

New High School Update

January 29, 2026

Heather Tow-Yick, Superintendent

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Sherri Kokx, Executive Director of Secondary Schools

Julia Bamba, Principal on Special Assignment



ISSAQUAH
SCHOOL DISTRICT 411

Board Direction in Spring 2025 - Recap

A solution to overcrowding and a model for the future

- Move forward with \$146M build
- Phase 1 – School Building
- 74,000 sq ft, 23 classrooms, 650-700 student
- Flexible, future ready model
- School should reflect evolving needs of students and the workforce
- Field and school facilities will be available for community use by the cities of Issaquah, Sammamish, and nearby municipalities

April 10, 2025 School Board Meeting

New High School News – January 2026

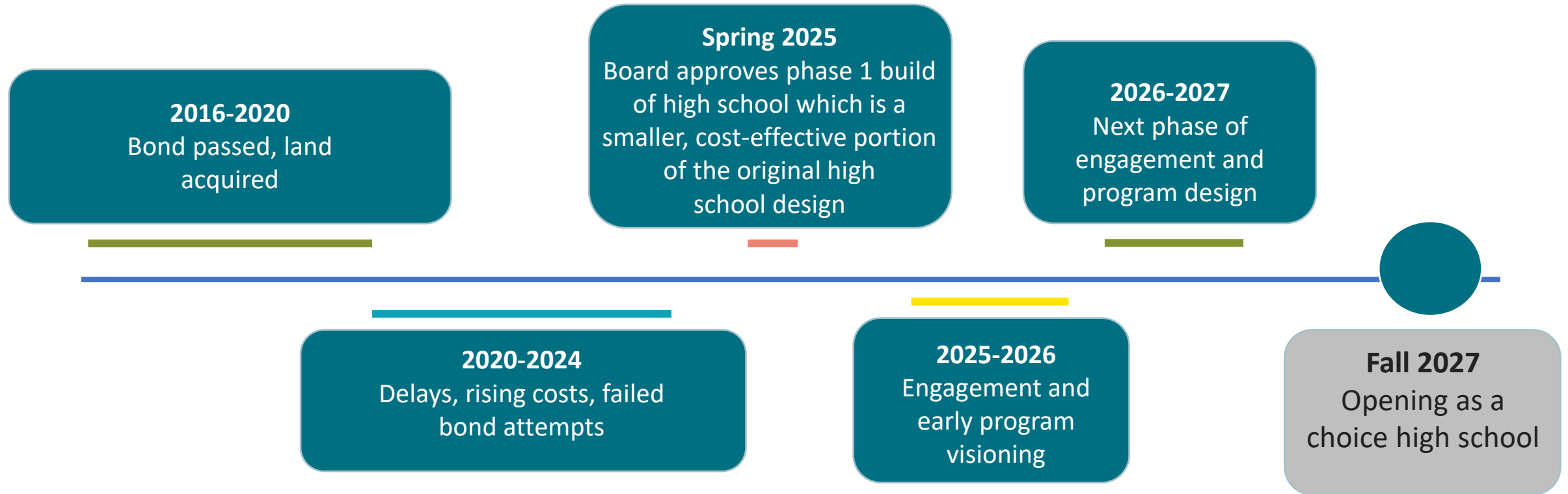
- The new high school will initially launch as a choice school
- Potential pathways to serve as a foundation for the design moving forward:
 - Entrepreneurship / Business
 - Environmental Sustainability (includes agriculture)
 - Health Sciences
 - Networking and Cybersecurity
 - Robotics and Engineering

Purpose

- Review context and history of planning
- Share current progress on facility plans, program design, and engagement insights
- Gather feedback from the Board on high-level parameters, design principles and engagement
- Preview the process and next steps

Where We've Been

10+ Year Timeline



Key Inputs, Research, and Engagement

School Year 2022–2025 Engagements

Empathy Interviews

Conducted with **50** students to understand their experiences and perspectives to inform district wide strategic efforts and new high school design.

Focus Groups

Held with **28** staff members to gather insights on needs and priorities.

Thought Exchange Survey

Heard from **175** students and **104** adults to collect community input on desirable pathway offerings in high school.

Design Sprint Sessions

Three sessions with **50** participants district-wide, including students, families, staff, and community members.

[ISD Design Sprint Video](#)

Administrator School Innovation Tour & School Visits

10 administrators explored innovative practices across neighboring school districts in addition to other visits. SAMI, IDEA, SOTA, Tesla STEM, Raisbeck Aviation, St. Vrain

[Our 2024 School Innovation Tour](#)

XQ Student Journeys Workshop

60 participants across **4** high schools, including students, staff, and families, that collaborated on student-centered design.

Strategic Plan

School Year 2025–2026 Engagements

Student Conversations

Prioritized listening to students historically underserved by the education system.
Connected with 40+ students at comprehensive high schools to hear insights and perspectives about student experiences to inform new high school design.

Summer School Conversations

Engaged with 20+ students during summer programming.

Student Voices Project (In process)

Student Board Reps held conversations with over 50 students across the 4 high schools to gather insights from students to inform new high school design and strategic plan.

Design Sprints

Two high schools engaged approximately 100 students in design thinking activities focused on designing the dream school experience.

Prototype Feedback Sessions

In progress with 60 students at two high schools to provide feedback on prototypes such as schedules, pathways, and classroom designs.

Administrator Design Sessions

15 administrators participated in 4 hours of collaborative design work focused on program design for the new high school.

Microschool Pilots

Two middle schools piloting small learning communities, project-based learning, and community connected experiences.

Career Kickstart Pilots

Connecting students across the district to hands-on, career connected experiences helping us inform pathway design and real-world learning opportunities.

Partnerships & Collaboration

Staying on the cutting edge by learning from partners actively designing the future of education

XQ Institute – Student
Journeys Workshop



Digital Promise and the
League of Innovative
Schools



Cambiar Education



Chiefs for Change



Getting Smart



ASU-GSV



Key Research, Future of Work

- [Research Practice Collaborative \(RPC\): Insights on Durable Skills Education](#)
- [The Future of Jobs Report 2025 | World Economic Forum](#)
- Employment Security Department for Washington State's Occupation in Demand Map - [ESDWAGOV - Learn about an occupation map](#)
- [Washington STEM](#)
- [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- Top career choices from Xello
- [World Energy Employment Report](#)
- [Fastest Growing Occupations : Occupational Outlook Handbook: : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](#)
- MIT's Living Wage Calculator and Typical Annual Salaries for Washington State - [Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Washington \(mit.edu\)](#)
- [District Survey Results](#)

Shared during [March 14, 2024](#) and [June 13, 2024](#) Board Meetings

Anchoring Our Work

Portrait of a Graduate



Our Vision: All students thrive as they engage in meaningful learning that unlocks their passion and potential to positively impact the world.

Our Mission: Our students will be prepared for and eager to accept the academic, occupational, personal and practical challenges of life in a dynamic global environment.

Agency to Learn



Graduates demonstrate passion, persistence, growth mindset, executive functioning and resiliency in their learning to adapt to changes and prioritize wellness.

Critical Thinking



Graduates show inquiry, creativity and systems thinking to solve complex problems and develop new opportunities to better the world.

Effective Communication



Graduates communicate with purpose across different audiences and modalities to foster discourse and human connection.

Collaboration & Influence



Graduates participate on teams in different roles, cultivate effective teams and build inclusive social networks to accomplish shared goals.

Interpreting Information & Data



Graduates gather, analyze and synthesize various types of data, leveraging emerging technology to maintain integrity in the context and use of information.

Every ISD Student. Every Day.

11/19/25 V4

Post-secondary Success & Life Success

How Our Changing World,
Innovation, Research and
Data, Engagement, and
Student Voice are Shaping
the New High School



ISD Teacher on Special Assignment with ISD Alumni – Career Kickstart Panel

Elevating Student Voice

Over the last two years we have engaged with our community, prioritizing the voices of our students. Through conversations with students, design sprints, prototyping sessions, and innovative pilots, we have gathered meaningful insights about what young people want and need from their high school experience.

Students consistently express a desire for a school that is **collaborative, relevant, and inspiring**. They want learning that is **hands-on** and **project-based**, where **creativity** and **critical thinking** are central and where lectures and passive seat time are rare. They envision a school where they are **known, supported, and challenged** in a school that embraces their personal **goals** while **preparing** them for **their future**.

What Are Our Students Sharing?



Gibson Ek students, XQ Student Journeys Workshop

Creative & Inspiring Learning Environments



Prioritize Student Health and Well-being

A school culture that prioritizes emotional wellness, reduces overload and stress, and builds a supportive, joyful community where students feel seen and valued.



Strong Relationships and Mentors

"I just feel like having a support system from teachers especially is really important. And teachers that exhibit that they care and show it. They ask you if you're okay, how you're doing. You know, they kind of really just get to know you as a person instead of just being there because it's their job.

*-ISD Student
(from student conversations)*



Skylight Student, XQ Student Journeys Workshop

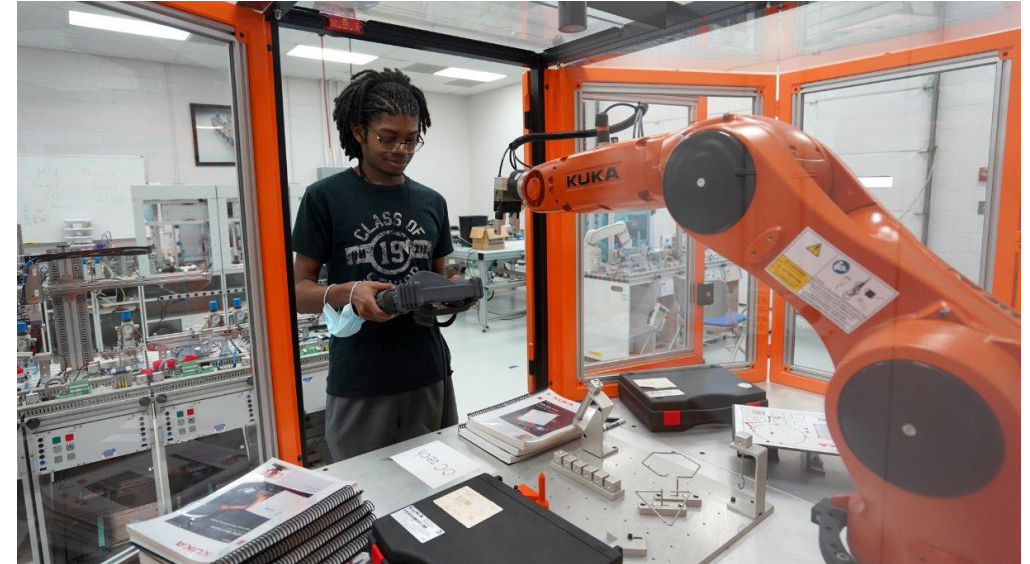
Social Connection & Teamwork

What is the #1 thing that students would miss if school disappeared tomorrow?

Friends and meeting *new people*



Agency, Choice, and Personalized Learning



Relevant, Real-world, and Engaging Curriculum

Learning that connects to the world and their lives. Students are asking for less repetition and more integration across subjects with coursework that feels modern, important, and empowering.



Maywood Community Microschool Students at the Gates Foundation

Flexible Time, Space, and Learning Options

Schedule Prototypes from Design Sprint Exercises Ready for Feedback & Iterating Through Engagement Sessions

Block	Sessions	Cohort A	Cohort B
AM Block	Sessions 1-3 8:30 – 11:05	World Language Civics Language Arts	Robotics & Engineering Pathway (Integrated Science + Math + CTE)
Midday	11:05 – 11:45	Lunch/Community	Lunch/Community
PM Block	Session 4-6 11:50 – 2:25	Robotics & Engineering Pathway (Integrated Science + Math + CTE)	World Language Civics Language Arts

Wednesday - Cohort, Studio & Planning Day (All Students)

Block	Sessions	Wednesday Focus
AM Block	Sessions 1-3 8:30 – 11:05	Cohort & Mentorship Advisory, Goal Setting, Check-ins
Midday	11:05 – 11:45	Lunch/Community
PM Block	Session 4-6 11:50 – 2:25	Studio & Lab Time Robotics, Engineering Labs, Project Work
		Personal Flex & Planning Academic Support, Internships, Conferencing

SCHEDULE – 6 + JANTERM

Weekly Schedule Overview for 10th Grade Environmental Pathway student

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30–10:00	Studio 1: Eco-Engineering Lab (Science + Math – 1 credit/each)	Eco-Engineering Lab	Advisory + Flex Time	Eco-Engineering Lab	Eco-Engineering Lab
10:15–11:45	Studio 2: Revolution & Resistance (ELA + Social Studies – 1 credit/each)	Revolution & Resistance	Mini Studios / Office Hours	Revolution & Resistance	Revolution & Resistance
11:45–12:30	Lunch + Wellness	Lunch + Wellness	Lunch + Wellness	Lunch + Wellness	Lunch + Wellness
12:30–2:00	Studio 3: Sustainability Startup (CTE + Elective – 1 credit/each)	Sustainability Startup	Project Work / Guest Speakers	Sustainability Startup	Sustainability Startup
2:15–3:15	Advisory + Portfolio	PE/Health	Clubs / Wellness Seminars	Industry Partner Visits	Fieldwork / Capstone Planning

January Term (J-Term): 3–4 weeks

Student Choice: *Climate Frontlines: Environmental Justice in Action*

Conduct field interviews, GIS mapping, Final project: Create a digital story map and policy brief

Credit Earned: 1 Credit

Where Are We Now

- Initially launching as a choice school in Fall of 2027
- Top potential pathways identified
 - Entrepreneurship / Business
 - Environmental Sustainability (includes agriculture)
 - Health Sciences
 - Networking and Cybersecurity
 - Robotics and Engineering
- Core team to be selected in Spring 2026
- Facility: Permitting in process, designed with flexible learning spaces

Developing Academic Program Foundations

- Anchor on Portrait of a Graduate's durable skills
- Interdisciplinary, career-connected pathways
- Integrated core courses with hands-on, project-based learning
- Real-world experiences, dual credit, industry recognized credentials

Facility Design Snapshot

74,000 sq ft building

- 16 classrooms
- 5 pathway labs
- 3 science labs
- 1 large classroom and flex lab
- 1 large hub/commons
- 1 innovation hub
- Multiple collaborative learning hubs and studios
- Outdoor learning space
- Multipurpose field and parking
- Library-Research and Design Lab
- Student market



What's Next

Parameters Needing Board Guidance

- Grade Level Span:
 - Which grade levels will this serve? (9-12, 10-12, 11-12)
- First Year Success:
 - What does a successful first year look like?
- Transportation and Access:
 - Will transportation be provided across the district?
- Program Options:
 - Should we consider offering part-time and full-time options or hybrid?
- Credit Flexibility:
 - Should we consider applying for a credit waiver through the WA State Board of Education? Note: The learning model will align with Washington State Board of Education graduation requirements, potentially with a waiver for credit flexibility including assessment model, scheduling, and requirements to graduate.
- Pathway Sponsors and Partnership:
 - What companies or organizations can we partner with to sponsor each pathway?

District-Led Decisions Ahead

- Staffing Model:
 - With a career-connected, interdisciplinary model, how will the school be staffed?
- Dual Credit:
 - Who will be our college partners for dual credit options?
- Industry Recognized Credentials:
 - What Industry Recognized Credentials will be offered?
- Technology Strategy:
 - What are our innovative technology choices for career ready skills?
- Credit Flexibility:
 - Should we consider applying for a credit waiver through the WA State Board of Education? Note: The learning model will align with Washington State Board of Education graduation requirements, potentially with a waiver for credit flexibility including assessment model, scheduling, and requirements to graduate.
- Marketing and Communication:
 - How will we market, communicate and engage with future students and families?
- Contracted Bargaining Agreement:
 - How will we collaborate with our unions along the way?
- Course Design:
 - How will we develop interdisciplinary course design including core courses integrated into pathway courses along with individual core requirements?

Program Elements to Shape Through Student, Staff, and Community Engagement

- School Identity:
 - School vision, mission, name, and colors
- Schedule Structure:
 - Schedule options to include student agency, deeper learning, and interdisciplinary experiences
- Student Agency:
 - Student designed learning plans and choice-based elements
- Student Support Systems:
 - Cohort and mentorship model to support student planning, progress, and performance. Engaging with families to support student success
- Graduation Capstone Requirements:
 - Capstone and culminating experiences for graduation that bring value to students and their future
- Learning Environment Layout:
 - Layouts for learning spaces across the building including learning hubs, labs, and studios (classrooms)
- Community-connected Learning:
 - Community partners and learning experiences such as internship opportunities, apprenticeships, or real-world projects and challenges

Overview of School Design Phases

New High School Timeline	
<i>Milestones</i>	<i>Phase</i>
Visioning and Commitments	Phase 1, October 2025-February 2026
Engage and Design with Community	Phase 2, February 2026-April 2026
Core Team Formation	Phase 3, April 2026-June 2026
Teaching and Learning Design	Phase 4, August 2026-June 2027
Opening Preparation - Systems & Structures	Phase 5, August 2026-June 2027
School Opens	Phase 6, July 2027-August 2027

Note: Gibson Ek started Phase 1 in May 2015 for a 2016 launch welcoming 106 students the first year.

What Might The Next Phase of Community Engagement Look Like?

- CTE hosting nationally recognized film, *Multiple Choice*
 - February 26th @ 6:30, Issaquah High School Theater
- Community Design Sprint
- Student prototyping and feedback sessions
- Core Team applications open in April for staff, students, family, community members
- Website live by the end of February 2026

Board Discussion and Work Study Recap

Parameters Needing Board Guidance

- Grade Level Span:
 - Which grade levels will this serve? (9-12, 10-12, 11-12)
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Previous Board Presentations

- [March 14, 2024](#) includes previews of CTE expansion across district and identified industries for future growth
- [June 13, 2024](#) includes ThoughtExchange data and possible Pathways across all schools



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