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THS Principal Terry Duty Leaving Lasting Legacy

Tahoma High School Principal Terry Duty has announced his retirement, effective at the end of the current school year. Principal Duty has been with the Tahoma School District since 1984 and is currently in his 26th school year as principal.

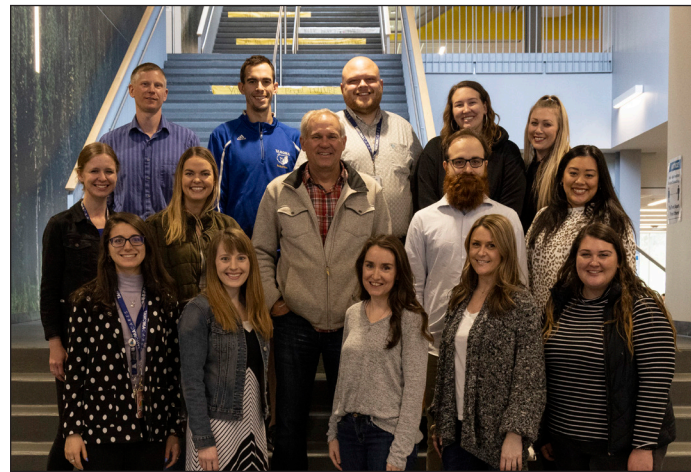
"I will miss so much about Tahoma, including the countless interactions I have each year with students, their families and our phenomenal staff," Duty said. "There are Tahoma teachers who were my students. Former students of mine have grandchildren who will one day walk through these halls. There's such an incredible team here that will continue to thrive and carry on the Tahoma tradition, so I know our students will be in great hands next school year."

Duty joined Tahoma School District as a science teacher in 1984. He spent two

years as an assistant principal before being named principal in 1996. Duty was selected as the Maple Valley Citizen of the Year in 2006 and was selected as the North Puget Sound League (NPSL) Principal of the Year. Most recently, he has served on the CEO network sponsored by the Association of Washington State Principals (AWSP), which connects businesses to top Washington state high schools.

Duty was principal during the construction of the new Tahoma High School, which opened its doors in 2017. He played a key role from design through construction, with Tahoma opening the largest square footage high school in Washington state at the time. "Honor the Past, Live the Present and Create the Future" was a theme Duty wove into the school's design. Tahoma High School was presented as the winner of the 2017 Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) Project Achievement Award for our new school.

"We were extremely proud to bring a state-of-the-art high school to the center of our community," Duty said. "It was a nearly five-year process from requesting a bond to the first day of school here. Less than three years later, COVID-19 forced



Duty (center) surrounded by current THS teachers who were students during Duty's tenure



us into remote learning. That made me want to see our students return and take full advantage of the opportunities that our amazing school offers. I believe that a person should leave a place better than they found it, and the successful return to in-person learning this year gave me the comfort that I'm doing just that." "The positive impact that Terry has had on thousands of students and families in our community is undeniable, and we're extremely grateful for all he's done over the past 38 years," said Tahoma School District Superintendent Mike Hanson. "We have a tremendous team of assistant principals, teachers and staff at Tahoma High School who will provide excellent support for a new principal, so our community can be assured that our high school will continue providing an exemplary education for all students."

For more information on the hiring process for Tahoma High School's next principal, please visit: tahomasd.us

THS Accomplishments under Duty's Leadership:

- Selected as one of the "Nation's Exclusive-100 Model High Schools" as nominated by OSPI
- Multiple years recognized by Newsweek in "America's Top Public High Schools" national ranking
- Listed on the US News and World Report "Best High School" national rankings
- Commended by the President of the United States for "Outstanding Achievement in Environmental Stewardship"
- Named a U.S. Department of Education "Green Ribbon School" for sustainability practices
- Multi-year winner of the Washington Achievement Award, presented by OSPI

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New ELA Curriculum Fostering Engagement and Belonging for Middle School Students

Students and teachers in Tahoma's middle schools have been cracking open their books (and Chromebooks) to dig into new English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum this school year—and so far, early testing data has shown significant improvement in reading comprehension and writing scores. But what is the driving force behind these improvements? Matt Brashears, Maple View Middle School Instructional Coach and Secondary ELA Content Specialist for the Tahoma School District, points to a new, individualized curriculum designed for keeping students fully engaged and fully focused on becoming better readers.

“One thing that’s a challenge for many students is that they don’t necessarily have the reading stamina that they might have had in years past,” Brashears said when speaking on achievement gaps and recovery from pandemic-related learning loss. “If you haven’t been in a classroom and been reading, especially reading something challenging as often, for an extended period of time, that’s going to be a little bit more difficult to do.”

Enter “Into Literature,” the new curriculum published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, which was adopted at the beginning of this school year and offers some key benefits to Tahoma’s middle school students, as well as the teachers who instruct them. Alongside the

Key Benefits

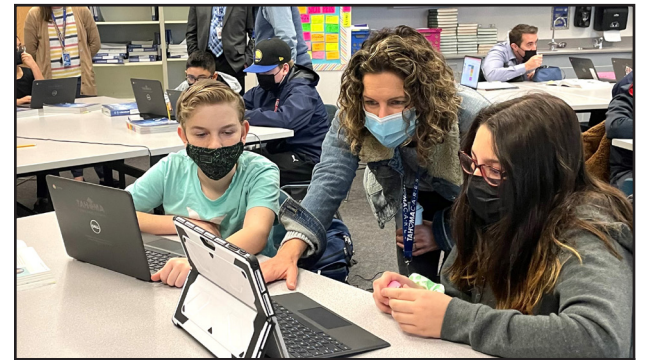
- Increased flexibility in student reading choice
- Individualized reading comprehension strategies
- Multimedia composition projects
- Digital edition supplements the course textbook
- Increased specificity in assessment data

physical textbook, students have access to an online version of the curriculum that individualizes reading strategy recommendations, areas of focus, and tips for finding success when confronted with a piece of literature that may be lengthier or more challenging than a student has been previously exposed to.

Middle-level ELA instruction at Tahoma has shifted focus away from reading literature in service of writing to focus more specifically on reading ability and comprehension. According to Brashears, the “Into Literature” curriculum is helping teachers and students rise to the occasion. He said that the previous ELA curriculum “tended to look at everything through the lens of writing, so every unit was structured around a summative writing task. There was reading involved, but it was in the service of writing.” He went on to say, “one of the reasons that a lot of middle school teachers were interested in looking at what else might be out there, curriculum-wise, was because they felt like we weren’t getting students really engaged with reading that they found interesting and compelling.”

Getting students engaged in reading material that interests them is vital in developing them into lifelong readers and lifelong learners. Instead of offering texts exclusively from the traditional canon, “Into Literature” focuses on genre-themed units, giving students a wide selection of literature to choose from. “That’s where I think this curriculum is a pretty good mix,” said Brashears. When studying the genre of horror/suspense, “many of our eighth-graders are reading fairly contemporary novels like a new version

One thing that literature has been found to do is to develop empathy. Reading about people in situations that are different from yours, but that you can relate to, can help you to develop that empathy.



Middle school students show School Board Director Haley Pendergraft how they use technology in the classroom.

of Frankenstein, but they’re also studying Poe’s ‘The Tell-Tale Heart,’ so you’ve got a real mix of the classic with the modern and hopefully in ways that are tied together thematically. Kids can see connections and be more engaged in things whether the literature is new or classic,” said Brashears. “Whether they’re reading a graphic novel adaptation of Frankenstein, or whether they’re reading ‘Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children,’ it doesn’t really matter, because they’re still able to see suspense through that.”

While the increased test scores and comprehension levels are a strong indicator that “Into Literature” is benefitting students, Brashears and staff are not discounting the positive impact that these stories can have for students’ social and emotional growth.

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For Tahoma School District, fostering a sense of belonging through the curriculum, while continuing to hold students to high expectations, will truly develop the Future Ready skills needed after graduation.

What’s YOUR Tahoma Story?



Every member of our Tahoma Family has a story to tell. For School Board President Malia Hollowell and her family, theirs started as a new Maple Valley family who was nervous to send off their kindergartner on the first day of school at Shadow Lake Elementary.

Seven years later, Malia is not only proud that her three kids are Tahoma students, she’s also supporting ALL Tahoma students, staff and families as school board president.

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/MaliasStory to hear Malia’s Tahoma Story!



BEARS IN THE WILD

Tahoma Alumni Spotlight

Mia Corbin, Pro Soccer Player



Some people are just made for those big moments. When the lights are brightest and all eyes are on you, there are those special individuals whose talent seems to elevate to a different level. If you watched Mia Corbin during her Tahoma High School days on the soccer pitch, or on the softball diamond, it was obvious that she's one of those special few.

Her time at Tahoma also set her on a path for a vibrant future. Her next stop? The University of California, Berkeley. The forward led all Cal freshmen in minutes (1,234) and made the Pac-12 Conference's All-Freshman Team. By her senior year, Corbin was a co-captain and two-time Pac-12 All-Academic Honorable Mention student.

In late February 2022, Corbin signed a professional contract with Liga Deportiva Alajuelense, a first-division soccer team in Costa Rica. It was a long journey for Corbin from Maple Valley to Costa Rica, with plenty of bumps in the road, but it's what she's been chasing for a long time. "Not many people can say that they've traveled out of the country to play soccer. I would love to eventually come back and play in the U.S., but for right now, this is exactly where I'm supposed to be."

Nik Owens, Cinematographer and Local Business Owner

Nik Owens graduated from Tahoma in 2013 after spending 4 years in the video production program, which gave him a skill set that would turn into a career and growing small business in Maple Valley. After graduating from Eastern Washington with a film degree, Owens started a run-and-gun film operation in his home town.

For Owens, the decision to set up shop in Maple Valley allowed him to keep charging forward even in the face of a pandemic. He produced video updates for the City of Maple Valley, found work locally where he could, and his company, Aperture Ocean Productions (AOP), is thriving in 2022. The growth also lets Owens do what he's most passionate about - supporting the next pack of Tahoma Bears.

With occasional guest appearances in Rick Haag's video production classes, and the bandwidth to bring on a Tahoma high schooler as a summer intern, Owens has seen firsthand the value of helping students build community connections from a young age.

"When I was that age, I wish someone had come in and told me that I could really do this professionally," he said. "Getting alumni involved and having us come back is a huge blessing. It's motivating for small business owners to come in and show kids that it's possible."



To read Mia and Nik's full stories and much more, visit tahomasd.us

A Message from Superintendent Mike Hanson

The start of spring is such a special time of year. We get a bit more sunshine each day, the flowers are blooming, and there are more opportunities for kids to get outside with friends and participate in the fun activities that create lifelong memories. It's a wonderful time for renewal – a fresh start where we take the lessons learned over cloudier days and begin new adventures.

At Tahoma, spring means so many chances for our students to showcase their talent and enthusiasm, and for the community to come out and see that dedication paying off. Throughout this school year, we've seen students meeting high expectations and having banner seasons in their athletics and extracurriculars, and many more teams and clubs are poised to finish their school year with impressive accomplishments.

At the high school level, our girls swim and dive team brought home the FIRST State Championship in program history. Boys basketball went to the

Tacoma Dome and competed for a title for the first time in a quarter century, and they earned a 6th place trophy. Bear Metal Robotics and We The People, two historically powerhouse programs, will return this spring to the highest level of competition that they missed out on over the last two years (and we know they'll bring back some hardware for the trophy case).

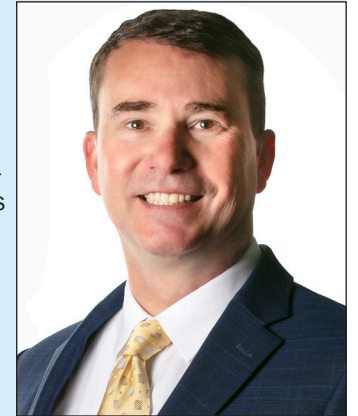
If you haven't seen a middle school theater production, you're missing out. In the fall, Maple View Middle School and Summit Trail Middle School produced separate plays. This month, they came together for a joint production of "Once Upon a Mattress" which has been a tremendous success. Athletics at middle school are also gearing up for the next wave of Tahoma Bears, so we encourage you to get out to a game this spring.

At our elementary schools, we've been excited to bring back field trips so our youngest students can get out and see more of our community. Those

experiences are so valuable and have been dearly missed. In the classroom, the recent change in COVID requirements is allowing for a richer, more fulfilling experience for our students. They can better engage with each other and staff, and school is really starting to look like school again at all grade levels.

We fully encourage families and community members to meet with staff, send us a message, pick up the phone, and attend events to get the full picture of our students' achievements. Our partnership with this community is a critical part of what makes Tahoma a top-tier district in Washington state, and your support for our world-class students will only make their Tahoma experience better.

Mike Hanson



"We the People" Teaches THS Students Compromise through Competition



In Gretchen Wulfig's classroom on the third floor of Tahoma High School, the students in her "AP Government: We the People" course are arguing, disagreeing, and questioning *everything*. Because if they don't, they won't achieve their goal of being a top-10 We the People team in the nation.

We the People is a program where students bring strong opinions and make even stronger arguments. They are divided into six groups of three, each with their own task, and are oftentimes made up of students with vastly different political perspectives.

So how does it all work, and what's the point? Let's back up a bit.

"Tahoma High School requires students to take a civics class their senior year," said Wulfig. "You can choose between AP Government, AP Government: 'We the People' and American Government: Global Issues." "We the People allows you to dive deeper into the curriculum, explore your passions about systems of government, the foundation of government, how the government works in modern day, and apply it through a more competitive aspect at the district, state and national level," said senior Aiden Abadilla.

Each group is given a question about government as it pertains to their "unit," and it's their job to form a four-minute argument based on that prompt.

The six units are: philosophy and the foundations of government, founding fathers and the foundations of government, voting rights, branches of government, the Bill of Rights and current events.

Each unit is given a score, and a cumulative team score earns your school a title, like

the State Championship that Tahoma won this spring. Now the team is gearing up for Nationals in Washington D.C. next month.

It'll be Tahoma's return to D.C. for the first time since 2019. In 2020, the team was weeks away from the big day when the pandemic ruined their plans.

It's a historically dominant program at Tahoma, but Wulfig says this team's unique high school experience has them more ready than ever.

"They have been through this high school at every stage of the pandemic," she said. "They had a normal freshman year, and their sophomore year is when we pulled the plug in March. They're flexible, they're tenacious, and they don't take anything for granted."

We the People is a demanding months-long process of reading government history and case law, with very little time actually competing.

"You are spending months on basically 12 minutes of speaking," Senior Olivia Andrews said. "You're memorizing a bunch of stuff and learning all these terms – but you want to do that. If you're in this class, you're in here to try and get to Nationals and do the best that you can."

And to be the best, you have to compromise with the rest. Wulfig's class is filled with students who have strong political opinions, and who have the training to research and defend those opinions. There are students who are on opposite ends of the political spectrum. Regardless, students need to find common ground and work together to form a flawless four-minute argument that they can all passionately defend.

"Our unit creates good civil dis-

course," said senior Kylie Kortenkamp.

"There isn't one true answer to a lot of our questions, so we have to talk about it. It allows us to have conversations that other people don't really have, because they think they're right and say, 'I don't want to talk to you if you don't have the same opinion as me.' But we have to talk about it to come to some sort of consensus."

Political dialogue can be tricky, especially in a K-12 environment, and Wulfig is fully aware. She sees a need for programs like We The People, but how teachers approach the curriculum is crucial.

"It's critical that teachers stick to what happened," she said. "Let's discover together what happened, and then you decide what you think about that. Talk to your family about things. But to ignore history would be a huge error."

At the end of the day, We the People is creating a space for discourse and collaboration, and Wulfig is molding better students and citizens in the process.

"I'm not teaching students what to think. I'm just teaching them to think."



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