



HOOD CANAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT #404







ROOTED IN NATURE

HOOD CANAL'S OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS TRANSFORMS LEARNING

DR. LANCE GIBBON
HOOD CANAL SUPERINTENDENT
PHOTOS BY STAFF & VOLUNTEERS



At Hood Canal School, students don't just learn about nature—they live it. The forest becomes a classroom, rivers turn into science labs, and trails are pathways to discovery. Throughout the school, a vibrant network of outdoor education programs is transforming what learning looks like, blending science, culture, and stewardship into experiences that leave a lasting imprint.

It's a bold vision: connect students deeply to their place, nurturing curiosity, resilience, and a sense of responsibility. Thanks to dedicated educators and powerful community partnerships, that vision is flourishing.

BOOTS. PUSHING BOUNDARIES. BUILDING CONFIDENCE

At the heart of this effort is BOOTS—Building Opportunities Through School—a program with a 25-year legacy of immersing students in the natural world. What started as a middle school adventure has grown into a full K-8 model, offering 325 students a progressive pathway of out-

door learning through four distinct programs: BOOTS, BYRDS, Jr. BOOTS, and ROOTS. Led by outdoor educator Toby Syrett, BOOTS focuses on teamwork, leadership, and personal growth through outdoor challenges. Activities include wilderness backpacking, mountaineering, overnight trips, team-building initiatives, and even vocational skill modules.

This spring, middle schoolers shouldered backpacks and tackled a rugged ten-mile trek into the Skokomish South Fork, braving rain and tough terrain. Outfitted with new gear, they not only stayed dry—they thrived.

"These experiences build confidence," says Syrett. "Kids realize their own strength—and that pride carries over into everything they do." He's witnessed powerful transformations: "I had seventh graders who struggled in class, but outside! They step up—dividing tasks, managing equipment. I thought, are these the same kid?"

Closer to campus, BOOTS students recently built a new outdoor classroom, transforming a fallen cottonwood and cedar logs into a national-park-style learning space. From clearing trails to shaping benches, students led the way—embodying stewardship in action.



knee-deep in wetlands or sketching plants; staff are gaining confidence and tools to integrate the outdoors into every subject.

LOOKING AHEAD

As these programs continue to evolve, so does the district's vision: expanding Skokomish cultural connections, deepening field experiences, and growing outdoor learning spaces on campus.

"The beauty of these programs is that they teach so much more than facts," says Strong. "They teach kids how to observe, how to work together, how to care for the world around them—and how to find their place in it."

At Hood Canal, outdoor learning isn't an add-on—it's a way of life, shaping students who are curious, capable, and deeply connected to the land they call home.



"OUR KINDERS WERE SO PROUD TO BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER, THEY'RE LEARNING EARLY THAT CARING FOR THE EARTH IS SOMETHING WE DO."









**\$50,000
Donation for
Outdoor
Education
including
ROOTS**













2023-24 Washington State Recognized School

The Washington State Board of Education
Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight & Accountability Committee
The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

HOOD CANAL SCHOOL

Congratulations!





Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

CONGRATULATIONS!
HOOD CANAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT

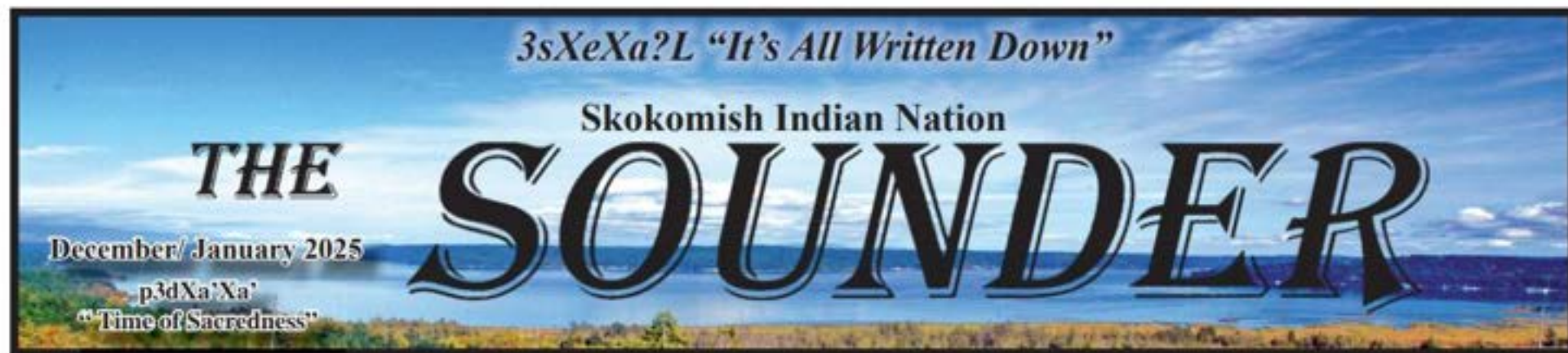
2026 STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S AWARD FOR
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE *for* **PROGRESS**



Hood Canal School District

ESSER ATTENDANCE & REENGAGEMENT EVALUATION CASE STUDY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OSPI)



HOOD CANAL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS EXCEL IN STATE TESTS, GAINING SKILLS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Strong relationships and engaging programs drive student growth and confidence at Hood Canal School.

“We realized that motivation is key—if students don’t see the value in doing well, they won’t put in the effort. We help them see they’re capable and that their hard work matters.”

— Dr. Suzanne Close

SKOKOMISH, WA, UNITED STATES, November 8, 2024 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Middle school students at Hood Canal School have achieved remarkable success, surpassing state averages in four out of five Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) categories and outperforming nearly all neighboring districts.

This milestone reflects the dedication



Hood Canal Middle School students pause during a hike to take in the view of the Olympic Mountains, building teamwork and resilience outside the classroom

Hood Canal’s middle school team of four teachers works with the same group of students over two years.

Science teacher Heather Akiyama highlighted the team’s collaborative spirit: “We meet students where they

School District, the middle school team emphasizes readiness as a core goal. “We’re here to set our students up for success in high school and beyond,” Dr. Gibbon said. “The skills they’re gaining—both academically and personally—are tools they’ll carry forward.”

Teachers have instilled a strong sense of purpose in students around giving their best effort on state assessments. “We realized that motivation is key—if students don’t see the value in doing well, they won’t put in the effort,” said Dr. Suzanne Close. “We help them see they’re capable and that their hard work matters.”

The school’s success in reducing chronic absenteeism by half has further boosted achievement. “When students



\$25,000 Music Donation

24 HOUR CHRISTMAS TELETHON

“TURNING HUMBUGS INTO HOPE”



”

\$26,000

for Hood Canal
Families!





HOOD CANAL SCHOOL

ADOPT A Pet

\$298.50

Two hundred ninety-eight dollars & 50/100

DOLLARS

for Pet health and supplies

Student
Signatures

Solena
Jenna L
Abraham
Enmanuel
Caleb

Teacher
Kylee
Robert
[Signature]













\$20,000 Farm to School Grant





2025 Washington State Education Support Professional of the Year



ESD 113 Names 2025 Regional Classified School Employee of the Year

Andi Bloomfield elevates education through real-world experiences at Hood Canal.

[TUMWATER, WA] ESD 113 has named Andi Bloomfield its 2025 Regional Classified School Employee of the Year. Bloomfield is a Student Support Specialist in the Hood Canal School District.





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By Hood Canal School District · Nov 7, 2024 · 0



Anacortes Football Championship



WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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Best school website designs in 2024 and what to learn
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2025 National Award
Winner

HOOD CANAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT





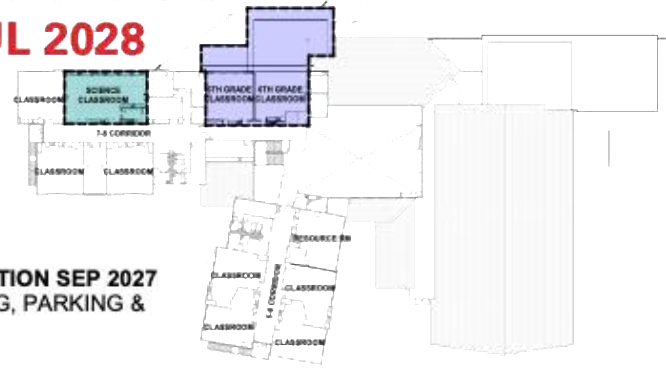
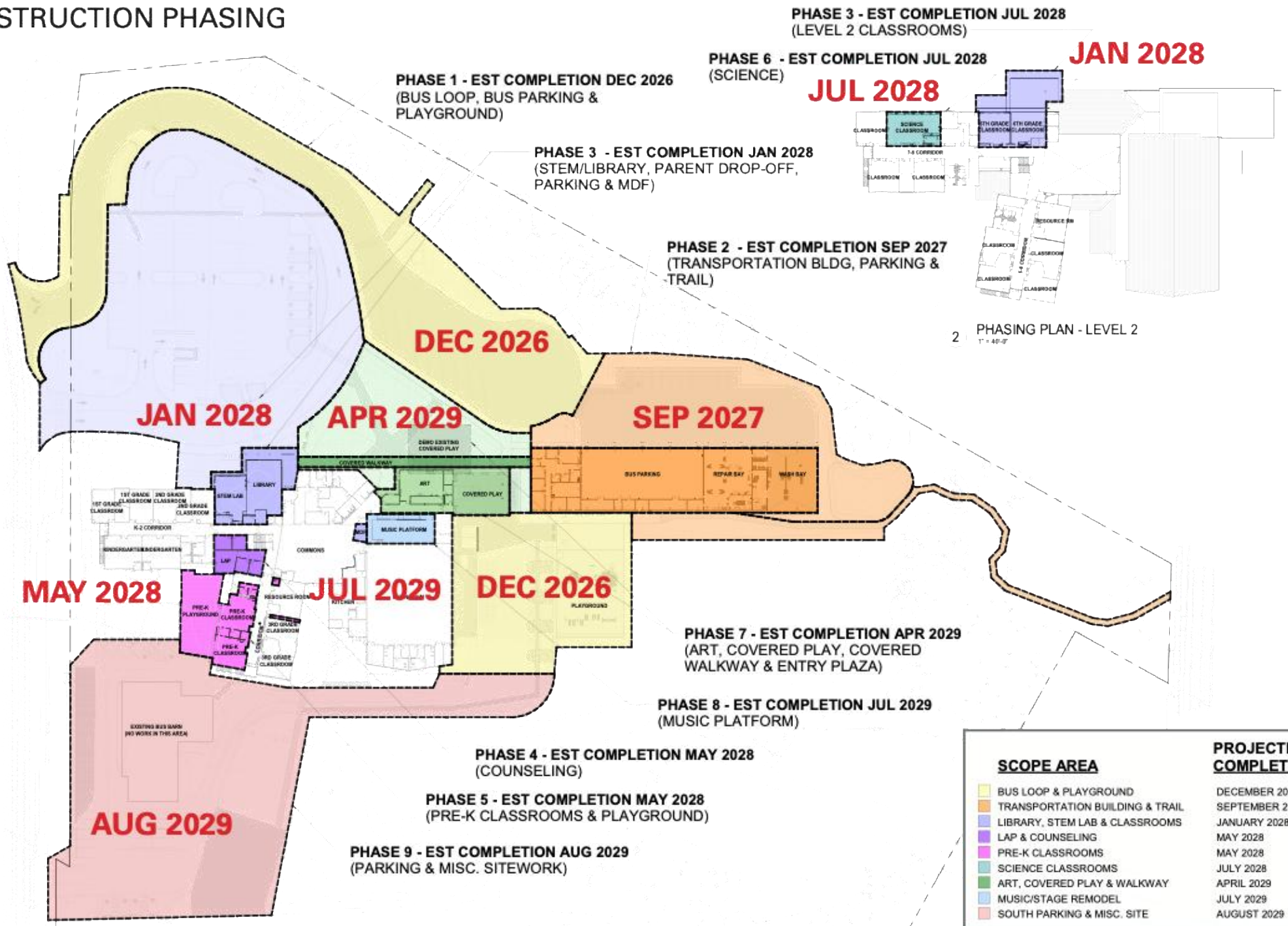








CONSTRUCTION PHASING



2 PHASING PLAN - LEVEL 2
1" = 40'-0"

SCOPE AREA	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE
BUS LOOP & PLAYGROUND	DECEMBER 2026
TRANSPORTATION BUILDING & TRAIL	SEPTEMBER 2027
LIBRARY, STEM LAB & CLASSROOMS	JANUARY 2028
LAP & COUNSELING	MAY 2028
PRE-K CLASSROOMS	MAY 2028
SCIENCE CLASSROOMS	JULY 2028
ART, COVERED PLAY & WALKWAY	APRIL 2029
MUSIC/STAGE REMODEL	JULY 2029
SOUTH PARKING & MISC. SITE	AUGUST 2029



Dollars and Sense

1. NEW Capital Levy	\$16,000,000
2. Co-op State Match	\$ 6,500,000
3. ADA Grant (award)	\$ 150,000
4. Healthy Kids Grant (award)	\$ 200,000
5. Tribe Water Tie-in (savings)	\$ 300,000
6. Tribe Lighted Trail (savings)	\$ 75,000



THANK YOU!

