



School Year 2026-2027

7th Grade Newsletter

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October 15, 2026

ADVISORY

7th graders returned from an incredible trip last week and got right back into the swing of things. After impressive speeches by the seven 7th graders who ran for cabinet positions, students voted on Associated Student Body (ASB) positions on Wednesday. Next week 7th graders will be enjoying some simple fall celebrations in advisory!

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

7th Graders recently finished up their opening unit on the novel *Peak*, by Roland Smith. Students completed a challenging unit test, which included passage analysis, key climbing and mountain vocabulary, and analytical responses to critical thinking questions. They also completed their first mini essay of the school year. Next, students can expect some creative classwork revolving around Spooky season, but first, we'll start our next book together, *Into Thin Air*, by Jon Krakauer, which will extend our larger unit on survival, resilience, and leadership.

MATH

We are roughly two thirds through our Expressions and Equations unit, and students will be receiving a mid-unit quiz on these topics this coming Monday! The unit began with a review of combining like terms, factoring, and the distributive property, with students starting easy and progressing to simplifying increasingly complex expressions. We then moved to actually solving algebraic equations using these same principles, emphasizing the (mostly) one-size-fits-all "Inverse operations" workflow and stressing the importance of cleanly showing your work instead of doing everything in your head. After the quiz we will be covering some inequalities using these same principles!

SCIENCE

Students are wrapping up our first official unit: Natural History of the Columbia River Gorge. Before venturing to the Columbia Gorge last week, students presented their own theories about how the Gorge was formed. This week students are learning the incredible drama that resulted in the formation of the Columbia Gorge – from colossal lava flows that flooded through Central

and Eastern Washington millions of years ago, to some of earth's largest floods that scoured the region thousands of years ago – the story of the Columbia River Gorge seems almost too wild to be true. Next week we will begin our Plant Biology Unit.

SOCIAL STUDIES

7th graders have been studying Washington State history through the lens of indigenous landmarks, culturally significant artwork and locations and reading about early history. On October 2nd, students had a short field trip to see the murals at Robert Eagle Staff Middle School as well as visit the single “spring” at Licton Springs Park. In class, students read about the history and some of the significance of these two places. We also read and discussed the Treaty of 1855 (Yakama) and about homesteading in early Washington territory. Our trip to the Yakama Nation, the Dalles Dam, the ancient petroglyphs and the Olmstead Homestead was a fantastic way for students to see and think about this complex narrative of our state. In class students will next write a short, but “formal” paragraph synthesizing this trip, and how these various entities show resistance, resilience and respect. In the coming weeks, students will prepare for a debate about the Dalles Dam.

SPANISH

7th grade Spanish has been using movement games to learn verbs, adjectives, and nouns. They have practiced using descriptive adjectives to describe their likes and dislikes using the verb *Gustar*. They have been utilizing varying levels of formal and informal greetings. They have also learned about Hispanic Heritage Month through historical documentaries.

STEM LAB

We spent the past few weeks in 7th grade STEM lab creating earthquake-proof structures using small and large marshmallows, fettuccini, penne, angel hair, and various thicknesses of spaghetti. We tested these brilliant and artful structures using Ryan's shake table, and they stood up incredibly well to even higher power outputs! We suspect that the lightweight and flexible materials may have been limited in their ability to truly collapse in the way that a real building might, but we learned about the principles of modern earthquake-proofing! We'll soon be moving onto a soil liquefaction study.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION /GO (GET OUTSIDE!)

After recently concluding our Ultimate Frisbee unit, dodgeball has taken center stage in PE classes. As we learn and play different versions of this classic game, students are encouraged to emphasize fair play and risk-taking over competitive results. Ask your child why catching balls is more advantageous than throwing them at opponents. We also have a parkour station set up on stage so students can practice vaulting and hurdling skills during breaks from dodgeball. Our next teamsport unit, handball, is coming soon. This unsung sport was very popular with students last year and we're excited to play again!

VISUAL ARTS

7th grade students learned how to see "edges" (where two things meet), and are practicing that through "pure" contour drawings: drawings of a subject where they don't look at the paper while they draw, and they use only one continuous line to capture every detail. This exercise is a great way to let go of perfectionism and focus on slowing down, seeing details, and learning through steady practice. Ask your student to show you how it's done, and try it together!

DRAMA

Drama students have begun the work of understanding the three types of comedy and how they show up in the world around us on a day-to-day basis. This includes discussions and action regarding understanding our audience and our responsibilities as comedic artists. These discussions help guide script choices as we prepare for the December 9th performance.

VOCALS

Vocals students have been learning intermediate level singing terminology, as well as understanding their individual singing range. Students have also been learning the criteria of selecting songs for a Billings 7th & 8th grade vocals class through listening to the soundtrack from the musical *Hadestown*. These skills will soon translate into selecting songs for our December 9th performance.

September 17, 2026

ADVISORY

In advisory, 7th graders have been setting 7th grade norms and routines. Last week each advisory made cube sculptures to represent themselves for Convocation. These sculptures were incredibly creative, unique, and impressively well-designed! This week, students voted on the first "R's Award" recipient. Ayyub was the first 7th grader to win this award with nominations. His classmates nominated him for three of the R's: Respect, Responsibility *and* Resilience!

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

In ELA, students have continued their strong writing from last year with daily journal entries: Masterpiece Monday, Take a Stand Tuesday, Wonder Wednesday, Throwback Thursday, and Fiction Friday. This has been super helpful as we build toward our first essay on *Peak*, the summer reading book for this year. Additionally, we've been preparing for our test on the novel by analyzing key passages, and working on a creative theme and symbol collages to help us think more deeply about the tension and characters in the novel.

MATH

The 7th graders have been getting back into the swing of a regular math class while working on their brief introductory unit on the real number system. We are condensing this unit a bit on account of students' relatively advanced math levels, and are finishing it with a short poster project in which students examine real-world examples of extremes in positive and negative

numbers. Topics have included earthquake depth vs. tsunami height, temperature and altitude extremes, and win-loss totals in soccer and baseball!

SCIENCE

7th graders are wrapping up their “Intro to 7th Grade Science” unit. This week 7th graders applied the scientific method to determine whether eggs were hardboiled or not, and on Thursday they will participate in their first lab! In this lab, students will collect quantitative and qualitative data as they manipulate dry ice in various experiments. Next week, 7th graders will launch into their first official science unit – the Natural History of the Columbia River Gorge – in preparation for our October trip!

SOCIAL STUDIES

7th graders created a wood and paper lantern depicting important images of themselves including objects or places central to their identities. Students are also creating a map of Washington as they begin their study of Washington State and prepare for the fall trip to Yakima, the Dalles Dam, and the Yakama Nation Cultural Center. 7th graders will begin to explore aspects of indigenous history and treaty rights.

SPANISH

Students have learned and memorized a poem with movement in Spanish. They have learned and memorized the vowels, alphabet, and numbers from 1-100. In addition to this, we have started working on a group rhyme, greetings and goodbyes, and expressing how we are feeling in Spanish. We have also started our Dances of the Caribbean unit. Students are currently learning the basic steps to Merengue and Cumbia. They are also learning the song Guantanamera.

STEM LAB

In our first STEM Labs for 7th grade, we reviewed the outline for the year, discussed the many geohazards present in our backyard, and previewed our first project for the year. We will spend the first term examining geohazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, and lahars. The students learned about the evidence for the 1700 Cascadia earthquake and the risks with a possible recurrence. Our first project will be a lab in which the students build and test earthquake-proof buildings, followed by a lab examining the mechanics of soil liquefaction.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION / GO (GET OUTSIDE!)

Students begin PE/GO classes with a mindful breathing ritual with three yoga-pose options: mountain, easy, or (the ever-popular) corpse pose. This brief, quiet moment emphasizes how focus, self-control, and precise technique translate to success in all athletic endeavors. Ultimate Frisbee is our first teamsport unit. The variety of athletic skills, teamwork, and inclusivity it promotes make it a very popular sport in our community. 7th graders have shown remarkable progression with throwing techniques and gameplay fluidity since last year. It’s a credit to their practice in PE classes, but also to all the times they throw the disc together and organize Ultimate games during lunch breaks.

VISUAL ARTS

7th grade artists are exploring a "new way of seeing" that allows us to slow down, notice details, and see the world as it really is. We practiced switching into this way of seeing by turning images upside-down and revealing only one section at a time, so we wouldn't know that all of the lines and shapes we were drawing were part of a person until the end! After the trip next month, we'll learn how to see edges and draw 3-dimensional objects on the 2-dimensional "picture plane".

DRAMA

In Sketch Comedy & Production, 7th grade students are working side-by-side with 8th grade students to become a sketch comedy ensemble whose first show will be **December 9th**. Our initial work focuses heavily on building artistic agreement and consensus while learning about dramaturgy, production elements, and whether they'd like to be a stage manager, actor or both! (All students will participate in some light design work.) Next, students will peruse script options from our school-appropriate selection from the catalogue of Seattle comedy-scene legends Bald-Faced Lie. We'll begin rehearsal and production work for those scripts once selected.

VOCALS

7th grade vocals students have been busy cocreating the fall vocals ensemble class that will consist of ensemble performers and also ensemble managers, stage managers, and low tech props coordinators. The first several weeks of class every student in the class, including ensemble managers and stage managers, will sing with the class to develop their ear training and singing abilities.

MUSIC

In Digital Arts, 7th graders started with 'the groove', learning how to create drum beats using Drumbit and understanding how the kick, hi-hat, and snare interact across different musical genres, while also practicing those rhythms by hand. Afterward, students transitioned to Soundtrap, where they have been transcribing songs from YouTube and building foundational production skills to apply to their own original compositions.