Tahoma
Community News

May 2019 | Tahoma School District | Maple Valley, WA 98038

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Making sense of the dollars

Engage Tahoma meetings invite community to explore school finance

Community members discuss school finance during the April 4 session of Engage Tahoma, Finance 101. Another Engage Tahoma session on school finance will be held next fall, focused on spending.

There has been a lot of information and conversation about school finance recently, as the state Legislature made major changes to improve basic education funding. The question of how those changes affect Tahoma School District was explored during the first Engage Tahoma sessions on March 20 and April 4.

Engage Tahoma is an opportunity for community members to learn more about the school district and then participate in discussion about a particular topic. The School Board asked Superintendent Tony Giurado to create Engage Tahoma as a way to involve more community members and as a method for two-way communication, something that has been requested both during Giurado's listening tour in the fall as well as by other community members.

"In order for us to provide the very best education for our students, it requires a partnership between the community, the schools and the families," Giurado said as part of his Engage Tahoma presentation.

The first session, called Finance 101, focused on how the school district is funded. The next session, on April 30 and May 20, will explore the school district's classroom technology program and future needs.

During the Finance 101 sessions, participants learned that students in the Tahoma School District are in the same league, academically, as the highest-performing districts in the state, despite lagging far behind in funding.

"We get really good bang for our buck here in Tahoma – really good," said Lori Cloud, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Finance. "It's pretty amazing what we're able to do with the resources we have."

In fact, if Tahoma's students were magically transported to nearly any other district in King County, they would instantly have millions more dollars available for their education, because those districts can collect more dollars per pupil through local levies. Cloud said some King County school districts collect millions more per year than Tahoma partly because their total assessed property value is much higher as a result of more commercial and industrial development.

Here's a look at the assessed value (or the worth of all property and buildings in the district) of some of the districts in King County, where their total assessed property value is much higher (see chart on page 2):

- Tahoma School District: $7.2 billion.
- Bellevue School District: $72.4 billion.
- Lake Washington School District: $66 billion.
- Northshore School District: $33.7 billion.
- Issaquah School District: $33.6 billion.
- Snoqualmie Valley School District: $9.6 billion.

Each of these is a district that Tahoma compares to academically and competes with for staff members. The assessed value figure is vitally important because it directly impacts the levy dollars that each district collects to pay for programs and staff not fully funded by state and federal income.

The question is how long can Tahoma sustain its level of excellence and continue to attract highly qualified teachers when comparable districts collect so much more money per year? The answer is uncertain, but likely depends on decisions made by the Legislature as it makes adjustments to the new state funding plan.

During the second Finance 101 session on April 4, those who attended broke into small groups and talked about questions related to school finance and revenue (School Board members and district staff listened, took notes and facilitated):

Each small group then reported out a selection of what they considered the most important ideas they had discussed to the whole group. These included:

- Clarity of how levy funds are spent; also, sharing information about how levy funds are spent year-round.
- "Humanization" of the needs. For example, don't just state that levy funds support the MAP and RAP programs; rather, show a student(s) who benefits from the programs.

See **Engage,** Page 2

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School Finance 101: Dollars assigned to 4 funds

Engage Tahoma participants learned that school districts have four major funds: General Fund, Capital Projects Fund, Transportation Vehicle Fund and an Associated Student Body (ASB) fund. Here is a quick look at each, as presented during the Finance 101 sessions:

The General Fund is comprised of 86 percent state dollars, 12 percent local dollars (levy funds), and 2 percent federal dollars.

• Federal dollars go to specific programs, such as Special Education (68 percent), Food Service (15 percent), Title I (10 percent), Title II (5 percent), English Language Learners (1 percent) and Vocational programs (1 percent).

• State dollars are determined by the number of students in classes, on a per-pupil basis. These funds are allocated by the state for Basic Education (80 percent), Special Education (10 percent), Transportation (5 percent), and smaller allotments such as the Highly Capable program, food service and more.

• Local dollars come primarily from the Educational Programs and Operations (EPO) Levy, (80 percent), with 8 percent from the Extended Enrichment Program, 7 percent from Food Services and 5 percent from smaller local revenue streams such as course fees, facility use and interest.

The Capital Projects Fund has money from local levies and bonds, state matching money, impact fees and interest earned before the money is spent on projects. This fund is spent on acquiring facilities, construction, equipment or major repairs; but not for regular maintenance or repairs, staffing, utilities or supplies.

The Transportation Vehicle Fund has money from the state bus replacement depreciation schedule and the local levy. It can be used for the purchase of replacement buses and major bus repairs; but not for any of the daily operations of the Transportation Department such as drivers, gas, tires, general maintenance. It does not produce enough revenue to enlarge the bus fleet.

The ASB Fund is used for extracurricular clubs, athletics and activities, and is controlled by the student body.

Assistant Superintendent Lori Cloud explained that the state uses what is designated as a "prototypical model" for funding. Under this funding model (not to be confused with a staffing model), the state pays Tahoma for 1.4 school nurses. Tahoma uses local levy funds to supplement so that it has 7.2 full time equivalent nursing positions for its 9 buildings. The funding model pays for 0 behavior specialists, while Tahoma uses levy dollars to fund 9 positions, one at each building because teachers, principals and administrators feel strongly that it benefits all students. The prototypical model pays for 2.6 FTE school safety positions, while Tahoma has 3.3; and, it funds 4.9 technology positions while Tahoma has 13.8 FTE.

Voters in the Tahoma School District last April approved a two-year EPO levy at $1.50 per $1,000 assessed value, the maximum allowed, which was estimated at $10.7 million in 2019 and $11.8 million in 2020 in the ballot measure.

Engage

Continued from Page 1

• Simplify the language and presentation of financial information.

• Dispel the misconception that the state has fully funded basic education at the level of service that Tahoma provides. (For example, the state's prototypical funding model would fund 1.4 full-time equivalent nursing positions; Tahoma supplements that amount with local levy dollars to have 7.2 FTE nursing positions.)

Middle school student Scott Alvord attended with his mom. Asked why he thinks it's important to learn about school finances and revenue, Scott said that although most of the information felt aimed at the parent level, he appreciates that his school spends money on providing programs and activities so that students can get to know more peers at school and make more friends. It's also important to learn about how the system works, he said, because "Then you can give your opinion." If someone would like a method or decision changed, Scott added, it's a good idea to learn about it and then ask them to consider a different perspective.

Scott's mom, Amy, said she brought him to the meeting after attending the first session by herself. "I like him to see how the community joins together for the betterment of the school district. The main reason we moved here was for the school district."

To read about the revenue information shared at the first session, check the district's webpage: www.tahomasd.us

In the fall, Engage Tahoma will focus on the expenditure side of the finance equation, with two sessions following a similar format. Community members can sign up on the TSD website in September.

Levy dollars in comparable and/or nearby districts

School district	Assessed value	Students	Levy dollars per student
Bellevue	$72.4 billion	20,474	$2,506
Renton	$25.7 billion	15,578	$2,475
Northshore	$33.7 billion	22,109	$2,291
Snoqualmie Vall.	$9.6 billion	6,933	$2,055
Lake Washington	$66 billion	29,749	$1,992
Issaquah	$33.6 billion	20,522	$1,772
Kent	$27.1 billion	27,271	$1,492
Enumclaw	$4.2 billion	4,515	$1,402
Tahoma	$7.2 billion	8,416	$1,274
Auburn	$13 billion	16,420	$1,188

Sources: KC Assessor's Office & OSPI

Tahoma is eager to engage with its community

Tahoma wants to hear what you have to say: Your involvement matters! It matters to our students, our schools, and our community.

When we work together as active partners, we are setting the stage for our children to be Future Ready. We are also creating the foundation for building and sustaining a better community. So, this is your official invitation to be our partner in improving the experiences and outcomes for our students. We are asking you to come and Engage Tahoma.

Tony Giurado

Last spring, the School Board made a commitment to provide more opportunities for community engagement. As your new superintendent, I conducted listening tour events last fall with over 900 participants. Among the many comments we received, communication found its way to the list of top five areas needing improvement. As a result, we implemented Engage Tahoma.

Community engagement is a vehicle for us to better understand complex education issues through the eyes of students, parents, and community members. As we strive for continuous improvement together with our community, we want to address barriers to learning.

What are we striving to accomplish with Engage Tahoma?

- Opportunities to gather community perspectives;
- Ongoing knowledge building;
- Transparency of information;
- Direct access to Board Directors and district administration;
- Informed citizenry.

A few weeks ago, we conducted our first Engage Tahoma series on Finance 101 (see related story on Page 1). Session 1 focused on building a knowledge base about the different funding sources for Tahoma. This included an opportunity for participants to ask questions about different revenue sources. Session 2 consisted of robust discussion about three central questions regarding school funding:

1. What is critical for our community to know?
2. How can our community advocate for appropriate funding to ensure our students have the learning experiences we value?
3. What misconceptions about school finance exist in our community?

Your voice is needed! Come join us for upcoming Engage Tahoma opportunities next fall. Together, we can give our children the foundational experiences they need to grow and the wings to fly.

Tony Giurado is superintendent of the Tahoma School District. Contact him at Tgiurado@tahomasd.us

New high school math curriculum offers 'student-friendly' learning

When high school students step into their algebra and geometry classes next year, they'll have new textbooks from a program that teachers are "giddy" about. The School Board voted March 12 to adopt the enVision textbooks by Pearson for Algebra 1, Geometry and Algebra 2 to replace the existing books, which had been in use for almost a decade.

"The teachers are giddy with excitement," said Dawn Wakeley, executive director of Teaching and Learning. "They recognize that Holt (publisher of the district's current math books) is really out of date, and they are very excited about the real-world context that this new resource brings."

The new books will cost about $300,300, plus an estimated 20 percent in tax and shipping charges (about $60,000). Textbooks have gone through a period of extraordinary price increases recently -- nearly tripling -- Wakeley told the board members. Also of note is the fact that the state apportionment has not gone up at the rate that the book prices have increased.

Published in 2018, EnVision was chosen after the conversation began about three years ago, and was selected because it aligns with Common Core State Standards (CCSS), meets identified student needs and fulfills criteria and needs identified by district math teachers.

The committee of teachers and staff members evaluating the options collected asked students what they wanted in a math textbook, and kept those comments at the center of the process, said Kathy Whylie, secondary math instructional coach for the district.Those on the committee started by reading independent reviews, then dove into assessing four options using a rubric to score them. The other choices evaluated included the Math Vision Project (2017); the Math TechBook/Discovery Ed (2017); and Agile Mind (2017).

Students told the members of the team that they would like to have resources they could use both in and out of class,

The new algebra books are supplemented by online resources.

such as video examples, access to homework help and the ability to check their homework and click on vocabulary. They also asked that the lessons be student-friendly and that teacher lessons would match the lessons in the book.

The existing books by Holt have been in use since 2010, since before Common Core State Standards were incorporated. When they began to examine EnVision, however, there were many "wow" moments, Whylie said. Among the aspects they liked about the new resource were:

- Gives students the opportunity to extend their thinking about math concepts by doing real-world problem solving.
- Includes the opportunity for teachers to adapt and individualize the lessons for students.
- Has excellent online components for teachers, parents and students. (Note: while some of these elements can be used immediately, others will be limited by the number of available computers, due to budget reductions resulting from failure of the Technology Levy in 2018.)
- Videos and webinars are included.

Elementary schools adjust schedules to add planning time for teachers

Elementary school students will see some changes in their daily schedules next year as a result of increased planning time for teachers that has created opportunities for complementary learning programs.

In a report to the Tahoma School Board, Shadow Lake Elementary Principal Mike Hanson and Glacier Park Elementary Principal Shelly Gaston explained the work of a committee that looked at how to incorporate additional planning time for teachers while preserving and enhancing learning opportunities for students.

As part of a new negotiated labor agreement between teachers and the school district that was approved prior to the start of the school year, elementary school teachers will have 15 minutes more per day for planning, which gives them an average of 45 minutes of planning time per day. A committee of district teachers, administrators, building managers, specialists and School Board representatives recommended ways to provide programs and staffing to cover the additional planning time.

Among the recommendations are to preserve at least an average of 30 minutes a week for music, art, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and about 90 minutes a week for PE (60 minutes for kindergarten). Also recommended is the addition of a literacy or social/emotional learning specialist at each school in order to enhance learning opportunities in those areas. The specialist would work with students during teacher planning times.

Elementary principals, building managers, and the district Teaching and Learning Department will take the committee's recommendations and begin crafting schedules and curriculum that can be used next year.

District addresses elementary school enrollment issues

In a recent letter to Tahoma School District parents, Superintendent Tony Giurado described how the district is dealing with rising elementary school enrollment while also focusing on reducing classroom sizes in grades kindergarten-3. Here is the letter:

"We want to keep you informed about how our district is responding to enrollment concerns next year at our elementary schools, where steadily rising enrollment and efforts to reduce class sizes in grades kindergarten-3 are creating a shortage of elementary school classrooms.

District administrators this week identified how to address these concerns for the 2019-2020 school year. We believe the solution will cause the least disruption while still providing quality learning and steady progress to reduce class sizes. Our decision came after meeting with the School Board in a work-study session on April 2 to share information and ideas. Of particular concern are our efforts to meet the intent of Initiative 1351, the 2014 law to reduce class sizes in grades K-3.

Tahoma has not yet met the goals of Initiative 1351, but we are well on our way. Our district has gradually reduced the average number of students in grades K-3 by about four students per classroom since the 2014-2015 school year. We are working to reduce the average size by about two more students per classroom to meet the state goal, including a further reduction by one student per class in 2019-2020. This will be accomplished by adding about 10 classroom teachers.

Initiative 1351 was approved one year after Tahoma voters passed a construction bond measure to build a new high school and make other facilities improvements. Our district had already planned more classrooms to accommodate growth and a change in kindergarten classes, when the state required full-day kindergarten instead of funding only half-day sessions. Adding more classrooms to meet the goal of Initiative 1351 was not part of Tahoma's construction bond measure.

Our challenge now is to find a way to continue reducing class sizes when more classrooms are needed to accomplish that goal. District administrators looked at different options for the 2019-2020 school year and decided to make some adjustments that will open classrooms for general education that are now being used for some specialized classes, such as art, STEM and reading assistance. Some of these classes would be relocated to alternative teaching spaces at some locations. As we work through these solutions, we want to ensure that students continue to receive high quality learning experiences, even if the delivery may vary slightly from school to school. We will share details as plans are finalized in each school.

Administrators also decided that there would not be school boundary adjustments or any movement of programs to different schools for next year. Specifically, the Discovery Program will remain at Lake Wilderness Elementary School for the 2019-2020 school year.

Our School Board and administration have discussed the need for the next phase of long-term planning. We will begin an examination of district enrollment and facilities needs through 2030. Community stakeholders and staff will be invited to be part of the process, which will begin after summer break. As always, we will keep our families and staff informed and involved in these important discussions."

School Board, City Council denounce acts of hate, intimidation

Elected leaders from the City of Maple Valley and Tahoma School District have issued a joint proclamation in support of diversity, equality, inclusion, and safety for all citizens while also denouncing acts of hate and intimidation.

The proclamation is a response to acts of vandalism that occurred last November, when racist graffiti appeared in Maple Valley neighborhoods. Several community members came forward to ask that the city and school district respond to the incident in ways that make it clear that such actions will not be tolerated.

The City Council and School Board asked staff to create a proclamation and decided to issue the document in March to coordinate with Gender and Ethnic Equality Month.

Councilor Erin Weaver offered this statement on behalf of the entire City Council:

"My fellow council members and I are proud to join with the Tahoma School Board and proclaim the month of March as both Gender and Ethnic Equality month. Many of us moved to Maple Valley because of a variety of attributes found in our city. We have affordable homes in outstanding neighborhoods. We have a terrific natural environment with great recreation opportunities. We have an outstanding school system preparing our youth for their future success. But most importantly, we have a sense of community and belonging that makes Maple Valley more than just the city we live in; it is home. And in our home, all are welcome and celebrated for making our community interesting, strong, respectful and kind," she said.

School Board President Didem Pierson said the proclamation reflects the school district's core beliefs. "Tahoma School District already has policies and curriculum in place to assure that all students and staff are treated with respect. With that said, it is with great enthusiasm that we have the opportunity to partner with the City of Maple Valley to collaboratively support a culture that embraces diversity, compassion and inclusion in our community. Our hope is that the citizens of our city will join us in supporting what has been outlined in the proclamation," she said. The proclamation can be viewed on the district website.

TAHOMA
Future Ready Students

Tahoma Community Report is produced by the Tahoma School District Communication Office and mailed to all school district residents four times a year. Contact the Communication Office by calling 425-413-3409 or by email to Kevin Patterson, communication director, at: kpatters@tahomasd.us

The Tahoma School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The following employees are designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

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Montgomery selected to fill board vacancy

Katrina Montgomery was appointed to the Tahoma School Board March 12 to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of longtime director, Bill Clausmeyer. School Board members voted to select Montgomery during a special meeting.

Montgomery

Montgomery was among three people, including David Porter and Kjellaug Rowe, who were chosen to interview with the School Board. Other applicants were: Jason Rosenfeld, Lynnette Hynden, David Downing, Courtney Black, and Pooja Sund.

School Board President Didem Pierson said Montgomery was chosen from a field of highly qualified candidates. "It wasn't an easy decision," she said. "We had excellent candidates. We have some incredible community members willing to step up and be part of our School Board."

Montgomery and her husband, Tim, are parents of two Tahoma students, Alex and Nate. She is an active volunteer in the school district and has served as a PTA president and coordinator of the PTA/PTO Round Table, a networking organization for PTA/PTO presidents. Montgomery also is an active volunteer for the Voice of Tahoma Education Committee, the school district Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee, and has been involved in several ad hoc school district committees and groups. She also has worked for the district.

"I'm excited to be able to help in another facet and to get to learn more about Tahoma," she said.

Montgomery participated in the school district's planning for the Future Ready initiative as a PTA president and said she is committed to continue advancing Tahoma's academic programs.

"Our focus for the past several years has been on building the new high school, reorganizing elementary schools and adjusting to growth. Now we need to commit more to our curriculum and the education piece, making sure we're doing all we can to benefit our kids."

She said she is looking forward to representing the community.