



Federal Way
Public Schools

News Release

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Thomas Jefferson High School Named One of Top 1,500 High Schools in Nation by Newsweek

Thomas Jefferson High School is the first high school in Federal Way Public Schools to be named to Newsweek's list of the top 1,500 high schools in the nation. The national newsmagazine's website lists Thomas Jefferson among 31 high schools in Washington state to make their annual list.

According to [the Newsweek article](#), public schools are ranked according to a formula that takes the number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and/or Cambridge tests taken by all students at a school in 2008, and divides that by the number of graduating seniors. All of the schools on the Newsweek list have an index of at least 1.000; they are in the top six percent of public schools measured this way.

Ranked at number 14 in the state and number 908 nationwide, Thomas Jefferson placed among perennial high achievers such as Mercer Island, Newport and Interlake high schools. It is one of only six schools in the Washington state group to have a subsidized (free and reduced) lunch rate over 30%.

Thomas Jefferson is the only high school in the district to offer the International Baccalaureate Program; in the current school year, 426 students took at least one IB class. "We have one of the finest and most popular IB programs in the state," Principal Mark Marshall said. "Since the program's inception at Thomas Jefferson High School, it has increased the educational opportunities for all of our students. This recognition shows that we are reaping the rewards of a lot of hard work!"

Why Is Test Participation Important?

Research conducted by the district's [Equity and Achievement office](#) in 2001 confirmed that one of the issues impacting minority students' acceptance into college was that they lacked a history of taking Advanced Placement and other college preparatory classes successfully.

Further investigation showed that they often hadn't taken challenging classes in middle school and in their 9th and 10th grade years, which would have prepared them for the rigors of Advanced Placement classes in 11th and 12th grade and college afterward. To increase the number of minority students taking AP level classes successfully, the district set out to prepare and encourage students of all backgrounds to take college preparatory programs.

This included offering pre-International Baccalaureate classes for 9th and 10th grade students at Thomas Jefferson, pre-Advanced Placement classes at the middle and high schools, and Cambridge curriculum at several feeder elementary and middle schools in preparation for the Cambridge Preparatory Program at Federal Way High School.

Superintendent Tom Murphy notes, “The work at Thomas Jefferson is reflective of the work across the district, connecting all students with rigorous course work. I am proud that the staff at Thomas Jefferson has had such success with their efforts and that this success is garnering national recognition.”

Note: *Since we first published this story on the district website, Newsweek has fine-tuned their data and list of top 1,500 schools. The specific rankings have changed slightly as some schools were added and others were removed from the list of Washington schools in the top 1,500. Because Newsweek does not notify districts directly of changes in the rankings, readers should go to [Newsweek's website](#) for the most current rankings.*