



## Bond Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. **How did the district decide upon the six schools to be replaced?**

During the spring of 2015, more than 60 ASD parents and staff served on a citizens committee. After studying the district needs for 12 weeks, the committee made the recommendations to the School Board. The full Citizens Ad Hoc Committee report is available [here](#).

The average age of the schools to be replaced is 58.8 years. The 2008 Citizen's Ad Hoc Committee identified these six schools and Auburn High School for replacement. Auburn High was rebuilt with a bond passed in 2013. These six schools remain the highest priority for replacement. The committees determined once the cost to renovate exceeds 70% of the cost of replacement, the schools should be replaced.

Terminal Park Elementary, built in 1945, 71 years old

Dick Scobee Elementary, built in 1954, 62 years old

Olympic Middle School, built in 1957, 59 years old

Pioneer Elementary, built in 1959, 57 years old

Chinook Elementary, built in 1963, 53 years old

Lea Hill Elementary, built in 1965, 51 years old

### 2. **Why do we need two new elementary schools?**

Enrollment has grown by 1,074 students in the last five years and the district is projecting 1,670 more students in the next five years. Across the district, there will be 102 portables for the 16-17 school year, roughly 2,500 students in portables.

Providing state-supported full-day kindergarten and state-supported smaller class sizes at the elementary level has caused tremendous over-crowding at our elementary schools. The two new schools will be built with a capacity of 650 students. The five elementary schools being replaced also will be built with a capacity of 650 students to accommodate current and projected growth.

All of this growth has resulted in closets being turned into instructional space and offices, extremely crowded lunch lines, and a reliance on portable classrooms. Schools provide instruction in the hallway because there are no available classrooms. Our schools are crowded and it impacts learning.

Since the last elementary, Arthur Jacobsen, opened in 2007, we have had an increase of 1,200 elementary students, enough for two elementary schools.

**3. What is the tax total tax rate?**

The total school tax rate has decreased from \$6.62 in 2013 to \$5.83 in 2015. Based on projections, the total school tax rate will be \$6.86 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The tax rate has steadily declined over the last three years due to increasing assessed valuation and the district's fiscal stewardship in managing current projects. If passed, this bond would add \$1.03 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

**4. Why doesn't the state pay for schools?**

In Washington, the state does not build schools. Local voters must approve bonds and then the state provides matching funds. If passed, this bond will potentially generate \$79 million in state matching funds, almost enough to build two elementary schools.

**5. Why does the district want to do all of these projects with one bond election?**

The need for replacing the six schools has not changed since initially identified in 2008. The assessed valuations in the district have made the overall tax rate lower than anticipated. With strategic planning and fiscal oversight, the six replacement schools and two new elementary schools can be built for a modest tax increase. Additionally, placing all of the projects on one ballot eliminates the need to run multiple elections for the already identified projects. There are costs associated with running elections and by running all at once, it eliminates future election costs and keeps funds available for students. The School Board wants to meet the recommendations from the Citizen's Ad Hoc Committee.

Additionally, because of the need for a transition site as we rebuild new elementary schools, we need a long range-plan to use the current Olympic Middle School site as a transition site. If we split the project into phases, we would not have the option to use Olympic as an interim site while the elementary schools are being rebuilt.

**6. Will the elementary attendance areas change?**

Yes, with the addition of two new elementary schools and increased capacity at the existing five schools, it will be necessary to revamp attendance area boundaries. As Auburn has historically done, we will convene a Citizens Ad Hoc Committee to make recommendations for the revising the attendance areas.

**7. When will all of these projects be finished?**

We are still working on the time lines, but we anticipate all six schools will be replaced and we will have two additional elementary schools completed in nine years.

**8. Where will kids go to school while their school is being replaced?**

The new Olympic Middle School will be built on the south end of the school property, where the football field is currently located. Olympic students can attend the current school during construction.

Students at the five elementary schools that will be rebuilt will need to be housed at a transition school site during construction. After considering all available options, the most cost effective and educationally viable transition site is the current Olympic Middle School building, once the new Olympic MS has opened.

As we replace Pioneer, Terminal Park and Chinook, those elementary students would attend school in the old Olympic Middle School while those schools are being replaced. The three elementary schools will not be replaced at the same time, it would be staggered over two or three years.

Depending on the availability and location of land for our new north end elementary, we have not ruled out opening the new school as a transition site for Dick Scobee and/or Lea Hill students. This would minimize travel to Olympic and potentially allow two schools to be built at one time. A final decision will be made after we have acquired land for a new school in the north end of the district.

**9. Where will the two new elementary schools be located?**

We are currently working on buying property for the two new elementary schools. One will be located in the north end of Auburn and one in the south. We are projecting growth in both the north and south end of the district.

**10. Cascade and Alpac also are old schools. Why aren't they on the list for replacement?**

Two citizens Ad Hoc committees identified these six schools as the highest priority for replacement. The committee prioritized the needed projects and there are other schools identified as needing replacement, but were not as high on the list. The board weighed the identified needs with the capacity of the community to fill all of the needs and decided to place these six schools and two new elementary schools on the ballot.

**11. Have the buildings been maintained?**

Yes, we have taken very good care of the buildings. Despite regular maintenance, buildings wear out. The cost to maintain old, inefficient buildings takes money from the general fund that could be used for student learning.

**12. What is the difference between a bond and a levy?**

In simple terms, bonds are for buildings and levies are for learning. Bonds are comparable to mortgages and can be used for building and replacing schools, buying property and renovations. Bonds usually have a 20-year payoff time line, while levies are for 2-4 years typically.

Levies pay for programs the state does not fund or partially funds such as all athletics and activities, additional teachers and support staff, maintenance and custodial staff, and more.

The Auburn community supported the latest 4-year Educational Programs and Operations levy in February 2016. The levy makes up approximately 20 percent of the annual operating budget.

**13. Besides schools, what else will this bond money be used for?**

Monies from this proposed bond will only be used to build two new elementary schools and replace the six schools mentioned above. No money is targeted for any other use.

**14. Don't developers pay school impact fees? If so, what is that money used for?**

Yes, the district does receive some funds from developers for school impact fees. All impact fees have gone towards the purchase of portables to house existing students.

**15. Why isn't the district building a new middle school? All of those elementary students need to go to middle school somewhere.**

The citizens committee identified replacing these six schools and building two new elementary schools as the highest priorities. There are other priorities. The committee did not determine a new middle school as an immediate need. Elementary class sizes are smaller than middle school class sizes, thus making the elementary needs greater than the middle school needs.

The district has capacity at Cascade and Olympic Middle schools. Boundary changes recommended by the last Ad Hoc committee intended to relieve Mt. Baker will not take full effect until the current 7<sup>th</sup> graders are in high school, due to grandfathering those who already were attending Mt. Baker.