CHEHALIS
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Celebrating Our Staff

"It's been a remarkable story to be part of the Chehalis School District."
-Bob Walters, Retiring W.F. West High School Principal

Bob Walters: A Home-Grown Educator Who Returned to His Roots

Hometown Roots

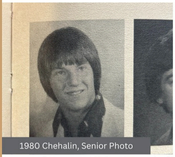
For Bob Walters, the spark to become an educator started with a difficult discussion with his wrestling coaches at W.F. West High School. In his recollection, Walters was never a very good student and definitely did not picture himself going to college. Still, there were adults in his life that saw something special in him and nurtured it.

"I remember, I think it was my sophomore year, that (wrestling coaches) Denny Daniels and Tim Kindle pulled me aside and gave me the 'who you hang out with is who you become' talk. That's where my life, my thinking, changed," Walters said.

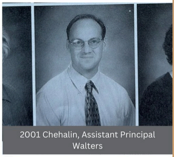
Walters graduated from W.F. West High School in 1980. He was offered a wrestling scholarship at Grays Harbor College, where he studied for a year before transferring to Centralia College where he could both go to school and also work at DJ's Plumbing. After earning his Associate's Degree at Centralia College, he was offered another wrestling scholarship at Eastern Washington University and decided that instead of the trades he had originally pictured himself in, he would pursue education as a career.

"I think it was back to some of the great experiences I had with my coaches and teachers at W.F. West. The influence they had on me made me want to be part of that," Walters said.

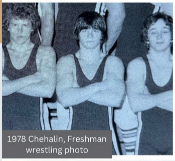
Bob Walters at W.F. West Through the Years



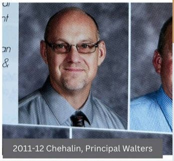
1980 Chehalin, Senior Photo



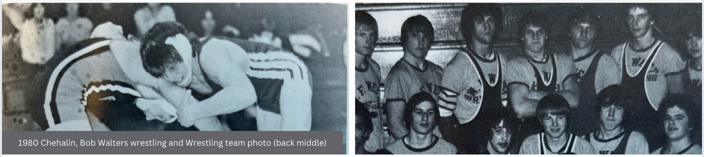
2001 Chehalin, Assistant Principal Walters



1978 Chehalin, Freshman wrestling photo



2011-12 Chehalin, Principal Walters



1980 Chehalin, Bob Walters wrestling and Wrestling team photo (back middle)

The Start of a Career

Walters graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in education from Eastern in 1987. He likes to joke that college was the best 7 years of his life. But in reality, it took him 7 years to earn a Bachelor's degree because he was only attending Eastern in the fall and winter each year and then spending his spring and summer doing commercial fishing near Kodiak, Alaska.

After graduating from Eastern, Walters went back to Alaska for one more commercial fishing summer and ended up being offered a teaching position in Kodiak, where he spent his first year as a teacher.

"What a great adventure," he said.

The next year, Walters accepted a job at Snohomish High School, where he spent the following 13 years coaching wrestling and teaching industrial arts and PE/Health and sometimes other subjects as needed. Toward the end of his time in Snohomish, Walters served as ASB advisor and got involved in school leadership. He enjoyed working in leadership and was encouraged by some of his peers to pursue his Master's in Administration, which he earned from City University.

Right after finishing his administrative credentials, Walters saw an opening for an Assistant Principal at W.F. West High School, working alongside Principal Linda Smith, who would pass the principalship to him years later. Being in the same halls he had walked as a student, but as an employee this time, was a surreal feeling at first.

"I felt very humbled to work with the teachers. There were several still here who had been my teachers," Walters said.

After 5 years as Assistant Principal at W.F. West, Walters was offered the chance to serve as Principal of Green Hill Academic School. Despite what some people may think of working at a school within a detention facility, Walters said he could have stayed at Green Hill for the rest of his career and been perfectly happy.

"I loved that job. I've always enjoyed engaging and connecting with at-risk kids and trying to have an impact on them and support them in any way you can," Walters said.

After 6 years as Green Hill Principal, Walters came back to W.F. West, this time as Principal. At the same time, then W.F. West Assistant Principal Tim Touhey, took the job as Principal at Green Hill. Touhey is also retiring this year. Touhey's story was featured in the May Staff Spotlight.

In a 2011 story in The Chronicle, Walters noted “Once you’re a Bearcat, you’re always a Bearcat. I have a lot of good memories over there at the high school.”

Some Scene's from Bob Walters' Final Commencement

Walters starts graduation with a selfie with the Class of 2024

Ridley Hudson/The Chronicle

Walters with incoming Principal Regina Carr

Ridley Hudson/The Chronicle

A Legacy of Servant Leadership

Thinking back on his years as Principal at W.F. West, Walters doesn't count his tenure in accomplishments or accolades. That's because he takes no credit for anything that has been accomplished while he was at the helm. Rather, he preferred to lead his team quietly and from the back of the group.

"I'm here to support the teachers. The teaching in the classroom is where all the magic happens so I just wanted to have an open door and be available to them and supporting them in what they need to do and what they're trying to do," Walters said.

Just some of the accomplishments that happened during his career include: being named the Evergreen 2A League Principal of the Year in 2016 by the Washington Association of Secondary School Principals and the Association of Washington School Principals; the beginning of the Student Achievement Initiative, which helped raise graduation and post-secondary success rates for students; the founding of the district's first alternative school; the addition of the state of the art STEM wing at W.F. West; and successfully seeing students and staff through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, just to name a few.

For Walters personally, another major highlight was being able to hand all three of his sons their diplomas at their graduation from W.F. West High School. One of his favorite parts of the job was alumni, like himself, who come back to W.F. West to make a positive influence on students and whose gifts of time, money and talent allow teachers to think big.

"It's been a remarkable story to be part of the Chehalis School District," Walters said.

Walters' wife, Andi Walters, a secretary at Chehalis Middle School, will also be retiring with her husband. Bob Walters said they have plans to travel, spend more time with their kids and their first grandchild arriving in August, and find other adventures along the way. Bob Walters said the story of his own career would not be complete without mentioning the support of their church family at Grace church and, of course, the work and sacrifice Andi Walters made to support him.

"She's helped me in so many ways and she's been a part of this job as well," Walters said. "For administrators, for a job like this, you really have to have tremendous support at home. When I was gone three nights a week, she was home with the kids and helping in so many ways."

Thank You, Retirees!

In this last Staff Spotlight of the 2023-2024 School Year, the Chehalis School District would like to extend our recognition and thanks to our retiring staff members:

- Janet Anderson, Paraeducator, James Lintott Elementary
- Cynthia Bingham, 2nd Grade Teacher, James Lintott Elementary
- Randy Brossard, Social Studies Teacher, Chehalis Middle School
- Debby Gregory, Executive Director for Human Resources, Chehalis School District
- Sherry Elder, Secretary, Orin Smith Elementary
- Laura Lofgren, P.E. Teacher, Chehalis Middle School
- Sue Lykken, Paraeducator, Chehalis Middle School
- Leslie Pagel, 1st Grade Teacher, James Lintott Elementary
- Cary Painter, Math Teacher, W.F. West High School
- Ryan Robertson, Social Studies Teacher, W.F. West High School
- Riki Saari, Teacher, Green Hill Academic School

- Kelly Sande, 3rd Grade Teacher, Orin Smith Elementary
- Rob Sande, Social Studies Teacher, W.F. West High School
- Mark Stevens, Paraeducator, Green Hill Academic School
- Colleen Touhey, Paraeducator, W.F. West High School
- Tim Touhey, Principal, Turning Point, Lewis County Juvenile, Green Hill Academic School
- Andi Walters, Lead Secretary, Chehalis Middle School
- Bob Walters, Principal, W.F. West High School
- Leslie Wood, 2nd Grade Teacher, James Lintott Elementary

We thank you for your dedication to this district and its students and wish you all the best of luck in your next journeys.

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