

Tyee Lunar New Year Festival

By *Yim Cheng*



On Friday, January 20 over 600 students, families, staff, and community members came together at Tyee Middle School for their Lunar New Year Festival event. According to Principal Byron Lillie, this was the first year that Tyee Middle School has held this event and many years since COVID where they have held such a large-scale event at the school. Therefore, the entire Tyee community was very excited and looked forward to it. They were also honored to have Bellevue Deputy Mayor: Jared Nieuwenhuis join them that night and announce the proclamation marking Jan 22, 2023 as the start of Lunar New Year week.

This event was a joint collaboration between Tyee Middle School PTSA and Tyee Middle School staff. The initiative this year was to bring back some normalcy to student's lives and give a chance for students, families, and the community to come together and celebrate and share their different cultures and traditions. It took months of planning and while many of the members on the committee previously didn't have much experience planning such large-scale events, the stars aligned that evening and it was a spectacular event that was well received by the community.

The first performance to kick off the event was the Lion Dance performed by Northwest Kung Fu and Fitness. Lion dance is a form of traditional dance in Chinese cultures and other Asian countries in which performers mimic a lion's movements in a lion costume to bring good luck and fortune. While it is a traditional art form, we were excited to see young kids also learn and perform in the lion dance and for this tradition to be passed from the older to younger generation. The Tyee Orchestra, Tyee Band and Tyee Choir group each performed a musical piece representative of the holiday and culture. We also had live stage performances and dance performances from Newport High Choreography Club, Alapadma, GE Chinese School, Seattle GuZheng Academy, Hengda Dance Academy, Korean traditional dance and individual performances from different Asian countries and cultures. The Inochi Tako group played the Japanese drum to a strong and furious beat to round out the performances for the night. Tyee students also contributed to the event in various ways. They wore traditional clothings, sang new year greetings and tongue twisters, and made poster displays to share how they celebrate this holiday in their culture. They also hosted different booths where they sold handmade crafts and provided games and activities.

While Lunar New Year might be celebrated differently in various Asian countries, they all share a common theme. It's a time for gathering with friends and family, to be thankful for what we have accomplished in the past year, to send greetings and blessings for the new year and to reaffirm connections to their culture and families.

