

Students Have a Seat at the Table



Student Representation Matters

In the Chehalis School District, our students have a voice. From student leadership roles, to committee seats, our students play a role in shaping their education and schools.

"Students are the center of our education system," said Chehalis Superintendent Dr. Christine Moloney. "It is important for us, both as parents and educators, to listen and engage them in their education so we can help them become responsible, contributing citizens in our community."

Student School Board Representatives Maddie Scalici & Natalie Eklund

In addition to the five school board members, who are elected by the community, the Chehalis School Board also includes a student representative position. W.F. West Senior Madeline Scalici was chosen as this year's student representative to the Chehalis School Board and Senior Natalie Eklund, ASB Secretary, serves as alternate.



"I'm basically a representative for the high school," Scalici explained. "I get to put in my voice and talk about topics that are important to students."

School Board Student Representatives are not voting members of the board, but get to add their voice to discussions about items the board is considering. The student representatives also have a place on the board agenda to report on what is going on at the high school.

"I really take pride in my role on the board," Scalici said. "I like being able to comment from a student perspective and tell them what's happening in the schools from a student's perspective."

"This is exciting," Eklund added. "I get to see behind the scenes what goes on in the district. It's cool to see how much they care about our education."

Scalici and Eklund both joined the Chehalis School District in 9th grade after having attended St. Joseph School Kindergarten through 8th grade. They were part of an 8th grade graduating class of 18 (16 of whom came to W.F. West), St. Joseph's largest in 50 years. They both said they felt a pull toward leadership but their small, private school did not offer a leadership class. Once they started at W.F. West, they immediately became involved in leadership. The pair said that in recent years, high school leadership has made an effort toward including more people and perspectives and they have been excited to be part of that trend.

"As time has gone on, more and more kids are getting involved and feeling school is a really fun place to be, which is really special," Scalici said.

After high school, Scalici hopes to attend [Michigan State University](#) and study business and medicine to become an anesthesiologist. Eklund hopes to play golf for [Pacific Lutheran University](#) and study kinesiology with a focus on diet and nutrition and eventually earn her Master's degree.



Maddie Scalici gives her report to the Chehalis School Board during a recent board meeting.

State Board of Education Representative Castulo Gonzalez

W.F. West Junior Castulo Gonzalez was chosen by the [Association of Washington Student Leaders](#) last May to serve as the Western Washington Student Representative on the [Washington State Board of Education](#).



Hailing from proud Mexican roots, Spanish was Gonzalez' first language and he spent the first five years of his life living between the United States and Mexico. His father only completed school through the 6th grade and then came to America to build a better life for himself and his future family, though not without a great deal of hardship along the way. When Gonzalez started kindergarten in the Chehalis School District, he said it was an adjustment to suddenly be surrounded by English speakers, but the experience pointed him toward his own love of learning languages that persists today (he is now trilingual, speaking Spanish, English and French).

"I just picked it up really fast and I didn't pay much attention to the differences," Gonzalez said of learning English.

Gonzalez admits that in middle school, he didn't take his grades as seriously as he does now. Once he started his freshman year at W.F. West, though, he said he pushed himself to develop good study habits and get involved in school leadership and life. He said he also wanted to be a good role model for his nephew, Jaden Gonzalez, 10th grade at W.F. West, and niece, Julianna Gonzalez, 9th grade at W.F. West. By his 10th grade year, all that practice showed him that he liked being in leadership and working hard at his schooling. Noting his drive, W.F. West counselor Libby Rakevich first suggested Gonzalez consider applying for the State Board of Education Student Representative opening. He initially said no. "I thought, 'too political for me,'" he recalled.

Gonzalez said it was the potential to represent other Chicano (his preferred term for his ancestry of half Mexican, half American) students as well as be a role model to promote mutual cultural understanding that pushed him to give the opening a second look.

"I'm the bridge between the students and the board and I have the ability to help change some things for the better," he explained.

Gonzalez will serve on the State Board of Education for his junior and senior year of high school. He is a voting member of the board, except he must recuse himself on matters that could affect his own high school success. He said that many of his schoolmates know that he is active in something, but that he doesn't think they really understand what it is that he does. He said he wants students to know that he can be a resource to listen to their comments and concerns about their education and take them to the policymakers who can create change.

"It feels like I have a big responsibility. It feels fun. It feels awesome and it feels unrecognized," Gonzalez said. "The people I want to know I do this, they don't know. But I'm glad I have the responsibility."

After high school, Gonzalez plans to attend [Central Washington University](#). He would like to pursue a career as a commercial airline pilot.

To read more about Castulo or to email him your thoughts, go to <https://chehalisschools.org/state-board-of-education-rep-castulo-gonzalez-2/>



Castulo Gonzalez meets with W.F. West Principal Bob Waters to talk over ideas that came out of a recent board meeting.

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Chehalis School District

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