

*A Teacher's Impact Reaches Beyond
Our School Walls*



Superintendent
CONNECT
May 24, 2024



Dear Chehalis Families and Staff,

This month we celebrate teachers.

Growing up I saw the joy and dedication (and, yes, the hours of grading papers and lesson planning at the kitchen table) that my mother had for teaching her students. I followed in my mother's footsteps, graduating from Pacific Lutheran University with a degree in secondary education and became a teacher.

When I graduated college, I chose to become a substitute teacher in Franklin Pierce and the Bethel School Districts. I taught every grade from kindergarten to seniors. I even had two long-term substitute positions; one in a classroom for students with emotional behavior disorders, and another as a business and marketing teacher at a high school. The following summer, I taught high school history and then became a junior high school teacher at Spanaway Junior High School where I taught science, social studies, journalism (and produced the paper), leadership, and an elective on Ghana, to name a few.

I loved teaching and being part of helping my students become successful and persistent in pursuing their goals. I hoped I had a positive impact on my students. As teachers, we may never know the impact we have made on students but we hope they carry a bit of their time with us with them as they head out into the world - whether it is a bit of advice, a kind gesture or the encouragement they need to believe in their abilities.

As an educator and administrator, I carry the lessons I learned from many of my teachers and mentors. Earlier this year, I got the opportunity to thank one of those very special teachers. I had the privilege and honor of being in Mrs. Joyce Stark's science classes in the mid-80s in Sunnyside, Washington. Her energy and enthusiasm was contagious and her support of student choice to explore the scientific world around them was monumental. As a junior high student, I won at regional and state science fairs because of this one teacher's support.

This fall I was asked to be the opening speaker at the Washington Science Teachers Association conference held here at W.F. West High School. I was honored to be asked to give opening remarks and included in my prepared speech acknowledgement of the impact Mrs. Stark had on my life. While at the podium, I asked the question, "Is there anyone out there who knows her?"

To my immense surprise, fingers pointed in the direction of a table in the front of the commons directly at Mrs. Stark. Before rushing down to give her a huge hug, I shared with her and the conference attendees how she shaped the trajectory of my life with her ability to inspire her students to experience and enjoy science. Because of her, I became a science teacher and had the courage and skills to follow my dreams.



At the school board meeting this month we celebrated the dedication, hard work, and love Chehalis teachers and staff have for their students as we honored this year's retirees. I was struck with how many student lives a single teacher can touch in their career (one retiring teacher estimated she had taught more than 20,000 students!) and marveled at the stories of the impacts these people made on generations of Chehalis students.

I would like to personally wish a happy retirement to: Janet Anderson; Cynthia Bingham; Randy Brossard; Debby Gregory; Sherry Elder; Laura Lofgren; Sue Lykken; Leslie Pagel; Cary Painter; Ryan Robertson; Riki Saari; Kelly Sande; Rob Sande; Mark Stevens; Colleen Touhey; Tim Touhey; Andi Walters; Bob Walters; and Leslie Wood. While not all of these retirees are teachers, the work they have done for our district has undoubtedly impacted our students for the better.

And in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week, I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of the teachers in the Chehalis School District. Teachers, we are so thankful for the hard, sometimes thankless, but always impactful work you do. Each one of you holds the power to inspire hope, ideas and dreams in our students through the subjects you teach and through your relationships with students. If you see a teacher this week, please join me in thanking them.



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