



KSD News

A report from your public schools.

This page was produced by the Kent School District (KSD).

Reconfiguration — Q & A



Barbara Grohe
Superintendent

Over this year, we have worked to inform you regarding KSD's planning process for the reconfiguration of all secondary schools, a change that includes different structural and instructional models. Beginning in the fall of 2004, Kentlake, Kent-Meridian, Kentridge, and Kentwood high schools will open their doors to 9th-12th grade students. Cedar Heights, Kent, Mattson, Meeker, Meridian, Northwood, and Sequoia junior high schools will become 7th and 8th grade middle schools. The opening of Kent Middle School will be temporarily delayed due to construction. This month, I share with you answers to some commonly asked questions regarding the KSD secondary reconfiguration.

Q. What will secondary schools look like in fall 2004?

A. Currently, secondary students attend schools organized around the entire student population. Beginning next fall, 9th and 10th grade students will attend classes within smaller learning communities (SLCs). This year, every secondary school has a Core Team that is meeting to determine the shape of those communities. One type of SLC model is the "pod" layout. A traditional pod layout includes adjacent classrooms that house students' core subjects. Teachers plan and coordinate instruction together within their pod. Several schools will adopt some version of the pod layout, while other schools have different approaches.

For example, the Kentridge Core Team has chosen to use a modified pod format for 9th and 10th grade students' English and social studies courses. Kent-Meridian's Core Team is developing a more extensive SLC model. Kent-Meridian will house five SLCs. For the district in general, students in SLCs will spend significant time each day within their community, receiving greater personalized instruction.

Q. Is the transition to Small Learning Communities simply a cost-saving measure?

A. This overall transition actually includes two distinct reconfigurations that are being accomplished simultaneously. First, we are increasing the size of our high school facilities to include 9th graders. This will provide "room to learn" for all students.

In addition, KSD is adopting a more effective instructional model. Smaller learning communities allow students to receive increased attention to their personal learning needs.

Q. How does the repurposing of Kent Junior High fit into KSD's plan?

A. Kent Junior High (KJ) was originally opened in 1928 and is the oldest KSD facility in operation. There are 19 construction projects scheduled. The KJ facilities require major improvements to heating and cooling systems, fire alarms, plumbing, flooring, etc. In addition to these repairs, the district has commissioned several committees to help in the repurposing or restructuring of the instructional program offered to middle school students on this campus. The district has also commissioned a broadly based committee to look at other options that might best be accommodated at the newly remodeled Kent campus.

Q. How can I help make my local school's transition successful?

A. Your interest is an important first step! I encourage you to contact your principal for more details. Each school's team has the responsibility of defining how their SLCs will function. Community input and involvement helps ensure a smooth and successful opening day in fall 2004. Specifically, parents and community members can support teachers as they prepare for the reconfiguration and help support our students and families as they prepare for an exciting 2004 opening.

For general information about KSD's secondary reconfiguration, check out our Room to Learn web site at <www.kent.k12.wa.us/KSD/CR/roomtolearn/>. You can also contact your local school for more information.

Volunteers make the difference

Throughout Kent School District, adult volunteers help schools run smoothly. At the same time, students contribute significantly through numerous community service projects. The following are just a few examples of the many volunteer efforts in the greater KSD community.

■ For the past two years, Kentridge student and Key Club member Kirk Carpenter has coordinated the club's Union Gospel Mission project. Twice a month, Kirk schedules trips into Seattle so that Kentridge students can serve food to the homeless. He recruits groups of six students for each trip, sends reminders, and frequently picks students up for the ride into Seattle.

■ Every school day, parent volunteers make a difference in KSD classrooms. Grass Lake mother Tamara Nelson volunteers at least 3 days each week. When Tamara is finished in one classroom, she walks the halls to see if other teachers need help before she leaves for the day.

■ With similar dedication, community member Dan Torrell makes time for weekly visits to help Meadow Ridge 2nd graders. Dan originally became involved while his daughter was a Meadow Ridge teacher. After his daughter relocated, Dan surprised school staff by continuing to volunteer at the school. Staff members are grateful that Mr. Torrell faithfully helps out in classrooms while also providing a valuable male role model for students.

■ Junior high students demonstrate commitment to volunteerism through individual and group activities. Joey Frostad, now a Cedar Heights 8th grader, received the rank of Eagle Scout for his volunteer work in local parks, nursing homes, and shelters. Meeker student Jamie Catron volunteers her time weeding the yards of senior citizens and helping to clean up local parks. Meanwhile, through Meridian Junior High's S.P.A.M. Club (Serving People and Mankind), students serve through activities such as tree planting in local parks.

Pictured below, Kent-Meridian student Tarandeep Kaur tutors Millennium Elementary students Sarah Rudolph and Carlos Barrientes. This month, volunteers from KM begin tutoring Millennium students twice a week in math and reading.





Our Mission: Successfully Prepare All Students For Their Future

Each month, *KSD News* features reading, writing, math, and science programs that improve students' learning skills. In every edition, schools from each of the district's four strands are featured. This month, Kent Mountain View Academy and Kent, Mattson, and Northwood junior high schools are featured.

KENTLAKE STRAND



Left to right: Teacher Mary Lopez, Patricia Jacoway, Kyle McGreanor, and Leah Maxwell.

Software Makes Math Take Shape

Kent Mountain View Academy

For a lesson in right-angle trigonometry, Kent Mountain View Academy teacher Mary Lopez takes students to the computer lab. The Geometer's Sketchpad enables students to discover trigonometric ratios. Students create a triangle and then a table of data from the triangle. They change the size and shape of their triangles and observe changes in their table of data. They discover that certain ratios define the relationship between the sides and angles of triangles. Students then apply these relationships to complex problems.

Secondary students can also use tools such as Cognitive Tutor. The software tracks students' challenges so that teachers can respond with appropriate instruction. Many students have benefited from the computer tutor and are now enrolled in advanced math courses. Overall, school enrollment in advanced courses has doubled this year.

KENT-MERIDIAN STRAND



Front to back: Leilani Hefa and teacher Susan Clarke.

Learning To Love Reading

Kent Junior High

At Kent Junior High, the Read Right classroom sits quiet, disrupted only by the sound of one student after another eagerly knocking on the table to signal the teacher that they have mastered another reading assignment. In the four years that KJ has offered Read Right, class graduates have experienced between one and four grade levels of reading improvement. Most leap forward at least three grade levels in a year.

Current tutors Susan Clarke and Kathy Cyford report that many students enter the program with no desire to read, but graduate reading for pleasure. Students graduate with more than just confidence. A 2001 KSD study found that Kent-Meridian (KM) Read Right graduates were twice as likely to meet 10th grade WASL standards compared to similar KM students that were not Read Right participants.

KENTRIDGE STRAND



Front to back: Steven Chukri, teacher Louise Sargent, Sylvia Kim, and Dominique Marksbury.

Taking Steps Toward Writing Excellence

Northwood Junior High

This year, Northwood's 7th graders began their first day of English class with "show and tell" through written descriptions. Students created a description of their shoes and then tested the effectiveness of their work by letting classmates attempt to match writings with shoes.

All Northwood students are developing their persuasive writing skills. Students in 9th grade research social issues like the Napster file sharing system, the Attica Prison riots of 1971, and the effects of divorce on children. Teachers encourage students to pick topics not currently in the spotlight, so that students are challenged to do their own research and defend their conclusions in writing. One student recently reported that her paper on divorce had persuaded her parents to consider resolving their differences.

KENTWOOD STRAND



Left to right: Breanna Wierzbicki, Kolten Sisson, Kaitlyn Shea, and teacher Jake McKinzie.

Science Moves

Mattson Junior High

At Mattson, reading and writing exercises are integrated into every science topic area. With each new unit, students receive short articles related to the topic. Students read the articles and then answer questions in written form. Students are expected to give detailed written explanations, as they would for the WASL. Group discussion gives students opportunities to discuss their writing strategies and share their thoughts on the articles.

In Jake McKinzie's 9th grade science classes, students recently explored Newton's Laws of Motion. Using bathroom scales held steady at 10Kg, students calculated the amount of force used to push an SUV across the Mattson parking lot. The vehicle's acceleration was determined with stopwatches, and then students determined the mass of the SUV using Newton's 2nd Law (force ÷ acceleration = mass).

Kent School District Calendar of Events

December 10
School Board Meeting
7:00 p.m., Admin Bldg

December 17
School Board Meeting
12:30 p.m., Admin Bldg

December 22-January 2
Winter Vacation
No School

This newsletter is produced by Kent School District
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