



ISSAQUAH SCHOOL DISTRICT
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www.issaquah.wednet.edu/news/FOCUS.aspx

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Why am I getting this newsletter?

As a resident of the Issaquah School District, you are an important stakeholder in the education of local children. This newsletter is designed to update you on the work and accomplishments of the district and its students—which contribute to the quality of our community and our future.

Points of Pride A few of the reasons you have to be proud of your schools



District musicians honored

More than 75 Issaquah School District music students have been recognized as the best in the state! They were individually selected to participate in prestigious Washington Music Educators Association (WMEA) All-State Honor groups (including Chorus, Choir, Band, and Orchestra). The Honors groups performed at the annual WMEA conference in Yakima in Febru-

ary. Additionally, Pacific Cascade's orchestra was the only middle-school program chosen statewide to perform as a whole during the conference and Sunny Hills' teacher Don Clausen was inducted into the WMEA Hall of Fame!

Tiger Mountain receives prestigious award

The Washington State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction recently presented Tiger Mountain Community High School with a 2011 Washington Achievement Award with special recognition for extended graduation rate and improvement in student achievement. Congratulations to all the Tiger students and staff!

Kindness—pass it on!

In February, filmmakers Lauren Parsekian and Molly Thompson addressed a standing-room-only crowd in Issaquah High's theater about their "Finding Kind" campaign, which includes a documentary of their trip across America talking to people about their experiences with girl-on-girl bullying. The presentation and film were brought to the district through funding from PTSAs and the Issaquah Schools Foundation.

Complete stories at www.issaquah.wednet.edu



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Focus

on building the future for students

The School Construction and Maintenance Bond will be on the April 17 ballot



QUICK FACTS: TOP THREE BOND QUESTIONS

1. **What's in the bond package?** All critical construction and maintenance needs through 2019: Expansion of career and technical training, space additions at over-capacity schools, rebuilds of the district's oldest schools, maintenance and repairs (roofs, heating systems, etc.), and more...
2. **How will it impact my taxes?** Residents' local school taxes will decrease even if the bond is approved—the owner of a \$500,000 home, for example, would pay an estimated \$215 less per year than they currently do.
3. **What is a school bond?** The state does not fund regular building or maintenance of public schools. Instead, local residents approve school bonds; otherwise, operational dollars would have to be spent on maintenance and repairs instead of classroom learning.

Please look inside for more in-depth information about the April bond.

continued on next page

School bonds: The basics



Washington state does not fund regular building or maintenance of public schools. Instead, local voters approve school bonds.

Similar to a mortgage, bonds are paid for over about 20 years, helping to keep costs lower and more stable for taxpayers. Bonds require a supermajority—60 percent plus one—to pass.

Especially since the state has cut Issaquah School District's operations budget by \$16 million during the last three years, community members often ask: ***Why can't some of the bond dollars be used to directly support classrooms instead of being used for maintenance and construction?*** Simply put, it's illegal. State law sets an immovable cap on the amount of local tax dollars that can be raised to directly support the operations budget, which pays for all the day-to-day expenses of running a school such as class size, salaries, utilities, and curriculum. A judge established the cap in the 1970's

because districts were over-relying on local tax dollars to run schools, and schools began shutting down when the economy dipped and levies failed. In Issaquah, we have reached that cap—we cannot collect anymore local tax dollars for school/classroom operations.

On the other hand, districts have no cap on the amount of bond dollars that can be raised locally. These funds, however, must only be used for purchasing land and building, renovating, or maintaining facilities. Although not directly tied to the operations budget, bonds are critical to preserving classroom dollars. ***Why?*** The state provides no regular funding for facilities, and so we would be forced to use operational dollars to pay for school repairs, maintenance, and building if not for bonds. For instance, replacing a broken boiler costs at least \$500,000, which is equivalent to about six teaching positions. Also, new construction streamlines efficiencies meaning hundreds of thousands of dollars are recouped in the operations budget when energy bills are reduced and deteriorating conditions no longer need constant custodial upkeep.

Common misconceptions about taxes and tax rates

- Changes in home values will not change the amount of taxes voters authorized the district to collect.
- Local school taxes can only be increased by a vote of the people.
- If your property value increases at a lower rate than the average increase for the school district, the amount of taxes you pay will decrease.
- If your property value increases at a higher rate than the average increase for the school district, the amount of taxes you pay will increase.
- If the district's average property value increases and your property exactly follows the trend, your tax rate will go down but the amount of taxes you pay will be the same.
- If the district's average property value decreases and your property exactly follows the trend, your tax rate will go up but the amount of taxes you pay will be the same.
- For Property Taxes 101, visit <http://tinyurl.com/ISDtaxes101>.



DID YOU KNOW:

In the past decade, the Issaquah School District has added about 31 percent more square feet of building space. Total energy consumption, however, has decreased by 4 percent. The efficiencies gained in new construction directly preserve operations dollars for classroom support.



What's in the 2012 bond?

\$219 million in projects to provide critical building, maintenance, and repairs for the next eight years

Job skills: Relocate and renovate Tiger Mountain Community High School to expand districtwide career and technical training to help all students compete in the global economy.

Critical maintenance and repairs for all facilities: Replace failing roofs, windows, and floors; renovate/repair aging heating, electrical, and mechanical systems; upgrade school security and safety features; paint interiors and exteriors. Resulting dollars saved in utility efficiencies directly support classroom operations.

Future capacity and the learning environment: Modernize Liberty High's classroom and common areas; add space to accommodate growth at Issaquah Valley Elementary and Apollo Elementary.

Rebuilds of oldest schools: After more than five decades, Clark Elementary, Issaquah Middle, and Sunny Hills Elementary are at the end of their lifespans. Long-term financial forecasts favor rebuilding now—in a period of historically low construction costs—rather than making ongoing major repairs in the years ahead. Additionally, new buildings tend to run about 30 percent more efficiently, saving utility dollars for classroom operations.

DID YOU KNOW:

The Issaquah School District has the lowest administrative costs as a percentage of its budget than any other district in King County.

QUESTIONS?

- Visit www.issaquah.wednet.edu/district/bond/
- Email bond2012@issaquah.wednet.edu
- Call 425-837-7000

Usability and safety: Increase usability/safety of athletic fields and high-school stadiums. These facilities have not kept pace with growing student demand for classroom or co-curricular use. For example, the bond would save \$150,000 in annual upkeep costs and provide five times more use (eliminating downtime for muddiness and regrowth) for middle-school fields alone.

For the complete itemized list of bond projects, visit www.issaquah.wednet.edu/district/bond/.

What's the tax impact?

In relation to current tax expenditures, **residents can expect to see a decrease in local school taxes even if the bond is approved**—for example, the owner of a \$500,000 home would pay about \$215 less per year than they currently do.

How? Recognizing the current economic climate, the new bond package is structured to be about half as much as the bond debt retiring in 2012. The retiring bond debt will drop the tax rate from \$4.85 to \$4.05 per \$1,000 of assessed property value; approval of the new bond will result in an estimated \$4.42 tax rate.

For a chart of historic and anticipated tax rates, visit www.issaquah.wednet.edu/district/bond/.

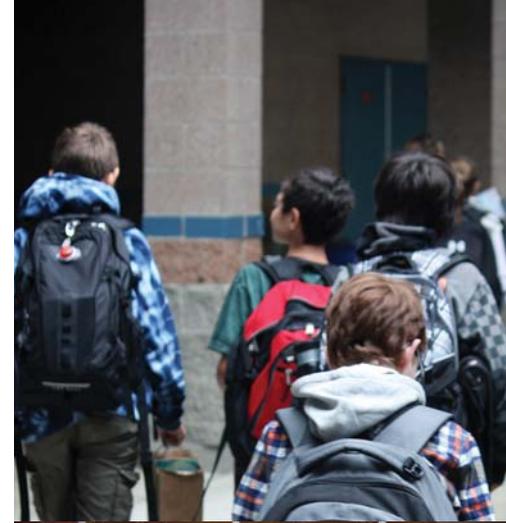
DID YOU KNOW:

Moody's has recognized Issaquah School District's strong fiscal management with its highest Aaa rating.

Only 0.76 percent of all school districts nationwide share this distinction, which keeps tax rates as low as possible for residents. This superior rating, for example, will save taxpayers about \$10 million on current outstanding bond debt.

How was the bond package formed?

- January-February 2011: Technicians evaluated the condition of all school facilities, principals and staff made requests based on educational needs, and the Business Office made future growth predictions to arrive at a preliminary list of projects for the next decade or so.
- March-April 2011: A community committee with student, parent, principal, business, senior, municipal, and at-large representation distilled the package. The committee's filter: bond projects had to be essential to maximizing resources for student learning, maintaining a safe and appropriate school environment, and stretching taxpayers' dollars during a time of historically low construction costs.
- May-June 2011: The superintendent further refined the package and presented it to the school board.
- June-September 2011: The school board established guiding principles (bond projects must address safety, support student achievement and educational success, protect the operations fund and the community's long-term investment in its facilities, ensure equity throughout the district, etc.) and sought further community input before streamlining and approving the final bond package to go before voters on April 17, 2012.



How will the resolution actually read on the April 17 ballot?

The Board of Directors approved Resolution No. 997 concerning this proposition for bonds. This proposition authorizes the District to rebuild Clark and Sunny Hills Elementary and Issaquah Middle; modernize Liberty High; relocate Tiger Mountain High for expanded career/technical training; improve district-wide heating/ventilation, space, and security; make usability improvements to curricular/athletic fields and stadiums; and make other improvements; to issue \$219,121,500 of general obligation bonds maturing within a maximum term of 20 years; and to levy excess property taxes annually to repay the bonds, as described in Resolution #997. Should this proposition be: (APPROVED?) (REJECTED?)

Then and now: Growth in the Issaquah School District

- 1961: 3,061 students, 5 school buildings
- 1971: 7,486 students, 10 school buildings
- 1981: 7,422 students, 12 school buildings
- 1991: 9,139 students, 14 school buildings
- 2001: 14,588 students, 20 school buildings
- 2011: 17,298 students, 24 school buildings

DID YOU KNOW:

The Issaquah School District manages about \$1.2 billion in capital assets, community investments that are built and maintained through bonds. In the past decade, the Capital Projects team has completed \$325 million in projects on schedule and within budget.

New construction, on time and on budget: Issaquah's costs compared to neighboring districts' costs*

Price per square foot	Issaquah School District	Average of neighboring districts' projects
Elementary buildings	\$227	\$265
High school buildings	\$226	\$308

**Based on 2011 state records; projects chosen for similarity and completion in the same time frame*

