

# Open Line

Spring 2026



## REGISTER EARLY FOR KINDERGARTEN



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Tumwater School District

### SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



Kevin Bogatin,  
Superintendent

Dear Tumwater Community,  
Spring has a way of bringing things into focus. The days are longer, the energy in our hallways is palpable, and as we approach the close of another school year, I find myself moved by what this community continues to accomplish together.

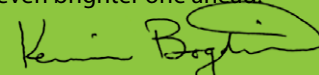
I'd like to begin with a heartfelt THANK YOU. To our Tumwater voters: your strong approval of the Replacement Safety, Technology, and Capital Projects Levy in February 2026 is an extraordinary investment in our children. This levy will strengthen school security, modernize technology, and bring needed improvements to our campuses, including new, accessible playgrounds at every elementary school. You showed up for our kids, and we will honor that trust every step of the way.

As we close the school year, we will complete our first full year of implementing the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, shaped by more than 2,000 community members, parents, staff, teachers, and students. This year, you may have already seen it taking shape in Portrait of a Graduate conversations, school action plans, and in the way staff are rallying around our shared promise that every student is known by name, strength, and need. We are just getting started, and the foundation is strong.

As we look ahead, I also want to acknowledge the financial realities school districts are navigating. Last year, Tumwater made difficult decisions to reduce staff, programs, and other costs by more than \$6.5 million. While those reductions have helped stabilize this year's budget, costs continue to rise while revenue has not kept pace. Like districts across our region, state, and nation, we will continue making careful, transparent decisions as responsible stewards of your tax dollars.

Even in the midst of challenge, our students continue to show up ready to learn, grow, and surprise us in the best ways. Behind that growth is an extraordinary team of staff members and supportive families whose commitment to students is the story of Tumwater. Their care, resilience, and dedication continue to create schools where students feel supported, challenged, connected, and prepared for the futures they envision for themselves daily.

Thank you for a wonderful year. Here's to a strong finish and an even brighter one ahead.

  
Kevin Bogatin, Superintendent

## Growing Through Play

### Year One of Play-Based Kindergarten in Tumwater School District

Written by Misty Hinkle, Director of Elementary Education

Play is not separate from learning—it is one of the most powerful ways young children make sense of the world around them. Through play, students develop skills in language, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-regulation. A play-based classroom provides opportunities to explore, create, and engage in meaningful experiences that support both academic and social-emotional growth.

The transition to play-based kindergarten reflects our commitment to aligning instruction with research on how young children learn best. It also advances our Strategic Plan by prioritizing strong foundational readiness, ensuring students leave kindergarten with the skills and confidence needed for future learning.

#### What This Year Looked Like

Throughout this first year, kindergarten teachers worked intentionally to redesign their classrooms and instructional practices. A key component of this shift has been the implementation of 45–60 minutes of free play daily, giving students opportunities to participate in meaningful exploration and social interaction.

The free play time includes several different play areas that children choose to participate in. These areas provide:

- Increased opportunities for hands-on exploration, such as building, dramatic play, and sensory activities
- Integration of literacy and math into play experiences, allowing students to practice foundational skills in authentic contexts
- Flexible classroom environments designed to encourage movement, collaboration, and choice
- A focus on social-emotional learning, including sharing, communication, and problem-solving with peers

In addition, our kindergarten teachers have been engaged in a yearlong professional learning community (PLC) focused on play-based practices. Teachers have worked collaboratively to refine instruction, share successes, and problem-solve challenges.

Our educators have also partnered closely with the early learning department at Educational Service District 113 to ensure student learning assessments align with our play-based model. This work included refining practices to better match the intent of WaKIDS (Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills), ensuring student progress is captured in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways.

#### Recognition and Interest Beyond TSD

The work happening in Tumwater has not gone unnoticed. This year, our play-based kindergarten initiative was featured by KING 5 News, highlighting the innovative practices taking place in our classrooms.

We have also welcomed visits from other school systems, including Franklin Pierce and Ellensburg school districts, who came to observe and learn from our implementation.

Beyond in-person visits, we have been contacted by districts across Washington and other states—including Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska—seeking to learn more about our approach as they consider similar transitions for their early learners.

#### Early Impact

While this is just the first year, we are already seeing encouraging outcomes. Kindergarten students are demonstrating increased engagement, stronger language development, and improved ability to work well with others. Classrooms are

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# Tumwater School District Adopts New K–5 Magnetic Literacy Materials for 2026–2027

Written by Misty Hinkle, Director of Elementary Education



Tumwater School District is excited to announce the adoption of new K–5 English Language Arts (ELA) instructional materials, Magnetic Literacy, which will be implemented across all elementary schools beginning in the 2026–2027 school year.

This adoption marks an important milestone, as the district’s last comprehensive ELA materials adoption occurred in 2014. Over the past decade, literacy research and instructional practices have evolved significantly, making this update an important step in ensuring students have access to high-quality, current instructional resources.

The selection of Magnetic Literacy followed a thoughtful, collaborative two-year pilot process involving 46 teachers from across the district. These educators dedicated significant time to exploring the materials, teaching units, analyzing student engagement and outcomes, and providing detailed feedback to ensure the curriculum best meets student needs.

Throughout the pilot, teachers reflected on instructional practices, shared insights, and evaluated how effectively the materials supported literacy development for all learners. Their professionalism and commitment were instrumental in guiding the district to a strong, research-based decision.

Magnetic Literacy stood out for its engaging content and intentional design. One exciting feature is the integration of science and social studies topics into literacy instruction, allowing students to build knowledge about the world while developing essential reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. This interdisciplinary approach strengthens comprehension and increases engagement by connecting literacy to meaningful, real-world content.

The materials also provide structured support for teachers while allowing flexibility to meet diverse student needs. The curriculum emphasizes strong foundational skills, rich text experiences, and opportunities for students to think critically and communicate effectively.

As implementation approaches, TSD will continue supporting teachers through professional learning and collaboration to ensure a successful transition.

We are grateful to the 46 teachers who participated in the pilot for their leadership, dedication, and commitment to excellence. Their work will help ensure Tumwater students benefit from high-quality literacy instruction for years to come.

# Growing Through Play

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filled with curiosity, creativity, and joyful learning—important indicators that students are building positive relationships with school.

These early outcomes reflect progress toward our goal of strong foundational readiness, as students develop the essential skills that will support their success in first grade and beyond.

Families have also shared appreciation for the way play-based learning supports their children’s enthusiasm and confidence as learners.

## Looking Ahead: Introducing Guided Play

As we move into the 2026–2027 school year, we are excited to take the next step by incorporating guided play into our kindergarten classrooms.

Guided play builds on the strong foundation established this year by combining child-led exploration with intentional teacher support. In guided play:

- Teachers thoughtfully design learning experiences with clear academic goals in mind
- Students maintain choice and voice in their play
- Educators interact strategically by asking questions, extending thinking, and introducing new concepts

This balanced approach allows us to deepen academic learning while preserving the creativity and engagement that make play so effective.

## Building for the Future

This summer, TSD will also create a Play-Based Lending Library. This shared resource will house materials that can be used across all kindergarten classrooms to enrich play centers. Teachers will be able to check out items as needed, allowing for greater variety and access to high-quality materials throughout the year.

## A Collective Effort

This work would not be possible without the commitment of our kindergarten teachers, the support of our administrators and staff, and the partnership of our families. Transitioning to a play-based model is a significant shift, and we are grateful for the collaboration and trust of our Tumwater community.

Together, we are building classrooms where learning is meaningful, students are inspired, and every child has the opportunity to thrive—fully aligned to our vision of strong foundational readiness for every Tumwater student.

Drumroll please...

## TWO STATE CHAMPIONS!



### Percussion State Champs

Congratulations to Black Hills High School students Jayden Ramsey (Snare Drum) and Will Madison (Multiple Percussion) for earning State Championship titles at the Percussion WMEA State Solo & Ensemble Contest in Ellensburg! In state music competitions, there are no classifications—meaning they are the top percussionists in Washington State, across all schools and all divisions. We are incredibly proud of these talented musicians!



### Schools Honored for Growth

We're proud to celebrate Bush Middle School and Tumwater High School for their recognition in the 2024–25 Washington School Recognition Program for growth among students in one or more racial or ethnic groups. This honor reflects the dedication of staff, students, and families working together to support growth, belonging, and success for all learners.



### Month of the Military Child Celebration

During April's Month of the Military Child, we were proud to host a district-wide celebration honoring our military-connected students and families. The event featured live music from America's First Corps Band from JBLM, food, a photo booth, free books, community resources, and more. With more than 7% of our students identified as military-connected, we are committed to strengthening our support for these resilient students and the families who serve alongside them. Thank you to our military families for your service, sacrifice, and partnership.

# Belonging Starts at Home: Special Education Programs Returning to Neighborhood Schools

Written by Chris Burgmeier, Executive Director of Special Education

Tumwater School District is aligning special education services with the district strategic plan as we continue working toward equitable student outcomes. Over time, many districts centralized programs for efficiency, requiring students to travel across the district for services. After reviewing our programs and practices, we have started returning programs to elementary neighborhood schools to serve students closer to home. Starting in 2026–27, the Structured Teaching Program will be offered at every elementary school in the district. This shift supports educational and social growth while aligning with inclusive practices and district values.

A sense of ‘student belonging’ is central to Tumwater School District. We know students thrive when connected to their school community. Returning to neighborhood schools allows students to build friendships within their community, attend the same school as siblings, participate in school traditions and activities, build long-term relationships with staff, and feel pride in their school. Having Structured Teaching Programs in every elementary school reinforces that students with disabilities are valued, included, and important members of their school community.

Research shows students often experience stronger outcomes when learning alongside peers. Inclusive



educational practices benefit all students and strengthen school communities. This model will increase opportunities for students in special education to participate in inclusive practices, activities, and extracurricular opportunities within their neighborhood schools.

Families also benefit from neighborhood-based

services. Participating in schools outside a family’s neighborhood can create transportation, scheduling, and communication challenges. Families are more likely to build lasting school connections when siblings attend schools within the same community.

The transition also offers logistical benefits. Shorter bus rides may improve student stamina and participation during the school day. Educators across the district will continue developing stronger inclusive systems while supporting diverse learners. Students will also transition to middle and high school alongside peers rather than moving between schools across the district.

Bringing these programs back into neighborhood schools is about far more than location—it is about belonging. Every student deserves to learn, grow, and build friendships as part of their school community, alongside peers in the place they call home. This work reflects our commitment to creating schools where all students are known, valued, included, and supported.

# Strategic Plan

As we complete the first year of our new Strategic Plan, we are proud to see staff across Tumwater School District enthusiastically embracing our shared promise: every student is known by name, strength, and need, and is prepared for the future they envision.

This roadmap guides our work over the coming years, and already we are seeing meaningful progress come to life in classrooms, schools, and across our system. To help share that progress, our website is being updated with current information and data highlighting the work underway.

Please use the QR code to visit the site and learn more about how our strategic plan is taking shape across the district.

SCAN FOR  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
WEBSITE!!



## Superintendent Advisory Council

This year, the Superintendent launched a new Student Advisory Council to strengthen student voice in district initiatives and decision-making. Throughout the school year, student representatives from Black Hills High School, Cascadia High School, and Tumwater High School met several times with district leadership to share perspectives, provide feedback, and help shape the future of our schools. This photo captures a breakout discussion between our superintendent and student leaders during one of those sessions.



## Day of Champions

A favorite annual tradition, Day of Champions brings our exceptional students together for a fun-filled celebration at Tumwater Stadium, where they are cheered on by friends, family, high school volunteers, and community members. This joyful event gives every participant the chance to shine on the field and be celebrated like the athletes they are—surrounded by encouragement, pride, and a whole lot of smiles.



## Principal of the Year

In a surprise announcement surrounded by her students, staff, and family, Kim Doughty was named the AWSP Elementary Principal of the Year. At the heart of her leadership is a simple but powerful belief: every student, staff member, and family deserves to feel seen, known, and valued. We are proud to celebrate Kim’s well-deserved recognition and the lasting impact of her leadership.

## Dance Team Champs

At the recent state competition in Yakima, featuring 39 teams from across the state, Tumwater High School Dance Team delivered outstanding performances, earning 1st Place in Dance, 1st Place in Hip Hop, and 1st Place in Pom. These victories add to an already impressive history of success to total 38 state championships—an unmatched achievement in Washington state. Congratulations to the Tumwater High School Dance Team on another extraordinary season!





The new covered bleachers at Black Hills High School provide fans with a comfortable, weather-protected place to cheer on their teams and enjoy every moment of the game—rain or shine.



Tumwater  
School District

Continuous Student Learning  
in a Caring, Engaging  
Environment



TUMWATER SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 33  
621 LINWOOD AVE. SW  
TUMWATER, WA 98512-8499

## Community Support in Action: Investing in Tumwater Schools

In February 2026, Tumwater voters approved a six-year Safety, Technology, and Capital Improvements Levy, providing \$49.1 million in capital funding to improve our schools over the next six years. Thank you to everyone who voted and continues to invest in our students, staff, and school facilities.

Levy collections begin in 2027, with projects launching that summer to improve school safety, accessibility, infrastructure, technology, and learning environments across the district.

### KEY PROJECTS INCLUDE:

#### Elementary playground replacements beginning summer 2027:

- New play equipment
- Accessible, inclusive, and adaptive designs for students of all abilities
- Rubberized fall protection surfacing
- Covered play areas for rainy-day recess

#### Addition of Multi-Purpose/Lunch Rooms at:

- Black Lake Elementary
- East Olympia Elementary
- Michael T. Simmons Elementary

#### Traffic and pedestrian safety improvements:

- \* Including improved traffic flow and extended parent queuing lanes.
- Black Lake Elementary
- Michael T. Simmons Elementary
- Tumwater Middle School
- Bush Middle School

#### Major facility improvements and maintenance:

- Roof replacements
- Replace flooring in Black Hills High School and Tumwater High School commons and Peter G. Schmidt gym
- Exterior building painting
- Future replacement funding for artificial turf athletic

- fields at Black Hills High School and Tumwater High School
- Paving the Tumwater High School gravel parking lot

#### Energy efficiency and sustainability projects:

- LED lighting upgrades at both high schools
- Proposed solar array installation at Tumwater High School through grant funding
- HVAC and other energy-saving improvements as grant opportunities become available

#### Special Services accessibility upgrades at:

- East Olympia Elementary
- Littlerock Elementary

#### Technology and security upgrades:

- New camera systems at Bush Middle School and Tumwater Middle School
- Security camera replacements at East Olympia Elementary
- Network upgrades at multiple schools
- Recently completed classroom projector installations at Bush and Tumwater Middle Schools

**New Market Skills Center campus renovation grant application** to support modernization of the nearly 40-year-old facility serving students from 39 high schools across 12 districts. This potential project would not require Tumwater School District capital funds.

**THANK YOU,**  
**Tumwater community,**  
**for your continued support of**  
**our schools and for helping us**  
**create safer, more accessible,**  
**and future-ready learning**  
**environments for all students.**

The capital projects of the Tumwater School District are managed by the small but mighty Capital Projects team with much help and collaboration from the other departments, school staff, district leadership, and especially parents and community members. We work together and strive to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to us by you in order to make our schools safer and support education. If you are interested in learning more about school projects, please reach out and let's talk. Call 360-709-7005.

As we look ahead to these exciting projects, we also want to recognize and thank **Mel Murray** for his 21 years of leadership of Tumwater's Capital Projects Department. Mel has played an instrumental role in improving, maintaining, and planning for our school facilities, and his mark can be seen in each and every one of our schools and facilities. His thoughtful leadership and stewardship of community resources have helped shape the learning environments our students and staff benefit from each day.