

Budget Questions for School Board Members

Updated: Feb. 9, 2011

Q: What programs does the district provide that are not mandated by federal law, state law or union contracts?

A: This is a complex question to answer in total.

Many programs have specific funding prescribed by federal or state law or grants that don't allow that funding to be used for anything else. For example, the federal Title I law provides funding specifically for disadvantaged populations such as schools with low-income populations.

In other cases, while a dedicated funding stream might not be available, case law requires the district to provide services. Some examples include: the day-reporting school at Remann Hall, the juvenile jail; the school for inmates younger than 21 at the Pierce County Jail; and some Special Education programs.

The state funds "basic education," but the district – through approval of local levies – can supplement basic education with additional programs, such as challenging programs for gifted students.

Beyond that, there are many programs and services not mandated by law but offered to students as another tool to keep them in schools. This category includes programs such as the arts, drama, music, band and orchestra and athletics.

Q: What would the financial savings be if the district shrinks Foss High School over time by not allowing a freshman class next year rather than closing it all at once?

A: There may be some incremental savings (in teaching positions due to fewer students, for example) by slowly closing Foss; however, the real savings will materialize only after all the students have vacated and the administrative and support staff positions are eliminated.

Q: If we're going to close Foss a year from now rather than now, what school options could the district give to the current 8th graders not allowed into Foss?

A: No decision has been made on how to handle this situation; however, here's the most likely scenario:

- The high school boundaries would be redrawn to divide the Foss High School catchment area among surrounding schools.
- The current 8th graders first would be assigned a new high school based on their home address.
- Then, during the district's optional enrollment period, they could apply to attend another high school with space available.

Q: If the district phases in the closure of Foss High School by not allowing an incoming freshman class, would the IB programme have enough kids to continue operating at Foss?

A: The IB classes are for juniors and seniors – with rare exceptions. Ninth graders don't take IB classes. The ninth graders and the 10th graders take honors classes that prepare them for future IB classes.

Q: What clear direction and conditions has the district received from International Baccalaureate non-profit foundation to guarantee that the IB program and its students can be transferred to another high school without a break in the program?

A: IB Americas, which oversees IB schools, has a clear approval process for relocation of an IB program.

A school that wants to relocate must submit proof of the following evidence:

1. That the old site will either close down or stop teaching the IB programme.
2. That the new site is ready for teaching at a stipulated date.
3. That the new school facility will come under the same governing body of the old school. If the school comes under a different governing body or district, proof of support will need to be submitted together with budgetary requirements similar to those of the application process.
4. That the current principal will move to the new facility. If the principal does not move, submit letter of new principal showing support to the programme.
5. That the current IB coordinator will move to the new facility. If the IB coordinator does not move, the school must submit proof of IB training for the IB coordinator designate.
6. That the current trained staff will move to the new facility. If not all trained staff moves, the school must submit the percentage of staff that will be relocating. If more than two-thirds of the teachers move, the school must submit proof of professional IB training for new teachers. If less than two-thirds of the teachers move, IB Americas will assess whether a new authorization process will have to take place.
7. That the students will move to the new facility. If not all students move, the school must submit the percentage of students that will be relocating. If more than two-thirds of the students move, the school must submit proof of support of new parents and students to the IB programme. If less than two-thirds of the students move, IB Americas will assess whether a new authorization process will have to take place.
8. Name of the new school (if different from previous name).

At the discretion of the IB Americas office, a site visit to inspect the new facility might take place at the expense of the school. During the visit, an IB Americas representative will inspect the new facility and meet with the Principal, the IB coordinator and a member of the governing body to ensure that the programme is properly implemented. Following the visit and confirmation of the above items, IB Americas will recommend approval of the change to the Director General. Once approved, the IB curriculum and assessment office in Cardiff will be notified of the name and address change. The school will maintain the same IBIS school code.

Q: What are the current enrollment statistics for the Foss IB program?

A: 46 students are enrolled in the full-time IB diploma program

157 are IB certificate candidates

234 students take a least one IB class:

- 9th grade – 2
- 10th grade – 34
- 11th grade – 108
- 12th grade – 90

120 students live in the Foss catchment area

102 students live outside the Foss catchment area

12 students live outside the Tacoma School District

(Source: Foss Scheduling & Data Entry Office)

Q: When Foss was last renovated, why was it only a partial renovation rather than a full-school renovation?

A: At the time, Foss was in better shape than the other high schools. Due to the age and general condition of Foss, it was not considered in need of the same level of expenditure to upgrade its teaching and learning environment.

Q: Why have the high school boundaries not been redrawn in recent years to give Foss a larger catchment/attendance area?

A: The Foss High School attendance area is actually in the same size range (in square miles) as the other four comprehensive high school attendance areas. The decline in enrollment at Foss has been influenced by other factors more so than the size of the attendance area.

Q: Can SAMI and SOTA be moved to Foss?

A: No. Both schools – by philosophy and curriculum – are integrated into their environments. Part of the success of the schools lies in their distinctiveness and separation from the traditional comprehensive high school facilities, program and environment.

Let's take an in-depth look at the Science and Math Institute, as an example.

SAMi has inseparable ties to Point Defiance Park, the resources included within the park, the community of employees of Point Defiance Park, the Metro Parks Greenhouse, the Marina, and the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Without Point Defiance Park, the integrity of the educational program is at-risk.

The SAMi instructional program currently relies upon:

1. A positive and growing relationship with the 702-acre park and its vast resources
2. Regular classes taught daily in the Point Defiance Zoo & aquarium through partnerships with Metro Parks and the Point Defiance Zoo Association
3. Daily use of the marine resources and access to Puget Sound for ongoing student research

4. On-going research with the bio-growth program in Metro Park's controlled growth facilities (greenhouses)
5. Integrated use of the park facilities giving students access to the overall park eco-system on a daily basis
6. Daily student research on the development and eco-system balance in the old growth forest
7. Long stretches of hiking trails that offer multiple opportunities for teaching with sufficient space for several classes simultaneously
8. Shared instructional and public resources between Metro Parks and Tacoma Public Schools (instructors and facilities)

SAMi students work through specialized curriculum that is intimately tied to the Point Defiance location. Students at SAMi work through foundational mathematics, outdoor education, humanities, zoological research, biology, chemistry, and physics in 9th and 10th grade, then move into "majors" as 11th and 12th grade students. Majors include Marine Sciences, Biological & Zoological Sciences, Botanical Studies, and Applied Mathematics & Physics. The academic program includes inquiry courses in sciences in the student's major areas, in addition to English and history classes tied to the academic majors.

Some ideas for resolving the district's budget crisis suggest SAMi could shift to Foss and use the Snake Lake Nature Center as its outdoor classroom. However, limiting students' resources to those of Snake Lake will not provide students comparable access to the resources available at Point Defiance every day. Student reliance on the much greater diversity of Point Defiance Park increases as students progress further into their majors/academic paths.

It's true that Snake Lake Nature Center is an outdoor natural setting also run by our partners Metro Parks Tacoma. However, Snake Lake lacks many of the resources of Point Defiance Park necessary for the education of students in the specialty SAMi program. In addition to the lack of overall resources, the high-demand use of Snake Lake by other schools' field trips and other community groups limits daily and multiple group access – both necessary for SAMi. Resources present at Point Defiance Park include but are not limited to waterfront access at Owen Beach, the vast animal and flora fauna collection at Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, the old growth forest of 5-Mile Drive, the marina, the native gardens, the professional working greenhouses, and historical Fort Nisqually.

In conclusion, to move the School of the Arts or the Science and Math Institute would for all intents and purposes close and eliminate the two schools. SOTA has worked to build community connections and create opportunities for students in downtown Tacoma for the last 10 years. That success directly led to the creation and opening of SAMi. These two schools are rooted in their communities and reliant on the assets of their specific communities. They will cease to exist when removed from the assets that support the vision and student learning.

Q: Why was SAMI opened after Hunt closed?

A: It wasn't. SAMI opened in fall 2009. Hunt closed after the 2009-2010 school year.

Q: How did the closure of Hunt influence the option of closing Foss? Why is the district looking at closing more Westside schools (Foss, Wainwright) rather than schools in other parts of the city?

A: The closure of Hunt Middle School did not influence the proposed option of closing Foss. The primary reason for considering possible closure of Foss is because it is the smallest of the five comprehensive high schools. In addition to Wainwright Elementary School, at least six other elementary schools, including some on the East Side and Central Tacoma are currently being studied for possible closure.

Q: Will the closure of Foss increase class sizes at the other high schools?

A: No. If Foss was to close and the students redistributed among the other four comprehensive high schools, the added enrollment at those schools would necessitate additional teachers and classes.

Q: How would the district compensate Foss students for the closure of their school?

A: There's no proposal to "compensate" Foss students in the event the school is closed. Here's the most likely scenario to accommodate the Foss students at other locations:

- The high school boundaries would be redrawn to divide the Foss High School catchment area among surrounding schools.
- The students first would be assigned a new high school based on their home address.
- Then, during the district's optional enrollment period, they could apply to attend another high school with space available.
- Note: For students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program at Foss, every effort would be made to reassign those students with the IB program in a new location.

Q: Can the CTE Marine Tech program at Foss be relocated?

A: Yes. The Maritime Trades program is a unique partnership and is offered as a program through the Pierce County Skill Center with a focus on mechanics related to propulsion, electrical and hydraulic systems.

The existing facilities at Mt. Tahoma, Lincoln, Stadium, Wilson and Oakland would require modification/renovation to support the current curriculum and equipment used in this program. (The current equipment is heavy with engines, outboard motors, boat trainers, tools, training modules.) Skills Center programming is two (2) 3-hour block classes per day. The classes typically have very specific equipment for use of instructional space.

Two relocation options:

- Option 1: Skills Center Program: Relocate existing program/equipment to a non-district facility and lease TPS equipment to the Skills Center. (Possibly the Tacoma Youth Marine Center and Sea Scouts as a three-way partnership on the Thea Foss Waterway.)
- Option 2: District Program: Relocate to a district facility and change the curriculum to align classroom/lab space with the skill set of navigation/marine science. (Could be

located in a classroom or portable classroom.) Would need to purchase new instructional materials and equipment.

Q: Now that Hunt has closed, what are the feeder middle schools for Foss?

A: Portions of the attendance areas for following middle schools currently “feed” Foss: Truman, Giardrone, Mason, Jason Lee and Gray.

Q: What are the graduation rates for all high schools?

A:

6 Year Graduation Rate Trends for Tacoma High Schools, District and Washington State

On-Time Graduation Rate

	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
Foss	77.3%	77.9%	71.7%	67.3%	73.6%	59.3%
Lincoln	69.3%	65.7%	62.2%	69.6%	56.1%	52.6%
Mt Tahoma	74.2%	72.1%	73.6%	74.4%	69.4%	56.8%
Stadium	83.4%	81.5%	84.4%	79.2%	83.5%	71.9%
Wilson	80.8%	87.1%	74.6%	76.1%	76.5%	68.6%
Oakland	4.2%		1.6%	18.5%	21.3%	14.1%
SOTA	94.1%	94.9%	93.2%	94.3%	96.2%	85.4%
Tacoma	70.8%	71.8%	68.4%	67.6%	67.5%	56.2%
State	73.5%	72.0%	72.4%	70.4%	74.3%	70.0%
<i>difference</i>	-2.7%	-0.2%	-4.0%	-2.8%	-6.8%	-13.8%

Extended Graduation Rate

	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
Foss	84.5%	84.8%	78.2%	73.1%	87.1%	59.3%
Lincoln	82.8%	74.2%	70.0%	81.8%	68.8%	61.4%
Mt Tahoma	82.0%	76.1%	78.4%	81.9%	81.0%	69.7%
Stadium	86.7%	85.9%	93.2%	84.3%	94.9%	81.1%
Wilson	81.2%	90.3%	77.1%	82.4%	88.7%	71.8%
Oakland	20.9%		4.9%	24.7%	38.7%	20.1%
SOTA	97.1%	94.9%	99.8%	99.8%	103.9%	92.1%
Tacoma	77.5%	77.6%	74.4%	74.8%	79.7%	63.8%
State	79.2%	77.0%	77.4%	75.0%	79.3%	74.0%
<i>difference</i>	-1.7%	0.6%	-3.0%	-0.2%	0.4%	-10.2%

On-Time Graduation Rate (e.g., class of 2009) – This rate represents only those students with an expected graduation year of 2009. These students would have started grade 9 in the fall of 2005 and were expected to graduate “on-time” (in four years).

Extended Graduation Rate - This rate includes students who graduated after their expected graduation year. Late graduates are added to the total number of on-time graduates in the year they graduate when calculating the extended graduation rate.

Q: Has the district engaged high school principals as a group to look at solutions to the budget crisis?

A: Yes, the district conducted multiple meetings with principals from all grade levels to explore budget cut options, revenue-generating ideas and school closure options. The principals have provided extremely valuable ideas and input on grade-level and district-wide budget strategies.

Q: If we look at closing an elementary school, what is the community impact? How do we notify the public?

A: The community impact is difficult to quantify. We want to be transparent and open about all options, including potential school closures. By school board policy, the process is clear:

- Prior to the closing of any schools, the superintendent shall provide opportunities for citizen and staff involvement. We have been working on that for the past few weeks.
- The superintendent shall have prepared a preliminary written summary containing an analysis of the rationale for, and the effects of, the proposed school closure. This summary shall be provided to the board and available for public review prior to any public hearing.
- The superintendent shall provide for a minimum of two public board hearings for each individual school being studied for closure. One public hearing will be scheduled during the daytime and one will be scheduled in the evening. Separate hearings shall be held for each school. Such hearings shall be held during the 90 days prior to the time that the board takes final action on the proposed school closure.

Q: What are the “mothballing costs” for Foss High School or each elementary school, meaning what are the ongoing annual costs just to maintain the building, heat the building without classes in it?

A: If Foss High School were fully closed – meaning there was no partial use of the pool, gym or other facilities – the annual cost to mothball is estimated at \$100,000 per year.

The cost estimate to mothball an elementary school would range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year, depending on the size and design of the school.

Q: How long will it be before our financial picture turns around?

A: We wish we knew. No one knows for sure. We hope there is an economic turnaround in the next three to four years and state funding for K-12 education gradually begins to increase. We have built the current three-year budget plan on drawing down our savings account by approximately \$10 million a year. By 2014, we will have approximately the minimum savings allowed by board policy and acceptable accounting practices, so we hope the economy turns around by then.

Q: What are the current enrollment numbers of where kids live vs. which schools they attend? And where they attend school if we didn't have open enrollment?

A: Because Tacoma Public Schools, by policy, allows parents wide-open enrollment for their students in any school with space available, every school in the district has a significant percentage of students who live outside its attendance area. Likewise, a significant number of

students in just about every school's attendance area has chosen to attend other schools throughout the district.

The district has a comprehensive, poster-sized chart that shows every school in the district, where every student in that school's attendance area have chosen to attend school and all the students from other schools' attendance areas who have chosen to attend that school. It's complex.

The chart is so tall and wide it's unreadable on a computer screen.

Q: Where do students who live in Salishan attend elementary school? Where do Salishan students attend middle school?

A: Lister Elementary School and First Creek Middle School

Q: Can the district offer a half-day kindergarten option at one or more schools? What would the financial savings be for one or two half-day kindergarten classes?

A: Yes, the district could offer a half-day kindergarten option. Each full day kindergarten class converted to a half-day would save \$40,000 on the teaching salary side, but that would be offset by additional transportation costs to run new kindergarten-only bus routes in the middle of the day. As a financial savings strategy, this option is insignificant.

Q: Does the Program Placement Committee have a report with recommendations available now? If not, can one be expedited to provide guidance during these budget deliberations?

A: The committee has provided the following status report on the handful of programs it is evaluating.

Program Placement Status Report: Feb. 8

School/Program	Description of Request	Project Status
Geiger Special Education Preschool	Move preschool to Franklin or Stanley.	Committee approved moving to Franklin pending decision of school closures
Lincoln Center	Phase 1 of expansion to full school implementation in 2012-13 would be to shift teaching start and end times and class times to make the model more fiscally efficient. It would however still entail some staff working an extra 25 to 85 extra minutes a day. Going to this “flex schedule” would allow them to test the flex model as they look to expand the model to the full school in the 2012-13 school year. They will still need a good number of staff to stay for the extended day study time, but cannot cost this out until they receive their staffing, identify the number of incoming LC 9 th graders, build a master schedule, and work out club support.	In Review
McCarver Elementary School	Tacoma Housing Authority will offer 50 housing vouchers to families in the McCarver attendance area if they commit to amongst other things keeping their child enrolled at McCarver and being involved in their child’s education. From the District they want a commitment that would infuse a rigorous course of study (such as Early Years IB) and the staff and training provided to staff to make this a quality program.	Reviewing funding sources for infusion of program and implications for staffing with the Human Resources Department.
McKinley Elementary Cultural Arts PK – 5 Focus School	Co-op preschool with arts infused from Pre-Kindergarten through the 5 th grade. No identified funding source. Are seeking grant funding.	On hold pending decision on school closures.
Night School at Foss	Facility can easily accommodate program.	On hold pending decision of school closure

SAMI	Add 2-3 additional classrooms. Several facilities are being reviewed for possible location of classrooms. The zoo is considering 1 additional classroom. Ft. Nisqually may have 1 classroom space and the Zoo party room has been suggested but is probably too small. Pt. Defiance Elementary has 1 -2 classrooms. There is also the possibility of adding portables at Pt. Defiance Elementary.	In Review. Transportation and Tech Services for cost analysis on each of these possibilities
Stewart: Olive Crest Co-location	Co-locate this service provider on the campus.	Committee reviewed request and sent back to school for further clarification.

Q: What would the savings be from increasing K-5 class sizes by two rather than one and what numbers, on average, would that mean in the classrooms?

A: This answer involves two metrics: class size teacher-to-student ratios and class size limits or “lids.” Increasing class size teacher-to-student ratios by one in grades K-5 will require that the district negotiate with the teachers union for an increase in class size limits/lids of approximately two. Based on next school year’s preliminary enrollment projections, an increase in class size limits of two reduces 22 +/- teaching position or approximately \$2 million. If you want to increase the class size teacher-to-student ratio by two, just double those numbers for a rough estimate.

Q: What would the cost savings be if we increased K-5 class size by two and supplemented the larger classes with part-time instructional coaches?

A: This is difficult to calculate since the district has more than 600 teachers/classrooms in grades K-5, and it’s unclear how many instructional coaches would be required to supplement some percentage of those classes. At first glance, this option would seem to cost money rather than save money.

Q: What’s the specific language in our teacher union contract that speaks to what we can or can’t do when it comes to class size?

A: Article IX – Class Size Staffing, Section 63 – Regarding reduction in staff – states that in the event of a reduction in staff, the class size and lids shall be increased proportionate to the reduction in certificated teaching staff. This is language we added in the last bargain.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1. Currently, Kindergarten is limited to a maximum of 24 students per session.
2. Grades 1-5 – maximum staffing ratio of 25.3 students per building, not including learning specialists. Class Size is limited to:

- K – 24 students
- Grades 1-2 – 27 students
- Grades 3-5 – 28 students

3. No 1st grade splits
No 2nd grade splits without written consent of teacher
No split assigned more than 26 students
In schools that fail to meet AYP for 2 consecutive years, parties agreed to try to avoid assigning split classes in grades 3-5
4. If due to student enrollment by after the second Friday of the school year the maximum ratio is exceeded adjustments may be made such as adjustments to building staffing, modification of building duty schedules, reassignment of students, ParaEducator assistance, additional planning time or other adjustments.
5. If class size exceeds contractual limits by 2 students after the 3rd Friday or the 15th student day, the Union and the District meet to determine appropriate adjustments.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Maximum is 28 students per class. If one or more classes exceeds maximum – daily student load will be less than 26.3 times the number of periods taught. Music and physical education will not exceed 34 students per class. No individual class shall exceed class maximum by more than 2 students unless agreed to in writing by the teacher.

HIGH SCHOOL

School ration not to exceed 25.5 students to one regular classroom teacher, with adjustment for students documented as disabled. Maximum class size is 30. If one or more classes exceeds the maximum, daily student load will be less than 149. Music and physical education classes will not exceed 35 per class. If one or more classes exceeds the maximum, the daily student load will be less than 165. No individual class shall exceed the maximum by more than 2 students unless agreed to by the teacher.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. No special education class shall exceed 12 students at a time except learning resource classes where no class may exceed 16 students at a time.
2. LRC - grades 6-12 – average number of students per period will not exceed 12
3. LRC – grades K-5 – no more than 40 students
4. Pre-school – no more than 25 students per day
5. If class size exceeds the lid, adjustments may be made by reassignment of students, ParaEducator assistance at a ratio of 2 hours per day for each student exceeding lid or assignment of additional certificated staff.

CONTRACT REOPENERS:

Additionally, the contract requires that if there is significant loss of revenue resulting from levy failure, legislative action or passage of an initiative or referendum the parties shall reopen applicable section of the Agreement within 30 calendar days.

Either party may reopen any provision of the Agreement exclusive of the section on salary, with written notice by March 1st if it is determined that contract amendments are in the best interests of the District and the Union.

Q: What does it cost to run Tacoma schools for one day?

A: The district's general fund operating budget is \$339 million. If you divide the total budget by 260 work days, it costs an average of \$1.3 million per day.

Q: How much could we save per day if we had mandatory furlough days?

A: The exact amount depends on when the furlough day occurs – during the school year or summer and what activities are scheduled for the furlough day. Generally, we estimate that it would save the district approximately \$1 million per day during the school year if all employees took an unpaid furlough day.

However, to get a furlough day would require the district to negotiate that provision with every employee bargaining group. In addition, state law currently requires a 180-day school year, which makes it impractical for teachers to take a furlough day on a regularly scheduled school day.

In addition, because a furlough day is a one-time cost savings rather than an ongoing cost savings, it doesn't help save the district money in future years and increases the budget shortfall the district must deal with in future years.

Q: If the district offered more K-8 school options, in which schools would the district have space for those options and would that save money?

A: The district currently has not considered expanding K-8 school options as part of the current budget crisis. To explore this option would require more research time.

Q: Why is the district talking about a minimum three-year closure for schools?

A: The time frame for any temporary closure depends on demographic projects for when enrollment numbers increase. For elementary schools, the district currently has capacity to handle approximately 3,000 more students than the district has today. That's why temporary elementary schools is an option. However, over the next five years, demographic projections indicate elementary enrollment will increase sharply. That means as soon as three years, but probably a bit longer, the district may need to reopen an elementary school to accommodate the increasing elementary enrollment.

At the high school level, enrollment has declined by 800 since 2001 and is projected to decline another 800 through 2016. By the next school year, the enrollment projected in the five comprehensive high schools would fit in four of the schools. In fact, demographic projections

indicate enrollment will continue to decline through at least this decade. It will be a much longer period – most likely well after 2020 – before Tacoma would need to reopen another high school.

Q: What has the district done to reduce positions at the Central Administration Building?

A: The administrative staffing levels have remained relatively constant since a reduction in 2007. The district has not made any significant budget reductions since that time. However, we are planning on making reductions of \$1 million in the administrative and operational areas of the budget for the 2011-2012 school year.

Q: The district has to cut more than \$8 million – roughly 75 to 100 positions – because federal stimulus funding is ending. The district knew the funding was ending two years ago. Why did the district wait until now to address it?

A: Good question. Voters in Washington passed Initiative 728 in 2000. This initiative provided significant new funding for school districts to:

- Reduce class sizes in grades K-4;
- Make selected class size reductions in grades 5-12;
- Provide extended learning for students in K-12;
- Provide additional professional development for educators;
- Provide early assistance for children who need pre-kindergarten support;
- Provide improvements or additions to school facilities which are directly related to class size reductions and extended learning opportunities.

Unfortunately, over the last few years, the state Legislature phased out I-728 funding for school districts.

When the temporary federal stimulus funding became available two years ago, Tacoma – like many school districts – used the temporary funding to continue paying for many of the valuable educational enhancements originally funded by I-728.

Now that both I-728 funding and the federal stimulus funding will disappear at the end of this school year, all those people and programs funded with those dollars face cuts.

Q: Are any North End schools targeted for potential closure?

A: Not at this time.

Q: How will students who attend schools that are closed be assigned to other schools?

A: Traditionally, when the district has closed schools, the boundaries between school attendance areas are redrawn so students have a new assigned school. Then the district has offered an optional enrollment period when students can apply to attend another school of their choice depending on space available.

Q: Would the closure of Foss lead to closure of other schools?

A: No. The proposed closure of Foss is independent of any other school closure decisions.

Q: Why is the district giving up on Foss?

A: The district isn't giving up on Foss in the way you mean it. Foss is not a failing school. Foss, like all Tacoma's comprehensive high schools, is a good school with terrific teachers, programs, students and fans.

The reason the proposed option of closing Foss came up initially was because of the deep state budget cuts that forced the district to look at saving money with big-ticket cost-reduction strategies and the low, declining enrollment at Foss.

Then other factors came into play:

- High school enrollment district-wide will continue to decline over the next decade.
- The remaining comprehensive high schools have space to accommodate the Foss students.
- The Foss facilities are the oldest of the comprehensive high schools.
- The Foss enrollment has the least percentage of students from its own attendance area of any other comprehensive high schools.

Q: Why does the district allow so many transfers for students to attend school outside the district?

A: School district Policy 3140: Release of Resident Students addresses this issue. It reads, in part:

A student who resides within the boundaries of the district shall be released to 1) attend another school district, or 2) enroll for ancillary services, if any, in another district as specified in the parental declaration of intent to provide home-based instruction if:

A. A financial, educational, safety or health condition affecting the student would be reasonably improved as a result of the transfer; or

B. Attendance at the school in the nonresident district is more accessible to the parent's place of work or to the location of child care; or

C. There is some other special hardship or detrimental condition affecting the student or the student's immediate family which would be alleviated as a result of the transfer.

Special hardship or detrimental condition includes, a student who becomes a resident of the district in mid-year may apply for a release to complete the current school year only in his or her former district of residence, if transferring mid-year would create a special hardship or detrimental condition.

This policy has resulted in the following statistics:

School year	Total release
2005-2006	2203
2006-2007	2270
2007-2008	2591
2008-2009	3078
2009-2010	3102
2010-2011	3054

Note: Students must receive a release approval each year.

Q: How many merit scholars have come out of the Foss IB program?

A: Foss, as a whole school, has had 81 National Merit Finalists and 149 Semifinalists in its history. While the data doesn't exist to determine how many of those were IB students vs. non-IB students, it's highly likely that all those students took at least one IB class.

Q: Has Giadrone applied to become certified as a Middle Years IB Programme? If not, why not?

A: Not yet, but we started laying the foundation for it last summer, according to the prescribed IB certification process. Here's what is going on at Giadrone.

1. The school plans to submit an application in March to be considered an IB school candidate. This couldn't be done last year, because the application was due in April and the principal wasn't hired until April 20 and the staff wasn't chosen until later in the summer.
 - a. 16 of 40 Giadrone staff attended IB Level 1 training last summer; 2 of the 40 staff members had Level 2 training from their time at Hunt. (There are 3 levels of IB training.)
 - b. Student schedules current reflect the necessary components (8) for IB certification. The school is modeled after the IB Middle Years Programme philosophy.
2. Spring 2011: In late spring the school will be notified if it is to be considered an IB candidate, which would give the school a green light for additional staff training this summer.
 - a. The remaining staff will be trained in IB Level 1 this summer; the original 16 will receive Level 2 training; the 2 Hunt staff members will receive Level 3 training.
3. Fall 2011: Next year the school will go through its trial implementation status, showing evidence of aligning schedules and other requirements. The staff will implement the training received during the summer and gather student work evidence plus other specifics required for IB status.
4. Fall 2012: The following year the IB consultants conduct a site visit and evaluate the school on multiple criteria. Then, if everything is in order as we expect, the school will receive its IB certification.

Q: If you close Foss, where would the IB program be relocated?

A: If Foss were to close, the district would intend to relocate the IB program to one of the other four high schools. Based on the current space available, the program would mostly likely be relocated to Wilson or Mt. Tahoma.

Q: The district has scheduled the annual Kindergarten enrollment period for March. Does it make sense to enroll students in Kindergarten now when some of the elementary schools could be targeted for closure by early April?

A: The district will delay its traditional March Kindergarten enrollment period until after the school board indicates a clear direction on the potential closures of elementary schools. We do not want to ask parents to enroll their Kindergarteners in an elementary school only to find out a short time later that the school will be closed and require the parents to reenroll elsewhere.