to lead others. Our coach created an environment where we love the sport first. Therefore, we want to work hard and help inspire others to work hard." When Nichols is not on the court he is quite busy with student leadership, broadcast club, backpacking and camping, and club volleyball. In fact, he will most likely play volleyball in college while studying finance and economics.

## Ella Ocampo — Swim and Dive

When Ella Ocampo was in elementary school she joined the club swim team (Thunderbird Aquatics Club) because she had such fun in swim lessons. She fell in love with the sport, mostly because of the people surrounding her. "Whether you were good or not, fast or slow, you were welcome." Now a junior, Ocampo still enjoys competing with her teammates, and she still focuses on having fun over winning, although she does have a goal of shaving time off her backstroke and making it to districts. She also admits the competitive aspect is important. "You want to make sure you're carrying your weight and not letting your teammates down." Ocampo swims the 200 IM, 100 Fly and sometimes the 500 freestyle. She loves the medley for the variety of strokes it offers. While Ocampo enjoys drawing and playing piano in her free time, most often she can be found at the pool as she also works there.

## Reese Morgenthaler — Soccer

Since the age of six, senior Reese Morgenthaler has been on the pitch. The forward, who also plays basketball and lacrosse, loves the team camaraderie best. Practicing with and then getting out and competing for her team is her favorite part. What's hardest is when all the work seemingly doesn't pay off. "When you work so hard setting up a play and don't score a goal, or you put so much effort in the whole game but still end up losing — that can be frustrating." But Morgenthaler has learned much more from the game. "I've learned to be a leader and that you don't have to know someone your whole life to be able to connect with them." Decisions and plans for next year are yet to be cemented.

## Tyler Olson — Football

Coming home with a state championship is Tyler Olson's biggest goal for the season. A junior, Olson has played football since 3rd grade. He has played several positions throughout the years but currently is both a running back and a line-backer. And while winning is pretty fun, Olson says the best part is playing with his friends, many of whom have been together since elementary school. Balancing practices with school work is one of the harder aspects of being on the team, but it's taught him perseverance and determination, he says. In the offseason, Olson can be found weight training to prepare for baseball, his other love.

ATHLETES  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Reese Morgenthaler has learned leadership and connection in her years playing soccer, and teamwork is her favorite part of the sport.



ATHLETES  
FROM PAGE 4



For Carolyn Chambers, running is at its most fun when it's a team sport.



Parker Mong said running with his friends makes the sport fun, even on days when he isn't necessarily excited to go out and run.

Carolyn Chambers —  
Cross Country

Running in the woods is not necessarily what senior Carolyn Chambers enjoys about her sport. It's tedious, and often it's hard to get motivated to do it every day. But when you're a part of the team, running becomes fun. She's learned a lot from the sport, too. "It's all about community. And you have to be mentally strong. If you put in the work, you'll get results." Chambers hopes to get a sub 19:00 time this season and is taking steps to possibly run in college. She is applying to

colleges that align with her academic interests (biomedical engineering), and if it works out for her to run for the school, that would be great, she said.

Parker Mong —  
Cross Country

When Parker Mong races, he is constantly keeping himself in check to not over-think, but to not let his mind drift too far away from the task at hand. The competitive senior has been running cross country since 7th grade and is motivated most by his teammates. "Being disciplined to do it on the days when you don't feel like it is the hard part. But running



Tyler Olson started playing football in the third grade, and he hopes that he and his team, many of whom have played together since elementary school, can come away from this season with a state championship trophy.

with friends makes it fun, and I really enjoy our team bonding — creating goals and helping each other reach them." Mong is fast. Really fast. His current PR for the 5K is 14:57, and he has lofty goals. In addition to standing at the top of the podium at state, he also aims to run at the collegiate level next year.

Amelia Burrus —  
Sailing

This is only Amelia Burrus' second year on the sailing team, although she did live on a boat for a month while she was doing Outward Bound a few years ago in Maine. Hailing from Beaufort, South Carolina, the senior loves being on the water and says it's harder than most people realize. "You have to think about so many different things at once." If she's learned anything, it's discipline. "You really really have to be 100 percent focused and intentional, both physically and mentally." Despite frequently having numb hands and feet and bruises from rolling into the boat, Burrus wants to continue sailing when she goes to college next year, hopefully at a university closer to her southern roots. She plans to study philosophy and physics with a goal of eventually becoming an anaesthesiologist.

Kendyl Flynn —  
Volleyball

Volleyball is in her blood. Senior Kendyl Flynn has been jumping, setting and spiking the ball since she was seven years old. Over the years, she's learned many lessons, but the most important one is how to be a team player. "You can't be selfish in volleyball. Everyone has to do their part and sometimes that means sacrificing a play for the good of the team." This year, Flynn has also had to step up as a leader. She loves the team aspect of the sport and says they rely heavily on the energy of each other. Building back momentum after a few errors is tough, she says. It's mentally hard to get out of a slump, but things can change quickly, which is what she loves about the sport. Although she isn't sure just yet where she will attend, Flynn plans to start college next year in hopes of becoming a teacher and a volleyball coach.



Amelia Burrus has learned a great deal of discipline in her time sailing, and she hopes to continue the sport in college next year.



Volleyball became part of Kendyl Flynn's life when she was just seven years old, and over the years she has learned that it's always a team sport, and Flynn loves to step up as a leader.



# Staff Spotlight

This year, the Pride will highlight staff from across the district.  
Enjoy getting to know our incredible and interesting staff members!



**Jessica Mallick**  
Food Services, Mt Erie Elementary

Jessica Mallick used to like running. But ever since COVID, she’s had a new hobby: collecting houseplants. She’s proudly down to 70 from her original 100. She loves houseplants so much that she even gives them away. “They’re my love language,” she said. Each week, Mallick presents the Mt. Erie Elementary School main office with a new plant. She then takes the current plant back home to nurture and grow it more. This lending library of plants has kept the administrative assistants happy and healthy, and they appreciate that someone else is keeping the plants alive. Mallick has worked in food services with the district for five years, three at Mt. Erie and one year each at AHS and AMS. Before that, she worked in various customer service positions and was a stay-at-home mom when her daughters were young. She loves making connections with the students. “It means a lot to me when they come up and hug me or ask me how my day is going,” she said. “And I love seeing their growth throughout the year and over the course of several years.” Mallick was born in Iowa but has lived in nine states. She met her husband while living in California and they moved to Washington when he was offered a job in Seattle. The couple has two girls, and Mallick looks forward to working at Mt. Erie when they become seniors and march in their caps and gowns through the halls of their elementary alma mater. And just as important: Zoey, a six-year-old goldendoodle.

**Annie Monroe**  
Nurse, Anacortes Middle School

Born and raised right here, Annie Monroe took an impressive path before ending up back in her hometown. After graduating from Seattle Pacific University, she landed her first job at Swedish First Hill in Seattle in the mother-baby unit. This prompted her to specialize in pediatrics where she then took an initial position as staff nurse at Seattle Children’s Hospital. Monroe and her husband eventually decided they wanted to return to Anacortes. In 2016, she heard about the school district’s need for sub nurses and jumped at the opportunity. She became a full-time nurse in 2017. “I fell in love with school nursing and have been here ever since.” Monroe says she loves working with people who genuinely care. “It’s amazing to see the collaborative effort with our community in supporting our students.” She is also passionate about empowering students with health conditions to gain independence with managing their conditions. She loves seeing students make the connection between a good health choice and the positive outcome it can make. “The best is when they recognize how they don’t have to be afraid of their conditions because they have resources to work through tough situations. I always try to encourage them to become nurses someday,” she said. Monroe and her husband, who met in 7th grade and graduated from AHS in the same class, but were not high school sweethearts, have a daughter and a son and two well-loved King Charles cavalier spaniels. They enjoy running and biking as a family, including the four-legged ones.



**Janet Casey**  
Elementary Substitute Teacher

“You look like the kind of woman who would enjoy building a log cabin.” These were the first words spoken to Janet Casey by her husband of 45 years when they met in her art stall at the Anacortes Street Fair in 1978. Jim proposed on their first date, and they’ve been together ever since. And they did build that cabin. They purchased five acres on Guemes and spent two and a half years of week-ends, commuting, he from Federal Way, she from Mt. Vernon, to cut the trees, peel the logs (by hand) and finish the home. They lived in the cabin for 13 years, four without electricity or water. The couple have one grown son, Jimmy. Casey, a self proclaimed Army brat, graduated high school in Frankfurt, Germany and attended 14 public schools in her 12 years. She earned her B.A. from Carnegie Mellon and her Master’s degree from Penn State. “I always knew I wanted to be a teacher,” she said. Casey taught for five years in Pennsylvania before moving to Washington where family lived. Once here, she ended up working in customer service for IBM but knew she wanted to start her own business. A calligraphy artist, Casey first made her mark on the art fair circuit. Then she moved into wholesale and eventually opened a shop in La Conner in 1984. At the height of her business, The Quotation, she was selling to 200 stores nationwide. After 35 years in the art business, Casey “retired” and began substitute teaching. This year is number 15 with ASD. She says in many ways, her passion for quotations and calligraphy was a continued form of education, as she was able to share the thoughts and writings of so many inspirational authors. She also taught calligraphy classes from 4th grade through college level. “I love connecting with kids. My goal is to be enthusiastic and instill in them a confidence that they can be successful, even if their teacher isn’t there. I’m a huge fan of lifelong learning and sparking curiosity,” she said. Casey enjoys bringing enrichment activities that align with what students are learning, whether it be an art project or creative writing. “Integrating supplemental learning keeps them engaged, and teachers know their students will continue to learn during their [teachers’] absences,” she said.

**Melanie Engman**  
School Social Worker, Cap Sante High School and Anacortes High School

A Bellingham native, Melanie Engman sees her job as layered, with rings radiating outward from the center. At the core of her work is helping students with academic, behavioral or social-emotional interventions. The next layer is working with families and looking at the whole student to assess needs and barriers. Next is the layer of looking at the school culture and what needs there are in the building. Finally, the outermost layer is coordinating with community resources to make sure they are easily accessible to her kids. Engman was an English major at Seattle Pacific University and still ranks reading as her favorite thing to do. Her graduate studies were through Eastern Washington University. For several years, she worked in Seattle for SEAMAR in both inpatient and outpatient treatment. She also worked for Whatcom Crisis Services, leading groups and teaching courses. Before coming to Anacortes six years ago, Engman worked at Emerson School in Mt. Vernon. In total, she has been a school social worker for 21 years. And she still finds many things to love about the job. “I love developing long standing relationships with my students and mentoring them through their growth. The one on one interaction is the most rewarding part,” she said. “But I also really enjoy developing programs and spaces for kids to connect and build a sense of community.” Engman, who still lives in Bellingham, loves to take long walks, read books and soak up all her hometown has to offer.



## ALMA MATER

FROM PAGE 1

has been in the leadership class for three years, said one of the the class’s main goals was to increase school spirit and student voice, so students got to work on finding ways to replace the song. It turned out the art club, then led by Kate Clark, had also been working on this idea and had created designs for a mural. Art club member Clara Jeong worked with other

members to decide a color scheme and which visual elements to include. “We all pitched in to create the final design. We wanted it to reflect school spirit but also the elements around Fidalgo island,” Jeong said. Once the leadership class had the design, it had to find a way to fund the new mural. Hunter said they contacted several companies for quotes but still had to come up with the money. Leadership teacher Spencer Andrich is

proud of the student-driven, student-led effort. “They had to figure out all the logistics from

collecting bids to raising the funds to promoting it,” Andrich said. AHS PTSA helped by

“When you walk into the gym, you feel ‘Anacortes.’ Before, it was just a nondescript gym that could have been in any school. Hopefully, now it will unite the student body and give us all a sense of Seahawk pride.” — Wesley Hunter, senior, AHS Leadership Class

setting up a gofundme account, which quickly raised two thousand dollars last February. The senior class of 2023 donated, too. “It was a really big community effort,” Prue said. “And we’re so thankful.” By late summer, with community-donated scaffolding, the finished mural was installed. Prue was proud that senior and junior LINK Crew leaders were able to reveal the mural to incoming freshmen and sing it with them

just days before the school year began. Hunter said the completion of the mural is a physical reminder of how the leadership class reached its goal of raising school spirit. “When you walk into the gym, you feel ‘Anacortes.’ Before, it was just a nondescript gym that could have been in any school. Hopefully, now it will unite the student body and give us all a sense of Seahawk pride,” Hunter said.





Our bus drivers are often the first district staff students see in the morning, and the last they see at night. Drivers transport students safely through dark rainy mornings and crisp, blue-sky afternoons. This year, our transportation team will be focusing on incorporating behavior management practices while maintaining student dignity. “The school bus is an extension of the classroom,” said Karen Garrison, Transportation Supervisor. “We want to encourage our students and our drivers to continue building a positive culture while out on the road.”

Transportation Plan encourages positive culture on the bus



MHP  
FROM PAGE 1

At the elementary level, parental permission is required and family engagement is encouraged, so counselors usually make the initial contact with Yrorita doing a follow-up. After this, Yrorita completes an intake, or assessment.

“The intake helps give a holistic view of the child’s strengths and weaknesses, any barriers and any history of trauma,” Yrorita said.

After the assessment, Yrorita makes a diagno-

sis and comes up with a treatment plan, a highly individualized schedule of sessions/goals for the student to work toward. Treatment can range from weekly sessions for a month or two to monthly sessions for an entire year. Yrorita said it just depends on the individual student.

Mt. Erie counselor Ian Mayer is grateful to have an MHP in the building.

“Abi is providing a much needed service for some of the students who need on-going mental health care. She is eager to support our students and has already shown

a wonderful ability to connect and build relationships with students and families,” Mayer said.

Yrorita loves being able to go more in-depth with kids than a counselor is able to.

“Watching students work toward a small or big goal and then seeing them reach it, is what’s most rewarding,” she said.

“Strong mental health and wellness allows kids to be fully present and engage in their learning and with their peers, resulting in better outcomes and healthier, happier kids.”

— Dr. Becky Clifford, Assistant Superintendent



Abigail Yrorita appreciates the opportunity to go more in-depth with ASD students than a counselor would be able to.

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Justin Portz, Athletics & Activities Director: (360) 503-1305 or jportz@asd103.org

Thanks to the generous support of businesses, foundations and individuals, the **Anacortes Schools Foundation** funds STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), School Block Donations, summer learning, the Arts, literacy, scholarships, early learning and more. Our August “Ready to Learn Fair” served close to 400 students and our “Fueling Education” Fun Run held in September helped raise nearly \$60,000 to support programs including the 3rd Grade Learn to Swim. We are also proud to be one of the only school foundations in the state to fund mental health at every grade level.

Coming up next is the Celebrate the Season Gala which is ASF’s largest fundraiser of the year. Each December ASF creates a magical holiday village inside the Port of Anacortes and holds a series of events to raise funds for our schools to support these critical programs.

**CELEBRATE THE Season**

- NOV. 20 - Silent Auction Opens
- DEC. 2 - Gala Fundraising Dinner
- DEC. 9 - FREE Holiday Fair
- DEC. 10 - Gingerbread Contest

Because mental health continues to be one of our most critical needs, ASF will be raising funds to support social workers at AMS, AHS and Cap Sante, a mental health therapist shared by all three elementary schools and, new this year, we are excited to maximize donor dollars by partnering with Communities in Schools.

**asf** | Anacortes Schools Foundation  
asfkids.org or call 360-488-2343



# District streamlines safety protocols

## Schools' plan now aligns with APD, AFD

What's the difference between "lockdown," "hold" and "shelter?"

All district staff now know what each of these safety responses mean. In August, district safety team members worked to align the terminology of the Standard Response Protocol with that of first responders from Anacortes Police Department (APD) and Anacortes Fire Department (AFD). The safety plan was originally created in 2015, but recent updates have improved both clarity and consistency, Superintendent Justin Irish said.

Also in August, all staff were trained on the five responses of the safety plan: lockdown, hold, secure, shelter and evacuate.

District Safety Coordinator Kevin Schwartz said the clear and universal language is key to successful implementing the plan.

"Every staff member will know exactly what to do in any of a variety of situations," Schwartz said.

School Resource Officer Jordan

Kellington, who works at both the middle and high schools, appreciates the partnership between ASD and APD.

"Knowing that no matter the emergency, or which building a call comes from, everyone involved is on the same page (dispatch, responders, building and district office staff), knows what the situation is, and knows what steps to take," Kellington said.

**"Every staff member will know exactly what to do in any of a variety of situations."**

— Kevin Schwartz, ASD Safety Director

Kellington also stressed the importance of drills. This fall, building leaders worked to test procedures and response times. Kellington was able to be an extra set of eyes and offer the unique perspective of a first responder, giving feedback on how responses could be improved. In addition, he gives safety presentations to the schools.



Kevin Schwartz shows Mt. Erie student Emerson Nelson one of the new safety response protocol posters. Every school conducts a safety drill each month to ensure that staff and students know what to do in response to an actual emergency.

Both Schwartz and Kellington emphasized the importance of practicing until it's almost second nature, whether for a fire, tornado, or wild dog on the

playground.

"The more we train, the calmer we'll be. It's crucial in a real emergency to know what we're doing," Schwartz said.

For more information on the District's safety protocols, please contact Kevin Schwartz, (360) 503-1549 or kschwartz@asd103.org.

# Four statements sum up ASD strategic plan

## District team synthesized plan into student-centered elements

A strategic plan is just that — a map of goals and a plan to reach them. For the Anacortes School District, it functions as an internal tool, a barometer to monitor prog-

ress, and as an external tool to communicate to the public what the district's vision and mission are and to make visible the actions it's taking to reach those goals.

But, while important, for the average person, the ASD strategic plan can be a bit dry. Last year the district leadership team worked to synthesize it into something that was grounded in the elements of the strategic plan but more student-centered. By spring of 2023, the team had landed on four student statements that speak to the question: At the end of the day, what is it we want students to know and believe about their learning?

**I am a successful learner.**  
**What I am learning matters to me.**  
**I am known and valued for who I am.**  
**I am cared for and I care for others in my community.**

"These four statements really represent what everything in the strategic plan addresses," Superintendent Justin Irish said. "My hope is that staff and community will be able to say — these four things — that's what we're about."

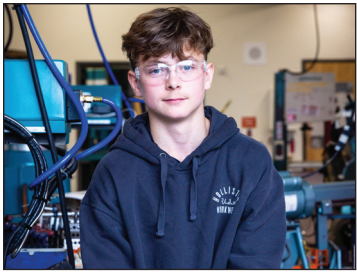
Anecdotal feedback has been positive so far. Staff have noted that the statements are clear and logical. Here's how a few students know these statements to be true:

**I am a successful learner.**  
"There are lots of ways I know I'm a successful learner: If I get a hard problem correct. Or if I help other students who don't understand. Any time I learn something new. And even when I notice a mistake and correct the teacher. Also, teachers give me pats



on the back and tell me 'good job' after I've learned something that's hard."

— Jaqlin Deakin — Mt. Erie



**What I am learning matters to me.**  
"What I'm learning genuinely matters to me because it's going to help me later in life. I want to be a mechanic so what I'm learning now is really important. The metals class gives you basic knowledge that you can use in many areas of everyday life, and it's fun because when you know how to weld, you can create cool things outside of class, too."

Wyatt Willoughby — AHS



**I am known and valued for who I am.**  
"Teachers talk to us per-

sonally about our individual goals in life. They really genuinely consider, listen to, and help us make a plan, specific to our vision."

— Holly Beierle — Cap Sante (Pictured with Jenn Turpin)



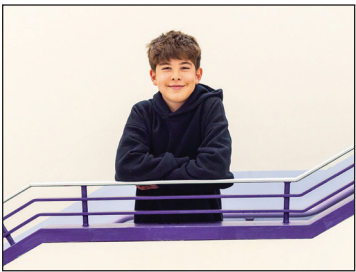
"Any time my teacher notices me doing a good job and tells me, I know I am valued. Also, one time I asked my principal to come watch my football game, and he did. So I know he knows me and values me. I just knew he would come."

— Jackson Huffman — Island View (Pictured with Caitlin Follstad)



**I am cared for and I care for others in my community.**  
"One of our goals this year is to notice kindness because when we do kind things it makes us feel good and when we notice others being kind, we have a goal to thank them. Whenever I'm stressed or anxious, my teachers help me to understand and that lets me know they care about me and don't want me to be nervous."

— Hazel Davis — Fidalgo



"One way I know that I am cared for and that our school has cared for our community is the signs of support fundraiser. This event raises money for our school and honors our veterans through charitable donations and yard sign photos featuring serves members around Veterans Day."

— Rowan Morgenthaler — AMS

This year, the district will implement a twice yearly Panorama survey for all third through 12th grade students. The nationally-normed, confidential survey will allow the district to tailor questions around the four statements and then use the results to compare ASD to districts nationwide. It also includes clear, research-based action plans that principals and staff can use to improve certain areas, based on the survey results.

Irish said the student learner outcomes are essentially a student version of the strategic plan.

"They bring humanity to the strategic plan. They are rooted in the human aspect," he said.



### Anacortes Pride

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