

October 26, 2009

As the new interim superintendent of the Selah School District, the first two months of the school year have been very exciting for me. I have met many staff members as I visited each school and department. Thanks to all of you for being so friendly and welcoming. I was able to visit classrooms in every school in September and October and I saw a lot of excellent teaching and learning. I saw a safe and supportive learning environment, standards-based teaching, and high levels of student engagement at each school.

I have been doing some comparisons of 2009 Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) data for our five schools with other comparable schools in the state, using the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction "School Report Card" website (www.k12.wa.us/). The WASL is given to all students in grades 3 through 8, plus grade 10. Writing and science are not tested at every grade level so there are a total of 20 tests. I compared our schools only with schools that have the same amount of student diversity, or are more diverse. I did not include comparison schools that were a lot smaller. The result is an "apples to apples" comparison.

Each of our schools has a different number of comparison schools. The number of comparable schools for John Campbell Elementary is 75. Because Robert Lince Elementary has a slightly higher enrollment and free and reduced lunch percentage, their comparison group is only 58 schools. The Intermediate School has 165 comparable schools for grade 5, because there are lots of elementary schools that include grade 5. The Intermediate School has 59 comparison schools for grades 6 and 7 because there are fewer middle schools to compare to. Selah Junior High has 131 comparison schools.

Below are the Selah School District WASL scores that ranked in the top 20% (or better) of the comparison schools.

	Rank	# of Comparison Schools
John Campbell		
Reading – gr 3	14	75
Robert Lince		
Reading – gr 3	9	58
Math – gr 3	11	58
Reading – gr 4	12	58
Math – gr 4	7	58
Writing – gr 4	12	58
Selah Intermediate		
Science – gr 5	4	165
Reading – gr 7	1	59
Math – gr 7	1	59
Selah Junior High		
Reading – gr 8	7	131
Science – gr 8	13	131

Selah High School did not have any WASL scores in the top 20% for 2009. However, passing the WASL in reading and writing is now a requirement for graduation in our state. In addition, seniors must either pass the WASL math test or take up to two years of additional math classes. I am very impressed that 99.5% of Selah High School and Selah Academy seniors in the Class of 2009 did meet WASL requirements for graduation last spring.

As a school district we are raising our expectation for student achievement. The state is replacing the WASL with the Measurements of Student Progress (grade 3-8), and the High School Proficiency Exam in 2010. Our new goal for the next three years is: Increase student achievement so that 90% of students meet standard on all Measurements of Student Progress tests and the High School Proficiency Exam by 2012. Based on what I have seen, I am confident that our students can achieve at these levels!

Steve Chestnut
Superintendent