

If you no longer wish to receive our emails, you may [unsubscribe here](#)

# PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY SCHOOL

## news & info

about pscs	give
program	contact
admission	home
community	

### e-Newsletter: February 2007

#### IN THIS ISSUE

**Approaches**

**Staff Perspective: Neal**

**Alumni Update**

**February - What's Happening**

#### APPROACHES

The flexible and open nature of PSCS encourages students to consider different approaches to meet their educational goals. By now, PSCS community members recognize the most common of these approaches -- independent study, service learning, field trips, and classes. Last month we summarized a new approach, the concept of "Intensives Week." With the success of our first intensives week still fresh and wanting to use it as a model for other forms of experimentation, another new approach is being tried, that of project-based learning.



Project-based learning involves students, either independently or collaboratively, working with an advisor to meet well-defined goals. Advisors help students with the groundwork for their projects, gathering materials, suggesting a starting point, helping students chart the path their projects will take. Students then have specific space available to them at school to work on their projects, and structure has been provided to make sure the teaching staff is available to meet regularly with them. The hope is that this approach will give our students yet another way to gain valuable experience in independence, responsibility, leadership, management skills, cooperation, and box-breaking thinking.

Some projects that have begun include those for students wanting more direct and individualized ways of earning high school credit than is easily provided by the school's other approaches. Three students are working from innovative English textbooks based on specific themes, the Holocaust, the concept of justice, and the Great Depression. They complete readings and write reflections on what they've read, employing different principles of high school English. Additionally, they are each reading a piece of literature connected to their self-chosen themes. Another student, this one with a strong interest in drama, has been meeting with teaching

#### CALENDAR

#### VISITING PSCS

#### HOW TO APPLY

#### DONATE ONLINE

#### SCHOOL FUNDRAISER



#### Scrip Cards / \$100:

- \* PCC scrip cards
- \* QFC/Fred Meyer cards

#### 2007 Chinook Books \$20

Call (or stop by) the office to get yours.

206-324-4350

#### SAVE THE DATES

*March 13: Comedy Benefit Show for PSCS at the Comedy Underground*

*March 22-24: PSCS Play*

#### MONTHLY QUOTE

*"All human beings are born with unique gifts. The healthy functioning of our community depends on its capacity to develop each gift."*

—Peter Senge

#### TESTIMONIAL

*"PSCS embodies 21st century education at its best with its emphasis on individual growth"*

staff member Nic to determine how he can earn English credit through drama. He is looking to compare themes in different plays from the same genre and era of theater.

*and responsibility, community, service, and on learning to learn."*

–David Spangler, PSCS Parent

PSCS believes the inclusion of project-based learning will strengthen a curriculum that already offers both independent learning and more common class structures. Option equals opportunity, and PSCS students and staff have expanded their veritable smorgasbord of opportunities, made possible by the school's commitment to adaptation and student-centered learning.

### **STAFF PERSPECTIVE: NEAL**

Earlier this year I joined the PSCS community, simply desiring to be a part of something greater than myself. I never imagined that I would find a family, a group of people with whom I share common attitudes, interests, values and goals. I found a school that was dedicated to passing on knowledge, helping students realize the imaginative triumph that is our natural world.



At a young age, I can remember wandering through Southern California canyons, carrying a worn copy of *The Pocket Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians* looking for western fence lizards, whiptails, and chuckwallas. I can remember trying to build the water-powered rocket I saw Mr. Wizard launch. The joy of my childhood was in everyday discoveries: how to judge the distance of lighting, how to hit a baseball, how to take care of a goldfish. As I've grown older, that same love of learning, exploration, and discovery has carried me each and every day.

I believe that students everywhere need teachers that are passionate, dedicated, and genuinely excited to explore the world with them. And that is what they receive at PSCS. Students need an educational community free of humiliation and condescension; they need a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes their natural curiosity. And that is what they receive at PSCS. Looking at the world I believe that these needs significantly outweigh the supply, except at PSCS.

Now when I walk from the University Heights parking lot to the front door of Puget Sound Community School, I am reminded of the giddy excitement and anticipation of childhood. In recalling the built-in structure of classes, lunch periods, study hall, and detention (rarely) of my education, the adventures always seemed to happen in those "in between" times. It was then that I made friends, played games, told jokes, asked questions, questioned answers. For me, PSCS is one wonderful "in between" adventure, free of bitterness, bias, or bigotry, coercion or the compromise of integrity. Thank you, PSCS!

(Neal Hanson is a first year PSCS staff member filling the newly created position of Director of Development and Community Relations. To reach Neal directly, email [neal@pscs.org](mailto:neal@pscs.org).)

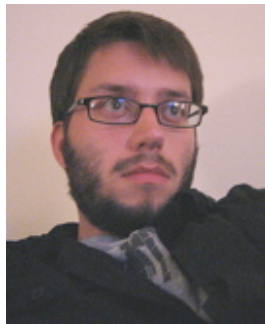
### **ALUMNI UPDATE**

Featured this month are two students who attended PSCS back in our nomadic,

pre-site days, and one who spent most of his PSCS career with the school having a home-base. They wrote in response to our request to tell us what they are doing and what PSCS meant to them, holding to our request to keep it concise and simple. We'd love to hear from other alums. If you haven't heard from us recently, please contact us. And to those from which we have heard, please spread the word to others. Thanks!!

***Whitney Ricketts (1997-1999)***

I am back in Seattle after graduating from Bryn Mawr College in May of 2006. I am working as a paralegal in asbestos litigation, before returning to school to begin my law degree in fall 2008. Of all of my schooling, I credit my years at PSCS as the most formative. PSCS taught me how to learn, how to stand up for myself, how to pursue my interests (however obscure), how to be a simultaneously determined and compassionate person. I gained a stronger footing in myself thanks to the freedom and respect granted to me by Andy, the PSCS staff, and my peers there. PSCS helped me to become not only a more curious student, but a more curious person - which has made my life indelibly more interesting.

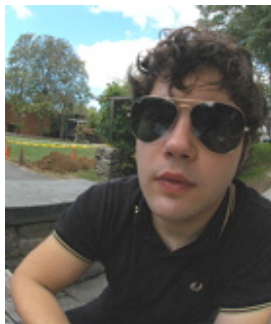


***Dan Gillmore (1999-2001)***

My student participation with PSCS ended in 2001, but my adult participation lasts to this day. I have facilitated several classes and held a position on the Board of Trustees, gaining knowledge of the intricacies of PSCS. PSCS helped form and define my passion in life. I am currently attending a local college in pursuit of a teaching degree in hopes of working at PSCS or a philosophically similar school.

***Zac Russell (2001-2005)***

Since PSCS I seem to have been everywhere. After graduation I took a year off to explore my hometown, taking junior college courses and getting a job at a local bookstore. I found that PSCS taught me the coping skills to get through the conceptual side of things, with the ability to form goals and have the motivation to meet and accomplish them. Now I'm attending Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. I find college work to be a nice change of pace from the free form of PSCS, and that settling into the structure of college not as hard as I would have thought.



**FEBRUARY- WHAT'S HAPPENING**

**VISITATION DAY**

Our next visitation day is Wednesday, 2/7. It is difficult to understand PSCS without coming to school and observing our activities and student life. Seeing the school in

action -- and even participating along with students and staff -- can make the difference between having a basic appreciation of our philosophy and the aha! of really "getting" how it works. For more information visit <http://www.pscs.org/admission/visiting.htm>.

**OPEN HOUSE**

PSCS is holding an admissions open house for prospective students on Sunday, 2/11, 1-3pm. Come find out more about the school and see the wonderful opportunities PSCS has to offer. Meet staff, students, and other community members. You can tour the school and pick up an application for 2007-08. For more information visit <http://www.pscs.org/admission/openhouse.htm>.

**INTENSIVES WEEK**

The second in our series of week-long "intensives" is coming up the week of 2/12-16. Each member of the teaching staff and Andy will facilitate a single week-long "intensive" designed to give students some concentrated exposure to an area in which they've expressed interest. Andy will be leading a US History intensive. Matt's will focus on outdoor education, specifically through hiking & biking. Nic's intensive involves working at local farms. Anoo's may be the most difficult to describe. A native of India, she has offered interested students the opportunity to, as she puts it, "teach me American through movies."

**BOARD MEETING**

Tuesday, 2/13 7pm.

**NO SCHOOL**

Monday, 2/19, President's Day and Friday, 2/23, Staff In-Service day.

**MAKE-UP SNOW DAYS**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 2/20, 21, 22.

-----

You're receiving this private communication because you're a valued friend of PSCS or have requested more information from PSCS.

Don't miss your email from PSCS; add [pscs@pscs.org](mailto:pscs@pscs.org) to your address book.

If this email was forwarded to you by another email recipient and you would like to continue to receive the PSCS e-Newsletter, please let us know by emailing [pscs@pscs.org](mailto:pscs@pscs.org).

[Unsubscribe me](#) from this list.