

Valley Voice

FEBRUARY 2023

Valley School and Paideia High School science students are participating in lab sessions to explore careers in health sciences and learn about the human body. This WSU Mentorship Program is presented by the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine.

Cultivating Safety and Security

Families and staff seem to be adjusting well to recent safety enhancements at school buildings entrances. Visitors at the main doors of Valley School and the Columbia Virtual Academy/District Office building now must request entry by pushing a button on a new video intercom system monitored by secretaries. Newly installed coded locksets and peepholes in Paideia High School and Valley Early Learning Center portable building doors, along with new sign-in processes throughout buildings help monitor comings and goings on campus.

For many years, most exterior doors around school facilities have been kept locked, with traffic directed to main entrances. These new entry systems take things a step further in the district's efforts to continuously improve school security. In 2021-2022, exterior fencing and locked gates were installed around ancillary buildings, at VL Transport Center, and perimeter areas of campus.

Student safety is a top priority for Superintendent Mandi Rehn, the School Board, and parents. "If our kids aren't safe, nothing else matters," Mrs. Rehn emphasizes. "When we speak about safety, we mean both the physical security of our buildings, but also the closely related psychological, emotional safety experienced by staff and students." Feelings of well-being enable an unguarded attention on the daily endeavors of teaching, learning and operating schools.

Supt. Rehn is consulting with the NEWESD (NE WA Educational Service District) School Safety Specialist and a private contractor with experience in law enforcement to assess district emergency preparedness and help fully develop and finalize the state-required Comprehensive School Safety Plan.

Safety plans are multilayered and include facilities, operations, communications, staff training, on-line activities, and preventing or managing various types of emergencies, threats, and hazards in collaboration with local and regional agencies and first responders. *(continued on page 3)*



Valley SD Receiving First Electric Bus!

THE first electric bus in Stevens County is expected to be delivered to VL Transport Center in May. The Valley School Board, administrators, and staff from VL Transport Center and the business office have been coordinating efforts for more than a year to make this goal a reality.

The electric bus and charging station infrastructure are largely funded through a state-wide competitive grant from the Department of Ecology (DOE) awarded to the district in April 2022.

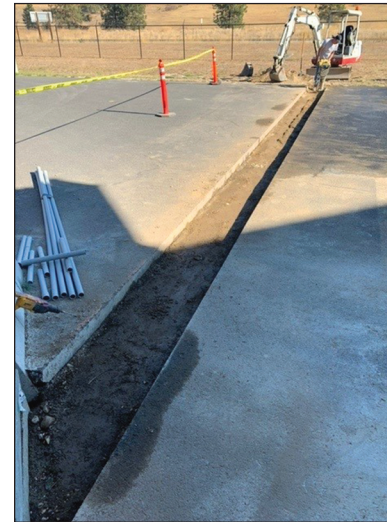
The objective of the Washington State Clean Diesel Program/Ecology's Electric School Bus Grant Program is to reduce diesel pollution from Washington's oldest buses and accelerate the transition from diesel powered bus fleets to all-electric powered fleets, thereby effectively lowering toxic and greenhouse gas emissions and risks for respiratory ailments and related health conditions such as asthma, lung disease, heart disease, and cancer.

Transportation Supervisor Steve Templeton and CFO Eileen Harris collaborated on the site, infrastructure, and financial feasibility analysis prior to submitting the grant application, with site preparations beginning once the award was accepted and financial commitments agreed upon by the School Board in June 2022.

The grant covers 115% of the excess cost of an electric bus ("EB") over the cost of a replacement diesel bus, equaling an award of approximately

\$312,000 to the district. There is also funding of up to \$75,000 for installation of required infrastructure (charging station), an investment that will enable future replacement of aging diesel buses with all-electric ones.

Administrators have been working with DOE and contractors to understand and meet various grant requirements, such as the DOE "Inadvertent Discovery Plan" (IDP) agreement, with procedures that must be followed if archaeological materials or human remains are encountered when digging trenches necessary for the dedicated power supply, and an Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) Make Ready Site Agreement with Avista Utilities.



Phase I involving groundwork and laying the power lines for the charging station was completed this past fall. The district has been waiting many months for the charging station equipment and bus, with delivery scheduled this spring. Phase II will commence thereafter, with completion of the project anticipated by fall 2023.

To prepare for the EB, VL Transport Mechanic Flint Jones and Secretary Annette Wisener visited Republic School District to learn about that district's experiences with their first electric bus and gain insight about maintenance and repairs, route logistics, and power station infrastructure.

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VSD Board Meeting Notice

Upcoming VSD Board meetings are
March 15th, April 19th, and May 17th
at 6:00 p.m. in the District Office Broadcast Studio
(509) 937-2791

School Board
Bill Wilson
(President)

Doug Elledge
Paul Voelker
Crystal Hubert

Nancy Cocroft
Superintendent
Mandi Rehn

Non-Discrimination Statement

Valley School District does not discriminate in its programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained guide dog or service animal by a person with a disability, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees of the Valley School District at 3030 Huffman Rd., Valley, WA 99181 are designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Danielle Tupek, Title IX Liaison; Ken Davis, Section 504/ADA Coordinator; and Mandi Rehn, Compliance Coordinator for State Law (RCW 28A.640/28A.642). A complaint regarding alleged discrimination may be made by e-mail to: compliance@valleysd.org, or by calling the district office at 509-937-2791.

News From Around Campus

■ Can you believe it? Students and staff already celebrated the 100th day of school on Feb. 13th with themed activities involving the big number. K-8 students and staff also observed Read Across America Day activities (in Seussical costumes) on March 2nd, with parents and VSD staff visiting classrooms to read aloud their favorite children's literature.

■ In Paideia's Spanish II class, students are challenged to engage their Spanish speaking and writing skills around everyone's favorite topic—FOOD! During a recent pizza-fest, students ordered from a Spanish menu. Hopefully the ingredients students selected were truly edible toppings!

■ Superintendent Mandi Rehn joined area administrators in Olympia to visit with legislators about how proposed education bills may impact (help or hurt) rural schools. Supt. Rehn stressed the importance of sharing the Valley story to advocate for the best interests of our students.

■ VELC started the Early Achievers Quality Recognition and Improvement System rating cycle with a goal of achieving the highest rating of Level 5 (VELC has an ongoing rating of Level 4). Programs achieve points in Quality Standard areas covering learning environments, child outcomes, interactions and curriculum, family engagement, professional development, and accreditation. This months-long process involves all staff and classrooms. Staff will submit 10-minute videos evidencing instruction using early learning guidelines and core competencies, along with interviews, surveys, assessment data, and staff training/certification.

■ Valley school staff are reviewing curricular options in language arts and will be piloting a new state approved K-4 comprehensive program with instructional components in reading, writing, vocabulary, listening

and speaking. Staff are also assessing grade level report cards and how they align with essential standards to re-



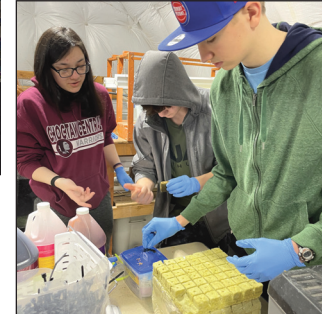
vamp cards into a user-friendly format for consistency between grades.

■ Valley's IT team of Forrest Miller and Bryan Lentes work in a year-round cycle of replacing outdated electronic devices including laptops, monitors, tablets, and ancillary equipment. They've ordered, configured and replaced 30 iPads, 62 laptops for K-8 and PHS students, 72 monitors,

and 26 laptops for staff (with docking stations). A total of 26 smart boards were installed in classrooms. Most equipment lasts 5-8 years.

■ PHS Environmental Science students are setting up and organizing the greenhouse and horticulture lab for semester class activities, which includes nurturing seedlings for the annual plant sale in May.

■ Valley School recently hosted families during Literacy Night to share



a meal, play literacy games, and provide free books to support reading activities at home.

■ Paideia's chess team won the team trophy at Deer Park's

January Winterfest tournament in their first competitive outing! PHS students performed a variety of dances and played contemporary hits at the Winter Concert, showcasing the school's commitment to enrich student experiences in the arts. ❖

Cultivating Safety

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Another visible result of the safety review is the enhanced accessibility to and expansion of emergency supplies in classrooms, and updated interior mapping of buildings.

All schools/buildings now have a large rolling safety kit containing emergency supplies, and all classes now hold emergency backpacks filled with various first aid and supplementary items.

Last year, automated external defibrillators (AEDs) were installed at

Valley School and CVA/District Office building, for a total of three AEDs on campus; an AED has been available at Paideia High School since 2011.

Emergency preparedness and school safety planning is an evolving project as society around us advances. Supt. Rehn appreciates all input from families, staff, and students about any safety concerns.

"This feedback is helping guide our work moving forward," said Mrs. Rehn. Once the final Comprehensive School Safety Plan is done, the district will gather more feedback on its progress. ❖

First Electric Bus

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Flint drove the Republic EB, and during the ride Annette noted the absence of noise and vibration generated by diesel buses, allowing for quieter conversations and a smooth ride. This lack of elevated noise level and sensory stimulation creates a

calmer environment for students. The Republic driver also confirmed that the EB has plenty of power, and Flint was able to gain speed quicker in the EB than in a standard bus.

Once the new electric bus is operational, it will be used on the Chewelah route and will be able to travel approximately 180 miles on a single charge. ❖



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Grants Enriching Healthy School Meals

THIS year, the food service programs for Valley K-8/Paideia High School and Valley Early Learning Center (VELC) are enriching meals using funds from three grants that support healthy meals for kids, connect Washington State growers with school nutrition programs to increase purchasing of local whole foods, and provide education about high quality food and farming sustainability.

Kitchen staff are infusing their recipes with locally sourced fresh vegetables, fruit, meat, and grain and dairy products—a move made possible by \$40,000 awarded to the schools through the Farm to School Purchasing Grant Program, a partnership between the Washington State Department of Agriculture and OSPI.* Valley School continues to receive the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetables grant of approximately \$10,000.

In addition, VELC was awarded an Equipment Grant offered

through the NEWESD 101 Nutrition Cooperative and funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-ED).

The Equipment Grant has helped VELC Cook Gloria Johnson add more 'made from scratch' meals to their nutritional foundation. While VELC has always promoted the

increases efficiency and allows more variety in the menu.

Additionally, the schools are taking advantage of support offered by the NEWESD Nutrition Cooperative. They help implement Farm to School programs by connecting schools and local

farmers, helping develop recipes that feature local foods, and hosting "Meet Your Farmer" events where the children can interact with the

people who grow or raise the food in their breakfast and lunch.

Students get to learn about and try unique fruits and vegetables served in daily snacks, such as dragon fruit, starfruit, and various colored melons

and carrots.

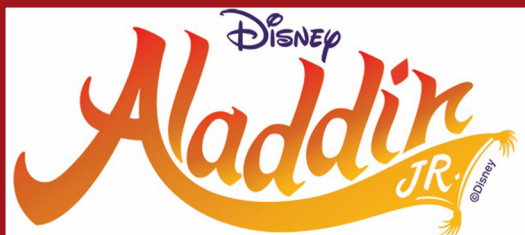
Food & Nutrition Supervisor Leah Harp indicates kitchen staff have been "super excited" about the opportunity to utilize locally grown food purchased from regional farms. These businesses include Ramstead Ranch (Ione), The Front Porch (Addy), The Bread Box (Chewelah), Olsen Farms (Colville), and Lakewolf Creamery (Deer Park). ❖

**Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Northeast Washington Educational Service District 101-Spokane*



scratch cooking method in its meals (meaning cooking without using a prepared mixture of ingredients), the new equipment—Vitamix blender, immersion blender, Kitchen Aid mixer and pancake baker—greatly

Come experience the magic!



Valley School Drama Club
~ Performances ~

March 16th & 17th

6:00 p.m. | \$5 Admission
Multi-Purpose Room