

Community Connections

NORTH THURSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Superintendent's message: Building Our Future, Together

When **River Ridge High School** students returned from winter break a few weeks ago, they walked into their beautiful new student commons—a space where they can gather and socialize before school, after school, and during lunch.

Seeing students enjoying this new part of the campus was a joy and a significant milestone in the River Ridge major modernization project. When complete, the campus will include 70 new classrooms, a new library, and new athletic fields for students and the community to use. Because of the project's scope, we are completing it in phases. So far, we have completed the student commons, kitchen, auxiliary gym, weight room, and facilities for baseball, softball, and tennis. The classrooms are scheduled to open at the start of the 2025-26 school year, and after that, we will complete administrative offices and the remaining athletic fields.

At North Thurston Public Schools, we focus every day on ensuring all students can focus on learning in schools that are safe, warm, and dry. Our talented construction, design, and facilities teams work hard to keep our buildings clean and modern. Sometimes that means a new roof, sewer, parking lot, or heating and cooling system. Other times, like at River Ridge and the recently modernized **Komachin Middle School**, it means a full-scale renovation.

How do we prioritize projects? We pride ourselves on carefully planning ahead and being excellent stewards of public funding. Our Facilities Advisory Committee meets several times each year to look at district facility needs and to provide perspectives as staff, parents, and community partners. Projects also depend on whether we can access state funding. For example, the River Ridge project only became eligible for state matching funds after the building was 30 years old. With the right timing, we were able to access more than \$29 million in state funding for the project.

Voter support for district bond and levy measures helps ensure we can keep our buildings in good shape. We are grateful that our community consistently supports a high-quality public education system. And we are accountable to you—learn more about our current and recently completed projects at ntps.news/buildingourfuture.

Troy M. Oliver
NTPS Superintendent

building
OUR FUTURE



Above photo taken in the newly constructed River Ridge High School commons.

Student Artists Share Their Love of Reading

Congratulations to our 2024-25 Lacey Loves to Read Bookmark Contest winners! These students' creative pieces were selected from hundreds of entries from around the district:

1. Rose, **North Thurston High School** (Grade 9)
2. Maribel, **Aspire Performing Arts Academy** (Grade 7)
3. Olivia, **Evergreen Forest Elementary** (Grade 4)
4. Jayden, **Lakes Elementary** (Grade 3)
5. Avianna, **Woodland Elementary** (Grade 1)
6. Violet, Homeschool Student
7. Superintendent's Choice: Lilian, **River Ridge High School** (Grade 11)

Join us on February 13 for the Lacey Loves to Read Author Event, a free community-wide celebration featuring award-winning author Varian Johnson! Visit ntps.news/read for details.



Avianna (center, front) celebrates winning her category for the Lacey Loves to Read Bookmark Contest alongside Woodland Elementary classmates.

The Joy of Learning Comes to Life

We see our 2024-25 district theme, Joy of Learning, in action every day in our schools! So far this school year, we have captured these fun learning moments:

1. At **Lydia Hawk Elementary**, older students read books in English and Spanish to younger students to help them find joy in reading.
2. In a **Chinook Middle School** STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) class, students engage in hands-on learning that combines teamwork and experimentation while building Rube Goldberg machines.
3. Students at **North Thurston High School** share their experiences mastering a new world language and earning the Seal of Biliteracy.
4. Students at **Ignite Family Academy** learn the basics of design with building bricks in their robotics class.

Visit ntps.news/joyoflearning to watch short videos showing these and many other Joy of Learning moments!



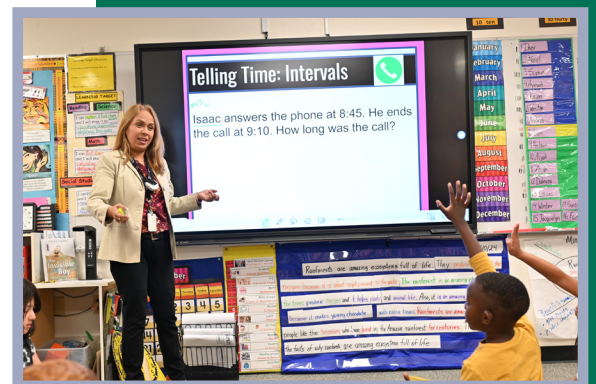
Students at Komachin Middle School experienced an at-school planetarium as part of their 6th-grade science class.

Lydia Hawk Teacher Wins National Award

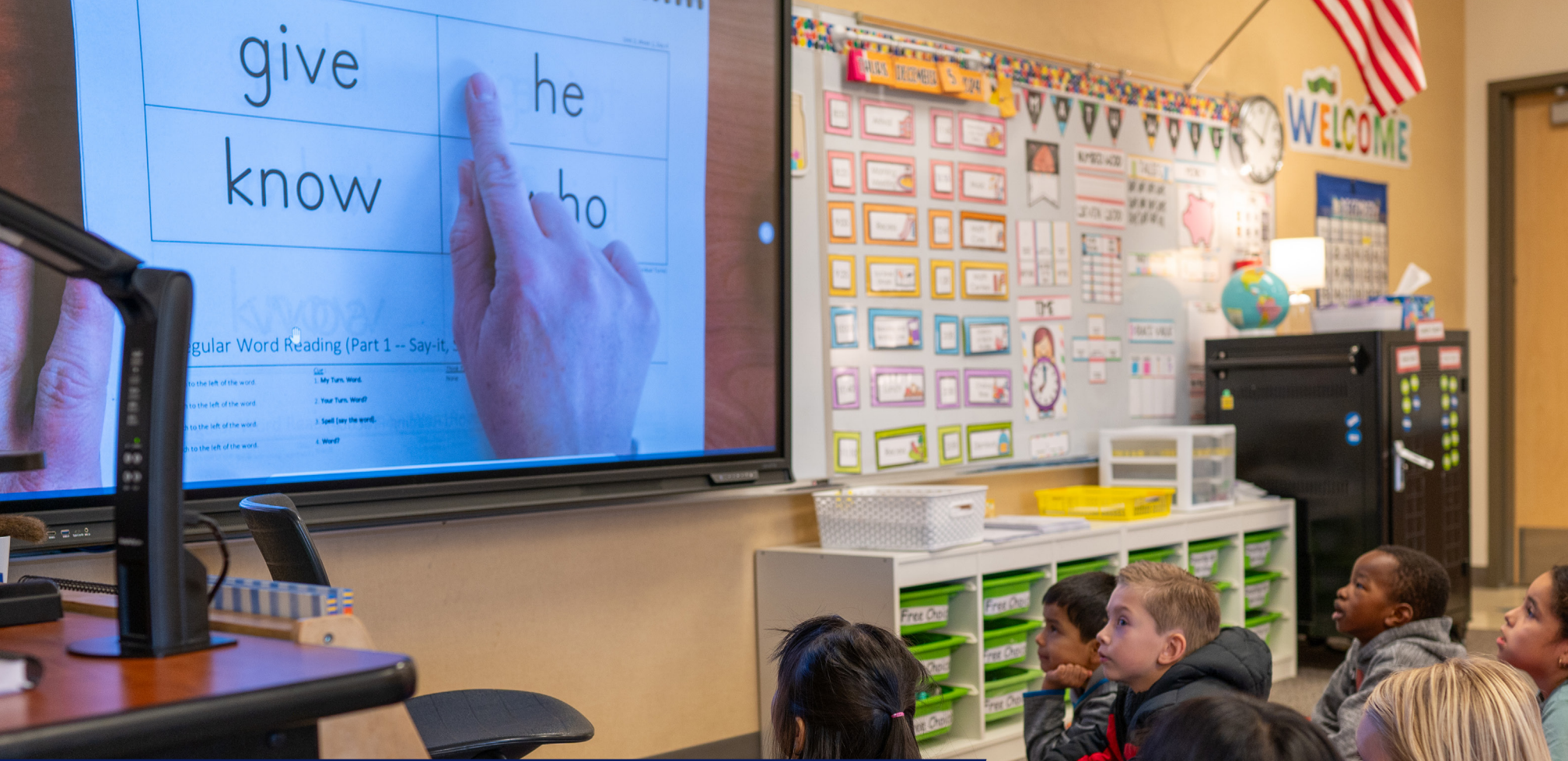
Lydia Hawk Elementary School 3rd-grade Teacher Maribel Vilchez has won the prestigious 2025 Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence!

One of only five educators in the nation to receive this honor, Maribel was selected by an expert panel for her excellence in the classroom, dedication to equity and diversity, engagement with families and communities, commitment to professional development, and advocacy for the teaching profession.

She is a National Board Certified Teacher and a specialist in bilingual English and Spanish education. We are proud to have Maribel representing our district!

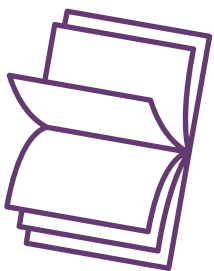


Lydia Hawk Elementary teacher Maribel Vilchez in her 3rd-grade classroom.



Building Foundational Literacy Skills

fostering LITERACY



Beginning this school year, all NTPS students in kindergarten through 2nd grade receive enhanced reading instruction as part of their English language arts curriculum.

Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI) is a systematic, evidence-based method for teaching young learners the foundations of language. It is a supplement to the district's primary reading curriculum. NTPS has used ECRI in four elementary schools since the 2022-23 school year as part of a national study on the effectiveness of ECRI's implementation. The outcomes were so positive that we now use it in all elementary schools.

South Bay Elementary School 1st-grade Teacher Liv Rosenberg said she has come to enjoy ECRI as part of her classroom routine.

"One day when I called everyone to the carpet for ECRI, one of my students was so excited that he said, 'Yay! This is my favorite part of the day!' Other students chimed in that this was their favorite part, too," Rosenberg said. "It shifted something for me, that this was something my

students loved and felt successful at. The routines were becoming more familiar, and they were making progress. They were becoming readers using these daily routines and practice, and I then came to love them as well."

The power of ECRI lies in its predictable routine and its repetition of foundational skills: phonological awareness, phonics, decoding, and encoding (dictation). There is also a focus on high-frequency words and fluency. Teachers lead students through 30 minutes of a daily pattern of exercises that impart foundational skills by seeing, hearing, saying, and writing the words in segments and then blending them. They also practice reading a few simple sentences aloud to build fluency.

"Students who learn to read and are on track by 3rd grade are more likely to be successful for the rest of their educational careers," said Jami Roberts, NTPS Director of English language arts, social studies, and library programs. "ECRI's foundational skills give students the ability very early on to decipher the 'squiggles' on the page!"

upcoming
IMPORTANT DATES

February 13

Lacey Loves to Read Author Event, 6:00 pm
Koval Center for the Performing Arts

March 18

Community Conversation, 6:00 pm
NTPS District Office Boardroom

upcoming
THEATER EVENTS

Feb 14, 15, 20, 21, 22

Radium Girls, 7:00 pm
NTHS Koval Center for the Performing Arts

Feb 21, 22, 28 | Mar 1

Timberline Spring Musical, 7:00 pm
(Mar 1: 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm)
Timberline High School Theater

**Community
Connections**



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Construction & Design Update

Thanks to voter support, we continue improving facilities around the district:

We completed secure entrances at **Woodland, South Bay, and Lydia Hawk Elementary Schools.**

The turf field and rubberized track at **Nisqually Middle School** is nearing completion. The work continues for the new lighting and seating, to provide more capacity for school and community athletics events.

The **Young Child and Family Center** is in the design phase. We are nearing the completion of schematic design. The facility is expected to open in summer 2027.

At **River Ridge High School**, new student commons with a student store, cafeteria, and kitchen are open and being used by the school! Demolition of the former temporary commons will begin soon. We are well into construction on the new building, which will include a two-story classroom wing, the library, and administrative offices.

We completed a water line relocation at **Horizons Elementary School.**

Work continues to replace the southern portion of the Raj Manjas Activity Center South, which will house: **Ignite Family Academy** (our family partnership program); the Family & Youth Resource Center; Student Records; and the South Sound Reading Foundation.

