

Levies provide Tahoma students with learning opportunities, support

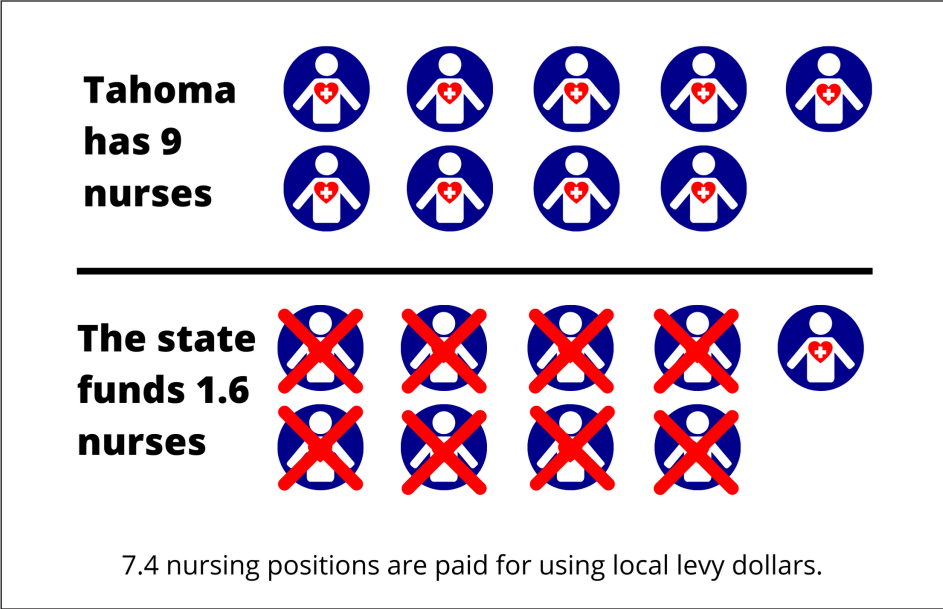
School funding has changed during the past three years, but there is still a need for local school levies that support students in multiple ways.

One example that surprises many people is how levy funds support student health and safety. State education dollars pay for 1.6 nursing positions for all of Tahoma’s nine school buildings. The district pays for 7.4 additional nursing positions, using levy funds provided by the Educational Programs and Operations Levy that was approved by voters in April of 2018.

Parents of students with chronic health conditions such as Type 1 Diabetes, severe food allergies and seizure disorders often tell district nurses that they simply wouldn’t send their child to school if there were no nurse available.

“Students learn best when they’re healthy and safe and feel like they’re a part of their school. School nurses help keep students in school so they can be educated, and they provide them with emergency care while they’re there,” said Jennifer Lyons, Tahoma’s Nursing Coordinator. “Things like diabetes, asthma and life-threatening allergies exist in our world today, and can impede our students from having access to an education.”

The existing EP&O levy will expire at the end of 2020; in February, the ballot will include a replacement levy that



would begin collection in 2021.

In addition to the obvious tasks such as applying Band-aids, icing injuries, and checking for fevers, school nurses perform a wide range of tasks. Among those are help for diabetic students to manage their blood sugar levels to avoid dangerous conditions and loss of consciousness. In addition, nurses deal with issues ranging from hygiene to social-emotional needs.

The number of daily student visits to the nurse at each building range from about 50 to 70 at the elementary level, from about 40 to 60 at the middle schools and just over 30 per day at the high school.

Nurses at each building work in concert

with the building counselors, mental health and wellness coordinators at the middle schools, and Behavioral Intervention Specialists.

Special Services Director Annette Whittlesey, who oversees the nursing staff, said nurses are key to keeping students safe and supporting their health needs, but also to proactive and preventative efforts such as tracking immunizations and writing plans for individual students.

“Our nurses are part of the team that looks at the whole child and makes sure we’re talking about all their needs,” Whittlesey said. “It’s an integral part of the wraparound support for our students and families.”

Feb. 11 election ballot measures

Proposition 1:
4-year replacement Educational Programs & Operations Levy

The EP&O replaces the levy that expires in 2020. It would continue to pay for programs, people, and supplies not funded or underfunded by state basic education money.

Here is what would be collected each year if the levy is approved:

Year	Rate per \$1,000	Total
2021	\$2.00	\$16,419,347
2022	\$2.00	\$17,895,669
2023	\$2.00	\$19,504,860
2024	\$2.00	\$21,258,878

Proposition 2:
4-year Technology Levy

The levy pays for equipment, software, infrastructure, training and support staff.

Year	Rate per \$1,000	Total
2021	\$0.47	\$3,900,000
2022	\$0.48	\$4,300,000
2023	\$0.44	\$4,300,000
2024	\$0.40	\$4,300,000

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Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy fills funding gap

2019 EP&O levy comparison

Athletics, student clubs, safety and security staff, school nurses, and extra help for struggling students are among a long list of support for students provided by the Educational Programs and Operations Levy.

Funds from the EP&O Levy account for about 9 percent of the school district's operating budget and help provide staffing and services that are not paid for by state basic education funds. Levy funds are controlled by the school district, which spends them in ways that respond to local needs.

Tahoma is asking voters to approve a levy of \$2 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. That tax rate is below the maximum authorized by the state Legislature, when it raised the EP&O levy lid from \$1.50 to \$2.50 last year. Even with the increase, Tahoma will not collect as much per student in levy dollars as most surrounding school districts because the community tax base is largely residential, with a relatively small share coming from commercial or industrial tax contributions.

The Tahoma School Board developed the proposed levy over the course of several months and decided that the district would not seek the maximum property tax, recognizing the impact on homeowners.

The levy touches many areas of the school district. Here are some that are supplemented by levy dollars:

- Elementary STEM and art classes.
- Sports, student clubs and activities.
- School nurses.
- Mental health programs and counseling.
- School secretaries.
- Special education supplementary funding.
- Behavioral Intervention Specialists.
- Safety/security.
- Specialized certificated positions not considered as part of basic education, including psychologists and classroom teachers whose subjects do not meet the state's basic education funding parameters.
- Transportation costs: Levy revenue supplements the cost of fuel, supplies and office support.
- School-based instructional coaches: The levy pays for teachers who serve as academic coaches to support curriculum and learning programs, which assist classroom teachers.
- Highly Capable Program: Levy support helps reduce class sizes for highly capable students in the Discovery Program (elementary school) and for advanced high school courses (pre-AP, AP and College in the High School).
- Math Assistance Program: Provides small-group math instruction for students who are working below grade level.
- Reading Assistance Program: Offers targeted

School District	Levy Collection	Revenue Per Student	Cost Per \$1,000
Vashon	\$ 3,930,379	2,582	1.22
Mercer Island	\$ 11,161,557	2,525	0.76
Seattle	\$ 134,419,995	2,519	0.55
Bellevue	\$ 51,302,571	2,502	0.71
Renton	\$ 38,550,865	2,471	1.50
Skykomish	\$ 120,601	2,275	0.61
Northshore	\$ 50,649,654	2,227	1.50
Shoreline	\$ 20,900,363	2,190	1.50
Tukwila	\$ 6,059,455	2,144	1.50
Snoqualmie	\$ 14,249,938	2,032	1.49
Riverview	\$ 6,522,395	1,960	1.50
Lake Washington	\$ 59,265,930	1,960	0.90
Issaquah	\$ 36,368,793	1,772	1.02
Highline	\$ 31,937,529	1,721	1.50
Enumclaw	\$ 6,331,221	1,568	1.50
Fife	\$ 5,886,012	1,567	1.50
Kent	\$ 40,679,089	1,525	1.50
Tahoma	\$ 10,724,041	1,241	1.49
Auburn	\$ 19,508,837	1,167	1.50
Federal Way	\$ 24,644,364	1,107	1.50

Tahoma consistently ranks among the state's top school districts, academically. But the district collects fewer dollars per student from local property taxes than all but two other King County school districts, due to the district's relatively low assessed valuation.

small group reading instruction for students who are reading below grade level.

- Substitutes: Levy funds pay a significant share of costs for teachers who substitute for classroom teachers for activities such as reading assessments, teacher training and support, new curriculum and more.

- Title 2: The levy supplements federal funds to provide professional development to help teachers assist students with different learning styles and behavior challenges. It also helps focus the use of data to improve classroom practice and student learning.

- Facility use: Services such as scheduling field use and room rental, are paid from levy funds.

- Field trips: These trips supplement classroom learning and, except those supported by outside organizations such as PTA/PTO or booster groups, are supported by levy funds. Examples include visits to the salmon hatchery and Landsburg Dam,

Shadow Lake Bog, Summit and Outdoor Academy, law class visits to King County courts, music and choir trips and festivals, and more.

- Food Service: Levy revenue supplements fees, federal and state funding.

- Zero hour classes.

- 8-period schedule at the high school.

- Summer School: The levy pays for this program, which serves students in grades 6-11, and provides assistance in math, language arts and credit retrieval.

- Custodians whose pay is not provided or not fully supported by state funding.

- Assistant principals and deans.

- Central Services support positions.

- Playground paraeducators.

- Maintenance staff support.

- Secondary theme readers.

- English Language Learners program.

- MSOCS (materials, supplies, utilities, insurance).

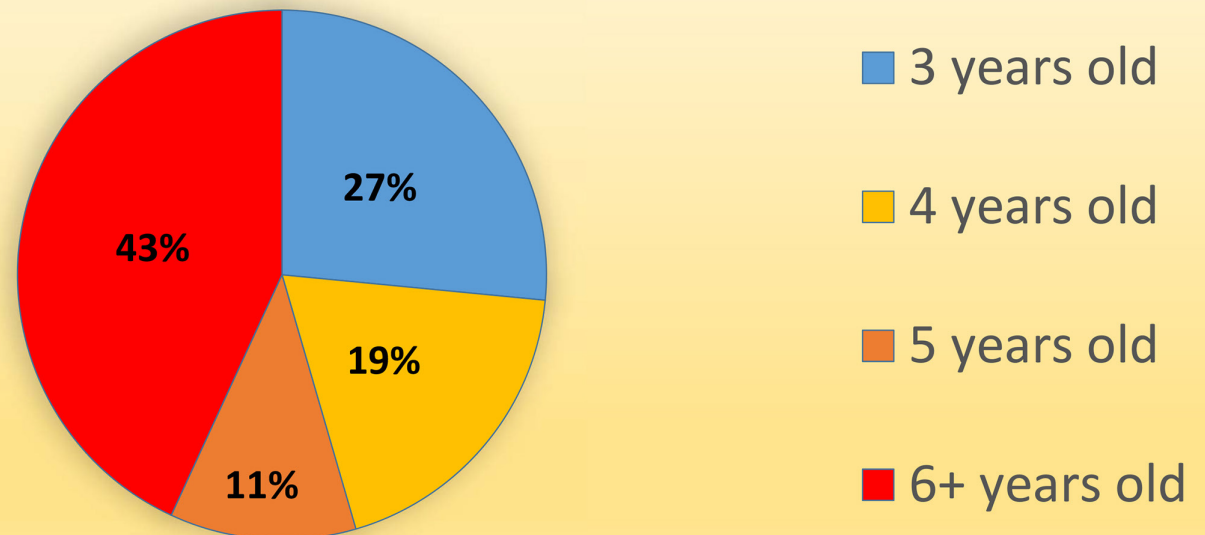
Technology Levy: Assists student learning

The Technology Levy pays for equipment, software, infrastructure, training and support staff. State basic education funding provides very little support for classroom technology. Tahoma's Technology Plan, created by a committee of parents, community members, staff & students, guides how classroom technology is used to enhance learning. Among the services and equipment paid for by the levy are:

- Keeping 9,000 computers for students and staff in good working order; maintaining five-year refresh cycle.
- Increasing student access to computers at school, to accelerate and enhance learning, providing necessary access to online curriculum and resources.
- Digital tools to support students who receive special education services.
- Educational and office software licenses.
- Technicians to support equipment purchasing, installation and maintenance.
- Technology coaches to help ensure technology is leveraged to improve learning where appropriate, as well as provide training and support for teachers in order to achieve equity and improve accountability in using classroom technology.
- Servers, storage, network switches, firewalls, routers, Wi-Fi, and other infrastructure.

This is the opening statement of the technology plan: "In the Tahoma School District, technology is leveraged and prioritized as a strategic investment to support empowered and engaging learning and teaching, and help ensure all students gain the Future Ready Skills necessary in order to leave our system with a valued, viable, and personalized plan for lifelong success.

Aging Tahoma Computers



More than half of Tahoma's 9,000 computers are five or more years old. Without funding from the Technology Levy, classroom computers can't be replaced and will begin to fail.

Technology use is prioritized where it can accelerate and improve student learning. Our technology model, developed by the Tech Model Review Committee during the fall of 2018, emphasizes that technology be used in our district to support our three essential outcomes: Empowered Learning, Future Ready Skills, and the Future Ready Plan. The core values of Equity, Sustainability, and Access guide decision-making and priority setting. We want all students to have the

experiences, opportunities, and tools necessary to attain both our instructional goals and their own aspirations. This plan is integral to achieving our goals for students. The goals outlined in this plan are significant and extend beyond the four years of this levy cycle. While we intend to make considerable progress toward achieving them over the four years of the levy, we know that realistically, many of the goals reflected in this strategic plan may take up to 10 years to realize."

Failure of the 2018 Technology Levy interrupted funding for purchase of new equipment, system maintenance, and staff support. Reserve funds are being used as a temporary way to maintain, but not replace, existing equipment and infrastructure. The levy would allow Tahoma to resume a replacement cycle of five years for classroom computers.



Classroom technology employs a variety of tools, including projectors.

Technology supports learning in Tahoma classrooms. All classroom technology is guided by a technology plan created over several months by a committee of district parents and staff members and guided by research and information about best practices for how technology can best be used to help students learn.

Questions and answers about the levies

Q: Why not spend the district's fund-balance reserve instead of asking for levies?

A: The fund balance is intended to be the school district's hedge against unexpected expenses and emergencies. Though the district has insurance, there are events that could occur that would not be covered, or completely covered, by insurance. One example is the failure of the technology and transportation levies in 2018. Fund-balance reserve dollars were used to help maintain, but not refresh, classroom technology. Fund-balance money also was used -- along with an unanticipated state grant -- to purchase six school buses. Because the fund balance does not have regular, dedicated income, it is seen as an unsustainable resource that is geared toward one-time purchases or uses. The School Board has stated the district should maintain a fund balance equalling at least 10-12 percent of the district's general fund budget. The remaining money can be used for district expenses, and some of that money is committed to classroom technology spending in conjunction with a technology levy. Even with levy funds, the fund balance is expected to shrink over the next four years.

Q: Why do we still need local levies to support schools?



Athletics and activities for students are funded by levy dollars, which make up about 9% of the school district's operating budget.

A: Even with changes to state education funding that resulted from the McCleary Decision, school districts still need local funding to pay for programs, staffing, equipment, and supplies that are not funded by the state. State funding pays for "basic education" and federal funds provide a very small percentage of operating funds. Everything else is paid by local levy funds. Tahoma also seeks grants when possible, but most grants are intended as one-time funding and are not intended to sustain ongoing programs or staffing.

Q: Why didn't Tahoma ask for the maximum levy rate?

A: The proposed EP&O levy would be 50 cents higher (per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) than the expiring levy, moving from \$1.50 to \$2 per \$1,000, which is below the levy rate lid. In 2019, the state Legislature made adjustments to a new state funding plan that began in 2018 by raising the EP&O levy ceiling from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

After spending considerable time analyzing what the district needs to support students, the School Board and administrators made adjustments to ensure that local school tax rates remain as low as possible. Needs vary by school district, and some nearby districts are asking for the maximum levy amount.

The increase would provide sufficient funds to maintain existing programs, staffing, and supplies, according to budget projections made by the school district.

Q: What is the district's history when it comes to approving levy measures?

A: Tahoma voters have approved operating levies consistently since the 1970s, when court rulings led to major changes in how schools are funded. School districts are permitted to re-run a levy measure one time if it fails to pass; there have been four times since the 1970s that levies have failed on the first attempt, but passed on the second try.

Q: Will the Technology Levy provide each student with a computer to take home, as in some of our surrounding school districts?

A: No. Tahoma is not implementing a "one-to-one" computer program. Technology Levy funds will ensure that while students are at school each one will have access to a computer that is in good working order, and that the network supporting computers and other technology is functional and well maintained. Rather than an emphasis on 1:1 computers, the Tahoma Technology Plan created by a committee of parents, students, citizens and staff calls for elements such as technology coaches to help ensure technology is leveraged to improve learning where appropriate. It also will provide training and support for teachers in order to achieve equity and improve accountability in using classroom technology.



Tahoma Levy Information is produced by the Tahoma School District Communication Office and mailed to all school district residents. Contact the Communications Office by calling 425-413-3409 or by email to Kevin Patterson, communications 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 have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

Title IX Officer
Director of Human Resources
25720 Maple Valley Highway
Maple Valley, WA 98038
425-413-3400
TitleIX@tahomasd.us

ADA Coordinator
Director of Human Resources
25720 Maple Valley Highway
Maple Valley, WA 98038
425-413-3400
ADA@tahomasd.us

Section 504 Coordinator
Director of Special Services
25720 Maple Valley Highway
Maple Valley, WA 98038
425-413-3400
Section504@tahomasd.us

How to calculate levy assessments

For a typical Maple Valley house that is valued at \$500,000 by the King County Assessor, the annual cost of the EP&O levy is estimated at \$1,000. The annual estimated cost for the Technology levy on that home is \$235. Here is how the cost is calculated:

Divide the assessed valuation (\$500,000) by 1,000, which equals 500. Multiply 500 by the tax rate. For the EP&O levy, the math looks like this:

$500 \times \$2 = \$1,000$. For the Technology Levy, the math is: $500 \times \$0.47 = \235 .

Tax assistance for seniors & disabled:

King County provides property tax exemptions and deferrals to senior citizens, disabled persons, and veterans, based on income. To learn more about the program, visit the Assessor's web page: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/assessor/TaxRelief.aspx>