

NEW SCHEDULE COMING JANUARY 10, INCLUDING RETURN OF LOCAL PROGRAMMING AT NOON

[SEE NEW SCHEDULE](#)

[LISTEN LIVE](#)

[SIGN IN](#) // [SIGN UP](#)  [Donate](#)

[SCHEDULE](#)

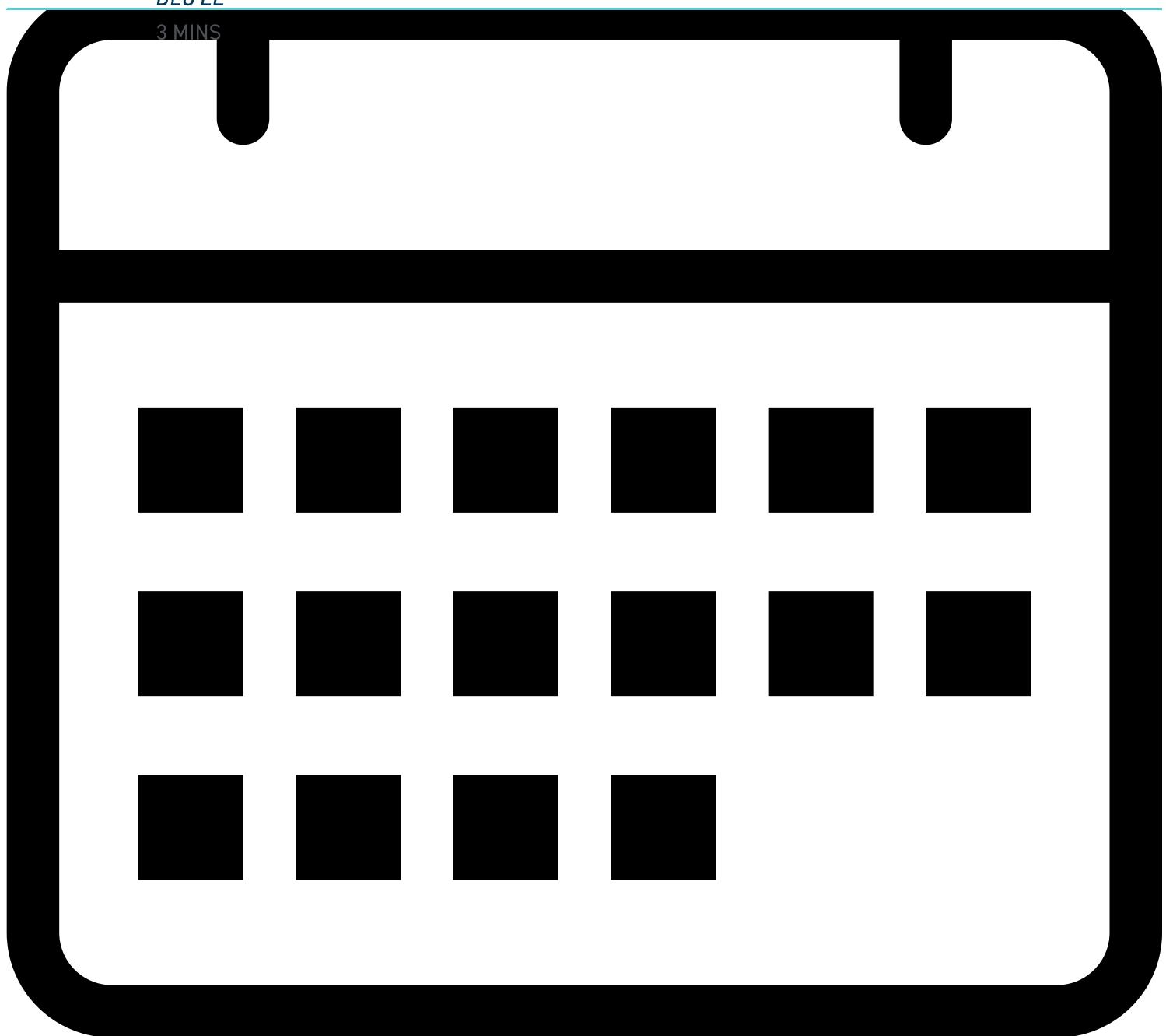


LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

[PRINT SCHEDULE](#)

08:00 AM PT

3 MINS



Schedule

[SCHEDULE](#)

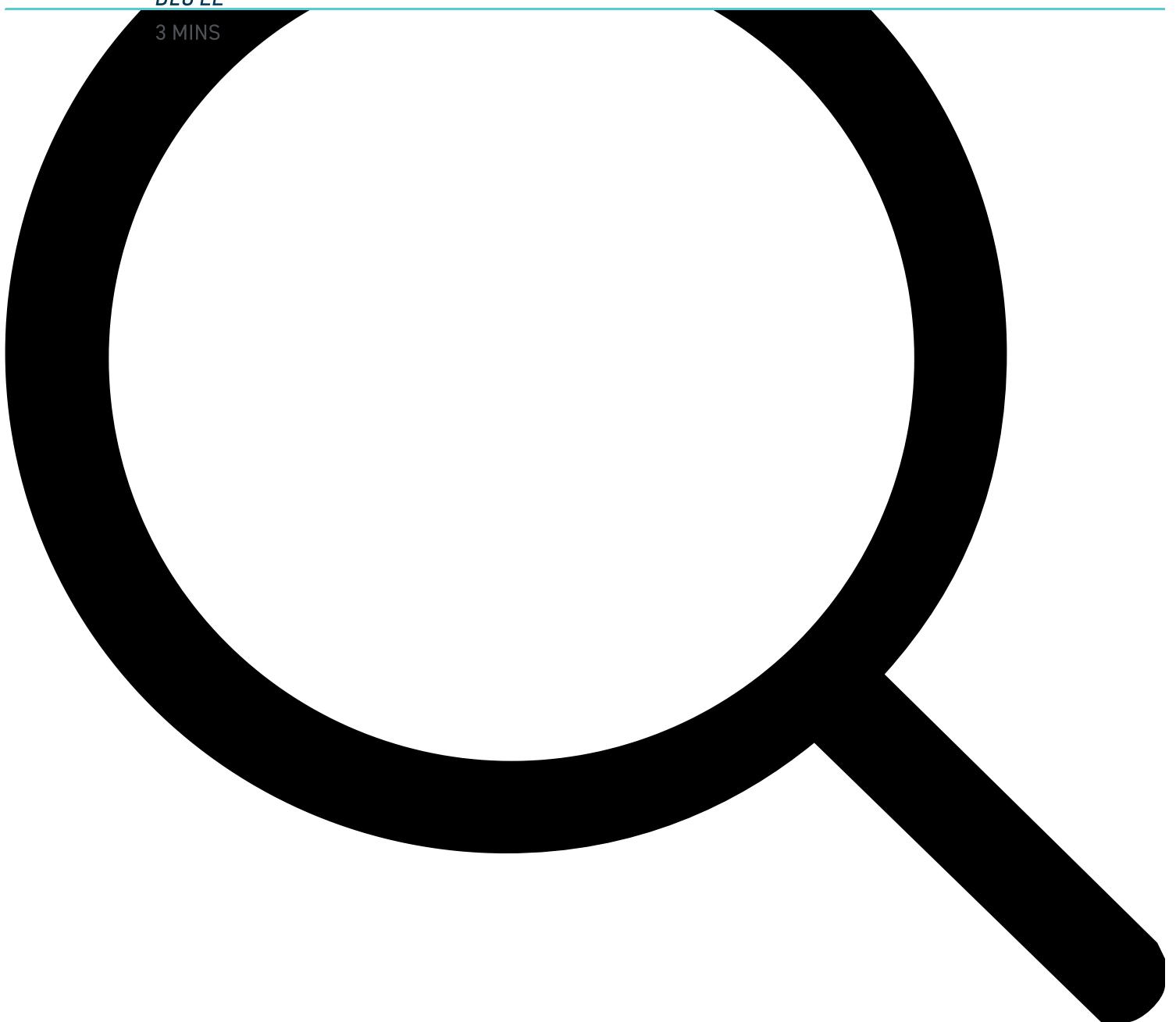


LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

[PRINT SCHEDULE](#)

08:00 AM PT

3 MINS



Search

SCHEDULE

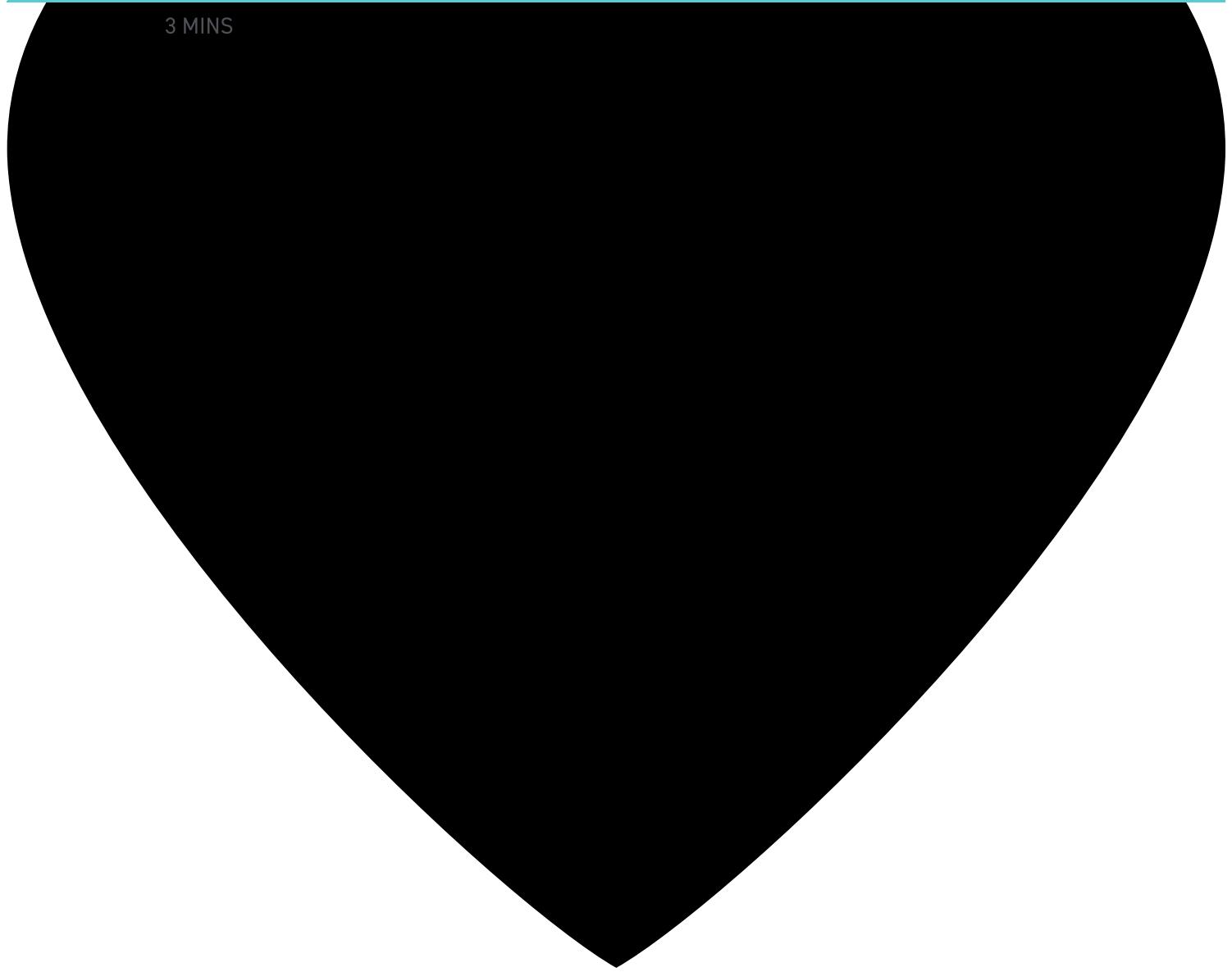


LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

[PRINT SCHEDULE](#)

Upcoming
08:00 AM PT

3 MINS



[Donate](#)

[Sign In](#) // [Sign Up](#)

[SCHEDULE](#)



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2021
08:00 AM PT

PRINT SCHEDULE

3 MINS



Tom Graff (R) and members of Belltown United meet with school board candidates Michelle Sarju (L) and Vivian Song Maritz (2nd from L) to talk about the proposed school site in Belltown

CREDIT: KUOW PHOTO/JOSHUA McNICHOLS

Can downtown Seattle attract families? The big question behind the debate about a new school.

OCT 11, 2021 at 6:04 AM

BY



Joshua McNichols



5 MINS



Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan wants to put a public elementary school downtown. She's offering the school district the right to build on the former entrance to the Battery Street tunnel.

That decision is not final, but it's prompted a lot of discussions about the future of downtown.

[More than 5,000 kids live in downtown Seattle. But you don't see many of them on the streets of](#)

SCHEDULE

[LATEST](#)[NEWSCAST](#)[PRINT SCHEDULE](#)

WEDNESDAY,

08:00 AM PT

DEC 22

families out here. I grew up in a house, and a lot of other families did."

3 MINS

When kids reach school age here, a lot of families move away.

The Downtown Seattle Association has been pushing for an elementary school in the area for 10 years, in hope of keeping families around. But a school hasn't been built, in part, because vacant land is so expensive and the competition fierce.

So when the city signed a deal last week giving the school district first dibs on the old Battery Street Tunnel entrance site in Belltown, it was a big deal, according to Marshall Foster, head of Seattle's office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects.

"To be able to go out and, in the market, secure a site like this for an elementary school in our downtown is next to impossible," he says. "And because we vacated the land with the viaduct removal, we're able to do something remarkable here, which is to give them the opportunity."

One person who's remarking a lot on the opportunity to build a school here is Tom Graff. He's with a community group called Belltown United. They're fighting the school. They want the land to become a park, instead.

[SCHEDULE](#)



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

PRINT SCHEDULE

08:00 AM PT

3 MINS



Potential site for a downtown elementary school in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood

CREDIT: KUOW PHOTO/JOSHUA McNICHOLS

It's not hard to visualize. After the tunnel was filled with rubble from the viaduct, workers topped it with soil and planted green grass on top.

"And it would be an amazing piece of open space for people in Belltown – but also people going to the Market, to Seattle Center – and the view down to the waterfront," Graff says. "And it's a once in a ... this will never happen again, is my point. And we didn't want to give it up."

Graff is showing off the site to a couple of school board candidates. He wants to convince them to come out against putting a school here. He argues that this neighborhood lacks kids in part because the apartments are too small.

"I want kids in these buildings, and I hope some day it happens, but we've got to build to the needs here now," he tells them.

SCHEDULE



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

PRINT SCHEDULE

08:00 AM PT

3 MINS

“Because you could build this school, but if there’s no intention to build family housing around it, then that’s not a match.”



Chain link fence surrounds a potential downtown elementary school site in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood.

CREDIT: KUOW PHOTO/JOSHUA McNICHOLS

Candidate Michelle Sarju asks why we would build a shiny new school when old schools, especially in South Seattle, are in desperate need.

“We have so many other needs in our city, in terms of solving overcrowded classes, upgrading buildings that are in great disrepair,” she says.

SCHEDULE



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

PRINT SCHEDULE

08:00 AM PT

don't have a school

3 MINS

He says it's a problem the district has never had time to thoroughly examine before, because it never had a real shot at land like this.



Potential downtown school site in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood

CREDIT: KUOW PHOTO/JOSHUA McNICHOLS

"I can tell you as an urban planner, and someone who's worked on our downtown for a long time, look at any successful thriving downtown, you will find an elementary school, you will find an investment in children. And families are at the heart of that," Foster says.

Even if the land becomes a school, it would include some space for a park, Foster says. But it wouldn't be

SCHEDULE



LATEST

NEWSCAST

[PRINT SCHEDULE](#)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2021

08:00 AM PT

DEC 22

3 MINS

spokesperson says for now, it's committed only to doing some deep analysis of the question.

It must determine, by examining demographic trends, whether children will become a permanent part of downtown Seattle's future.

*[*Correction: an earlier version of this story implied the school would appear on the 2022 levy. In fact, it will not appear on that levy, the City of Seattle's Marshall Foster clarified. The school district has up to 10 years to decide on how to fund the school.]*

Comments or tips? You can reach reporter Joshua McNichols at jmcnichols@kuow.org.



EDUCATION 1:00



5 MINS

[SCHEDULE](#)

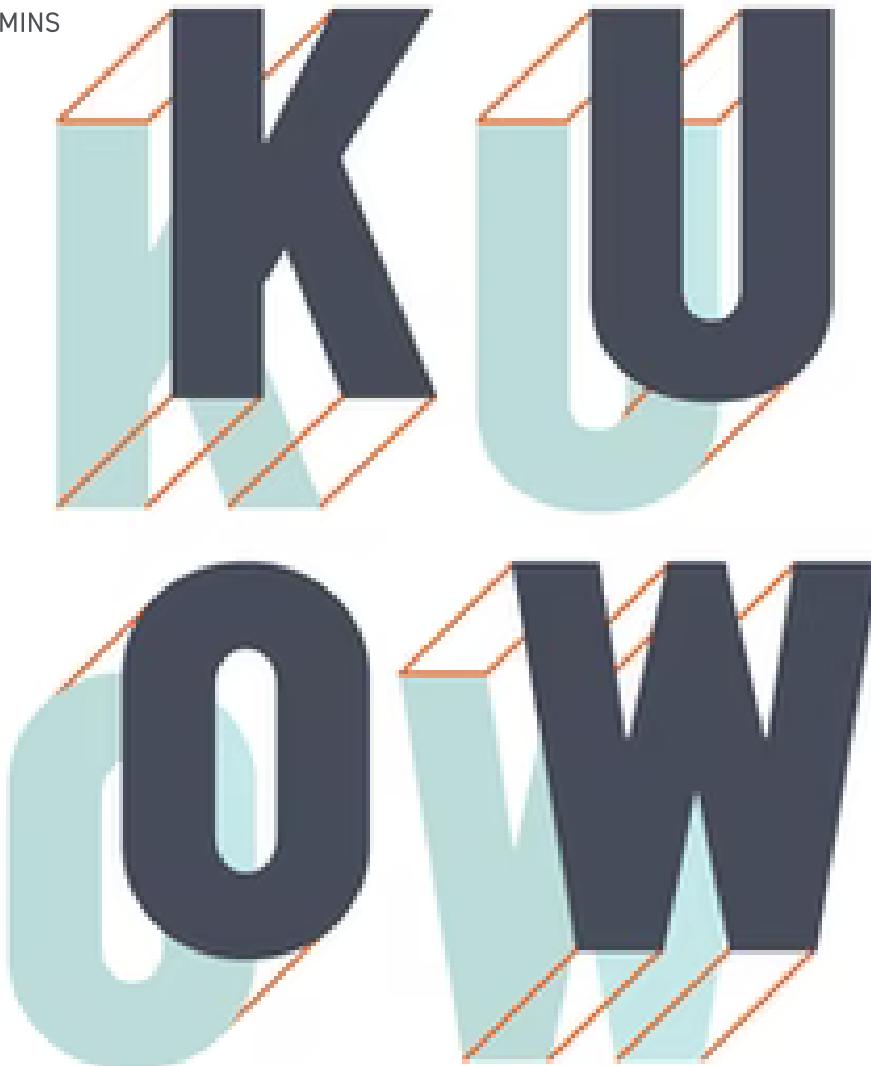


LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

PRINT SCHEDULE

08:00 AM PT

3 MINS



KUOW.ORG

KUOW NEWSROOM

// NEXT EPISODE

Microsoft: We're on track to stop polluting this decade. Then we'll undo all the climate harm we've ever done



2 MINS

// SUBSCRIBE VIA



APPLE PODCASTS

SCHEDULE



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2021
08:00 AM PT

[PRINT SCHEDULE](#)



RSS 3 MINS

RELATED STORIES

KUOW NEWSROOM



Large classes, little social distancing at a Tukwila charter school worry parents and staff



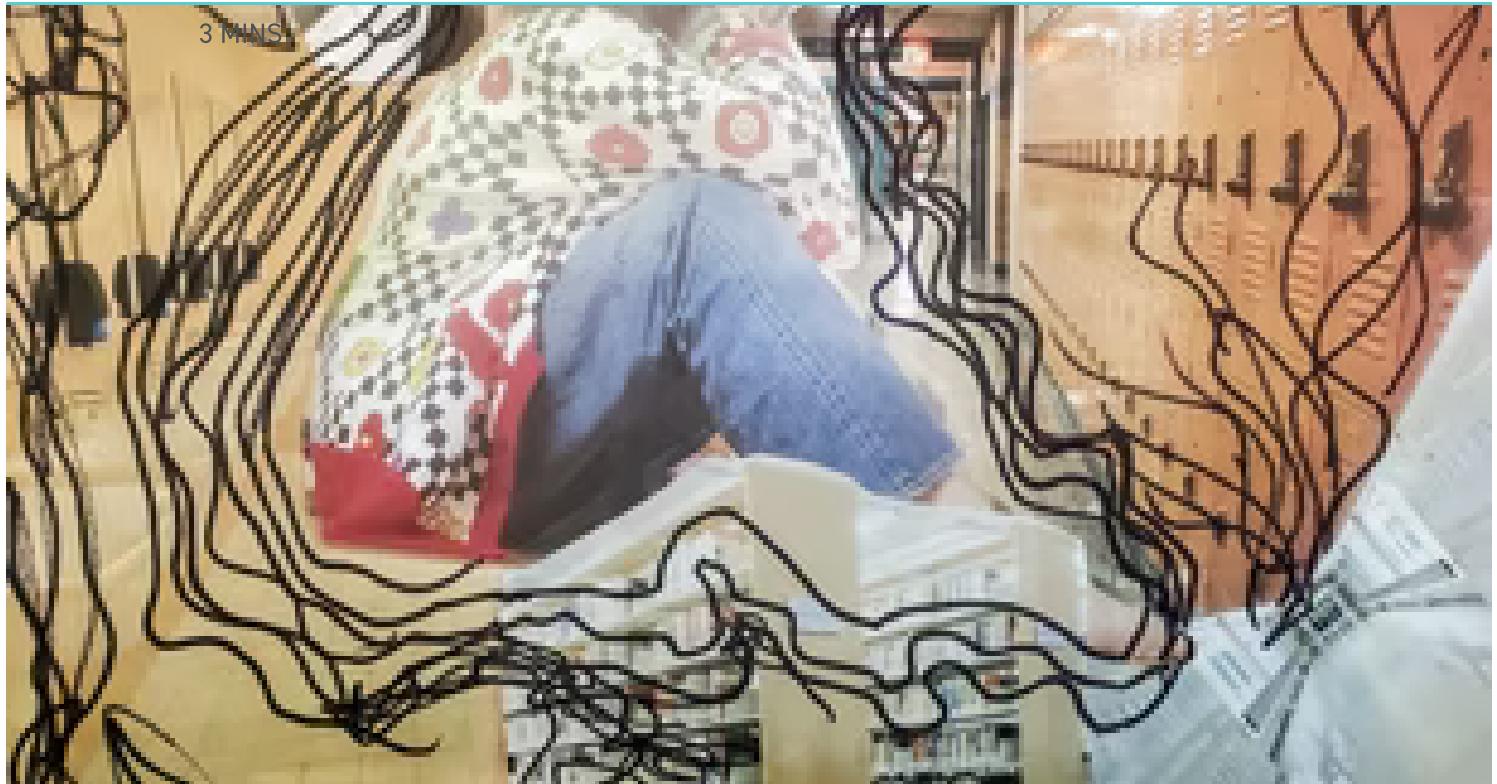
6 MINS

[SCHEDULE](#)



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
PRINT SCHEDULE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2021
08:00 AM PT
DEC 22

3 MINS



What I heard when I returned to school



4 MINS

[SCHEDULE](#)



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

PRINT SCHEDULE

08:00 AM PT

3 MINS

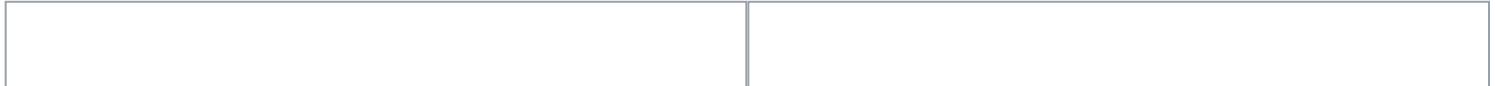


Locked in 'the cage.' Report finds disturbing discipline measures at Seattle school

8 MINS

CONNECT WITH US

Get a quick look at the most important local stories of the day with KUOW's Today So Far newsletter.



SEND

[VIEW ALL](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

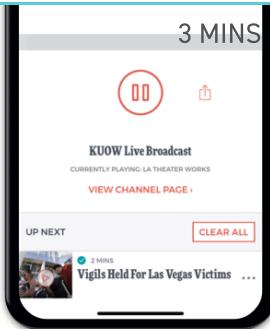
SCHEDULE



LATEST
NEWSCAST:
WEDNESDAY,
DEC 22

PRINT SCHEDULE
08:00 AM PT

3 MINS



DOWNLOAD FROM
APP STORE



GET IT ON
PLAY STORE

KUOW is the Puget Sound region's #1 radio station for news. Our independent, nonprofit newsroom produces award-winning stories, podcasts and events.

[ABOUT](#)

[STAFF](#)

[BOARD](#)

INSIDE KUOW

[Contact Us / Feedback](#)

[Secure News Tips](#)

[Careers](#)

[Impact Report](#)

[Press](#)

[Schedule \(PDF\)](#)

SUPPORT

[Donate / Become a Member](#)

[Wills and Estate Planning](#)

[Donate Your Car](#)

[Gift of Securities](#)

[Business Sponsorship](#)

[Volunteer](#)