

What's news in Tahoma schools?

Presented as a community service by the VOICE of the Valley and Tahoma School District

School District highlights

School board to hear student housing report

The ad hoc student housing committee will report its findings to the Tahoma School Board Nov. 8 as part of the board's regular 6:30 p.m. meeting at Central Services Center.

The committee, made up of 19 community volunteers, has met since last June to look at ways to house students during the next decade. A bond measure that would have added classroom and support space for students failed to pass last April.

The committee will not present a preferred plan of action. Instead, it will give the board the results of its research and discussions regarding short- and long-term solutions.

The public is invited to attend the meeting.

THS sets parent conferences

Parent conferences for Tahoma High School students will be held on Nov. 7, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and on Nov. 8, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The conferences will be held in "arena-style" format. Parents are encouraged to check their student's grades online, using Skyward Family Access.

Community notices online

Find out about fun events and ways to involve students in productive activities by checking the online community events web page. Just go to the main Tahoma web page or any school web page and look for Community Notices.

Visit us on the Web:
www.tahomasd.us

Tahoma test scores among best in state

Only 5 districts achieve higher overall marks

Tahoma School District students continue to perform at high levels of achievement, according to an analysis of comparable school districts as measured by standardized state test scores.

In 21 testing categories that include reading, math and science for grades 3-8 and Grade 10, Tahoma students finished in the top 10 in 14 categories and were no lower than 26th in any category. The comparison is for all school districts in the state that have more than 50 students in a grade level. Tahoma is fifth overall in the state in this analysis; the only

school districts that had more top-10 representation were Mercer Island, Bainbridge Island, Issaquah and Lake Washington. More information is available on the Tahoma web page: www.tahomasd.us.

"Our teachers and our kids are working really hard at learning," said Dawn Wakeley, associate director of Tahoma's Teaching and Learning Dept. "Our teachers and parents really support our students."

Wakeley said students have benefitted from new math curriculum, along with an emphasis on providing immediate help to students who are struggling with math. In addition, the district is providing more assistance to teachers by employing math "coaches," whose mission is to help teachers better understand and teach

math skills and concepts.

Teachers also are receiving more timely information about student test scores, which helps them focus on areas where individual students need assistance. Better data and training for teachers is translating into better test scores for students.

"They just care so passionately and want to know about their students what the data says," Wakeley said.

Because the majority of Tahoma students are performing at a high level, Wakeley said there is more emphasis on identifying students who are struggling in a particular subject or subjects and providing more help to them.

"We are at the point of providing help to individual students about individual skills" while still maintaining overall

high achievement throughout the school district, she said.

Despite all of the district's academic success, it will be a struggle to maintain high levels of achievement as state funding shrinks, due to budget cuts, and the school district remains overcrowded.

"We want our community to join us in celebrating the achievement of our students," said Kevin Patterson, public information officer. "But the community also needs to know that student achievement is occurring despite lack of adequate learning spaces in our schools and reductions in funding. It is going to be very difficult to maintain our high standards during the next few years unless we find better ways to fund schools and until we can provide more classrooms and support spaces for our students."

Disabled but not discouraged, guest speaker tells it like it is to TJH students

First, they stared at the guy in the wheelchair with only one arm and no legs. Then, he made them laugh as he began to play harmonica and sing the "One-Armed Blues."

"I can't keep a beat," sang Bob Mortimer to a gym filled with 1,200 Tahoma Junior High students. "'Cause I ain't got no feet."

Mortimer, a Gig Harbor resident and nationally known speaker who lost both legs and his left

arm when he became entangled in downed power lines after an auto accident when he was 21, pokes a little fun at himself as part of his inspirational message.

"Accept the things that make you different from everybody else," he said. "It makes it so much easier for everyone else to accept you also."

He encouraged students to reject drugs and alcohol, prejudice and bullying and to respect each other.



Bob Mortimer entertained and enlightened Tahoma Junior High students with his inspirational message.