



WEST BONNER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #83

Administrative Office
134 Main Street, Priest River, ID 83856
(208)448-4439 • www.sd83.org

WBCSD Community Questions Answered

1. How do neighboring states fund schools?

Washington	–	Enrollment [4.a.]
Oregon	–	Enrollment [4.b.]
Montana	–	Enrollment [4.c.]
Wyoming	–	Enrollment [4.d.]
Nevada	–	Enrollment [4.e.]
Utah	–	Enrollment [4.f.]

2. How do neighboring states compare to Idaho nationwide?

It depends on the source of information. There are many ranking systems available online and many services which strive to rate educational systems in an effort to determine the “best” one. If you’re going off of SAT scores alone, Idaho ranked #40. Washington ranked #24, Oregon #18, Montana #10, Wyoming #2, Nevada #14, and Utah #4. [4.g.] If you’re looking at combined score averages for SAT, ACT, MCAT, and Math/Reading proficiency tests in 4th and 8th grade, Idaho ranked #27. Washington ranked #15, Oregon #36, Montana #24, Wyoming #16, Nevada #46 and Utah #2. Overall, we don’t rank high compared to our neighbors. [4.h.]

3. How are the funds used on the students?

The answer to this question is intricate and varies by district and even by individual school for all public education. For instance, some Junior High and High Schools provide Career Technical Education [4.i.] or STEM programs [4.j.], while Elementary Schools typically do not. Some States invest in afterschool programs [4.k.] and early learning education [4.l.] while others (like Idaho) do not. In the case of how Idaho Public School District Supplemental Levies allow Idaho School Districts to use funds on students; it is required by Idaho State law that school districts running supplemental levies [4.m.] use the funds exactly as outlined on the Supplemental Levy Ballot Question. [4.n.]

4. Why would I be willing to pay higher taxes for schools if my kids don’t attend (home school and private) or my kids are grown?

Public Schools are a benefit to the individuals and families with attending students, and also to our community at large. Region industry specific CTE is a firm part of the District’s curriculum, encouraging a home-grown labor force. In order to ensure population stability and encourage positive growth, it is essential to retain graduates in our communities. Educating under-served children who can not afford private or home-based schooling elevates the level of education overall for citizens in our area, decreasing crime rates and drug usage, and increasing the value of our communities. There are truly myriad benefits to public education for everyone. [4.o.][4.p.][4.q.][4.r.]



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5. How much are my taxes going up if I support the Supplemental Levy?

If you are willing to support our School District, you would be contributing \$23 to the district every year for every \$100,000 of your property's assessed value, less any homeowner's exemption you receive. This is as little as \$7.67 a month if you own a property valued at \$400,000.

6. Where would the Supplemental Levy money go?

Funds received via supplemental levy are always used where advertised on the ballot. State law requires funds acquired via supplemental levy to be used only for the items listed on the ballot. If less funding is necessary, the difference would not be taxed. The amount listed on the ballot is the maximum amount that can be taxed, and any amount that goes unused is not collected from taxpayers.

7. How is the district held accountable for the finances?

Via annual audits and exhaustive financial systems. School District finance is complex, and the District has experienced a high level of turnover in the past few years in critical District financial roles. District staff have worked hard to ensure that the District operates efficiently and that records are properly kept and updated.

8. Can you give us an example of how the district is mandated to fund programs that are not covered by State funding?

Many required accommodations for students with special needs are not funded by the State of Idaho.

9. What happened in 2006 with District funding?

In the past, the State funded education completely with a mandatory 3% property tax that didn't require a community vote. In 2006, the State cancelled this funding method and moved 20-30% of public education funding into the hands of their School District's local votership. This was an effort to ensure that small town money wasn't being spent on big city expenses or vice versa. The end result is that funding is heavily weighted and insufficient in smaller towns where large buildings still have to be maintained.

10. How much is spent per student in Idaho versus other states?

Idaho ranks last in dollars spent per student across the nation despite rising population percentages in the state, according to data available from the United States Census Bureau. [4.s.] With that being the case, it is hard to argue that Idaho Public School Districts are not spending responsibly. In many cases Districts are underfunded to the degree that old facilities continue to fail without the funding for proper maintenance and renovations. It is a testament to the resilience of Idahoans and the dedication of Idaho Educators that children in our state do not rank last in educational achievement. [4.t.][4.u.]



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11. Our students are at the bottom of the state, why should we give more money to failing schools?

Our District's academic achievement may not be in the top of the state, but we aren't at the bottom either. One source stated that WBCSD83 ranks #105 out of #173 School Districts [4.v.], but there are only 117 School Districts listed in the Idaho.gov school district list. [4.w.] According to Idaho Education News, from 673 individual school entries in 2022, our schools ranked as follows: PLE #168 | IDH #176 | PRE #298 | PRJH #575 | PRLHS #610. Those schools in the bottom rankings had populations with higher rates of economically disadvantaged families, and in general spent less per student than our own district with the exception of Plummer-Worley which has a much smaller population of students. [4.x.] What this illustrates, is that there is in fact a negative correlation between economic hardship and student achievement. Funding District programs will have a positive impact on our community.

12. Are there millions of dollars unaccounted for in the results of the Forensic Audit completed this year?

No. The results from the Forensic Audit completed by Eide Bailly can be viewed online. The Date of the meeting was March 20th, 2024. [4.y.] There were check images that had not been received by the District from the Bank at the end of the Forensic Audit but which were accounted for shortly afterward and have been reviewed by the District Finance Committee which is overseen by two Trustees.

13. Since the levy for this school year failed, why are there still Extra and Co-Curricular Activities?

This is due entirely to the monumental fundraising effort of community members who believe that Extra and Co-Curricular Activities are an essential part of student achievement. The Board Approved Extra and Co-Curricular Activities to be funded entirely with funds raised by said community members this past summer. The District has spent nothing towards these activities. The credit goes completely to our amazing community. Thank you.

14. SRO grant just came through, where will those levy dollars go if it passes?

The Board will make a decision on whether or not to hire another full time or part time SRO for the District, (currently there is only one for all four of the schools in operation) or to simply not collect that portion of the levy. In which case, the rate that taxpayers pay would be reduced accordingly.

15. Why was the Proposed Supplemental Levy reduced from \$4.7 million to \$1.13 million between May 2024 and November 2024?

The largest difference in the supplemental levy funds requested in May 2024 versus November 2024 is the removal of staff salaries and benefits from the resolution. Staff salaries and benefits were 2.8 million dollars. Also removed was nearly 1 million dollars for facility maintenance and renovations. The District is in the process of fundraising efforts to make up the gap. [4.z.] The District is listening to the concerns of community members, and attempting to transition to programs-based supplemental levies. There are two staff positions on the current levy: ½ of an AP clerk's wage, and ½ of a custodian's wage. These two positions were added to the levy to communicate what the state will not fund.



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