

PEORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS staff news weekly

-----Volume II — No. 11 — November 4th, 2009-----

BOE Gives Approval for Letter to PBC

The look of Lincoln Middle School may be getting a makeover, while Peoria High may see some cosmetic changes. The Peoria Public Schools' Board of Education voted in favor Monday night of sending a commitment letter to the Public Building Commission regarding plans to use the remaining, nearly \$30 million of PBC funds.

The commitment letter, as approved by the Board, will state the district plans to use the funding for an addition to Lincoln Middle School. That addition would make room for primary students from the former Kingman attendance area and the students from Irving Primary, when it closes.

Also included in the commitment letter, will be a plan to make environmental updates to Peoria High School. Those updates could come in the form of air conditioning the school, replacing the windows of the school, or both.

While details of the plans are currently being worked out by Administration, the Public Building Commission needed a commitment letter of the basics to keep their funding timeline on track.

"We are already working on planning for both projects," says PPS Director of Capital Projects Dave Ryon.

Ryon says planning costs will leave about \$26 million available for the construction budget of both projects.

Redefining Teaching & Learning

Project Learning at the New Community Learning Centers

What do we mean by projects?

Projects, or deep investigations, will be an integral part of the curriculum at the new Glen Oak and Harrison Community Learning Centers. Project work is never considered a whole curriculum but is another vehicle for approaching curriculum which provides practice in 21st century knowledge and skills. Project learning is centered on the aspects of curriculum which students find most interesting and is characterized by high engagement. Students at all ages are involved in finding answers to questions that are complex for their age and grade level. Project work emphasizes the need for collaboration and teamwork. A key to project work is interaction with experts and the use of authentic topics. Project work is rich in literacy, mathematics and science skill development. Students discover reasons for learning academic skills. They see why reading, writing, and mastering technology is important. They also have an opportunity to practice the use of academic skills as they do independent research, organize information, and share what they have learned. Project work provides real world application of concepts and skills learned in curriculum experiences.

Why do projects?

Project work generally increases motivation to learn and can have a positive effect on the learning environment. Students are energized as they find answers to their own questions and complex problems. Students represent their learning in a variety of ways including preparing reports, writing books and articles, giving speeches, building experiments and models.

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Open Enrollment Reminder

Coming Up This Week...

Open enrollment is underway for all district staff and will continue through the end of November. Insurance enrollment packets are now available and must be signed for when they are picked up, either at an open enrollment session or at the Administration Building. All packets must be completed and returned no later than November 30th at 5:00 p.m.

Health insurance and FLEX remains out to bid for custodial/maintenance and administrative groups, but employees must still attend an open enrollment meeting in November to fill out packets for

dental, vision and life insurance. A phone call to Payroll is NOT NEEDED to register or attend an open enrollment meeting.

This week's scheduled open enrollment meetings include:

- 11-04-09 - Kellar Primary Gym
3:30-5:30 PM
- 11-05-09 - Peoria H.S. Auditorium
3:30-5:30 PM
- 11-06-09 - Form Drop-Off at DLC Board Room, Administration Building
6:30-7:30 AM & 3:00 - 5:30 PM
- 11-07-09 (Sat.) - Admin. Building
9:00-11:00 AM
- 11-09-09 - Woodruff H.S. Auditorium
3:30-5:30 PM
- 11-10-09 - Blaine Sumner Gym
4:30-5:30 PM

Forms can always be dropped off each day there is not an open enrollment meeting, between 6:30 - 7:30 AM and 3:00 - 5:30 PM at the Administration Building.

Contact Information Update

As Human Resources prepares for the end of the year, please help them to make the W-4 and other tax processes run smoother by calling HR at 672-6770 or sending a groupwise email to an HR staff member if you need to update your phone number and/or address!

-Project Learning, continued from front page

Projects are considered part of the experiences that students need to be successful in 21st century. Research in neuroscience and psychology show that knowledge, thinking and doing are inextricably tied. The 21st century learning and working environment will be one where social skills and the ability to operate in the context of a variety of cultures and communities will be important. Learners feed back information and actively use what they know to explore, negotiate, interpret and create solutions to problems with others. Students who can learn to solve problems in schools are more likely to be the creative and collaborative workers we need in the future.

How will project work look in the schools?

Project work will look different based on the age level of the students. In the earliest experiences, those provided by caregivers and parents, projects will be home projects. Seminars will teach parents how to identify a child's interest and provide experiences including books which match the child's interest. Beginning with the pre-kindergarten years, the Project Approach will be used. This method of project work investigates project topics which are nearby and are based on student generated questions. For example, a class may study snakes when a snake is discovered on the playground and a science curriculum goal is understanding the needs of living things.

In the late elementary years (3-5th grade) projects will follow the outline of Problem Based Learning, in which teachers coach student thinking and guide student inquiry,

facilitating learning toward deeper levels of understanding while entering the inquiry as a co-investigator. For example, students in the age level may study the geo-thermal systems that heat and cool their building and conduct experiments with different kinds of systems. In the middle school level (6-8th grade) projects will combine Problem Based Learning with Service Learning. The Service Learning teaching and learning strategy integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. For example, students may become involved in a project on recycling which leads them to develop a recycling education program for the neighborhood. In each of these types of learning experiences, students play a key role in defining the topic, designing strategies for investigation, doing the investigating, and then sharing or presenting their findings in some way. In each of these types of project work the emphasis is on long term experiences in which students learn to take ownership for outcomes. In each of these types of project work, students develop higher level thinking skills such as observing and reflecting, developing hypotheses, drawing conclusions and inferences, and developing practical implications. Students involved in project work develop a strong sense of accomplishment and confidence in academic work.

*** For more information visit:**
<http://pbln.imsa.edu/>
<http://www.projectapproach.org/>
<http://www.servicelearning.org/>
<http://store.tcpress.com/0807745502.shtml>

Know the Basics... First Aid Tips

If you give first aid to others, always protect yourself from exposure to bloodborne pathogens by wearing gloves, masks,



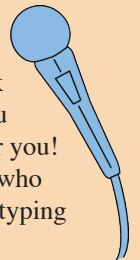
and eye protection. Also protect yourself from any surrounding dangers. Do not be foolish. Get first aid or medical help when you need it. While it is best to leave major first-aid treatment to those who have professional training, all workers should know basic first aid.

TIP...

- If a victim is in contact with electricity, make sure the current is off before attempting to help the victim, or use a nonconductor, such as a dry wooden pole to remove the victim from the contact. If necessary, have an experienced person perform CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

Try This! Assistive Technology Ideas

Find a microphone and plug it into your computer. Start Microsoft Word. Click on Tools>Speech. Now you can talk and have it type for you! This is perfect for students who have poor handwriting and typing skills.



Special Services: Thomas Jefferson Teachers Teaming Up and Implementing Successful Co-Teaching Model

Co-Teaching A SUCCESSFUL Model

Co-teaching is working in District 150! Teachers and assistants at Thomas Jefferson Primary School are committed to the co-teaching model and are fully implementing the co-teaching approaches. According to teachers and assistants, co-teaching is a teaching model that supports the needs of all students, general education and special education alike. They report that this approach provides the best educational environment for all students. These are busy classrooms

where learning is going on at many different levels. Children are getting what they need; teachers recognize that all students do not learn at the same pace and that this is OK. All students are winners in these classrooms. The teachers report that they like having the option to brainstorm with another teacher. They learn over time to work hand in hand to meet student needs. They do not have lines drawn to divide students into yours and mine. They truly work as teams where each member brings different perspectives and experiences which allow differentiated learning to take place. Students get more attention, practice, and response opportunities

during the school day. Teachers report that students are learning responsibility to work with other students and that this creates an environment where all students feel good about themselves. The staff is realistic about obstacles including limited planning time and the need to sometimes address multiple grade level curriculums. The teachers must be flexible as they must often make changes in their schedules to accommodate the mobility of students moving in and out of the school. The co-teaching teams at Thomas Jefferson are excited about the co-teaching model and are giving it 100% of their energy.