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Technology plan moving forward

School Board discusses funding

A year after work began to analyze classroom technology status and needs, the Tahoma School Board is reviewing a proposed plan and how to pay for it.

The review, which began at a July 30 School Board meeting, is being led by Dawn Wakeley, executive director of Teaching and Learning. She described the work done last school year by a task force of parents, staff and students to design a technology model and by a separate technology committee to draft a usage plan. Wakeley said the district has a clear vision for classroom technology's role in supporting empowered learning strategies that fit within Tahoma's Future Ready initiative.

"We truly think this is what we need for our students to be competitive," she said.

The technology model and usage plan were developed in the wake of a failed technology levy in 2018. The district is using fund-balance reserves to maintain existing classroom technology, but has reduced support staffing and suspended purchases of new equipment and software.

With a classroom technology model and operating plan in place, the School Board now must decide how to pay for the district's classroom technology vision. The board reviewed initial cost estimates, along with proposed alternatives designed to reduce the number of dollars needed

from a technology levy.

Cost reductions are grouped into four areas:

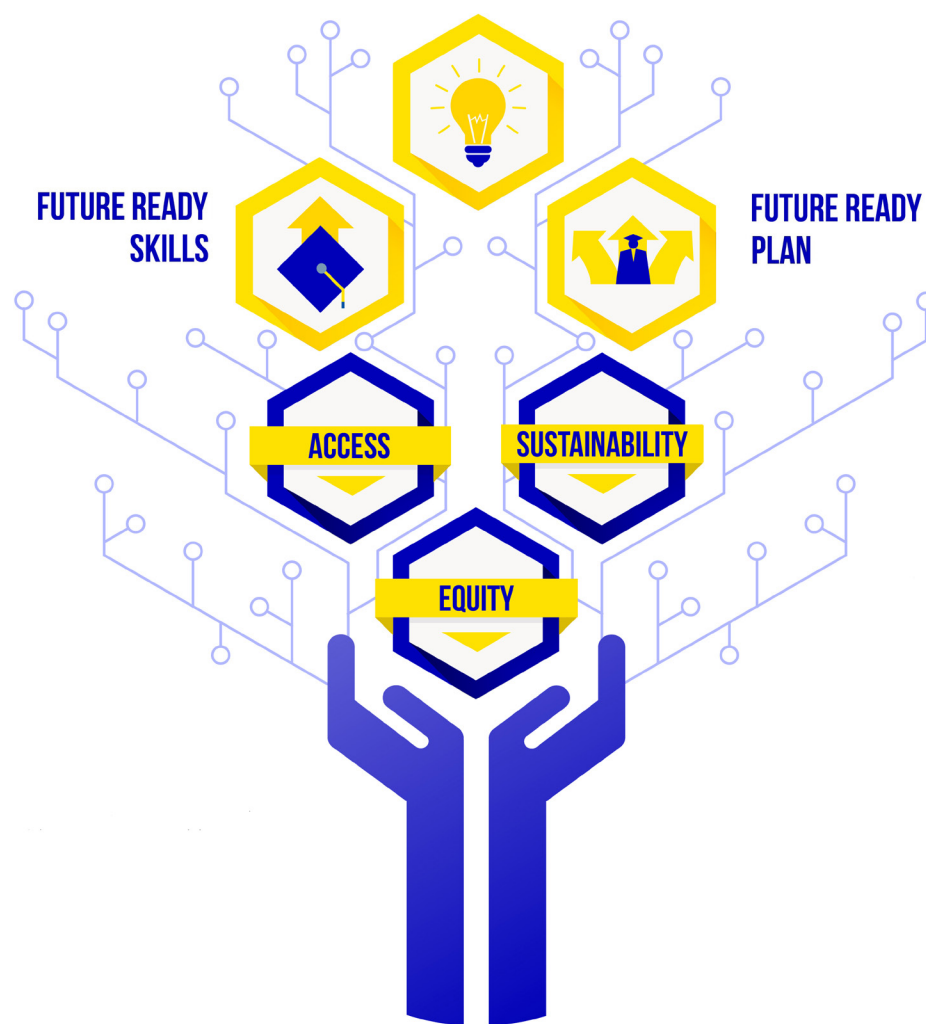
- Purchase less expensive equipment or rethink the strategy;
- One-time costs that could be paid for from the district's fund-balance reserve;
- One-time costs that could be considered capital projects, which could be paid from the capital projects fund;
- Use the general fund for a limited number of ongoing expenses.

The recommended changes would reduce the estimated amount of a proposed four-year technology levy from \$22.1 million to \$13.9 million. Among the major cost shifts would be replacement of old computers and purchase of 515 additional computers to increase science and math access by using \$3.5 million from the fund balance reserve, though it is not a sustainable funding source.

The Board discussed when funds would be available if voters approve a 2020 technology levy. Funds would not be collected until spring of 2021 if the levy is approved in 2020, which prompted discussion of whether the district could borrow from its fund-balance reserve to begin implementing the technology plan at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. More discussion is planned.

TAHOMA TECHNOLOGY

EMPOWERED LEARNING



Last year's Technology Model Review committee adopted this graphic, suggested by a student on the committee and called the "Circuitree," to illustrate the relationship and importance of providing equity, access and sustainability for classroom technology in support of the district's Future Ready learning goals.

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New teacher aims to pick up where her mentor left off

It's always a challenge to follow a retired teacher who is synonymous with the subject and the school. But it helps if that teacher was also your mentor.

Tahoma High School alum Reni Jenks has stepped into the animal science classroom of her former teacher and community treasure, Marie Page. Jenks, who grew up showing animals, enrolled at Washington State University to study animal science, but it wasn't until her now-husband, Tyler, decided to earn a teaching degree that she started to seriously consider a career in education.

"I had people telling me, 'You should be a teacher!'" she recalled. Their instincts turned out to be right. Jenks taught animal science at South Kitsap High School last year, then found out that Page was leaving her longtime position at THS. Expecting their first son, Tyler and Reni decided to move back to Maple Valley to be close to family, although Tyler (also a Tahoma alum) commutes nearly two hours each way to teach animal science at North Mason High School.

"I'm very excited to be in Tahoma and back in this community," Jenks said. "I definitely want to continue to build on what Marie has built. ... It's exciting and intimidating at the same time."

In addition to the current animal science classes, she hopes to be able to offer advanced level classes, as well as to add some opportunities in the FFA club for career development events, leadership development events, public speaking and more.

"As Reni replaces Marie Page, she brings not only all she learned as a student at Tahoma, but also what she has learned in her time in WSU's Agriculture program and teaching in South Kitsap HS," said Martin Barber, the director of Career and Technical Education for THS. "Our students are fortunate to have such an amazing person who understands the culture of Tahoma and our Agriculture Program."



Reni Jenks takes over for Marie Page, who retired in June.

In her free time, Jenks said she enjoys hiking, being outdoors and raising and showing French Lop and Netherland Dwarf rabbits.

Tahoma hired more than 60 new certificated employees. For the full list, please visit the Staff News section of the Tahoma website: https://www.tahomasd.us/for_staff.

School Board OKs student dress code changes

Tahoma School District has completed an overhaul of the school district's student dress code, which was approved by the School Board in late August.

The update of district policy and procedure 3224 revised the student dress code that was in effect since 2007. The changes were developed by a committee of school principals and a district administrator. A survey of more than 3,000 district parents and students about the dress code was used by the principals in their work, along with a review of policies from other school districts and applicable state law.

The policy applies to students at all grade levels and is gender neutral. It is intended to establish standards that allow for self-expression while preserving school order and safety. The policy places limits on clothing deemed to be a health or safety hazard, could damage school property, or that creates a "material or substantial disruption of the educational process."

The procedure, which lists specific applications of the policy, prohibits messages on clothing that are lewd, sexual in nature, drug related, tobacco related, or alcohol related. Gang apparel and hate messages also are prohibited. The procedure also states that non-transparent clothing must cover private areas, including the midsection of the torso, front and back.

The School Board reviewed policy and procedure proposals from the principals' committee, listened to parent and staff comment, and discussed at length how to craft the changes to ensure that it meets student needs in an equitable, fair manner and is enforceable.

According to the policy: "Students have the right to be treated equitably. This policy will not create disparities, reinforce or increase marginalization of any group, nor will it be more strictly enforced against students because of racial identity, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, gender nonconformity, sexual orientation, cultural or religious identity, household income, body size/type, or body maturity."

Staff will use reasonable efforts to avoid applying this policy in a way that singles out or embarrasses a student in front of other students."

To see the full policy and procedure 3224, visit the Tahoma website, www.tahomasd.us. Find the Our District tab and look for School Board, BoardDocs, policies.

Backpack Buddies' summer food program a success

This summer, Backpack Buddies of Maple Valley introduced a new service to help make sure kids had enough to eat. During the school year, Backpack Buddies provides a bag of food for students in need to take home over the weekend so that they come back to school on Monday nourished and ready to learn. But last February when the snowstorm hit just before mid-winter break, organizers began thinking about the fact that some families were without the extra food for two weeks.

"That really made us think about the summer, and the gap in service," said Mindy Gamble, president of Backpack Buddies. "That is what has always driven us: There's a need? Let's meet it!"

Backpack Buddies is a nonprofit organization run by a board of volunteers and supported by community members who offer their time to pack and deliver

the bags to the schools each week. From there, counselors distribute the bags to students whose parents have opted into the program. Bags contain easy-to-prepare or ready-to-eat foods such as fresh fruit, granola bars, juice, macaroni and cheese, oatmeal, etc. For the summer bags, the fresh fruit was replaced with a coupon for fresh fruit from Foley's.

For the new summer service, families in need signed up to receive 65 bags per week. Because school wasn't in session, organizers offered to pack the bags and have them available at a secure location for a 12-hour pick-up window each week. Estimating because the summer service was new, Gamble said she and her team expected that perhaps 30 bags per week would be picked up. Instead an average of 45 bags were collected each week during the summer (and the service extends into September in an effort to eliminate any

lapse in service).

"There was still a significant amount of kiddos in need of those bags," Gamble said. "Overall I think (the summer service) has been positive."

In general, the school-year program was serving about 165 students throughout the Tahoma School District last year, she said. The costs of the program are covered through donations and fundraisers. On Sept. 28, Grocery Outlet will host a food drive for Backpack Buddies, and customers interested in participating may purchase foods with a "Backpack Buddies approved" tag to donate. A Bunco fundraiser is also in the planning stages.

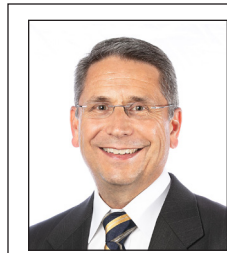
Information about how to donate or become a sponsor is available on the organization's new website at backpackbuddiesofmaplevally.org and families in need may also submit a secure application for food support via the website.

New year, same focus to help students be Future Ready

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year! Our educators have been working hard to get our new school year off to a great start. As I reflect on the opportunity this year brings, I have a strong sense of optimism and renewed energy. I would like to share a few thoughts on why what we do matters, our focus for the year, and the value of our partnership with our parents and community.

At a fundamental level, our purpose is very clear. We are here to serve our community by providing a high quality education that prepares our students to be Future Ready. We know that each day brings a unique opportunity for our educators to connect deeply with students as they develop strong relationships, convey a sense of belief in their unique talents and skills, and inspire them to follow their passions and dreams.

For some of our students, life has already



Tony Giurado

brought tremendous challenges. A high quality education, however, has the potential to even the playing field and put students on a trajectory filled with hope and possibilities. Ultimately, we

are building a better community because our children are the future, and they will shape our community for years to come.

Tahoma School District has a great reputation in our community and across the region because of our commitment to find ways to improve student learning and to touch the hearts and minds of our students. This year, our educators are sharpening the vision for what Empow-

ered Learning looks like in our classrooms. This work will set the stage for us to implement strategies for higher levels of engagement and deeper learning that will inspire excellence.

Tahoma's vision and success would not be possible without the support and guidance of our School Board directors, who have been going beyond the call of duty this summer to put in extra hours working on Tahoma's financial outlook. They care deeply about our district, and I would like to thank them for their time and dedication. The Board has been reviewing our new vision and plan for technology, reflecting on our programs for students, our operational methods, and studying financial forecasts. They are carefully analyzing possible next steps, including a potential Technology Levy and replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy, needed to ensure that we have

the revenue streams to continue to offer high quality learning for students while expanding to new levels of excellence.

I would also like to take a moment to thank you for being our partner in support of our students. The only way that we can provide the very best education possible for our students is for our families, our community, and our schools to work together in the true spirit of collaboration. We are committed to always putting students first and engaging parents and community to establish open communication and to build a strong partnership. Together, we can continue our Tahoma tradition of excellence by giving our students the experiences they need to grow and the skills to empower them to follow their passions and dreams!

Superintendent Tony Giurado welcomes your questions. Email him at: Tgiurado@tahomasd.us

Kindergarten Camp eases transition to elementary school

One morning several weeks before the new school year started, excited voices could be heard in the kindergarten wing at Lake Wilderness Elementary. Inside Britney Robinson's classroom, a group of young soon-to-be kindergartners was eating a snack together and getting ready to move on to the next activity of the day. As part of the district's Kindergarten Camp, some incoming students are invited to participate in a voluntary week of preparation designed to increase kindergarten readiness before classes start.

After snack, Robinson's group gathered together on the rug for a "brain break" video to help them get their wiggles out before storytime. Next, they were asked to take a seat to listen to storytime. Robinson sat at the front of the class, holding a stuffed animal raccoon, and reminded her class that her "friend," Chester the raccoon, would be looking for students using good listening skills to sit with for part of the story. She opened the book "The Kissing Hand," and began to read about the young raccoon in the story who goes off to night school for the first time.

As is often the case with 5-year-old scholars, it wasn't long before one student had to use the restroom. Robinson paused to remind the boy of a quiet sign he could use to ask to use the restroom without interrupting the rest of the class. The story resumed but soon the raccoon had chosen a student who was sitting still, intently listening, to sit with. As Robinson handed Chester to the student, she reminded the rest of the class that her friend was still



Britney Robinson reads "The Kissing Hand" to children attending Kindergarten Camp at Lake Wilderness Elementary School in August.

watching and waiting for someone else to sit with next.

"The purpose of K Camp is to help students and families transition into the school environment. Students are learning how to 'do school' through literacy-based activities while experiencing the rules, routines and procedures of a typical kindergarten day. Students develop a familiarity with staff and peers, preparing them for their entrance into elementary school," said Christine Thurston, Early Learning Coordinator for the district. "Kindergarten Camp actually helps both those that attend, and indirectly those that don't. Teachers find that students who have attended camp often step forward and act

as leaders in modeling routines and procedures that the other students then quickly pick up. In this way, the whole class gets a quicker, more supported start to school."

This year's Kindergarten Camp served 180 incoming kindergarten students from throughout the district. In most cases, students attend at their own school building; however this year Shadow Lake did not host a camp session due to ongoing construction. The program began in the summer of 2016, and has been funded in cooperation with the Tahoma Schools Foundation, which has an emphasis on kindergarten readiness. Students are invited to participate after kindergarten assessments are completed; a balance of students who

can use a boost and peer students.

"Kindergarten Camp is an extra boost for those students who need it either academically or socially. This extra four days allows these children to gain confidence, experience expectations, and set them on the right path on the first day of kindergarten and beyond," Krissy Riggs said in an earlier interview. Riggs teaches kindergarten at Rock Creek and during Kindergarten Camp. "For those students who might have otherwise begun kindergarten unsure, a bit behind and nervous, instead this extra small-class time, scaffolded to support their needs, gives them a lift that lasts throughout kindergarten. Without this extra time, students who are struggling take much more time to catch up, and feel less confident as learners."

Research shows when students start behind, they most often stay behind, Thurston said. "Students can start kindergarten with skills at a 3-year-old level to skills at an 8-year-old level. We want to provide opportunities for students to start on a level playing field," she added.

The Tahoma District has invested in other supporting events leading up to a more successful first day of school (READY! for Kindergarten parent workshops, Kindergarten Kickoff, Kindergarten Game Night, Kindergarten Assessments, Kindergarten Camp and Family Connections). Each of these in different ways, support students and families' transition into school, easing anxiety and answering questions families may have about the start of the year.

Shadow Lake improvements completed

Shadow Lake Elementary is more secure after the second phase of improvements that were paid for using funds from the 2013 construction and remodeling bond measure.

Phase one included new portable classrooms and a new playground and playfield, which opened last school year. The second phase focused on safety and security improvements, as well as adding a classroom and reconfiguring kindergarten classrooms into a kindergarten wing. Construction costs were about \$2.4 million, said Cindy Darcy, project manager for the district.

On the wall facing visitors who enter the office hangs a print by former Shadow Lake student and professional artist Iris Scott, featuring a large tiger. Principal Mike Hanson is planning an art project for students at the school and has invited Scott to attend and participate. As staff greet families and guests, soft light shines from new fixtures that don't have traditional light bulbs -- instead, the lampshade piece itself emits the light.

The school, built in 1967 and remodeled 20 years ago, will celebrate the most recent improvements as part of its annual open house event on Sept. 26.

The work this summer concluded a 2 ½-year project that produced these changes:

- Reconfigured the main office to move the entrance and create a secure vestibule.
- Installed 28 video cameras around the site, including cameras that allow staff to see the entire perimeter and cameras throughout the campus and hallways.
- Improved visibility for safety.
- Installed electric doors with secure badge access and single-touch lockdown.
- Installed a new fire panel as well as new strobes, pulse stations and monitoring system.
- New touches throughout the buildings such as new carpet, paint and tile (with colors themed by build-



A new, secure main entrance was created at Shadow Lake Elementary School as part of the school's just-completed remodeling. All visitors now must use this entrance

ing; for example, the 100 building is orange). Classrooms also received new back counters and tackable surfaces on columns.

- Added a classroom and created a kindergarten wing that includes new restrooms.
- A larger, more efficient workspace in the workroom instead of two smaller rooms.
- Changes in the library that resulted in a more usable space.
- Updated and additional signage.

2019-2020 operating budget uses reserves to supplement revenue

Tahoma School District will use fund-balance reserves to supplement the operating budget for the 2019-2020 school year. The budget was approved by the School Board on a 5-0 vote Aug. 6.

It will collect \$127,062,371 in state, local, and federal funds; it spends \$130,560,892 plus an additional \$1,389,674 for loan payments and technology. The spending is \$4,888,195 more than anticipated revenue, and the difference will be paid from the fund-balance reserve. Budget details can be found on the Tahoma website: www.tahomasd.us in the News & Announcements section.

Most of the district's \$106,782,194 in state revenue is based on student enrollment. Federal revenue is \$2,638,967 and is mostly special education funding. Local revenue is \$17,641,210, including \$10,761,082 from the Educational Programs and Operations Levy.

Like other school districts in the state, most of Tahoma's general fund spending, 82%, is for salaries and benefits. The remainder is for materials, supplies and other costs (MSOCS). The budget spends \$18,320,146 more than the 2018-2019 budget. Most of the increased spending is for salary and benefit increases to teaching and support staff, along with hiring additional staff to reduce class sizes in grades kindergarten-3 and to meet anticipated enrollment growth.

As part of new state budgeting requirements, Tahoma must issue a three-year budget forecast beyond the 2019-2020 budget document. The School Board discussed whether to include anticipated revenue from local levies in the forecast but decided not to do so, since it is not known whether voters will approve future levies. Board members said they want the budget to be accurate and the process to be transparent so that the community can trust the numbers.

The budget forecasts show that if Tahoma continues to rely on reserve funds to balance the budget, the fund balance would be exhausted by 2021-2022 and result in a deficit unless spending or revenue is adjusted.



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:

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

Follow school events on new Tahoma app

Families, students and community members who want to hear the latest news from individual schools and the district may now download the custom Tahoma School District 409 app for free. Features include school information, news, staff directory, and calendars as well as links to menus, bus information, district social media and online payments.

The new app doesn't replace other sources of information such as the website and email, but rather supplements those sources for individuals who prefer to use an app.

Created by SchoolMessenger, the app is part of the communication package that the district pays for, which also includes the website and the service that provides

email, calling and texting to parents and guardians according to their preferences. Those who download the app may select which schools to follow; for example, someone who has a child at Shadow Lake Elementary and the high school might choose to receive information about those two schools. District-level information is included as a default setting.

The app also offers the option for the district to send push notifications to inform families about school-related emergencies, closures or other timely issues.

To get the app, visit Apple's App Store or Android's Google Play page and search "Tahoma." After the app downloads, open the app and select the school or schools to follow.