

# ~TEA Advocate~

## TUMWATER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

1619 STATE AVENUE NE, OLYMPIA, WA 98506

PHONE: 360-352-5256 ~ FAX: 360-352-7361 ~ TUMWATEREA.ORG

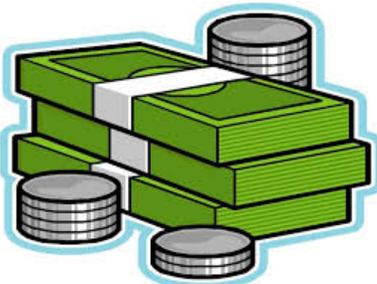
### RESPONSE TO TSD BUDGET VIDEO – DECEMBER 2019

Last month Tumwater Superintendent, Sean Dotson, produced a short video and asked you all to watch it during an ACT Friday. The video addressed what he referred to as the 'budget challenge' currently facing the district. I heard from some TEA members that the video made them anxious. Some people were even pondering whether the budget challenge was somehow related to the Collective Bargaining Agreement we signed with the District in September of 2018. I want to take this opportunity to address this issue from my perspective.



First of all, I am glad that we have a district superintendent who wants to be fiscally sound and keep the Tumwater School District in good financial standing. During contract negotiations we continually stressed that it was not the TEA's intention to bankrupt the District. That would be antithetical to the needs of our teachers, our students, and our community. It **was** the TEA's intention that money from the state earmarked for educators' salaries actually went to educators, and we were successful in doing so. The two-year contract we signed in 2018 did not lead to these budget challenges. **Let me repeat that; our contract did not lead to these budget challenges.** The increases we were able to achieve were still **under** what the district had budgeted to spend on teachers' salaries in the 2018-19 school year. Some factors that did come into play was the legislature's decision to exclude Tumwater in regionalization or mix factor formulas – something that North Thurston and Olympia received respectively - despite being our next door neighbors.

Recently I had the opportunity to speak with Superintendent Dotson regarding his video presentation. He listened to concerns from various stakeholders who cited a lack of financial transparency from the TSD over the last couple of years and decided to address those concerns. He told me his primary goal in creating the video was to be open about financial challenges the District is facing while simultaneously inviting District employees to be part of the solution. Superintendent Dotson also made it clear to me that our TEA contract is not the cause of our present situation and feels it is important that Tumwater educators deserve compensation that is competitive with surrounding districts.



Superintendent Dotson mentioned in the video that revenue will be increasing in the Spring. 'The good news is that we have some increase funding coming to help us. In April we will start collecting more in revenue through our levy. That will help replace our deficit.' He added that, 'We will get through this, and we will do this together.' As far as depleting the district reserves, Mr. Dotson pointed out that this is a 'worst case scenario.'

Again, I'm glad that the District is intent on being fiscally sound. They've proven to be in years past. However, in years past we've also heard over and over again about 'budget challenges' as reasons for not providing fair and competitive salary increases to certificated educators. In the 10 years between 2005 and 2015 certificated educators in Tumwater saw an increase of just seven TRI days. That's a 3.5% increase in over a decade at which time the voter-approved COLA was suspended by the legislature seven straight years. Meanwhile health premiums rose significantly. During those 10 years the District claimed they could not afford more than nominal increases in compensation but somehow ended almost every year with significant ending fund balances.

THE ROAD TO  
**SUCCESS**  
IS ALWAYS  
**UNDER**  
CONSTRUCTION.

I fully understand and appreciate Superintendent Dotson's obligation to the District, the School Board, and the Tumwater community to be fiscally sound. I also appreciate his desire for transparency and reaching out to employees for cost-saving ideas. However, looking at the District's budget for 2019-20, I feel that come April when the increased revenue starts kicking in, we'll finish the year in anything but a 'worst case scenario.'



We know our TEA contract did not lead to the current Tumwater School District 'budget challenges' shared by Superintendent Dotson. We know the District will receive increased funding later this year, which will ease these 'budget challenges.' We also know that Tumwater educators deserve a professional salary within our competitive Thurston County compensation range. Please don't let anyone convince you otherwise. We will, of course, continue monitoring the District's budget projections throughout the year and communicate those updates to you regularly.

In Solidarity,  
Tim Voie, TEA President



## **WEA LOBBY DAY AT THE CAPITOL**

For years, WEA members have emphasized that access to quality public schools is a civil right for all Washington students, a right that is guaranteed in the state Constitution.

That's one of the reasons our legislative goals for 2020 emphasize WEA's commitment to promoting equity, combating racism and eliminating discrimination – and ensuring all students have the support they need to be successful. That includes social-emotional learning and mental health support, and it means doing everything we can to ensure the safety of students and staff at school or on campus.

**One powerful way we can support our students is by telling our stories – which are *their* stories.** Legislators need to hear why our students need more school counselors, nurses, social workers, school psychologists and other mental health professionals. We need to tell them about solutions that work and what they as legislators can do to support our students.

We're meeting at the Woman's Club of Olympia at 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 20 for a briefing with WEA lobbyists and then heading to the state capitol campus to meet with legislators (it's just a few blocks away). At 12:30 p.m., we'll have a brief gathering on the steps of the capitol, and we've invited elected leaders to join us.

As a special incentive, we'll have limited edition #RedforEd scarves for the first 300 WEA members who participate in WEA's 2020 Lobby Day!

Contact your building rep or Tim Voie if you would like to join the TEA Team on Capitol Hill. Lobbying legislators is not scary. It's actually easy. You just tell them YOUR story. Remember, they work for us.