

Portland Public Schools — Portland, Oregon



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Portland Public Schools News

Portland police chief takes a shift as Vestal principal

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Portland Police Chief Rosie Sizer stepped into the morning rush of children, teachers and parents in the Vestal K-8 School hallway. She navigated to the main office, passing signs welcoming her, and shook a few inquiring students' hands. Stepping inside the door, she declared: "Reporting for duty."

Sizer was one of more than 100 community and business leaders participating in the annual Principal for a Day program Tuesday, Oct. 27, throughout Portland's five public school districts, including 69 PPS schools. Participants ranged from Mayor Sam Adams and Portland School Board members Bobbie Regan, Dilafuz Williams and David Wynde to leaders from Columbia Sportswear, Nike, Albina Community Bank, OMSI, Portland Opera and many more.

"This is a good time to celebrate the success within our schools and thank principals for their leadership — student achievement scores are rising despite inadequate resources," said Dan Ryan, CEO of the Portland Schools Foundation, which co-sponsored the event with Comcast.

"I highly recommend that anyone who is interested in the challenge facing public schools spend a day walking in the shoes of one of our principals," said Curt Henniger, vice president of Comcast Oregon and Southwest Washington and a Principal for a Day alum.

Principal puts chief to work

On her tour with Vestal Principal Susan Foxman, Sizer asked about enrollment and the impact of swine flu. Pausing in the cafeteria to greet a squirming group of third-grade girls, she introduced herself: "Hi. Rosie Sizer. Nice to meet you."

"Yea!" cheered Alaina Smith after scoring a handshake.

"I just want to be a police when I grow up," Alaina told her teacher, Laura Thompson. "But I don't want to hold a gun."

In the school kitchen, Sizer asked food service lead Candie Farley whether pizza was still the most popular item. Farley said yes, but she and Foxman also spoke of how much healthier the meals have become — from whole wheat rolls to baked, rather than fried, chicken nuggets.

Foxman led Sizer to a portable classroom, where teacher Miriam Al Faiz was gathering her kindergartners on the rug. Many, she explained, were out with the flu.

Sizer sat down on the rug with the children. She asked them what to do in an emergency. "Call 9-1-1," they



Portland Police Chief Rosie Sizer, principal for a day at Vestal K-8 School in Northeast Portland, explains to kindergartners Keely Ho and Hashim Hussein-Sheek that when people break the law, "it's important for society to say that's bad."

chorused.

She explained the role of police: "When you need help, we come to help you."

The chief answered many questions: Police send people to jail, she explained, because "some people need time out because they're not making good decisions."

When Sizer left, she paused on the landing outside the classroom, her eyes misty. "It makes me think how often I don't talk to kids," she said.

Foxman remarked on how sensitive the chief was with the children.

Then, ever the flu-wary principal, Foxman said, "Come, let's wash our hands."

Time for advice

Back in her office, Foxman served the chief tea and did what a veteran principal does well: used available resources — in this case, the chief — to advocate for her staff and students.

Foxman asked Sizer's thoughts, from one supervisor to another, about how best to support a cherished staff member who was coming to discuss a matter with Foxman that morning. Then she played a voicemail for the chief from a neighbor with concerns about a possible drug house near the school and got Sizer's advice. Finally, she asked for the chief's feedback on the emergency phone tree posted in classrooms.

Foxman said having Sizer visit for the day was a great opportunity to show students a positive role model. Having a professional adviser was also nice: "It's extremely valuable to share with a leader of our community who is so well respected and has so much knowledge about working with people."



Vestal Principal Susan Foxman seizes the chance to get the chief's input on the school's emergency preparedness strategy.

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