



NORTH THURSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES ♦ 305 COLLEGE STREET NE, LACEY, WASHINGTON 98516
TELEPHONE: (360) 412-4400 ♦ FAX: (360) 412-4410 ♦ WWW.NTPS.ORG

Community Conversation Overview:

On February 3, 2026, the Board of Directors of North Thurston Public Schools (NTPS) hosted a Community Conversation titled “Success in the Early Years.” The primary focus of the event was to build community understanding of the variety of early learning options in the community and how North Thurston is partnering to expand, and receiving feedback from participants about next steps aligning with Strategic Plan Goal 1: Success in the Early Years, Outcome C: Increased percentage of children meeting or exceeding grade level standards by the end of 3rd grade.

The evening began with a welcome from Board Director Michelle Gipson, who set the stage for a productive and engaging conversation. Following this, Diane Heckman, the Director of Early Learning, provided an overview to understand the multiple programs, and the programming available in NTPS.

After the presentation, Board Director Sarah Tracy led a panel discussion featuring early learning providers throughout the community. Participants included Timberland Regional Library, Bezos Academy—Lacey Southeast, Childcare Action Council Early Learning Centers, Early Achievers Regional Coordinator-Child Care Action Council, ESD 113 Early Learning Programs, Capitol Forest Preschool Cooperative, South Sound Parent to Parent, TK teacher, Elementary Principal, Hands on Children’s Museum NTPS Director of Language Arts, Social Studies and NTPS Director of Math and Science. Panelists shared the role of their individual programs and how they partner in many ways with NTPS and other providers in the community to support early learning.

Board Director Gretchen Maliska introduced the next steps in the Community Conversation and the small group prompts. The evening continued with a small group discussion at table groups where all attendees reflected on the following prompts:

“What did you hear that you find encouraging?” “What do you wonder about?”

“What feedback or input do you have?”

Table groups included School Board members and notetaking facilitators.

At the conclusion of the table discussions, Board Director Esperanza Badillo-Diiorio closed the event, summarizing the key takeaways and thanking the participants for their valuable contributions. Highlighting how the event was an important step in understanding how NTPS can continue to support Strategic Plan Goal 1: Success in the Early Years, Outcome C: Increased percentage of children meeting or exceeding grade level standards by the end of 3rd grade.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

GRETCHEN MALISKA ○ TIFFANY SEVRUK ○ SARAH TRACY ○ ESPERANZA BADILLO-DIIORIO ○ MICHELLE GIPSON
EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES · EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Determination:

As a result of this Community Conversation, the Board's Determination is as follows:

- The Board commends the district for its progress in expanding both opportunities and partnerships to support Strategic Plan Goals in Goal 1, Outcome C.
- The Board directs the Superintendent to enhance communication strategies to better inform parents, students, and community regarding access to both district and community-based programs in the region that support the youngest learners in our community. Communications must include how to learn more about these programs and how to access each of these programs.
- The Board directs the Superintendent to develop the next steps to better communicate the role and purpose of early learning assessments like WAKIDS.