



presents an invitation to apply
for the position of

SUPERINTENDENT

Thorp School District
Thorp, Washington



Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow



Thorp, Washington *A Community with Character*

Nestled at the western edge of the beautiful Kittitas Valley, Thorp offers a distinctive blend of small-town community, agricultural heritage, and outdoor adventure. Located just eight miles northwest of Ellensburg and approximately 100 miles east of Seattle, Thorp provides the opportunity to enjoy the pace and personal connections of a rural community while remaining within easy reach of the amenities, cultural opportunities, and higher education resources of Central Washington. Here, the forests of the Cascade Range transition into open farmland, cattle ranches, and fields of timothy hay, alfalfa, fruits, and vegetables. With four distinct seasons, abundant sunshine, and the Yakima River nearby, Thorp is an appealing place for those who value the outdoors, wide-open spaces, and a strong sense of place.

Thorp's history is an important part of its identity, but the community's character is found in the people who continue to invest in it. The historic Thorp Mill, built in the early 1880s and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, stands as a reminder of the community's agricultural and entrepreneurial roots. Restored through the determination of residents, the

mill now serves as both a historical site and a gathering place. Annual traditions such as Thorp Community Day bring residents together for a pancake breakfast, parade, fall market, carnival, live music, and activities celebrating the community and its agricultural heritage. The Thorp Fruit & Antique Mall, historic buildings, community spaces, and surrounding farmland add to the area's distinctive small-town personality.

For those who enjoy an active lifestyle, Thorp's location provides remarkable access to Central Washington's recreational opportunities. The Yakima River offers fishing, floating, and kayaking, while the nearby Cascade foothills and Wenatchee National Forest provide opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, hunting, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and exploring.

Thorp also benefits from its proximity to **Central Washington University**, creating opportunities that extend well beyond recreation. The university brings an abundance of cultural, educational, and athletic events within easy reach of the community, providing residents and families with opportunities to enjoy performances, lectures, activities, and collegiate athletics throughout the year. Just as importantly, the district can build meaningful relationships with the university, creating connections that can support professional learning, student opportunities, and the recruitment and retention of outstanding educators and staff.

This relationship with higher education can be an important asset for a school district seeking to attract talented professionals who want to live and work in a community that offers both small-town connection and access to broader educational and cultural resources. With Ellensburg nearby and Interstate 90 providing convenient access west toward the Seattle region and east toward Central Washington and beyond, Thorp offers an appealing balance of accessibility and community. For a leader seeking a community where relationships matter, where the school is an important part of community life, and where there is room to make a meaningful difference, Thorp offers a rare combination of small-town connection, natural beauty, history, educational opportunity, and possibility.

For more information about the Thorp community visit:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorp,_Washington



Thorp School District *Small by Size, Big on Opportunity*

Thorp School District is a small, community-centered K–12 school district where relationships are at the heart of the educational experience. The district serves approximately 270 students in grades K–12 and operates as a single-school district, creating an environment in which students, staff, families, and community members can know one another and work together toward a common vision. The district's size provides opportunities for meaningful relationships, individualized attention, and a strong sense of connection among students and staff.

The school is much more than an educational institution in Thorp—it is an important part of the community's identity. The district is committed to preparing students for a wide range of opportunities beyond graduation and is especially excited about the continued growth and development of its Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. As the district continues building its CTE offerings toward full capacity, there is a strong opportunity to expand meaningful, hands-on learning experiences and help students connect their education with future careers, technical skills, and post-secondary opportunities. The district is also deeply committed to its outdoor education programs, taking advantage of the remarkable natural resources and recreational opportunities that surround the community. Together, these

programs reflect a vision for education that extends beyond the traditional classroom and helps students learn through exploration, experience, and real-world connections.

The district's current strategic direction reflects an emphasis on preparing students not only for academic success, but also for the opportunities and responsibilities that await them beyond high school. Students benefit from the advantages of a small school setting, including opportunities to participate in a variety of activities, close collaboration among staff, and meaningful connections with families and community members. For a superintendent, Thorp offers the opportunity to be highly visible, accessible, and directly connected to the work of teaching and learning while helping lead the continued development of important programs that will shape the district's future.

Thorp's educational story is also connected to the community's deep sense of history and pride. The result is a school district with a strong sense of tradition while also looking forward with excitement and purpose. For an educational leader who appreciates collaboration, personal relationships, community engagement, and the opportunity to help build innovative programs students, Thorp School District offers a leadership opportunity where a superintendent can truly know the community—and play an important role in helping shape its future.

For more information about the Thorp School District visit:
www.thorpschools.org



District & Community Strengths

A Community That Values Relationships, Family Engagement, and Student Success

- **Strong Parent and Guardian Partnership:** The district places parents and guardians at the center of student support and success. Teachers and staff work directly with families to communicate concerns, celebrate progress, and develop plans for student growth. This strong partnership has become an important part of the district's culture and is highly valued by families.
- **A Commitment to Keeping Students in the District:** The district has worked intentionally to strengthen the secondary school experience, including academics, activities, and athletics. These efforts have contributed to retaining older students and creating a stronger sense of connection and school pride.

Challenges & Opportunities

A District Ready for Thoughtful Leadership and Continued Growth

Thorp School District is at an important point in its development. The next superintendent will have an opportunity to build upon the district's positive momentum while helping Thorp thoughtfully prepare for its future. The district is seeking a leader who will listen, build relationships, understand the community, and work collaboratively with the Board, staff, students, and community to address the opportunities ahead.

- **Lead Through Transition:** The district is experiencing a leadership transition and seeks a superintendent who can provide stability while bringing fresh ideas and a clear vision for the future. The successful candidate will recognize that leadership change can bring both excitement and uncertainty and will take the time to listen, build relationships, and understand the

- **Outdoor Education and Farm-to-Table Programs:** The district has developed meaningful outdoor education and farm-to-table opportunities that connect students with hands-on learning, agriculture, health, and the community. There is excitement about continuing to build these programs and exploring additional ways students can share their learning and talents with the broader community.
- **A Strong Foundation for the Future:** Many significant infrastructure needs have been addressed in recent years, providing the district with a solid foundation from which to plan for the future. The community takes pride in being fiscally responsible while continuing to invest in students and programs.
- **A Community with High Expectations and Strong Pride:** There is a genuine desire to build on the district's strengths, increase student opportunities, strengthen school spirit, and continue creating an educational experience that makes families proud to be part of the district.



district's culture before making significant changes.

- **Plan for Growth:** Continued residential growth and strong interest in the district may eventually require thoughtful conversations about facilities, school capacity, and long-term planning. The next superintendent will help the district proactively consider future facility needs, potential expansion, and the long-term configuration of its schools.
- **Address Facility Needs:** While many infrastructure needs have been addressed, important projects remain, including the district's septic system and improvements to lighting in the parking area near the gym. The superintendent will need to prioritize these needs while balancing available resources and other district priorities.
- **Maintain Financial Stability:** Fiscal responsibility remains essential. The district has worked diligently to maintain financial stability despite the challenging funding environment facing Washington schools. The next superintendent will need to protect that stability while continuing to provide high-quality programs and opportunities for students.
- **Sustain and Expand Career & Technical Education:** Thorp has made an impressive commitment to Career & Technical Education (CTE), with many of its programs connected to CTE-certified coursework. The next superintendent should bring knowledge and experience in CTE and be prepared to sustain the district's momentum, explore additional program opportunities, develop partnerships, and identify funding resources that can expand meaningful career-connected learning for students.
- **Strengthen Student Activities and School Spirit:** There are opportunities to continue developing ASB, band, athletics, and other student activities. With many students participating in multiple activities, the district will benefit from a thoughtful and strategic approach to expanding opportunities while maintaining a healthy balance for students.
- **Balance Innovation with What Works:** The district is interested in thoughtfully navigating emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, while maintaining the value of strong classroom practices and proven instructional approaches. The next superintendent should help the district embrace appropriate innovation while keeping student learning, relationships, and sound instructional practices at the center of decision-making.



Professional Qualifications

The Ideal Candidate Will Be an Experienced, Thoughtful, and Community-Centered Educational Leader

The district is seeking a superintendent who will:

- Demonstrate successful leadership experience in education, preferably with experience in a district or school leadership role.
- Understand school district finance, budgeting, and long-term financial planning and be able to work effectively with the district's business and bookkeeping team.
- Can establish clear expectations, delegate effectively, follow through, and hold people accountable while respecting the expertise of staff.
- Understand the importance of organizational structure, clear lines of authority, and effective leadership systems.
- Demonstrate a deep working knowledge of CTE, including program application, funding mechanisms and district wide scope.
- Demonstrate strong communication skills and a proven ability to work collaboratively with staff, students, parents/guardians, the school board, and community members.
- Be comfortable working in a changing educational and political environment and understand the implications of state initiatives and OSPI guidance for a local school district.
- Possess the judgment to advocate for the district's needs while maintaining productive relationships with state and regional partners.
- Demonstrate an understanding of whole-child education and the ability to recognize and respond appropriately to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.
- Support strong academics while recognizing the importance of athletics, activities, outdoor education, and other opportunities that contribute to a well-rounded student experience.
- Understand both the opportunities and challenges associated with emerging technologies, including AI, and help staff and students use these tools responsibly and effectively.
- Demonstrate the ability to manage competing priorities while keeping the

Personal Characteristics

The Community Is Looking for a Leader Who Builds Trust and Brings People Together

The successful superintendent will be:

- **A Relationship Builder:** Someone who takes the time to know students, staff, families, and community members and who is genuinely present and engaged in the district.
- **Trusting and Empowering:** A leader who recognizes the expertise of others, delegates responsibility, encourages staff leadership, and trusts team members to do their jobs while maintaining appropriate accountability.
- **A Strong Communicator:** Someone who values open, transparent, and timely communication and keeps people informed, particularly during challenging or uncertain times.
- **Diplomatic and Honest:** A leader who can communicate difficult truths with honesty, respect, and professionalism while maintaining positive relationships.
- **Visible and Involved:** Someone who will be present in schools and classrooms, participate in community life, attend student activities, and develop a genuine understanding of the district and the broader community.
- **Student-Centered:** A leader who sees the whole child rather than simply a student's academic performance and who understands the difference between intentional defiance and behaviors that may reflect trauma, stress, or other underlying needs.
- **Calm and Thoughtful:** Someone who does not rush to judgment or make changes simply for the sake of change. The successful candidate will listen, learn, evaluate, and then act with purpose.
- **Collaborative but Decisive:** A leader who values the ideas and expertise of others while also being willing to make difficult decisions when necessary.
- **Strategic and Forward-Thinking:** Someone who can appreciate what has worked in the past while helping the district prepare for growth, changing student needs, financial realities, and the future of education.
- **A Steward of the District:** Above all, the next superintendent should understand the responsibility that comes with leading a community

district focused on its mission, students, and long-term goals.

school district. The community wants a leader who will protect its financial stability, honor its traditions and relationships, and continue building a strong future for its students and families.

School Board

- **Brook Shull, Chair**
District #4
- **Kim Rivera Vice Chair**
District 5
- **Jessica Howard**
Legislative representative, District 2
- **Lois Bell**
WIAA representative, District 1
- **Anne Cubilie**
District 3

Compensation

District will be offering a three-year contract with salary and benefits regionally competitive with districts of similar size and enrollment.

Application Packet

A completed application packet should include the following:

- A formal letter of interest stating personal qualifications, experience, and reason for interest in the Thorp position
- A personal statement regarding educational philosophy
- A completed Thorp application packet (available from any of the addresses below)
- A current resume
- Copy of administrative license or proof of eligibility to obtain one
- Three to five letters of recommendation from current and recent positions

Send an electronic copy of all application materials to:

Andy Wolf, Consultant: Awolfsearch@outlook.com

Joel Aune, Owner/Chief Operating Officer: gunderaune@gmail.com

Tom Rockefeller, Owner/Chief Operating Officer: rockefellertom34@gmail.com

Applications received by January 4th, 2027 will receive first consideration

The District retains the right to accept applications until a superintendent/principal is selected

Application materials will become property of NWLA and the district, and will not be returned to the applicant

Please do not contact the school district directly regarding the selection process for this position.

All inquiries, including those from applicants with disabilities who need help in completing application materials, should be made to the following NWLA Associates

Joel Aune | Email: gunderaune@gmail.com

Northwest Leadership Associates | gunderaune@gmail.com gunderaune@superintendentsearch.com | Richland, WA 99352 US

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