



pscs

practice integrity. engage the community. act with courage.

turning passion into achievement

PSCS was founded upon the belief that people are intrinsically compelled by their own curiosities and desire to learn, and when provided a positive and supportive environment—along with a wide variety of opportunities offered by interesting and engaging people—they will enthusiastically pursue meaningful and challenging tasks. Whereas mainstream educational models often promote *one-size-fits-all* memorization and conformity, the approach used at PSCS fosters creativity, flexibility, and a genuine diversity that stems from the uniqueness of all human beings. In this environment, meaningful learning occurs naturally and inevitably, though the pace, form, and content of learning will vary from person to person. This philosophy is based on the most robust findings in behavioral science of the past 40 years. It is a philosophy that has reinvented what school is in the 21st century.

requirements

PSCS is grounded in community. As such, the requirements we place on our students are based on providing the structure necessary for them to be immersed in the positive and supportive environment at the root of our philosophy. Students are required to earn 1,000 Community Hours (see *Key Words*) each year, and to attend mandatory whole group and small group activities (see *Key Words: Advising, Advisory, Check-in/Check-out, and Seminar*). We require students to attend PSCS for at least three years to be eligible for graduation.

collaboration

At PSCS, students and staff collaborate throughout the year to create each term's schedule, which has the flexibility to change regularly. This cooperative process provides an arena in which students learn to advocate for activities they want, to structure their schedules around their interests, goals, and priorities, and to be sensitive to the scheduling needs of others. Students are assigned an Advisor (see *Key Words*), a member of the teaching staff with whom they meet regularly. Advisors challenge students to identify short- and long-term goals and help them learn how to align what they do at school with these goals.

core commitments

Students who fully embrace the program offered at PSCS show consistent progress in self-expression, leadership, and skill-building in almost any endeavor, and recognize they are part of something bigger than themselves. This progress is contextualized within the school's Core Commitments: **Practice Integrity. Engage the Community. Act with Courage.**

academics & transcripts

It is important to note that PSCS does not have academic requirements, nor do we require students to take standardized tests or earn credits to graduate. There are no letter grades. We believe that students should be following their interests and honing a diverse range of skills—an approach that allows them to intrinsically participate in academic rigor. Advisors engage students in a process of authentic self-reflection that is challenging and supportive of their growth. The school documents this process with individualized transcripts that focus on the activities each student completes while attending PSCS. In addition, Advisors provide an annual narrative report of each advisee and high school students write three self-reflection essays per year. All of this is included on their official school transcript.

graduating from pscs

PSCS graduates demonstrate high levels of self-expression, intrinsic motivation, and commitment to the community. A student's senior year at PSCS is the ultimate development and expression of these characteristics and is uniquely structured to showcase them. To be granted senior status, students must first successfully present to the staff why they are ready for the rigors of the senior year. To be considered, students will need to be at least 16 years old and have been enrolled at (*continued on page 3...*)



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding various natural objects on a beach. The person is wearing two colorful, woven bracelets. The hands are holding a dark, textured object, a piece of driftwood, and a small, light-colored object. The background is a sandy beach with scattered driftwood and shells. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

pssc envisions
a community of
global ambassadors
for a philosophy
that values kindness,
wholeness,
& social justice.

Key words

ADVISING

A regular one-on-one meeting of a student and a member of the Teaching Staff to ensure each student gets individualized attention.

ADVISORY

A regular meeting for the 10-12 students who share the same Advisor (along with that Advisor), to build community and discuss larger issues in small group settings.

BLOCK CLASS

A facilitated activity that meets multiple times a week, usually for several weeks, to provide more focus for engaging in a topic.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT

Daily all-school gatherings, at the start and end of each school day, facilitated by a student volunteer.

COMMUNITY HOURS

Time students earn by being present on campus and through participation in school-approved off-campus activities. Students are expected to earn 1,000 community hours each year.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

An un-facilitated, off-campus activity that has been pre-approved by a student's advisor and furthers their specific goals and/or interests.

INDIVIDUAL WORK

An un-facilitated, on-campus activity that arises from a student's curiosity or goals.

INTENSIVES

A special week of school in which the regular schedule is suspended in support of students engaging in facilitated, in-depth investigations of a theme or topic all day for an entire week (some past *Intensives* have included Ceramics, Music Theory, Game Design, and Snowshoeing).

SEMINAR

Mandatory, staff-facilitated, weekly meetings designed for students at similar stages of development to learn how to best benefit from their experiences at PSCS.

(...continued from page 1) PSCS for at least three full school years at the time of their projected graduation. Approved students attend a mandatory Junior Seminar the spring term before their senior year. Then, during their final year, seniors must:

- Meet the principles of the school's presence requirement
- Conceive of and complete a yearlong Senior Project
- Present their *credo* to the community
- Participate in the yearlong Senior Seminar

In addition, graduating students are expected to promote and uphold the values of the school through a distinctly elevated and mature enactment of the core commitments (see *Core Commitments*). At the start of their culminating year, seniors are given a handbook that presents these requirements in detail.

volunteers

PSCS involves a number of volunteers from the community (parents, grandparents, local educators, etc.) who bring their unique expertise and energy into the school. Students receive the benefit of the volunteer's life experiences, exposure to a diverse range of teaching methods, and an additional lens through which to learn about and explore the world. Volunteers participate in a mandatory orientation, complete a background check, and are supervised by the School Director and Operations Specialist.

anti-bias policy & diversity at pscs

We believe that functioning in a truly diverse community is a vital 21st-century skill. At PSCS, we define diversity to include race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identification, sexual orientation, different physical and cognitive abilities, and religion. We recognize that there may be other areas in need of attention that we have not identified here, or that will emerge with time. PSCS has an open admissions policy that reflects our aim to respect individual differences and learn from diversity. We admit students of any racial, national, religious, or ethnic origin, from all backgrounds, belief systems, family dynamics, and orientations. In short, we invite the participation of all people, not discriminating on any basis in the administration of our programs.

"PSCS gives its students a radical dose of autonomy, turning the 'one size fits all' approach of conventional school on its head."

—Bestselling author Dan Pink in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*

sample course offerings & activities

Current Events Jam
Music Theory
Rock Climbing
Web Coding
Romeo & Juliet

Gym Soccer
Geometry
College Explorations
Science Lab
Natural Latin

'Zines
Sociology
A People's History
Queer History
Culture/Identity

Shop Life
Korean History
Critiquing Disney
Mask Making
Red Scarf Girl

March: Book 1
Secret Life of Words
National Parks
Kurt Vonnegut
Positive Psychology

Self Care Strategies
Les Misérables
Food Justice
Music Performance
Found Art

pscs profile

2017-18

college code

781177

director

Andrew Smallman

student/teacher ratio

11:1

enrollment

53 students

grade levels

6-12

approval

Puget Sound Community School is a WA State approved, independent, middle & high school.

governance

PSCS is governed by an active Board of Trustees comprised of volunteers from the greater community.

admissions

Decisions are made based on applications and personal interactions with students and their families, not on prior academic performance.

tuition aid

PSCS believes that lack of funds should not prevent any student from applying to our school. As funds allow, we provide assistance and program aid for activities and materials (for families that qualify).

contact:

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www.pscs.org

founder & director

During his senior year in high school, Andy Smallman was asked to list his life goals for publication in the school annual. He wrote, "To remain a defender of all that is pure and good. Let it lead me where it may." He may have been trying to be a bit silly at the time, but it turns out to have been true. His life's work is helping people get in touch with their most authentic selves, what he thinks is pure and good. Andy facilitates popular PSCS classes centered on kindness and healthy human development. He consults and presents in many settings, and has contributed to multiple books and periodicals on kindness, compassion, and progressive education. His efforts to promote kindness can be found at kindliving.net. (B.A. The Evergreen State College; M.A. Human Development, Pacific Oaks College.)

full time teaching staff

When hiring staff, our first priority is identifying people who demonstrate outstanding character and deep commitment to lifelong learning. Because of the unique structure of PSCS, which emphasizes authenticity and kindness, we have been able to select the best staff from an extraordinarily rich talent pool.



Liana Green (B.A. Music, Western Washington University & Fairhaven College; M.M., Performance & Orchestral Studies, New England Conservatory of Music) is a freelance musician who has worked as a librarian and as a music engraver. This is Liana's 11th year teaching at PSCS, where she advises and facilitates many classes, including: Jazz History, College Explorations, POC Podcasts, *March: Book 1*, and Music Theory.



Scobie Puchtler (B.A., Art and Design, Yale University) is a designer and entrepreneur who co-founded Prism Kite Technology. He is a licensed pilot and a skilled saxophone player. This is Scobie's 11th year teaching at PSCS, where he advises and facilitates many courses and activities, including: Geometry, Fearless English, Mask Making, Shop Life, and Young Eagles, an aviation course.



Nic Warmenhoven (B.A., Political Science, Reed College) is a freelance web developer whose first jobs out of college were teaching at his alma mater, Lakeside School, and volunteering for the ACLU. This is his 14th year on the staff at PSCS where he has facilitated many classes and activities. Most recently: Web Coding, Intro to Computer Programming, *Grapes of Wrath*, Constitutional Law, and *Romeo & Juliet*.



Chrissy Wakeling (B.A., Anthropology & Sociology, Principia College) spent three years on an archeologic dig in Illinois and has traveled extensively. She is in her 3rd year at PSCS, where she advises and facilitates classes for all levels. Her most recent offerings represent her loves of travel, history, art, and social sciences: *A People's History*, Sociology, Korea, National Parks, Sumi-e, and *Red Scarf Girl*.



Elizabeth Ortega (B.A. Sociology & Anthropology, University of Arizona; M.Ed. Transformative Learning Processes, Antioch University) is our newest teaching staff member. Originally from Arizona, she brings a particular passion for social justice and equity to PSCS, along with interest in writing, poetry, and printmaking. Elizabeth has most recently offered courses in Culture & Identity, Critiquing Disney, and Food Justice.

adjunct teaching staff

PSCS has two adjunct teachers, both passionate, kind, and interesting educators who help supplement school offerings and bring an even broader array of opportunities to our students.

Tawni Bell (B.A. Fine Arts & Performing, Western Washington University; M.A. Columbia College, Chicago) came to PSCS six years ago as a full time PSCS staff member. Over that time she has also been a volunteer facilitator and board member, and now works part time for PSCS offering courses and activities specifically geared toward middle school students).

Michael Coffey has a long history with PSCS. He has been a full time staff member, volunteer facilitator, board member, and supporter for well over 20 years—and now works part time for PSCS offering courses and activities geared toward science exploration (B.A. English, Western Washington University).

Life after graduation

PSCS graduates demonstrate a powerful knowledge of self, the ability to self-direct, and the passion to set ambitious goals, overcome obstacles, and make meaningful achievements over an extended period of time. They are doing many things, including traveling, working, volunteering, creating, performing, and pursuing higher education. The school adheres to the belief that college is one of many possible paths a young person can take after high school, and recognizes that youth who have had ownership over their education often wish to pursue higher levels of schooling. When PSCS students are considering college, staff members work closely with them to develop a strategy for getting into a program that interests them and fits their needs. This involves identifying entrance requirements and doing the work to meet them (which might include preparing for the SAT or other admissions exams). We stress that there are many ways to gain admittance to colleges, not just the one-size-fits-all GPA and SAT scores that are popularized by the media. PSCS alumni have been accepted to, are attending, or have graduated from a wide variety of colleges, including: Sarah Lawrence, Parsons School of Design, University of Washington, Western Washington University, The New School, Cal Arts, Cornish College of the Arts, Quest University, DigiPen, The Evergreen State College, Reed College, Seattle University, University of Illinois, and many more. PSCS is excellent preparation for a four-year or two-year college, vocational training, entrepreneurial ventures, or any road our graduates may choose. **The paths of our alumni are varied and widespread. Here are a few of their stories:**



GREG MORRIS, CLASS OF 1999: Greg completed PSCS (before we even gave high school diplomas) and went on to study computer science at the University of Illinois. He currently works at Google in New York. *"People ask if I regret not going to a more traditional high school. The answer is always NO. I am certain I would have been bored out of my mind."*



LAUREN HEAD, CLASS OF 2010: Lauren graduated from Quest University in 2014, where she majored in Peace & Conflict Studies and International Dev. In her sophomore year, Lauren wrote what's called a Question Proposal, which served as her major for her final years of undergrad. Lauren's question was, *"What is the role of empathy in community?"* She works for PartnersGlobal in D.C.



TESHA KARPOV, CLASS OF 2005: After PSCS, Tesha graduated with a BFA from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. She graduated *magna cum laude*, and the program listed five awards and scholarships she had earned. Her degree came with a concentration in sculpture, photography, and printmaking. Tesha is an artist and "biological investigator." She lives and works in Seattle.



LOGAN FENNER, CLASS OF 2015: For his PSCS Senior Project, Logan wrote and published a full novel called *Voicelless*. In his senior speech, he wrote *"Humans are by nature fragile creatures. We are barely a breath in this world, precious as rubies and permanent as a leaf in autumn. I have every reason to make my time here count."* Logan studies Theater at The Evergreen State College.

recent grads

This past June, PSCS graduated all four members of the Class of 2017. Each senior completed their yearlong project and several text studies and practicums, as part of their in-depth self-reflection (a statement of belief we call their *credo*). Every graduate presented their Senior Projects at our Senior Showcase held in May at the Wing Luke Museum, and were honored at a graduation ceremony held in June at the North Seattle College Concert Hall. During this ceremony, they were each introduced by an important person in their life, read their *credos* to the community, and received their official Washington State diplomas.



ASHER SIMON, PSCS CLASS OF 2017: Asher's Senior Project was a combination of SSP (Support Service Provider) and PTASL (Protactile American Sign Language) training, interviews with DeafBlind individuals, and volunteer work. His presentation was done entirely in ASL and PTASL and was interpreted by a member of the community for which he served this past year. Asher is currently attending Western Washington University.



SARA BAHTEN, PSCS CLASS OF 2017: Sara's Senior Project was a journalistic look into the criminal justice system. Her work included audio and editing, as well as setting up interviews and discussions with women and men in a myriad of positions (investigators, a chief in the sexually violent predator unit, corrections officers, public attorneys, and several judges). Sara was accepted to Western Washington University, and is taking a gap year.



MARGAUX BOUCHEGNIES, PSCS CLASS OF 2017: Margaux' Senior Project was on water tech and "conscious water usage." She created a system to numerically display how much water one is using while they are using it. Margaux's presentation included sustainable product design, behavioral psychology, and water justice. Margaux is taking a lot of jazz classes at The New School



MILO RUPP, PSCS CLASS OF 2017: Milo's Senior Project was an Android app called Hop2It. He created a database structure over the course of the school year using MySQL, Java, CSS, and HTML, hosted by a webserver (Microsoft Azure)—that runs the majority of his code. Milo is studying computer science at Western Washington University.