



TRANSFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN PORT TOWNSEND

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Port Townsend Schools are launching a five-year effort to transform public education through a central, place-based maritime framework. By connecting learning to the richness of our community, the potential of our classrooms is limitless. This is not an alternative program; the maritime-themed curriculum will be incorporated throughout all grades and subject matters. Our schools will use this theme as a springboard to improve academic performance and better ready graduates to be citizens of the world.

### **What does this place-based, maritime education look like?**

We can all remember great days in school: dissecting a frog or a visit to a local museum. We know that you learn better through activities related to the world around, and the learning sticks. Shouldn't all school be like that? Imagine a school day where students' minds and senses are fully engaged: learning to swim as part of kindergarten curriculum, or watching geometry come to life in a sail-making class, or a science class in the tide pools. Place-based education blurs the line between community and school, giving context to academic subjects.

### **It all sounds like a nice idea, but will there still be classes at school, or tests, or homework?**

#### **Will our kids be ready for college?**

You bet. This framework will exist within the context of state and national education standards. While we will align with the Common Core State Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards, the maritime framework will increase the rigor of our academics beyond those requirements. With deeper learning, there will be homework, and project based community learning opportunities and internships, and all of this is an effort to better prepare our students for college, careers, or anything else they take on after going to school here.

### **Are there examples of this approach working elsewhere?**

There are numerous examples of this type of experiential education being implemented in individual schools. Maritime themes, aviation themes, even schools that teach academic subjects through video game design. These tend to be high-performing schools and much sought after for enrollment. The concept is proven, and as far as we know ours would be the first to align an entire district.

### **OK, but why maritime? There are other things going on in Port Townsend; what about all of our rich scenes in agriculture, Victorian houses, the mountains, the arts? What if my kid doesn't like boats?**

This is a place-based education initiative, and with saltwater on three sides, at our core we are a maritime community and have been since the first dugout canoe landed here to collect shellfish. As part of the initiative,

the diverse vibrancy here will be used to energize education, and our community's relationship to the water will be the common thread throughout a student's career. This isn't about boats as much as it is about developing a deeper understanding of our community, our environment, and bringing the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math curriculum to life with real-world learning moments right in our own backyard.

### **When will I start seeing changes in the schools?**

The work to change is funding dependent, but assuming reasonable success, the planning work will begin in the first part of 2014, with initial implementation in selected grades in the 2014-2015 school year.

### **How will all of this get done?**

Change takes work, and we are not going to create yet another unfunded mandate in education or compromise student learning during this transition. Each grade and subject will have unique needs for implementing this change, and staff will be hired to lead the change process and classroom teachers will work with them to define the resources, time and support needed to successfully implement this maritime framework in their classrooms.

### **This sounds like a lot of work. How will the schools pay for this?**

The Maritime Discovery Schools initiative will be entirely funded outside of the schools' operational budget through a fundraising campaign. In all, the budget for the 5-year change effort is \$750,000. It sounds like a lot of money because it is, but for each student in our district, the change will cost only \$125 per year for 5 years — \$625 total. We're looking for people willing to commit to one student's worth of change and make a tax-deductible investment in our community's future.

### **Public schools have always been funded by taxes. What's different now?**

School budgets get tighter every year, and that funding doesn't allow for research and development of this scale. This level of innovation will require funds from non-traditional funding sources. This new model of education is being designed to fit within existing funding once the change is complete. This isn't a proposal to increase the ongoing cost of education, but to create a change that will make our tax dollars more effective.

### **How can I help and where can I sign up?**

We're glad you asked! Go to [MaritimeDiscovery.org](http://MaritimeDiscovery.org) for more info and how you can get involved, how to involve your friends and neighbors, and how you can sponsor one student's worth of change.

Thank you!