

Education

Parents and teachers gather to learn New PPA scholarship

Parents, teachers and community members in more than 180 school districts gathered beginning March 26 to learn about new tests in Washington's K-12 public schools.

The meetings are being hosted by local school districts as part of a statewide information campaign entitled "Testing Our Future: New Assessments in Our Public Schools."

In 1993, the State Legislature charged the Commission on Student Learning with developing academic standards for all K-12 students to achieve in core subjects — reading, writing, communication, mathemat-

ics, science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. The Commission was also charged with developing new tests or "assessments" to measure how well students are doing in these subjects at the fourth, seventh, and tenth-grade levels.

More than 70,000 fourth-graders in nearly 1,000 schools will take the tests in reading, writing, communication and mathematics between April 21 and May 9. The new tests are expected to give teachers and parents a better understanding of a student's knowledge and abilities, and where the student needs help.

The new tests are considered to be rigorous and more demanding of students. In addition to multiple choice questions, students will be required to explain their answers, complete charts and write short essays. Scores will be reported in August.

About 68,000 seventh-graders are expected to take a pilot of the seventh-grade test, but no scores will be reported since this is a "test of the test." The seventh-grade test will be ready for use next year; the tenth-grade test will be available for use in the 1998-99 school year. By the

2000-01 school year, the tests will be fully phased in and administered by every public K-12 school in the state.

Beginning on Wednesday, March 26, local school districts across the state hosted public meetings to give parents and other community members a chance to see and try out the new tests for themselves. Gov. Gary Locke proclaimed March 26 to be "Learn About Assessment Day."

Development of tests for science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness is scheduled to begin later this year.

New PPA scholarship

The PPA Executive Board has authorized a third scholarship to be offered to a 1997 graduating Portland high school senior in memory of Officer Robert J. "Bob" Roberts a 19 year veteran of the Portland Police Bureau and PPA Member.

The PPA currently offers two scholarships each year to graduating seniors. The scholarships are four-year renewable scholarships of \$1,000.00 for one male

and one female student who have actively contributed to their school communities, are of good moral character, are recommended by their schools, have financial need and a minimum of 3.0 GPA in a college preparatory curriculum.

This third scholarship will fall under the same criteria and expire at the end of the fourth year. For additional details call: Portland Police Association at 25-9760.

Robo-gladiators spark science interest

The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, once reserved for sports only, was experienced by hundreds of students in a new setting: science and technology. Students, robots, businesses and an inventor/marketing genius came together last week to inspire achievement in science and technology when FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) began its 1997 Mid-Atlantic Robotic Competition. The Competition paired high schools, businesses and institutions of higher education in engineering design teams to develop competitive robots. Some 35 teams of high school students and engineers competed.

"FIRST really wants to do for science and technology what the NBA or the Olympic Committee does for athletics," said Dean Kamen, the New Hampshire-based inventor and entrepreneur who founded FIRST in 1989.

Gay teachers group to meet

Clayton Vetter feared the worst from his students at Skyline High School when he announced he was gay.

Fury was already brewing at another city school over efforts to form a gay students' club. Its school board had just banned all non-curricular clubs rather than allow clubs for gay students, and state lawmakers were ready to pass a law to ban gay clubs altogether.

Vetter expected his students would hate him, would quit his debating class en masse if they knew the truth about his sexuality.

Instead, he found understanding. "If anything, I found I had a whole coalition of students and parents who would support me," he said. "I didn't drop one student."

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network wants to convey a similar message to other homosexual students and teachers Saturday at its first national conference. Organizers expect more than 240 to attend.

Utah's capital was selected for the conference because the network wanted to respond to the gay club

controversy.

"To the great dismay of many people, the city was transformed into a symbol of intolerance," said Kevin Jennings, the group's executive director. "We were outraged by that. Our local members in Utah were outraged by that."

Vetter, who will speak at the conference, said he decided to come out a year ago after hearing a news report on the club controversy in which a student said gays should keep their lifestyle secret.

Vetter, a teacher for 13 years, had told his students in the past that no problem could be solved through secrecy.

"My silence was just as wrong," he said. "My students were saying, 'I don't know any gay people,' and I wanted to say, 'Sure you do, you know me.'"

Vetter decided to step out of the closet in a very public way, announcing it to his students and the world in a news conference at the state Capitol.

His students' reaction told him he made the right decision. About 25 burst into cheers — some into tears —

as he emerged from the news conference in the Capitol Rotunda.

"I definitely think they learned that when you believe in something you have to stand up for it even though it may be difficult," Vetter said.

Vetter doubts his students would ever consider a law like the one Utah legislators passed last year. It gives school boards the authority to forbid clubs that "materially or substantially encourage criminal or delinquent conduct, promote bigotry or involve human sexuality."

"This generation has a maturity regarding humanity that my generation lacked," he said.

Since the law passed, some students have been meeting on their own. David Buckel, attorney for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, said he still hopes their gatherings will be allowed at schools.

Buckel represented Jamie Nabozny, a gay student who won a \$900,000 settlement last fall against a Wisconsin school district for not protecting him from harassment by his peers: name-calling that escalated into physical assault.

Southland teachers honored

NBC 4 will honor extraordinary Southland teachers by introducing the Crystal Apple Awards, an accolade bestowed on educators who have the ability to make a profound difference in the lives of their students and who are truly dedicated to their profession.

The first recipient will be Alfredo Perez, the inspirational teacher from Figueroa Street Elementary School in Los Angeles, who brought national attention to the problem of violence in our schools when he was accidentally hit by a gang member's bullet while teaching his fifth grade class. Today, Perez along with his wife, Virginia, also a teacher, are speaking out on the importance and value of education as a way to help stop the violence.

NBC 4 reporter Cater Lee will present Perez with the Crystal Apple award on Friday, March 21. Her interview with him will be seen that evening on the "Channel 4 News" at 6 p.m. Each Friday, NBC 4 will honor an outstanding Southern California teacher in its 6 p.m. newscast.

Forthcoming honorees will be selected from submissions sent to

NBC 4 from students, parents and faculty. Teachers selected for the Crystal Apple Award will be chosen based on their standing as a role model in the academic arena, their ability to inspire students to new educational heights and who go beyond the call of duty to guide our children to follow their dreams.

The Crystal Apple Awards are part of NBC 4's on-going efforts to reach out to local schools and to keep education in the forefront of civic and community awareness. Recently, NBC 4 launched the NBC 4 WeatherNet, a network of donated real-time weather stations based in 50 Southland schools which help students learn science, math and meteorology through hands-on experience.

Additionally, the station has helped a number of high school students to further their education by telling their stories on the weekly "Beating the Odds" news segment. More than \$100,000 in viewer donations have been contributed to a "Beating the Odds" scholarship fund, allowing these students to have the chance to attend college.

THE KOREAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

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