

Building A Bond: Why Not The Other Options?

With school back in full swing, students, parents, and teachers are excited for the brand new year and all the wonderful moments ahead. While you've taken your student to open houses or parents' nights, you might have noticed the school board passing out bond information. And you might have had the thought, 'Why this bond?' 'Aren't there so many other options?'

Yes, there were many options to consider when deciding what version of the bond made the most sense for our community. And this was not a decision we took lightly. Our hope was that each member of the community understands our process and feels like their voice is heard. In the winter of last year, the school board met with focus groups that included teachers, staff, parents, community members, and created a survey to guide our decision making process.

We learned a few key things that drove our thinking during this time: You wanted a long-term fix, community elementary schools felt very important, the board should consider all options, and you want the process to be clear.

With clarity in mind, here are the reasons the other options were not our final choice.

A Central Kindergarten through Fifth Grade

Cost: \$32.3 million

This option was the most expensive, because this larger school facility would need two of everything to accommodate such a large population of students: two sets of cafeterias, two gyms, and two media centers. This school would also have **850 students** enrolled, and that number would just keep growing.

For our small community, it did not seem to reflect the values of this town to have such a grand, highly populated campus. In addition, we received strong feedback that our community schools in Victor, Driggs, and Teton were an important part of the district and something that should remain.

A Central Kindergarten through Third Grade

Cost: \$26.7 million

Again, although this school would not be as big, a centralized kindergarten through third grade campus would have roughly 560 students enrolled. Overcrowding is already an issue at some campuses, and this feels like a new version of the same thing. This would take away community schools. Although we would have some cost savings, there would be added expenses, like having extra staff, more available amenities, and bigger facilities.

We have also heard the question: "Why not build a new High School and shift Teton Middle School students to the current High School and elementary students to the current Middle School?"

Secondary school square footage is much more expensive than elementary square footage due to specialized classrooms (i.e. labs, home economics, vocational agricultural, etc). A new high school, accounting for 20 percent growth, would cost over \$50 million. Also, we would still have the current problem of elementary students utilizing facilities that were not designed with younger students in mind. Playgrounds would need to be added and bathrooms added and remodeled to accommodate our youngest children.

You have also likely noticed that we have an additional bond amount for \$7.2 million geared toward the middle and high school, that can only pass if the \$30.05 million elementary school bond passes. We have heard the question, 'Why these campuses? They are modern.' Yes, these facilities are more modern than our elementary school facilities, but they are nearing capacity. The bond addresses updates, like adding more classroom space and adding a gym. We have long-term in mind. If we did not address this now, we would have to in three years.

This bond is important now, and it is needed now. Why not wait until the current bonds are paid off? We would be waiting until 2025, and frankly, we cannot wait that long to address our aging and over-populated elementary schools. We are using the most cost effective strategy to address all of our needs within our district. Each student from kindergarten through twelfth grade will benefit from improved facilities.

If you have any questions, please visit the bond website: www.tsd401bond.org or reach out to the school board.