



LYNDEN

SCHOOL DISTRICT

TRADITION + PRIDE + EXCELLENCE



Lynden Schools' Home Connect program allows a flexible learning environment, which can include plenty of unique opportunities.

Home Connect a Unique Pathway

Families gain flexibility in learning styles, environment with educational offering from Lynden Schools

Lynden Schools responded to families during the pandemic, developing unique strategies for ensuring families connected with certified teachers at their personal comfort level. For some, that included Lynden being one of the first public schools in the state to return to in-person learning. For others, that meant the retooling of Home Connect, a program still thriving with nearly 150 students partnering with the school in a flexible, customizable program that connects students to certified teachers.

Home Connect is a stand-alone program under the purview of Lynden Academy where parents serve as the primary educator, home—or wherever home happens to be—is the classroom and certified Lynden teachers partner with families as a resource and support with weekly checks.

"During the pandemic, there were a greater number of families more interested in the academic pathways of their children," says David VanderYacht, Lynden Schools superintendent. "There was just this range of interests, so we discovered our best path forward was to provide as many options for families to choose from."

That spirit of providing flexible options has only grown.

"I look at this from a family's perspective," says Marj Hendricks, one of the two Home Connect certified teachers, along with Lona Smit, who each have spent nearly 30 years as a classroom teacher at Lynden Schools. "This is such a great opportunity for them no matter their situation. There are a lot of reasons why they are a part of Home Connect and it gives them such a great option they wouldn't otherwise have. I meet with parents who are so thankful they have

Giving Lynden Families Options

this opportunity."

The Purdy family is just one example, with three students participating, ranging from seventh grade to a junior. "We were drawn to the Home Connect program during COVID because it allowed us to take control of our three kids' learning in a time with much uncertainty and we wanted to be able to establish a routine and stick with it," says Allison Purdy, the students' mother. "It also



Danny working through a hands-on unit in Home Connect.

provided us with the ability to cater to each child's learning style with the support of a teacher and provided a transcript for the high school years. The program is also fantastic in providing us with access to resources to round out our curriculum."

Purdy says that during Home Connect, Danny, now a junior, has grown into enjoying math and science thanks to finding a curriculum that met his learning style, something she worked with Lynden Home Connect teachers to discover. Ethan, a freshman, is able to focus on the chance to build, create and explore, which fits his learning style. If there's a subject that is more difficult, he can take it at his own pace.

"Home Connect is about the quality of learning and not about the quantity," Purdy says. "If he completes everything early, he has more time to build or create something, go mountain biking or play video games with friends."

For Ava, a seventh grader, by focusing her schoolwork into a concentrated time, she has more opportunity to explore her love of horses and be in the horse barn.

"It allows a flexibility the traditional setting doesn't allow for," Smit says. "We have students who travel and find ways to integrate those experience with what they are learning in their classes. Their attendance isn't impacted if they are still learning on the road and showing evidence of the learning."

The practical set-up has the parents as the lead educators, and the

certified teachers work with families to go over questions, problems or curriculum. The teachers check in with each student weekly, holding the students accountable for learning progress.

Open to students in kindergarten through high school, students who graduate from the Home Connect program earn a diploma through Lynden Academy. Students can also remain involved in the district's extra-curricular activities.

Freedom in curriculum is a major draw. The teachers work with families to select a curriculum tailored to a student's needs. If a family wants a faith-based option, they can select that if they purchase it on their own. "If a high schooler starts in a language arts program and it is not a good fit for a variety reasons, just something that isn't helping them grow as a learner, we can try other types until we find one that fits," Smit says.

The Van Mersbergen family started in Home Connect for certainty in schooling during the pandemic while staying connected to Lynden. They've remained for the flexibility. With three of the family's four students in Home Connect (the youngest, a third grader, attends Isom Elementary), each has a different reason to stay focused on their work to free them for other interests, whether to get a part-time job or engage in hobbies.

"If they stay focused, they will be done quicker, allowing them more time for other interests," says Stacy Van Mersebergen, the students' mother. "In a fast-paced world, having our kids doing school at home has allowed more time for family conversations and connection. I feel like the kids are less rushed, which ultimately affects their stress levels and mental health."

Van Mersbergen says that while they've had a tremendous experience within Lynden Schools, experiencing amazing teachers, the choice of Home Connect is about their own kids. "While we do study all the core subjects and are held to the same graduation credit and course requirements as the rest of the district, we have much flexibility in the curriculums we choose, as well as in their electives," Van Mersbergen says. "We can choose curriculum that works with each child's particular learning style and interests."

The family also stays fully connected to the district. Ellie, a senior, participates in school activities and dances, including playing on the tennis team, and Lily, a sophomore, recently wrapped her role in the spring's *Fiddler on the Roof* performance.

Home Connect flexibility happens on a macro level, but also a micro level. Hendricks had one family spend a day at an aquarium, completing a sea life unit before they went. Another traveled to Disneyland and did an entire unit on engineering by looking at amusement park rides as part of their experience. Smit says she works with a family who is training their children to be pilots, so they fly planes and integrate that into their learning. One special education student helps her family raise chickens and ducks, an "awesome" experience for her in a hands-on setting.

One highly capable seventh grader in the program recently finished a calculus course at Arizona State University while another family has a sixth grader working through a Johns Hopkins physics course.

"It really is about what is best for each child," Van Mersbergen says, "and that can change year to year."

Students add STEAM to Weekly Lineup

A group of Bernice Vossbeck Elementary students gathered around batteries, hand cranks, miniature light bulbs and conductors. It was electricity in action (and electric to see the looks on their faces when they figured it out). Just a table away, another small group crafted a ramp with obstacles for a small marble-like ball to plow through. And that's all while a different set of students used rubber bands to store up energy and get their cup-and-straw concoctions scooting across the floor.

It was just another day in STEAM class.

STEAM education—science, technology, engineering, art and math—has become a regular part of the curriculum across all three elementary schools at Lynden Schools, allowing dedicated STEAM teachers (not that unlike a music or physical education teacher) to connect weekly with every single student in the building.

"They love the hands-on," says Leanne VanHulzen, BVE STEAM teacher and a classroom teacher for nearly 30 years. "When I can get all the materials out and they can build and create, they love it. Teachers tell me they love it, and they all seem to love coming."

New for the 2022-23 school year, the focus on STEAM offers teachers an opportunity to really get kids understanding the many elements of STEAM. "I would say I paint with a pretty broad brush," VanHulzen says about the content. "Every student can be excited about science, curious about science."

Using the Mystery Doug curriculum, each grade level has different activities and content tied to national standards. Often a STEAM class starts with a five-minute video, a discussion of the objective of the day and then a hands-on activity or experiment.



BVE students working on STEAM activities.

Along with VanHulzen at BVE, Brandon Goodale at Fisher and Laura Sebastiani at Isom form the STEAM team for the district, working together to go over lessons and strategies.

The variety in content not only spans the school year but ranges across grades levels. That also adds an extra element of students getting excited about what's in front of them for future years.

"I like they all get at least a little bit of science and the vocabulary," VanHulzen says. "We can give them a background and a joy. Science is not a scary word, but a fun word. We have been teaching them how many jobs now come from STEAM and we talk about

that all the time. They have to be curious, ask questions, make mistakes and learn how to fail. It is hard to fail and try again."

Often students explore a variety of examples—such as in the above energy curriculum example—by rotating through action stations. An upcoming unit in STEAM features mini-Indy cars, an opportunity to merge technology into the mix. Already this year students have learned about electricity, created cornmeal canyons to learn about landslides and investigated chemical reactions, mixing baking soda with vinegar to blow up plastic bags. "That was pretty cool," VanHulzen says. "It is giving them a taste of everything, and every grade is different so that is really nice."

The benefits of STEAM run across multiple demographics of students. VanHulzen says students who struggle with language or just enjoy the hands-on opportunity all have an equitable opportunity to explore. And science is about teamwork, really forcing the kids to learn to work together while trying different ideas.

"I love watching kids explore with science," VanHulzen says. "You can see the light bulb going on with the hands-on activities."



Creating Connections at Lynden

Activities, clubs and athletics provide diversity of opportunity

State championship sports teams get plenty of fanfare, but what has Lynden School excited is that roughly 70% of all Lynden High School students are involved in either an activity, after-school club or program or athletics. That's a number that helps create connection within the school and a connection that leads to better engagement with academics.

The diversity of those opportunities abounds. Lynden High has seen participation skyrocket in activities, athletics and clubs since the pandemic, now with record-setting numbers across the board. From FFA to FBLA and athletics to drama or even band to Knowledge Bowl and Impact Club to Teen Court. There's an option for interest levels of all sorts.

"We are ahead here in engaging students," says Mike McKee, LHS athletic director and ASB supervisor. "We are helping students make connections and get together with like-minded peers with similar interests."

Lynden is set up with a variety of ways to get involved. An activity period is built into each Wednesday's class schedule, giving a chance for students to connect with others with similar interests. Sometimes those activities turn into full-blown after-school clubs.

Some of the largest are FFA, FBLA and Knowledge Bowl. But that's not all. The Lynden Drama program routinely has about 75 students involved in the task of putting on the spring musical. The Lynden High Pep Band has ballooned in size and scope, most



Above: The LHS band at the state basketball tournament. Below: The LHS performance of Fiddler on the Roof (photo courtesy Bill Helm)

recently with about 65 students involved. Athletics has taken off, with 353 students participating in spring sports alone at Lynden in 2023. While the athletic numbers are tough to quantify exactly because some students participate in more than one season of sports, 314 students participated in the fall, 124 in the winter and 353 this spring.

"It is a lot," McKee says about the participation numbers. "When you start pulling it out, I look at the total number of students involved in our activities and clubs, and the number includes a few more students in activities than sports. We have well over 50% of our population, likely closer to 70%, involved in something that was beyond attending school."

McKee says that at every turn, whether athletics or

otherwise, the coaches, teachers and leaders are working to be the best at what they're involved in. Still, the real goal is students "making connections and being part of something bigger than themselves, that is by far the biggest part of what we do."

Having a mix of competitive options and non-competitive choices ensures more students find a path fit for them. And hosting an activity period during the school day is critical to help some students who otherwise couldn't participate because of after-school transportation issues. "Trying to get them with others with like interests gives them a better chance to create friendships," McKee says. "When students want to be a part of these clubs and activities, they are excited to go to school. With the right mindset, that's where the magic happens. It is very wise to make it a priority for our students to make connections."

Connections happen across clubs. FFA has nearly 90 students involved in it this year. "I think it is the ability to be involved in something," John Grubbs, FFA advisor, says about the interest. "We really like to develop



Clubs, Activities & Athletics Build Opportunity

their speaking skills and set them up for success to communicate in the real world by using contests and other activities. It gives them a good foundation for after high school and being comfortable in front of people."

Jordan VanderVeen, LHS teacher and lead for Knowledge Bowl and Honor's Society, says the roughly 20 students he took to the Knowledge Bowl District Playoffs gave students "an exciting opportunity to display their knowledge in a fast-paced team-oriented competitive environment," an added wrinkle they wouldn't have otherwise had just in a regular academic day. "The National Honor Society signifies more than achieving good grades," says LHS senior Sierra Wyant, "it provides opportunities for students who want to give back to their community. From tutoring at both LHS and LMS to involvement in our local retirement homes, we have the opportunity serve our community while also developing important leadership skills and personal growth. It is an honor to be a part of an organization that places great value on service and makes a difference in the lives of others."

Trevor Galligan, band director, says band offers students to "contribute to the school culture with their varsity-level musicianship. Being in band also teaches students strong character skills as they work together to create a perfect product."

The participation is growing at Lynden Middle School too. "I believe participating in clubs, activities and sports at school helps students get connected to school and create a sense of belonging," says Cyndi Selcho, LMS assistant principal. "When students feel like they belong, they take pride in their school and enjoy being part of something greater than themselves. Simply put, students who enjoy

coming to school come to school, and therefore do better in school."

At LMS, clubs include Woodshop Club, Young Author's Club, Jazz Band, Glee Club, Drama Club and Art Club. Over half of the LMS students participate in at least one club or sport over the school year.

Selcho says her time in Lynden and the connections she created there is a major reason she's involved in the district now. "One of the best parts of my job is working with students to create opportunities for them to get connected to each other and their school community," she says. "It is a big reason why I returned to work in the district. I will never forget my experience of being a Lynden Lion and now I get to share that feeling of belonging with my students."



The Lynden football team won a second straight 2A state title this past fall, as did the boys basketball team this winter. The girls soccer team captured the program's first district title and state tourney win.

Lynden Invites Families to Join ParentSquare

As part of Lynden Schools' effort to give families more control over school-to-home communications, the district rolled out ParentSquare in January 2023. This gives families one place to send and receive communications with their student's school and teachers.

Beginning in January, the district enabled ParentSquare and started sending all district-level and weekly school newsletters through the service.

Available via a smartphone app or a desktop, ParentSquare allows families to create their own account and set a host of preferences on how they choose to communicate with the schools. Families can

select how to receive messages—whether via email, text or push notifications—how often to receive messages, what languages and more. To set their preferences, parents can create an account using the email address the district has on file.

"We believe using ParentSquare will make communication between home and school easier to navigate and gives families more control over how they communicate with their school," says David VanderYacht, superintendent. "We plan to continue rolling out new opportunities within ParentSquare as families and staff get better acquainted with its abilities."

The district's launching of ParentSquare

starts first with basic communication from the district and school offices, but the goal is to have classroom teachers using the new platform for communication by fall 2023.

"This is a new tool for us, and it offers a wealth of ways to connect the classroom to the home," he says, "but this is still new so will take some time to get everyone fully up to speed on the capabilities. We are encouraged by the potential and are confident this new tool will help provide a more streamlined and efficient means of communication to our families and staff."

Please contact your school office if you have questions about registering your ParentSquare account.

Register Now for All Grades at Lynden

Families can register for the 2023-24 school year online at lynden.wednet.edu/parents-students/enrollment

Helpful tips for student enrollment:

- Families with a child already enrolled in Lynden Schools can log in to Skyward Family Access and go to "New Student Enrollment" to register an additional student.

- Follow the steps to complete student's paperwork. The application will be submitted to your neighborhood school according to district boundaries.

- An email confirmation and additional enrollment details from your neighborhood school will be sent directly to your email address.

- If you do not have email, please phone neighborhood school for further details.

- Lynden Academy requires a new family consult with Principal Ellie Meenk prior to beginning the registration process.

- Families without computer access can visit their neighborhood school or the district office (during the summer) to register their child on a laptop.

Paperwork needed for registration:

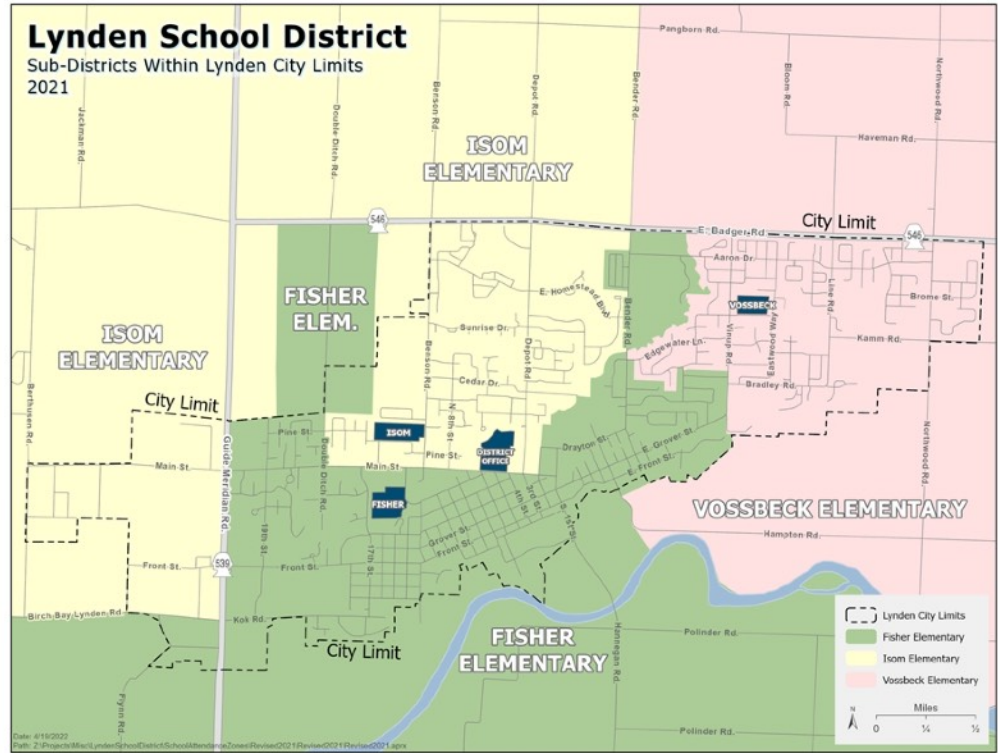
- Child's birth certificate or passport documentation.
- Current proof of residency (utility bill, rental agreement, homeowner's policy).
- Certificate of immunization and health history.
- Parenting plan/court order, if applicable.
- Proof of guardianship if student is living with an adult other than the parent.

Information on Preschool:

The Preschool Program is part of the District's Special Education Program which serves preschool children with developmental delays, as well as their typically developing peers. Children ages 3 to 5 (not eligible for kindergarten) will participate in an enriched learning environment focused on developing communication, social, self-help, motor, thinking skills, and Kindergarten readiness. For more information or to enroll, please contact our registrar

Key Registration Contacts:

- Lynden Pre-School: Linda Wiles, WilesL@lynden.wednet.edu, 360-354-4443 ext. 3426
- Isom Elementary School: Megan Mather, MatherM@lynden.wednet.edu, 360-354-1992, ext. 1301
- Bernice Vossbeck Elementary School: Kristen Brown, BrownK@lynden.wednet.edu, 360-354-0488, ext. 1102
- Fisher Elementary School: Wendy Kuplent, KuplentW@lynden.wednet.edu, 360-354-42191, ext. 1203
- Lynden Middle School: Shelli Joss, JossSh@lynden.wednet.edu
- Lynden High School: Lisa Wilde, WildeL@lynden.wednet.edu, 360-354-4401, ext. 3218
- Lynden Academy: Wendy Neff, NeffW@lynden.wednet.edu, 360-354-6675



Linda Wiles at 360.354.4443 ext. 3426 or email WilesL@lynden.wednet.edu.

Information on Transitional Kindergarten:

Please view the information on page 8 for more details about Lynden's Launch TK program.

Transfer Request Info:

New students are assigned to their attendance area school based on home address.

If you live outside the Lynden School District boundaries, please go to <https://lynden.wednet.edu/parents-students/forms/> to complete the Choice In Non-Resident Transfer Form and return it to the district office at 516 Main St. The request form should include all required documents noted above as well as any special education and/or health plans. Approval of transfer requests will depend on space available.



Pathways to Graduation Full of Options

Lynden High School embraced career and technical education (CTE) well before the state realized its importance as part of graduation plans. And now Lynden is once again ahead of the state, spearheading new CTE pathways that give Lynden students innovative ways to learn about careers while fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

The state has three main avenues high school students can follow to fulfill graduation requirements. The most common—and most traditional—features college preparation by passing SBA tests to show proficiency in English and math. A second is a military direction, allowing students to take the ASVAB placement test to see if their score meets the cut level for the branch of Armed Forces they choose. The third route is through CTE.

Lynden serves students in all three, has ample opportunity for the college-bound students via College in the High School classes, AP classes and honors classes, but is well ahead of other schools its size and larger (and especially ahead of smaller schools) with a diverse

At Lynden, those CTE pathways include woodworking, welding and fabrication, IT, education, culinary and medical. Expect more in the coming years.

"In some cases, we even have multiple course pathways within a particular program area," Freeman says. "There are different ways students can follow their passions and meet graduation requirements."

As Lynden embraces CTE, Freeman says they want to intentionally offer options. "We are going to do things by design, not by default," he says. This means, Lynden plans to design even more CTE pathways and is already working with the state to craft more creative options. For example, if a student has an entrepreneurial passion in the culinary world, Freeman says they'd like a student to be able to merge Lynden's culinary and business classes together for a specifically designed pathway.

"If this student wants to own a restaurant, they will need to know how to cook and operate the business," Freeman says. "Those things can be accomplished at our school."

Three of those existing pathways also include opportunities for students to work with real-world providers. The woodworking pathway features a partnership with Lynden Door that has LHS students attending classes at the company's Technic Training Center site. The Education pathway includes LHS students spending sixth period dispersing across the district's three elementary schools for internships, and the medical pathway features students conducting internships with local healthcare providers.

Pathway design takes forward thinking. Counselors are having conversations with students and giving in-classroom presentations on the options, encouraging students to start planning by their sophomore year to create a pathway that meets their interests. "We want to be forward thinking and give the students a vision," Freeman says.

When teachers know the specific interests of students in their classes, they can also mold curriculum to better serve those interests.

Freeman says that with the state realizing the importance of CTE and the skills learned through CTE classes, districts across the state

are working to add more CTE back into their school. "We never lost them," he says. "We actually grew them and now they are being recognized by the state."



LHS students on an Education Pathway toward graduation intern at Lynden elementary schools.

CTE offering.

"Small schools tend to only offer one or two pathways in the CTE realm and that pushes students back to the college or military route," says Ian Freeman, LHS principal. "That is where we are different. We have lots of different offerings."

Traditionally, schools—and the state—forced all students through the narrow hole of college-bound testing, even if students had passions, skills or abilities to be successful in other places. Recent changes to state graduation requirements opened the door for CTE pathways, allowing students to take a set number of CTE classes in a specific pathway, combined with moving toward a certification, to serve as a graduation requirement.

Board of Directors

CJ Costanti
David Vis
Tonya Hickman
Ken Owsley
Cindy Petersen

Contact Info

516 Main Street
Lynden, WA 98264
360-354-4443
lynden.wednet.edu

Superintendent

David VanderYacht

****ECRWSS*****
POSTAL CUSTOMER
BOX HOLDER

Launch TK Program Proving a Success



The Launch TK Program offers an opportunity for young students to get an early start on learning what life in kindergarten will be like.

The first full year of Lynden Schools' Launch Transitional Kindergarten program geared toward helping young students develop academic skills has already proven a success.

Known as Launch TK, the program offers a free, full day transitional kindergarten program for children who will turn 4 before the end of August. The program, located at all three elementary school buildings in the district, focuses on basic academic and social skills to help qualifying students get a jump start toward success in school.

But it's much more than about a leg-up on academic skills.

"We are increasing confidence, providing opportunities for self-regulation, empathy and problem-solving, as well as increasing the opportunities for early intervention to our children who may be at

risk in making a smooth transition to kindergarten," says Megan Hubner, Lynden Schools early childhood education specialist.

"The energy in the Launch classrooms can only be matched by the excitement of the students," Hubner says. "The play-based learning model integrates letters, numbers, art, music and so much more to keep our busy learners engaged throughout the day."

Lynden was awarded a grant to fund the program in spring 2022, allowing Launch TK to kick off in fall 2022. Students must reside within the district boundaries and are accepted into the program based on financial, academic or social-emotional need. Visit the early learning section on the district's website to learn more or apply for the fall 2023 program.