



Thoughts & Questions

2021 SKSD EP&O Levy

We all support our South Kitsap Schools.

We think everyone agrees that the school district needs money to pay for extra student educational expenses not covered by the State.

We must ensure our student's needs are being met.

Is the district meeting your student's educational needs? District funding from both the state and local levies has continued to flow toward hiring more employees, increased pay and given larger and more generous benefit packages. Consequently, there is less and less money actually going toward student needs and educational enhancements. Is the District providing what your students need?

Are the schools in the conditions you expect them to be for your child? If not, then it is time for the District to better allocate funding and reduce the number of employees in addition to curtailing further pay raises and benefit increases. There are no other answers. This is not rocket science!

The extra 185 or more employees cost taxpayers millions of dollars in salaries, pay raises, and overly generous benefit packages. This continued over-spending must stop! These funds can be used to improve student achievement and educational outcomes. Isn't this what we all want, what we all expect from our school district?

Why didn't the school board compromise on levy rate.

Three board directors passed the \$2.50 rate per \$1,000, two board directors voted to have the current \$2.50 rate reduced by \$.25 - \$.35 cents. The board majority did not feel charitable, nor do they appear to be overly concerned about our students or their family's needs. They took the easy route and elected to collect the maximum rate as allowed by law. To top it off, through all of the bickering, arguing and justifications given, one board member had the audacity to state the district needed all of the money they can get. She said the district should not and does not need to ask the voters how much they are willing to give the district that the district must continue to tell the voters how much they need. She said if this levy fails in February then the District will just run another levy. This same Director stated that the voters can easily afford this levy rate since a typical family spends as much on latte's each week as compared to the cost of this levy.

Right now, three directors are dictating to 48,000 voters that the school district needs more money. They have not suggested or

recommended any spending cuts' or personnel cuts. They did have the gall however to approve more pay raises for district personnel during this global pandemic.

With two directors dissenting, does it not concern you that perhaps the public does not have all the information they need from the board to make better-educated decisions? Comments from one director saying that the district needs all the money it can get with no justification as to why is extremely disconcerting. And the additional comment stating that if the levy fails, we will just run another until it passes (at \$185,000+ per attempt) implies that voters do not consider their votes carefully. And finally, stating that the average family spends the levy rate on Latte's each week is plain irresponsible and condescending.

So what is this levy for?

The district tells you that the levy is for counselors, mental health professionals, social/emotional Para educators, nurses, sports, and others who are there to assist your student. This is purely an emotional appeal to make you vote for the levy. What if they told you the levy was for two assistant superintendents, several executive directors, several directors, several assistant directors, several executive assistants, and several one of kind specialists (web designer). Would you then vote for the levy or demand they fund the folks who help your kids versus several layers of very costly bureaucratic administrators.

But will it ever be enough?

No, it won't because the annual 3% pay raises and benefits continue to grow at a larger pace than the state allocation or levy monies. The district pay and benefits now consume all of the money that the state gives the district to educate your child. How much longer do you feel the district can maintain all the people it employs until all the state allocation money and levy money is consumed by the district for pay and benefits?

What about \$2.25 per levy rate rather than current\$2.50 rate?

This is not a compromise and it is not reasonable considering the lack of growth in our own incomes, the rate of inflation, tax increases, and all this happening during a global pandemic.

Our schools remain closed and current online teaching is not producing the results we were hoping for. Our entire community is suffering due to layoffs, furloughs, and closed businesses. It is not fair nor is it equitable to raise our schools taxes now. Let the District look to the State for any further increases in funding.

Why did the District hire so many additional employees?

We must demand that the District prove what they need rather than us merely accepting what they say they need as fact. Just how many employees are actually essential? Why did they need 185 more employees than the State provides funding for? Have we all forgotten the 20%+ raises to district personnel a few years ago when the \$25M in McCreary money came to the district and was used exclusively for district pay raises?

The additional employees are primarily nurses, social/emotional needs Para educators, counselors, and additional teachers. If you feel they are value added to your child's educational needs that is fine as long as you understand that they take up 70% of the LEVY money in salary and benefits.

We must re-envision our community's needs before approving anymore levy's.

We must not continue funding this outdated, inadequate and inefficient school district. We must demand to see changes before passing any future levies. We need to see a re-envisioned, affordable, and sustainable South Kitsap School District operational budget.

The Pandemic has shown all of us that education as we know it will never be the same again. Many parents are now aware that they have other choices and options available to them to educate their children. Will your older student still want to be at the High School sitting in classes if other options are available? While younger children will need to be in some type of in person classes, students and their parents will now expect a richer, more rigorous, and academically challenging approach to their education.

What are the District's costs to run a new levy?

The costs to the district taxpayers is approximately \$185,000 to run the February 9th EP&O Levy. Will the levy fail in February? If it does, the board already said they would just run the levy again. They can only run levies three times in a calendar year. We should not

forget that four previous failed bond attempts cost district taxpayers approximately \$1M, so how many of your tax dollars is the district willing to spend to pass a levy?

It was reported in the paper that a tax rate decrease of just \$.20 cents would save the average homeowner of a \$300,000 home \$60 a year. At the same/current rate of \$2.50 per \$1,000, the same homeowner will be paying \$750 per year. If this levy passes, we will be obligated to pay on it for four years beginning in 2022. Each year the rate collected is scheduled to incrementally increase.

You can find out how much your new taxes will cost you before you vote on this new levy. Kitsap County Assessor's office has stated "The total property tax amounts are typically available Online three to four weeks prior to the February election. Ballots for this election will be mailed to us beginning on January 20th. Be sure to check on your new 2021 taxes before you cast your vote! The tax statements are usually available Online about two weeks before the February election. Merely input your property/parcel details on the county's assessor website to find your new tax rates. Go here to find out what your new property taxes will be:

<https://psearch.kitsapgov.com/pdetails/>

Every voter needs to make his or her own assessments.

Every voter should consider both the financial impacts and the value of the EXTRA employees the district has already hired before casting a vote. Remember, we are not talking about cutting basic education, we are talking about cutting EXTRA employees. If we had say, 100 extra people rather than 185 then the money from the unused 85 positions could be used to improve your student's education.

ALTERNATIVELY, we could demand the district ask for a smaller levy. This was suggested by two board members but summarily voted down by three members of the board. Three board members appear to listen to the Unions but not the voters. It's time to send the District a message, let them know what we want, not what the District thinks they need!

For the record, The Committee Against South Kitsap School District's 2021 EP&O levy would have supported this levy if the District had set a much lower collection rate than

Unfortunately, the board majority opted to go with the maximum allowed by law, Which is currently \$2.50 per \$1,000 valuation for your property

We need to take a time-out on passing levies.

We need to take a pause on passing further levies. Voting no on the February levy will send the correct message that we want the District to come back with some staffing changes and a reduction in the levy amount being requested. They must reduce the top-heavy administrative personnel they have staffed up. Let's just say no and give the district more time to effect these needed changes in current manning levels within administrative sections of the district first. Let them prove they can make changes, reduce their budget, and more efficiently and responsibly manage the levy dollars we have continued to shovel to them in the past. Do you feel the district is providing the best education possible for your child? Is it worth the money you are paying these highly paid district employees, or are their other choices available when spending your hard-earned money? Perhaps it is time for the district to show you that they can do better with less. Many studies show that more money is not helping to produce a better educational experience for your child. What works best to meet your child's needs is not to throw more money at it or just hiring more people to "help" your child. You must decide, is more money the answer to better education or just better paychecks for the over staffed district.

Some final thoughts & Considerations

We need to see some very significant changes in how the SKSD is capable of better tax dollar budgeting; reducing cost overruns; monitoring expenses, and stopping wage and benefit changes. They must get control of their over-hiring practices and hiring of unfunded staff positions. We must demand they show us they can make these change. Unless they do these things, the best way to express our concerns and demands is to Vote No on the upcoming SKSD EP&O Levy on February 9th.

Currently the district is number 5 out of the surrounding 7 districts in most academic areas. Scores are continuing to decline, but staffing and salaries continue to increase. If we graduate 80% of seniors, what happened to the other 20%? Why are they left behind? If only 25% of our graduates graduate from 4-year colleges, are we

providing what the other 75% of our students want and need?
With so many important questions unanswered are you sure
your hard earned tax dollars will be used for student needs
versus other wants?

If not, **Please Vote NO on the SKSD EP&O Levy on
February 9th.**