



Monte R. Woolstenhulme, Ed. S

Superintendent

TSD401 Bond: The State of the Schools

Maybe you've visited the new website—tsd401bond.org—taken the survey, or have been to a recent school board meeting; if so, you've probably heard Teton County School District is planning to ask voters, again this November, to approve a school bond slated to pay for new school construction. The previous \$19 million bond failed twice in 2014, despite receiving a majority approval. In the state of Idaho, a two-thirds supermajority is required (66.67 percent).

Over the next six months, the TSD401 School Board will be working to ensure there is transparency regarding why the bond is being proposed, how it will be used, and how it will affect taxpayers. As part of this plan, look for a series of articles in the *Teton Valley News* and on the district website. The goal: Present the facts.

How much: Stay tuned. The board is in the process of deciding how much the bond will be for and over what period of time.

Why: Idaho does not fund buildings; communities are responsible for renovations, maintenance, and construction. Cue a school bond.

The Numbers

Teton County, Idaho, has grown faster than any other county in the state, up 47 percent since 2002 from 6,849 to just over 10,000 residents. With these new residents, classroom sizes have swelled.

Garett Chadwick of GPC Architects looked at the capacity of current facilities as of 2016, updating information gathered in 2012. The study determined capacity standards based on regional and recognized state departments of education—The Idaho Department of Education does not have a standard.

Capacity was based on desired square feet per occupant in the classroom and on the school grounds. Based on 2016 capacity numbers, all of TSD401 elementary schools are operating just below or over max capacity. Driggs and Victor Elementary Schools and Rendezvous Upper Elementary School are in need of new facilities, and while Tetonia is in need of updates, it is the only campus with the potential for expansion versus a rebuild. Adding classrooms and modular continues to place more strain on core facilities like restrooms, lunchrooms, and libraries.



PO Box 775 Driggs, ID 83422
Ph: 208 228 5923 Fax: 208 354 2250

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Driggs Elementary School has grown from a population of 250 students in 2012 to 332 in 2016, bringing their percent of capacity to 117-119 percent. The school's max student population is 195. The building, constructed during 1952 to be a high school, is at 86 percent of its facility service life (the expected life of a facility based on the materials, usage, and other environmental factors).

The Need:

- Each year, the district spends \$30,000 on maintenance and repairs.
- The rooms are small and overcrowded.
- The library is located at the back of the auditorium. The stage is now a classroom.
- The music room and the ESL room are located in spaces without windows.
- The computer lab, two classrooms, and ESL room are accessible only by stairs.

The City of Victor has had the largest growth in the county in recent years, but **Victor Elementary School** is at max capacity with 180 students, causing many children living close to Victor must travel to Driggs for school. The oldest school in the district, Victor Elementary was built in 1948 and has reached 100 percent of its facility service life as of 2016.

The Need:

- Each year, the district spends \$40,000 on maintenance and repairs
- Hallways have been converted to storage space or are used for instruction.
- The gymnasium is a shared community space, used between 8am and 9pm every day.
- One modular has already been added to the school property. There is a need for a second, but it would greatly reduce playground space.
- The auditorium stage has been converted to the cafeteria.
- The stage is also the location of Occupational Therapy.
- The staff and students share bathrooms.

Tetonia Elementary School now has a population of 83 students, 82 percent of its max capacity. The building was built in 1951 and is in need of updates and additions, as it reaches the last quarter of its facility service life at 84 percent.

The Need:

- Each year, the district spends \$35,000 on maintenance and repairs
- Tetonia Elementary has the capacity for expansion.



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- The staff and students share bathrooms.
- The cafeteria occupies the former stage space.
- The stage was walled off from the gym.

More than Brick And Mortar

Overcrowding is linked to increased wear and tear on buildings—A National Center for Education Statistics study found that schools that are at max capacity are more likely to have one or more buildings with less than adequate conditions.

But it is also linked to student and teacher success.

Overcrowding has been connected to lower achievement, decreased attention spans, and more violence, as well as the spread of illness. Teachers must combat an array of factors: excess noise, restricted movement during lessons, ensuring all pupils needs' are met, engaging students who aren't paying attention, to name a few.

For more information on the state of the school facilities, visit www.tsd401bond.org.