

the SCHOLAR CHRONICLE

FEDERAL WAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  SUMMER 2026

EACH SCHOLAR: A VOICE. A DREAM. A BRIGHT FUTURE.



A NOTE FROM
DR. DANI
PFEIFFER,
SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Federal Way Public Schools Families and Community,

We have reached the end of another incredible school year. As I reflect on the past ten months, I am filled with gratitude for the students, staff, families, and community members who make Federal Way Public Schools such a special place. Together, we have created opportunities for students to learn, grow, discover their strengths, and prepare for bright futures. Whether in classrooms, on stages and athletic fields, through career-connected learning, or in service to others, our scholars have accomplished so much this year.

One of the highlights of the year was celebrating the Class of 2026. This past weekend, 1,564 graduates crossed the stage and embarked on the next chapter of their journeys. Collectively, they earned more than \$12.5 million in scholarships, and every graduate left with a plan for what comes next.

Here are just a few highlights from the Class of 2026:



- 247 are the first in their family to graduate from high school
- 435 are the first in their family to attend college
- 652 plan to pursue a four-year degree
- 399 plan to attend a two-year college
- 120 will enroll in a trade school or technical program
- 96 will enter an apprenticeship
- 55 will serve in the military
- 151 will enter the workforce

Congratulations, Class of 2026! We are proud of all you have accomplished and look forward to seeing the impact you will make in the years ahead.



Our signature events, including Life After High School, STEAM Expo, District Music Festival, and CTE Scholar Showcase, continued to demonstrate our priority of high quality rigorous instruction across all subjects.



On June 12 and 14, FWPS celebrated the Class of 2026, with more than 1,500 scholars earning their diplomas and more than \$12.5 million in scholarships. Check out more photos on our Graduation Page.



Students in Olympic View K-8's new dual language program, the first of its kind in Washington state.



The new Electrical Pre-Apprenticeship program is one of several new CTE opportunities that launched this year.

This year also brought many opportunities for learning and growth across our district. We completed the first year of our Korean and Spanish Dual Language programs at Olympic View K-8, celebrated a record 237 students earning the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy, launched new K-3 and 9th Grade Assurance Teams to strengthen student support, and expanded Career and Technical Education pathways that prepare students for college, careers, and life after graduation.



Seven schools celebrated their work in closing the achievement gap with recognition from the Washington State Board of Education.

Our students continued to excel academically, artistically, and athletically, while our schools

were recognized for student growth and achievement. This spring, seven additional schools earned recognition from the Washington State Board of Education, bringing our district total to 18 schools recognized for closing opportunity gaps and supporting student success.

We also strengthened the connections that make our school communities thrive through events such as STEAM Exploration Night, Life After High School, the District Music Festival, Family Academy, the CTE Scholar Showcase, and many other opportunities that brought students, families, staff, and community members together.

Perhaps most importantly, our community once again demonstrated its commitment to students through the successful passage of the Educational Programs and Operations Levy in February. We are deeply grateful for the trust and support shown by our voters, which will help sustain critical programs and services for years to come.

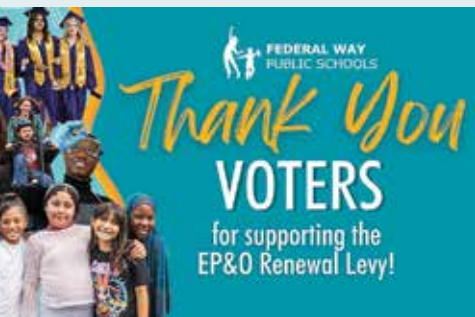
As you explore this final edition of the Scholar Chronicle for the 2025-26 school year, I hope you take a moment to celebrate all that we have accomplished together. Every success story, milestone, and achievement reflects the dedication, partnership, and care that define Federal Way Public Schools.

I wish you a wonderful summer and look forward to welcoming our students, staff, and families back for another year of learning, growth, and opportunity.

With gratitude,

Dr. Dani Pfeiffer





Federal Way Public Schools extends its sincere gratitude to our community for approving the 2026 Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) Renewal Levy.

Officially certified on February 20 with 61.77% voter approval, the highest support in recent district history, this vote reflects our community’s continued commitment to students, schools, and educational excellence.

While Washington state provides funding for basic education, local levy dollars help sustain many of the programs, services, and opportunities that enrich the student experience. This four-year renewal levy, which will provide funding through 2030, ensures Federal Way Public Schools can continue supporting academics, athletics, arts, music, activities, essential staff positions, and operational services that benefit our 21,500+ students. On behalf of our students, families, and more than 3,000 staff members, thank you for your trust, partnership, and investment in the future of FWPS.



Nearly 1,600 student-scholars received diplomas during graduation ceremonies held June 12 and June 14. FWPS also celebrated 15 exiting transition scholars in the Employment and Transition Program (ETP).

We are #FWPSProud of their accomplishments and their bright futures ahead! Read more about graduation, rewatch the ceremonies, view photo galleries, and hear our graduates share how FWPS prepared them for their future at www.fwps.org/graduation2026.



\$12.5+ million
earned in scholarships

247
scholars are the first in their families to graduate from high school

435
graduates are the first in their families to attend college

237
scholars have earned the Seal of Biliteracy

396
earned Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs)

POST-SECONDARY PLANS

66%
attending a 2- or 4-year college

13.5%
attending a trade or apprenticeship program

3.5%
going to military

11%
entering the workforce or starting an internship/career track



SUPPORTING 9TH GRADERS FOR SUCCESS IN HIGH SCHOOL



The turning of tassels, proud smiles, and celebrations with loved ones marked an unforgettable milestone this past June as Federal Way Public Schools celebrated 1,564 graduates. While graduation is often viewed as the finish line, the path to earning a diploma begins years earlier, with intentional systems and supports designed to help scholars succeed every step of the way.

In Federal Way Public Schools, we know that ninth grade is one of the most important years in a student’s educational journey. Research shows that students who successfully complete ninth grade are more than four times more likely to graduate from high school, making this a critical year for future success. That’s why FWPS launched 9th Grade On-Track Assurance Teams at each comprehen-

sive high school this year as part of our commitment to excellence, equity, and continuous improvement. A key focus of this work is supporting the transition from middle school to high school by using eighth-grade data to identify student needs, connecting incoming freshmen with peer mentors through Link Crew, and establishing strong academic supports from day one.

This work is informed by research from the University of Chicago’s Network for College Success, which has demonstrated the powerful connection between ninth-grade success and high school graduation. FWPS measures success through two key indicators: ensuring students pass all of their classes and supporting them to earn a 3.0 GPA or higher. While passing classes keeps students on track for graduation, a strong

GPA can open doors to college admissions, scholarships, and other postsecondary opportunities. Using this research-based approach, teams regularly review grades, attendance, course completion, and discipline data to identify students who may need additional support and develop targeted interventions based on individual needs.

For example, a student struggling academically despite strong attendance may require different supports than a student whose attendance challenges are affecting classroom performance. By monitoring progress throughout the year and adjusting supports as needed, teams work to ensure more students remain on track and thrive academically.

The impact of this work extends far beyond ninth grade. By helping students stay on track early in high school, FWPS is increasing the likelihood that more scholars will graduate prepared for college, careers, military service, apprenticeships, and other postsecondary opportunities.

This first year has allowed teams to build strong systems, learn from one another, and identify promising practices that can be expanded across the district. As we look ahead to year two, we are excited to deepen this work, strengthen supports for students, partner with families, and continue building pathways that help every scholar succeed in high school and beyond.





STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
AND BELONGING
RISE AFTER CELL
PHONE POLICY UPDATE

One year after tightening our policy regarding cell phones and electronic devices in our schools, we’re already seeing encouraging signs that our students are more engaged, connected, and focused at school.

During the 2024–25 school year, we engaged staff, parents, and community members in surveys and discussions to develop new guidelines that would keep learning first, without the distractions of cell phones and other electronic devices. Through this process, we were able to implement a revised policy, which has now been in effect for an entire school year.

And the results?

Our fall Panorama survey collected information directly from our students.

We saw an upward trend from our students in grades 3–5, but some of the strongest data came from the students most impacted by this change.

Among students in grades 6–12, we saw increases in:

- **Classroom Effort (+3):** Students reported putting more effort into paying attention, participating, and completing their work.
- **Engagement (+3):** Students reported feeling more focused, interested, and excited about learning
- **Social Awareness (+3):** Students reported stronger empathy and understanding of others.
- **Sense of Belonging (+4):** Students reported feeling more connected, respected, and valued at school.

While many factors contribute to a positive school experience, reducing distractions can create more opportunities for students to engage with their learning and build meaningful connections with peers and staff.

After only the first year of implementation, these early results are encouraging. We look forward to continuing to monitor student feedback and building learning environments where students can focus, connect, and thrive.

Learn more about the policy at www.fwps.org/cell-phone-policy.



FLASH FORWARD
Alumni
Spotlight

RODNEY KING '97



Years after discovering his love for art in Federal Way Public Schools, Rodney King found his way back to the creative passions that first took shape in his art and creative writing classes. Today, the Federal Way High School graduate balances a career with the United States Postal Service while building a growing reputation as an artist whose work celebrates African American history, culture, and community.

From finding his place in Federal Way schools to serving in the Marine Corps and eventually rediscovering art during the pandemic, King’s journey is a testament to perseverance, creativity, and following your natural gifts. Read the full story on our website to learn how the creative foundation he built as a student continues to shape his life and inspire others today.

www.fwps.org/alumnispotlight

Grounds for Growth
brews real-world job skills for students



When Janelle started working at Grounds for Growth this spring, she wasn’t just learning how to make coffee. She was learning skills she can use in future employment.

“I learned that coffee is important for customers because they drink coffee every single day,” said Janelle, who graduated from Federal Way Public Schools’ Employment Transition Program (ETP) this June. “I also learned how it works. I learned to make coffee and also the cash register.”

Janelle was one of several students who helped launch Grounds for Growth, a new student-run coffee cart at the Educational Service

Center. After a year of planning and preparation, the coffee cart opened this spring, providing staff with handcrafted beverages while creating a new worksite for ETP students.

Grounds for Growth was made possible through the collaboration of students, paraeducators, program staff, district departments, and community partners. Staff worked with students to develop the brand, create the menu, establish payment systems, secure permits, and prepare the cart for operation.



Students took orders, prepared drinks, managed transactions, and delivered beverages throughout the building. Before opening day, they trained alongside program staff and paraeducators in beverage preparation, customer service, point-of-sale systems, inventory management, health and safety procedures, and workplace expectations.

As the year progressed, students became more confident in their roles and took on additional responsibilities.

“They had a lot of practice with customers here at ESC. It’s been a big learning process, but I’ve enjoyed it and they’ve enjoyed it,” said Paulina Laris, ETP Career Development Specialist. “They feel independent and that they’re able to work a point of sale and learn how to run a big machine, like an espresso machine. I think that’s a really cool work skill.”



Students also benefited from support provided by community partner Café D’arte, gaining exposure to industry practices and beverage preparation techniques used in professional coffee shops.

The program later expanded to include beverage delivery throughout the Educational Service Center, giving students additional opportunities to practice communication, customer service, time management, and workplace professionalism. Experienced students also helped train their peers, developing leadership skills while reinforcing their own learning.

Paraeducators played an important role throughout the program, providing daily coaching and support as students learned workplace responsibilities and expectations. The coffee cart quickly became a popular stop for ESC staff, who supported the program and celebrated student success throughout the year.



While Grounds for Growth provided a daily coffee stop for staff, it also gave students an opportunity to apply classroom learning in a professional setting and gain experience that will support future employment opportunities.

the SCHOLAR CHRONICLE

FEDERAL WAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUMMER 2026



First Day of Summer Learning at Star Lake Elementary.

INSIDE

END OF YEAR RECAP

Dr. Pfeiffer shares the highlights and successes of the school year.

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GRADUATION CELEBRATION

Relive the joy of graduation with the Class of 2026!

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Read about Rodney King, FWHS Class of 1997, and his life after high school.

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GROUNDS FOR GROWTH

ETP students build job skills at new FWPS Coffee Cart.

P3

The Scholar Chronicle is published periodically throughout the year by Federal Way Public Schools. Write us at 33330 8th Avenue South, Federal Way WA 98003, or call 253-945-2000. Visit our website at www.fwps.org. Follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/fwps210 X: @fwps210

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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PORTUNITY STATEMENT
Federal Way Public Schools does not
discriminate in any programs or activities
on the basis of race, color, national origin
or ethnicity, religion, creed, sex or gender,
sexual orientation, gender expression
or identity, age, marital or family status,
veteran or military status; disability, or
the use of a trained dog guide or service
animal. The District provides equal
access to the Boy Scouts of America and
other designated youth groups. For more
information: www.fwps.org

ECRWSS

Postal Patron

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASICS



September 2, 2026
First day of school for grades K–12
September 10, 2026
Preschool and ECEAP begin
Monday, September 7
No school in observance of Labor Day.

NOW ENROLLING FOR THE 2026–27 SCHOOL YEAR



- Are you seeking a school district that offers more than just the basics? At FWPS, we provide:
- Free meals and school supplies for all students
 - Guaranteed college admissions for eligible seniors
 - Robust Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs
 - Comprehensive support for multilingual learners

Enrollment is now open for all grades. Join a community where every scholar is empowered to thrive.



Get started at www.fwps.org/enrollment/new-students

If you have questions about the enrollment or verification process, please contact your neighborhood school directly which can be found using the search tool at www.fwps.org/SchoolBoundary. For support outside of school hours, please contact the district's Educational Service Center at 253-945-2000.

FOR MORE INFO



SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR
www.fwps.org/calendar



BELL SCHEDULES
www.fwps.org/bellschedule



BUS ROUTES
www.fwps.org/busroutes



MEAL MENUS
www.fwps.org/mealmenu



TOP 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2026–27 SCHOOL YEAR

- 1. Transportation Registration Required**
Families with children eligible for school bus transportation must opt in during the annual verification process to receive a bus assignment. This required step helps ensure accurate routing and efficient use of district resources.
- 2. Health-Related Tasks to Start School On-Time**
All scholars must be up-to-date on routine childhood immunizations to start the school year. Be sure to review the requirements, particularly for children entering Pre–K, kindergarten, and seventh grade, at www.fwps.org/immunizations. Additionally, if your child has a condition that needs to be managed at school, health forms, required medications or treatments must be provided to schools before the first day. Find forms here: www.fwps.org/healthforms.
- 3. CNEEB Application for Free School Meals and Additional Benefits**
Don't forget to complete the Child Nutrition Eligibility and Education Benefit (CNEEB) Application. This important application provides:
 - **Free Breakfast and Lunch:** Provided to every scholar at no cost each school day, regardless of free and reduced eligibility status. View menus at www.fwps.org/mealmenu.
 - **Additional Benefits:** Fee waivers, scholarships, SUN Bucks grocery benefits, program discounts, and reduced internet costs for eligible families. Get started after August 1 at www.fwps.org/lunchsurvey.
- 4. Free School Supplies for Every Scholar**
Every child will receive basic school supplies at no cost from their school. Please check individual school websites for the school-specific list of provided supplies.
- 5. Cell Phone and Electronic Device Policy Continues**
Last year, we saw incredibly positive trends as a result of our new policy, which showed improved classroom engagement and sense of belonging at school. We'll continue to enforce this policy to ensure classrooms remain a place of learning with reduced sources of distraction. As a reminder, cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent and stored away during the school day for all K–12 students. Middle and high school students may only use their devices during their assigned lunch period. Find the updated policy at www.fwps.org/cell-phone-policy.

Find more information about the upcoming school year in our Back-to-School Resource Hub at www.fwps.org/backtoschool.