

Open Line

Winter 2020-21



Tumwater School District

Continuous Student Learning in a Caring, Engaging Environment



On his first day of in-person school, this Tumwater Hill Elementary Kindergartner in Mrs. Taylor's class is happy to be at his desk for the very first time!

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Tumwater Community,



Sean Dotson, TSD Superintendent

It has been almost eleven months since a global pandemic changed our community by closing our schools, and as we grapple with the impacts, I feel compelled to share a few thoughts for you to consider. Families and educators across our district and across the country are worried about the education, health, and wellness of our children... and for good reason! At the same time, we continue to fight a pandemic that is impacting millions of people around the world. As we work to reopen schools using a slow phase-in plan and under the guidance of health authorities, I hear regularly from people who are worried about lost learning as well as from those who are most worried about the mental and physical health of children.

As we support our students, I contend that we must resist the temptation to overemphasize and hyper-focus our attention on demanding that students "catch up". How can we state they are "behind"? The reason we worry is that we give in to the temptation to measure this group against students who learned under totally different conditions. I suggest that the standards we typically use to measure student progress are completely inadequate for this special group of students. As we use familiar assessments and tools to check progress and find the best ways to support students impacted by this crisis, we must resist the temptation to measure them against other groups. For risk of being cliché, this would be like comparing apples and oranges.

We also need to remember that students have been learning and living through an extraordinary time in history. As a result, they each have acquired unique experiences and coping skills that we must recognize and honor. There is no doubt that our students have been busy learning this past *continued on page 4...*

Reopening Our Schools

When schools closed last March, it was unthinkable that eleven months later they would still be closed to many of our students! Several things have come to light over the past months; one of the greatest concerns is that when schools are closed, the crucial role that schools play in our community is hindered. Schools serve as a 'hub' in communities and when the supports they provide aren't available, many students and families feel the impact. While school staff and community partners have worked diligently to provide services for students and families during these times, we also know that being in school is the most effective

way to provide academic and social/emotional education and care for our students.

While buildings have been closed, we have been working diligently and carefully preparing the many details needed to be in place when students return to help keep staff and students safe. This process has presented many challenges, and our team rose to the occasion! From placing 6-foot markers throughout schools and on sidewalks, to planning for recesses in separate sections to keep students only with their classmates, to student drop-off/pick-up procedures, to book checkouts/returns, to cleaning during the day, to screening students for symptoms, and so much more, our site teams have worked tirelessly to plan and prepare.

As the calendar turned to 2021, we anticipated that we would soon be given the approval to move forward with our hybrid learning plan. Families were given the option to have their child return in hybrid or to keep them fully remote. In-person students were split into two groups - Group A students attend Mon/Tue and Group B students attend Thu/Fri. Wednesdays are reserved for deep cleaning of the schools.

On February 1st, Phase 1 *continued on page 5...*



Tumwater Education Association President Tim Voie (far right) sees the safety measures in action at Tumwater Hill Elementary on the first day of in-person learning, as he tours the schools with Superintendent Dotson and Principal Jon Halvorson.

Peter G. Eagles and Tumwater Hill Hawks Take Flight

By Marie Williams and Heather Stoker, TSD Elementary Music Teachers

After teaching fully-remote for several months, one thing we learned is that teaching and learning virtually presents many challenges. We have relied on virtual learning experiences to fuel our connections with students and families. Last October, we set out to provide an exceptional experience for our students.

A unique virtual learning experience for a group of 40+ 4th and 5th graders from Peter G. Schmidt and Tumwater Hill elementary schools was launched. Through a partnership with the Olympia Symphony Orchestra (OSO) and non-profit organization Emerald City Music, they brought together members of Carnegie Hall's Decoda Ensemble, cellist **Claire Bryant**, and composer **Brad Balliet** to serve as teaching artists. What was birthed was an inspiring new program for the Tumwater School District. With composer workshops and demonstrations by musicians from the Olympia Symphony Orchestra, weekly virtual sessions helped to guide the students' knowledge of each instrument family and work with the musical elements to piece together variations on Woody Guthrie's "Pastures of Plenty." One of the Olympia Symphony musicians that presented for the students was **James Harper**, the band director



During one of many collaboration meetings, Olympia Symphony Executive Director Jennifer Hermann (upper left) and Tumwater School District teachers Marie Williams (upper right), James Harper, and Heather Stoker discuss next steps for the project and reflect on how much they have all enjoyed the project.

at Tumwater Middle School. As the students learned about the different techniques that made each instrument family unique, they began to make decisions about the overall feeling, mood, and the variations that each instrument group would be playing in this new composition. Students were given a sneak peek of the music as it was coming to life. Watching their reactions as they saw and heard their own ideas come to life was priceless!

As with any new project being put into motion, there were changes and adjustments made throughout the creative process. **Jennifer**

OSO to review their work and watch the performance video together. Music teachers **Marie Williams** (PGS) and **Heather Stoker** (THE) feel very fortunate to have been a part of this wonderful opportunity with their students. Music was made and connections were created, which is vitally important during this time of virtual learning.

To view the video highlighting this great collaborative project, watch the recording at <https://youtu.be/l8JnzGRw1Q?t=2863>. An introduction begins at 46:54 and the music at 58:10. We hope you enjoy it!

Hermann, the executive director of the Olympia Symphony, surprised the students with the announcement that Olympia Symphony Musicians who would be playing the student composition would be traveling to Benaroya Hall in Seattle to record and play the students' composition! While that plan has been delayed, it may still happen and our students will be able to watch.

The students' work premiered on December 13th as part of Emerald City Music's Virtual Fall Finale and again on December 22nd as a part of the Olympia Symphony's Home for Holidays Concert. In January, the students met once more with Balliet, Bryant, and members of the



Tumwater Hill Elementary Principal Jon Halvorson stops with a kindergarten class for a 'wing check' to make sure that everyone is keeping proper distance as they return from recess.



For our teachers, this is what teaching looked like as we started the school year. Pictured is Tumwater Middle School math teacher Suzanne Jones as she prepares for her next class.

Our Commitment to Equity in Education

By Dr. Sean Dotson

While the pandemic has, by necessity, been a primary focus of efforts in Tumwater School District this year, we are committed to continuing the critical work of addressing and improving educational equity in our schools.

Last fall, our district partnered with Puget Sound ESD's (PSESD) Equity in Education team to provide workshops for board members and district leaders on the topic of Leadership for Equity in Tumwater School District. Continuing the work, in September our TSD School Board held a joint meeting with the Tumwater City Council as both groups focused on discovering ways to partner and find ways to help advance equity in our community.

In November and December, we initiated an Equity Advisory Committee that includes staff, District leaders, parents, and students. During our first four meetings, an average of 45 Equity Advisory Committee members attended as the PSESD's Equity in Education team helped us to develop a common foundation of knowledge on how to lead equity work and facilitated activities to help identify a common purpose to guide our efforts. In the coming months, the Equity Advisory Committee looks forward to reviewing the goals in our Ensuring Educational Equity Policy 3212 and identifying ways to improve equity for our students.

It is exciting to see the commitment of this group to build collaborative relationships, honor the voices of our students and community members, and act to create equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for all students in Tumwater School District. While there is much work ahead, Tumwater School District remains fully committed to ensuring a safe, caring environment where ALL students can achieve success in every classroom, in every school, every day.

Preparing for Life After High School

By Brian Hardcastle, CTE Director



In this photo taken pre-pandemic, Black Hills High School Video Production students record *PACK TV*. This show is then broadcast to all students reporting news, announcements, and more.

The High School & Beyond Plan (HSBP), a graduation requirement, helps students get the most out of high school and think about their future. Students work with school counselors and advisors to create their own individual plan – their **personalized Career Pathway**. Throughout their years in high school, they revise their plan annually to account for changing interests or on what they expect to do the year following high school graduation. These aspirations may include application to colleges or universities, community or technical colleges, apprenticeships, industry standard certificate programs, military training, or on-the-job training.

Career Pathways show students a direct connection between high school and transitioning smoothly to post-secondary opportunities. Students who focus on a Career Pathway acquire academic, technical, and real-world knowledge, skills and experiences they need to be prepared for a variety of career options.

Our district developed 12 **career clusters**. A career cluster is a group of jobs and industries that are related by skills.

- Aerospace Manufacturing
- Finance
- Marketing
- Business Management & Administration
- Information Technology
- Architecture
- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Health Sciences
- Arts, A/V Technology & Communications
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- Construction
- Human Services

Each cluster corresponds to courses and training opportunities that will prepare students for a chosen career pathway and contains information on careers, student leadership organizations, education and more.

As we approach registration for the 2021-22 school year, we are offering six program areas: Business & Marketing, Skilled & Technical Sciences, STEM, Natural Resources & Agriculture, Health Sciences, and Family & Consumer Sciences. With several course offerings for secondary students in each area, students are able to develop skills such as decision-making, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, time management, persistence, self-advocacy, interpersonal communications, professionalism, safety, project management and more. As you know, these skills are essential building blocks to success in further education and work.

Tumwater High School Tech Drawing students have the option to come in small groups to work with special design equipment. Their special assignment – to design homes according to Habitat for Humanity guidelines.



Facilities Update: Your Bond Dollars at Work

By Mel Murray, Facilities Director



The District Stadium has new aluminum and steel bleachers in the upper seating area. Replacing the 26-year-old wood seating, these new long-lasting seats will provide safer seating for years to come.

The Covid-19 pandemic slowed but did not fully stop construction of the last projects that our community approved in the bond election of 2014. The Tumwater Learning Center, a new building with ten classrooms built on the New Market campus, was completed on June 1, 2020. When it was weeks away from being finished, the Governor's orders halted all construction in the state. Later clarifications allowed construction to restart as the contractor put approved COVID precautions in place. The new Tumwater Learning Center brings closure to a years-long plan for Cascadia High School (formerly Secondary Options) to have its own building and also moves the LINC program, which is a transitional life skills program for 18-21 year old students to prepare them for independent living within their community. Other alternative learning programs may be housed here when we return to in-person learning.

The renovation of the Tumwater High School Performing Arts Center started in June 2020. The work will revitalize the performance space with new seating, renovate the control booth (including

putting it on a balcony so operators will be able to hear/see better) and add new dressing rooms, new green room, theater director office, and much needed storage space for sets and costumes. New theater lighting, audio and video is also included. Work is schedule to be finished June 2021. This project and the recently completed renovations at the Black Hills High School Performing Arts Center ensures all our high school students looking for careers in the creative arts and technical theater fields will have access to state-of-the-art equipment as they prepare for the future.

Over the winter, the old wooden bleachers in the upper seating section of Tumwater Stadium were removed and replaced with new aluminum and steel bleachers.

Preparing for new/improved space for our earliest learners, we have started pre-design in the old library building on the Peter G. Schmidt campus to prepare to relocate the learning space for our Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC). Once the predesign and cost estimate study is complete, a determination will be

made about the future of this project.

These are the last of the current bond projects. Meanwhile, our community continued showing their overwhelming support of our schools by approving a capital levy in February 2020. The funds generated are being used for technology upgrades (especially important to support on-line learning), major maintenance, health, safety and security projects.

Even as the pandemic has slightly reduced TSD enrollment, it has not decreased as significantly as similar-sized districts in the state. In our community, home construction is booming and Tumwater schools are a major selling point for new homebuyers. We were already over-capacity in several of our elementary schools, leading to a boundary change that went into effect this year to help balance enrollment. The capital levy projects include planning for a new elementary school.

Please watch for an announcement inviting District community members, parents, and staff members to serve on an Advisory Committee to review our current facilities and the possible need

for a new elementary school. The Advisory Committee will provide recommendations to the School Board regarding a possible future bond election.

We thank you for your ongoing commitment to your community schools and for your support of our students! Strong schools make strong communities.

In early February, contractors used a crane to place a 4,800 pound metal support across the roof of the expanded stage area of the remodeled PAC at Tumwater High School.



Superintendent's Message *continued from page 1...*

year, though their learning looks very different. Their learning will likely not be best measured by a standardized test, but it is every bit as valuable as the skills we traditionally measure. They have learned technology skills, new means of communication, and new ways of collaborating. They have lived under conditions that are unique, and they have overcome adversity. Their brains have continued taking in and processing new information, whether that is from focusing on caring for family, making meals or helping at home, dealing with the stresses and realities of life during a pandemic, and processing the extraordinary events taking place in the world around us. They have feelings, experiences, and ideas that come from experiencing childhood in a time that is new to all of us.

As students return to our classrooms, we plan to

honor their experiences, listen to their stories, and help them make sense of their world. It is not a time to worry about where they would be under different circumstances. Instead, it is a time to care, to greet them with activities to connect with each other, to resume activities that make school special, and to give them avenues to express their feelings and process all they have been through this past year.

This year has taught us the vital role schools play in offering students a community of support. We have done everything possible to keep that community strong from a distance. As we return, let's remember that the work our students will value most is the work of connection, of relationship, of building resilience. Our students miss their classmates. They miss the adults at school who care and support them. When we focus on those

important needs, learning will happen.

With new information, new vaccines and treatments, our future is hopeful. While we are happy to have some of our students in school at this time, soon we will have all of our students and staff back in classrooms. As we overcome this pandemic, let's come together in support of our children. They need our care, our support, and our understanding.

Together, we will make a positive difference in the lives of children. Thank you for partnering with us in the education of our children and your continued support of our schools.

My family and I wish you all the best for 2021!

Sean Dotson, Superintendent

High School Sports & Activities are Back!

After a long wait, high school athletes and coaches were excited to begin tryouts at the beginning of February. Following Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA), WA State Department of Health (DOH) and Thurston County Health Department guidance, our students were thrilled to take the courts, fields, pools, and links as adjusted sports seasons launched. Protocols and guidelines for athletics and activities will include training for coaches, social distancing when possible, health screenings, face coverings, cleaning protocols, and more.

After several season adjustments, our seasons will be as follows:

- Feb. 1 – Mar. 22: Cheer, Cross Country, Dance, Football, Boys Golf, Girls Soccer, Girls Swimming, Boys Tennis, and Volleyball
- Mar. 23 – May 5: Baseball, Fastpitch, Girls Golf, Boys Soccer, Girls Tennis, Track
- Apr. 26 – Jun. 6: Boys & Girls Basketball, Girls Bowling, Wrestling

Spectator attendance at events will be limited or not allowed, in certain situations. But that doesn't mean you have to miss out on all of them. Many of our events will be televised on the NFHS Network. Thank you for your continued support of our students involved in sports and activities!



The Tumwater High School Volleyball team practices rotations and prepares for their first competition.



Black Hills High School Football team members are excited to be practicing for their first scrimmage.



Washington State Superintendent, Chris Reykdal, visited Michael T. Simmons Elementary. While there, he visited classrooms, the health room and quarantine area. He was also able to see first-hand the safety protocols our district has in place during small-group instruction and preparations to expand to hybrid learning.



As Cascadia High School (formerly Secondary Options) moved into their new building, teacher Anthony Neff was excited to set up the new library for students to enjoy when they return to in-person learning.

Reopening Schools *continued from page 1...*

of our plan started by welcoming preschool, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders to hybrid in-person learning. Phase 2 will bring 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th graders starting on February 18th. Phase 3 will bring 7th and 8th graders back on March 1st.

As of the writing of this article, no dates for the return of high schoolers have been announced. Bringing back high school students presents additional challenges. One of them includes County Health Officer, **Dr. Abdelmalek's** statement that she will not recommend we bring high school students back until the case counts in the county are 200 average or less over a 14-day period per 100,000 residents. Another undertaking will be to make sure we can safely and adequately staff our programs.

Prior to opening, Thurston County Health Department and WA State L&I reviewed our reopening plans and walked through many of our facilities to observe the plans, practices, and protocols to keep students and staff safe. Because of the careful planning of staff, we were told that our preparations meet requirements and exceed them in some areas. We are thankful for the many people involved to provide input, expertise, and suggestions as plans have been carefully laid out at each of our sites.

We look forward to the day when all of our students will be able to attend a more 'normal' in-person learning model! For more information about our reopening plans, please visit our website and click on the picture that says "Click here for our return to in-person learning plans."

Thank you to our dedicated School Board

January was School Board Appreciation Month. During a 'normal' year, our five volunteer school board members dedicate countless hours to bring better and more equitable education for our students. Most recently as we navigate through a global pandemic, our board members have spent even more time than usual as they study and consider new, changing, and dynamic information being presented to respond to the pandemic. A huge "THANK YOU" to our devoted members: **Melissa Beard** (President), **Casey Taylor** (Vice President), Members **Stephanie Goebel**, **Darby Kaikkonen**, and **Scott Killough**. We appreciate your willingness to serve and your dedication to Tumwater Schools!



Board members Scott Killough and Melissa Beard (from left) tour Littlerock Elementary with Buildings & Grounds Supervisor Brian Hinkle, Principal Glenn Spinnie, and Supt. Sean Dotson to observe first-hand the safety measures put into place to safely reopen.



Providing supplies and learning materials to students and families takes all staff working together to coordinate distribution. Bush Middle School paraprofessionals Denise Woinarowicz and Reed McCause were happy to see families as they drove through for pickup.



Peek-a-Boo, we see you! With first-day of school excitement, our youngest learners at the Early Childhood Learning Center enjoyed playing outside during recess.

Free Parent Education Opportunities Including Classes in Spanish

We are happy to be able to offer free parent education opportunities to families in our community and beyond. This year, all classes are via Zoom and are recorded then posted to our website for those who aren't able to attend.

Our remaining classes include:

March 9th from 6:00-8:00 pm – **Candyce Bollinger**, local counselor and parent educator, will talk about supporting your child's authentic self and how parents can empower and support their children. This is a 'resiliency' tool class in English. Registration to the Zoom webinar is required – see our website for details.

March 9th from 6:00-7:30 pm – **CIELO** (Centro Integral Educativo Latino de Olympia) will present a class to help parents identify patterns at home that impact their child's education. *This class is in Spanish.* No registration is required and Zoom link will be provided on our website.

May 4th from 6:00-7:30 pm – **CIELO** will present a class for parents on choosing paths to higher education. *This class is in Spanish.* No registration is required and Zoom link will be provided on our website.

The classes are for all families from throughout the community, not just Tumwater. We know that strong families make strong communities!



In each of our schools, counselors and counseling office staff have used innovation and creativity to make connections with our students from a distance. Pictured (l-r) are Tumwater Middle School registrar Sally Riddle, and counselors Sarah Stone and Margaret Mickelson.



Superintendent Dotson was named as Honorary Commander of the 62nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at McChord Air Force Base. This partnership helps build valuable relationships with the base and will enable us to learn how to better support our military families.



Throughout the District (PGS pictured), air flow in the buildings has been increased and air filters have been upgraded to MERV-13 per CDC recommendations. Both of these strategies are to help improve healthy air quality for all who are in our buildings.

Our Food Services workers are super! Since our buildings closed last March, our dedicated employees have been working to make sure that students receive nutrition. Families have been invited to pick up breakfasts, lunches, or 5-day meal boxes at no cost thanks to a grant from the USDA that provides free meals this school year to all children 18 and under.



Women's Suffrage Heritage Monument Dedicated on Littlerock Elementary Campus

In October, as Daughters of the American Colonists (DAC) presented a moving reenactment of the first women voters in a Washington election casting their ballots, a monument was dedicated on the Littlerock Elementary campus.

The DAC representatives carefully planned the event, which included an essay and art competition for students of Littlerock Elementary. The student winners shared their entries and received prizes at the dedication.

The crusade for women's right to vote was a long and hard-fought mission. In 1870, that right was finally realized in Washington State as several women cast votes for the first time in Washington... right here in Thurston County. Several determined female settlers conspired to use the "route to a man's heart through his stomach" to convince election judges to allow them to cast their ballots. After a delicious picnic dinner at the local schoolhouse near Grand Mound, the ladies were allowed to cast their votes. Other hopeful women who were at the nearby Black River Precinct (near Littlerock) stationed a man on a horse at the Grand Mound precinct to report the results of their efforts. The man arrived waving his hat and yelling, "They're voting! They're voting!" Those hopefuls were also able to cast their votes that day. However, others in the area were denied the opportunity. It was in 1910 that Washington State enacted women's suffrage, and in 1920 the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution granted women's suffrage nationwide.



Local members of Daughters of the American Colonists reenact the first women casting votes in Washington State.

This monument was dedicated in October on the campus of Littlerock Elementary to commemorate the first women voters in Washington.





Tumwater School District is looking to add members to their great team of bus drivers, para-professionals and custodians. Come work with the best students around!

Looking for Team Members

Is Our Team for you?

To safely reopen schools, we are actively hiring quality team members for the following positions:

- **Substitute Custodian**
- **Paraprofessional**
- **Bus Driver**

If this is for you or someone you know, please visit www.edjobsnw.org, go to "Find a Job", then search "Available Jobs/Classified" on the right-hand side. For additional questions, contact our Human Resources Department at 360-709-7020.

Our Schools: Black Hills High School (BHHS), Tumwater High School (THS), Cascadia High School (CHS), Bush Middle School (BMS), Tumwater Middle School (TMS), Black Lake Elementary (BLE), East Olympia Elementary (EOE), Littlerock Elementary (LRE), Michael T. Simmons Elementary (MTS), Peter G. Schmidt Elementary (PGS), and Tumwater Hill Elementary (THE).

Board of Directors: President Melissa Beard, Vice President Casey Taylor, and members Stephanie Goebel, Darby Kaikkonen, and Scott Killough.

Superintendent: Dr. Sean Dotson
Writing, editing, photography: Laurie Wiedenmeyer, Communications and Community Relations

Graphic Design: Barbara Bayer, iDesignStudio
Tumwater School District will provide equal educational opportunity and treatment for all students in all aspects of the academic and activities program without discrimination based on age, sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person of disability. The District will provide equal access to school facilities to the Boy Scouts of America and all other designated youth groups listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society.

The Tumwater School District offers classes in many career and technical education program areas under its open admission policy including courses in the Business and Marketing, Horticulture, Skilled and Technical Sciences, Family and Consumer Science, and the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math program areas. Some advanced level classes have

prerequisites and/or specific criteria through an application process that is non-discriminatory. More information about participating in one of these program areas is available by contacting the school's counseling office. English language proficiency is not an element of the admissions and participation requirements for career and technical education classes. This notification can be provided in the appropriate language for communities of national origin by calling 360-709-7000. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Shawn Batstone, Title IX and Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator 360-709-7030, 621 Linwood Ave. SW, Tumwater, WA 98512. Kelli Ehresmann, 504 - Special Services Supervisor 360-709-7040, 621 Linwood Ave. SW, Tumwater, WA 98512.

El Distrito Escolar Tumwater brindará igualdad de oportunidades educativas y de tratamiento para todos los estudiantes en todos los aspectos del programa académico y de actividades sin discriminar por motivo del sexo, raza, credo, religión, color, nacionalidad, edad, estado de veterano o militar, orientación sexual, expresión de género o identidad, discapacidad o el uso de un perro guía o animal de servicio entrenado, y brinda igualdad de acceso a los Niños Exploradores y a otros grupos de jóvenes designados.

El Distrito Escolar Tumwater ofrece clases en muchas áreas del programa de educación vocacional y técnica conforme a su política de ingreso abierto, incluyendo cursos en las áreas de Negocios y Marketing, Horticultura, Ciencias Especializadas y Técnicas, Educación para el Hogar, y Ciencias, Tecnología, Ingeniería y Matemáticas. Algunas clases de nivel avanzado tienen prerrequisitos

Calling All Kindergartners!...

Countdown to Kindergarten

Do you have a child that will be 5-years-old by August 31st?

Now! is the time

to start the registration process in order to join us for our Springtime Countdown to Kindergarten!

Pre-register at www.tumwater.k12.wa.us

and click on the Calling All Kindergartners headline.

Be the first to know about our Springtime Countdown to Kindergarten event – whether virtual or in-person!



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