



Orcas Island School District 137

557 School Road, Eastsound, Washington 98245, Telephone: 360 376-2284, Facsimile: 360 376-2283

It is my belief...

As your Superintendent, every action or decision I make is based on what is in the best interest of our students.

The future of the Montessori program at Orcas Island Elementary School came into question with the news of Martha Inch stepping down from her role as the Montessori classroom teacher after 15 years of dedicated service to this district and the Montessori program. This presented a dilemma that would ultimately result in a decision to (1) continue a successful program of 15 years along with its challenges of operating a school within a school or (2) phase out the Montessori program to further unify and strengthen our thriving elementary program.

Lorena Stankevich assumed leadership of the elementary school two years ago at a time in which school culture and morale were in need of a boost. Over the last two years, she has done a phenomenal job of creating a positive culture for students and staff. Morale is at its highest! Lorena has proven herself to be an outstanding instructional coach and academic leader and has worked tirelessly with me and also with her staff to successfully implement data collection and interpretation, multi-tiered systems of support, data-driven instruction, and teacher collaboration; all of which create a climate of learning for all students of all abilities.

The Montessori program has been a success due in large part to the commitment of an exceptional teacher. That said, it has also been a stand-alone classroom within the elementary. A Montessori program without Martha didn't seem plausible, so Lorena naturally saw an opportunity to transition from Montessori to one cohesive elementary program – a program with one shared vision and action plan. I supported her in this. Two weeks ago, a meeting with Montessori parents resulted in their generous offer to raise money to train a Montessori teacher or teachers in order to maintain and avoid disruption of the Montessori program. Lorena presented the offer of Montessori training to her teachers, and the teachers declined as they have invested in and are committed to the current strategic goals for the elementary school.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Montessori is a remarkable and successful program, and our elementary school has enjoyed a 15-year history under Martha's excellent instruction. Now that the future of the program is in question, it is time to look closely at the challenges that a school within a school brings; those challenges evident within our very own elementary school. Having essentially two schools within one over the years has inadvertently led to a distinct division within the school.

Orcas Island Elementary School: 611 School Road, Eastsound, Washington, 98245, Telephone: 360 376 - 2286

Orcas Island Middle and High Schools: 715 School Road, Eastsound, Washington, 98245, Telephone: 360 376 - 2287

Waldron Island School: School Corner, Waldron Island, Washington, 98297, Telephone: 360 622 - 6297

OASIS Alternative Schools: K-8 and High School: 557 School Road, Eastsound, Washington, 98245, Telephone: 360 376 - 2284

The solution is as follows:

2018-19

Montessori

Martha will serve as Montessori teacher for students in grades 1, 2, & 3, as she has over the past 15 years. At the end of the year, Martha's request will be honored and she will be transferred into OASIS.

2019-20

Montessori

Montessori will become a stand-alone program under ALE within the Orcas Island Public School District for the 2019-20 school year and beyond.

A complete transition plan will be developed and executed over the next year by an appointed committee consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators. I am pleased to share that Martha Inch has offered to serve on this committee and mentor the new Montessori teacher!

2018-19

Elementary

As we enter into a year of transition (2018-19), I will support the elementary students with an additional teaching position. This new position will allow us to continue to include first graders in Martha's Montessori class and reduce class sizes overall.

The class configurations for 2018-2019 are as follows:

Kindergarten
1st/2nd
1st/2nd
1st/2nd/3rd Montessori
3rd/4th
3rd/4th
4th/5th
4th/5th

Additional support will be provided to the Elementary students in the form of a .6 FTE Math Interventionist. The Math Interventionist will provide support to students in an effort to close the achievement gap in math and to support the District's Problem of Practice. (Additional FTE will be provided to the MS/HS for math support as well.)

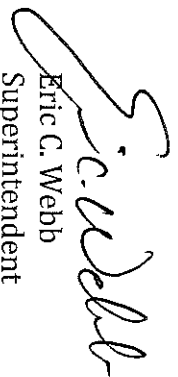
2019-20

District-Wide

- The elementary music program will move into their new building
- English Learners will move out of the modular building and into the elementary
- Montessori will move into the modular building as a stand-alone ALE program
- The Old Gym will be renovated with classroom space on the stage for drama and yoga
- Students, staff, and community will enjoy a new track

I hope this brings clarity to the questions regarding the future of Montessori and how we will move forward by continuing to honor and offer both highly successful programs in our district. It is important to always remember that we all want what is best for our students, and I am proud to say that we are doing and will continue to do just that!

Respectfully,



Eric C. Webb
Superintendent