



PO Box 775 Driggs, ID 83422  
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**Monte R. Woolstenhulme, Ed. S**

**Superintendent**

### **Building a Bond: Addressing Your Concerns**

Proposing a bond is a big undertaking for all parties involved. It affects teachers and students. And it affects not only parents, but the entire community through taxes. This is not something taken lightly. But something we are approaching with the utmost intention to help all entities know why the bond will be up for vote this November.

We want to let you know that we are hearing your suggestions, concerns, and questions. We are ready to provide answers, engage in discussions, and keep this bond moving forward.

While we continue to work with the community and interested parties to determine the cost and terms of the bond, we wanted to take a moment to address some key questions and concerns we continue to hear in our surveys, focus groups, and meetings.

#### **Building Communication and Trust**

The survey and focus groups revealed concerns regarding the school district's—both the board and the administration's—ability to communicate effectively; to involve staff and the community in planning and decision making; and to manage projects cost effectively.

The school board recognizes that this need for communication goes beyond the bond and it is important for the district to continue to strengthen this throughout the year. Regarding the bond, the board is working to ensure all community members understand why there is a need, how funding works, and how the board will decide what the bond will include. The line of communication is open.

#### **Here are just some of the ways to get involved and stay informed:**

- Attend a Special Bond Meeting held the third Monday of every month at 6 p.m. at the District Office. We want your input! If you can't be there in person, watch the Facebook Live Stream on the district facebook page.
- Attend our regular board meetings held the first Monday of every month.
- Visit [www.tsd401bond.org](http://www.tsd401bond.org)
- Call the district to schedule a school tour.
- Read the bi-weekly articles in the Teton Valley News.
- Email board members with any questions or concerns.
- Stay tuned. There's more on the way!



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We know how important being informed is and are looking forward to strengthening our communication and transparency. Your feedback is appreciated.

Below you will find a few select questions that continue to be raised that we wanted to address. If you need any further information, please let us know.

### **Why Not Just Build A New High School?**

Throughout surveys and in focus groups, community members posed the question, “Why not build a new high school and shift the elementary students into the current middle school and the middle school students into the current high school?”

We appreciate all ideas and thoughts. And, we take them seriously. This idea hits a roadblock when you think about the difference between an elementary-aged student, a middle school student, and a teenager in high school. Elementary schools must be built differently to accommodate younger students, including but not limited to layout, bathroom facilities and classroom sizes. Driggs Elementary was already used as a high school and the issues that this presents are paramount. The layout is not conducive or optimal for use as a K-3 elementary school. We need to focus on elementary school designs with younger students in mind.

What’s more, this option would carry a much bigger price tag than building new elementary schools. According to School Planning & Management, new high school buildings cost \$235 per square foot, versus an elementary school that costs \$212 per square foot to build.

### **“New Classrooms Don’t Make Smarter Kids”**

A student’s success has many factors, three of which are the student, the teacher, and the classroom. While the classroom does not make the student, it does help.

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, and engaging students who aren’t paying attention, to name a few.



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Even though a student's achievement is not solely based on the classroom, the area where they learn is a launchpad for success, providing an intentional space for the most effective teaching and learning. The bond will help promote this positive learning space.

Teton School District works hard to ensure each teacher has a manageable number of students. In fact, even though the State of Idaho funds 86 teachers in the district, TSD401 currently employs 102 teachers—an additional 16 jobs thanks to the Supplemental Levy—allowing for smaller class sizes with less than 21 students per classroom and a lower student to teacher ratio. But they need more room.

Mark your calendars for the July 17 special bond meeting at 6pm. We look forward to addressing your questions and concerns further.