



What community members really need to know about **school funding**

School Board Priorities

The Willapa Valley school board wants to compensate teachers fairly for the important work they do. They also want to be financially responsible to meet school district needs.

Initiatives happening now or beginning soon include the Willapa gym construction, purchase of elementary math curriculum, completion of middle-high science and math curriculums (to expand new curriculum for calculus, chemistry and physics) the bus barn construction, and needed roof repair/replacement on the HS gym.

Willapa Valley Board members and their districts:

Tom Walker, President (1st)

Andy Portmann (2nd)

Eric Clements (3rd)

Josh Christian (4th)

Tyson Wetterauer (5th)

Schools face tough decisions due to new legislation and no state guidance.

As school districts negotiate with teacher unions for new salary scales, some basic knowledge of school funding will help folks understand the difficulties created by the new state laws designed to ensure the state, and not local districts, fund basic education.

These laws create three major changes in how school districts are funded. Because of these changes, some school districts are relative winners and others are losers.

1. One change eliminated a decades-old system in which teacher salary allocations from the state were increased to offset higher salaries for experienced teachers with increased education. That “staff mix” system was replaced with a statewide average allocation that is the same for each district regardless of their true teacher costs, \$65,216. Nearly half of WV teachers are at the higher levels of experience and education. While this is good for teaching skill, it challenges the budget. The state determines from a prototypical formula how many teachers each district should have. However, each district has different situations and different needs; none are alike.

Willapa Valley is apportioned for 23.67 teachers and 7.62 para educators. WV’s programs require 24 teachers and 25 para educators. The extra funds to pay all employees’ salaries must be found within other district resources in addition to the apportionment

2. A new regionalization formula attempts to address cost-of-living differences among school districts. Some urban districts with higher property values and higher cost of living receive extra dollars to offset cost of living. A total of 99 districts receive this bonus with rates ranging from an additional 6% to 24%. Willapa Valley is NOT one of those districts.

3 Third is a dramatic reduction in the funding that can be raised through local levies and levy equalization, and severe restrictions on how levy dollars can be spent. No salaries can be paid out of local levies. At WV, local levies are now restricted to raise only half of previous totals, resulting in a \$220,000 loss yearly. However, residents’ taxes will NOT be lowered, since the new state tax to pay for the new funding will keep taxes the same or higher.

While the state did increase school funding overall, the new finding was not only intended for teacher salaries. Districts face many other expenses as well.

Additionally, new federal laws have put the pressure on the WEA to “prove their worth” to teachers by trying to bargain high salary increases. Some school administrators, untrained as negotiators, have bent to the pressure of the unions. Unfortunately, overly high salary increases have caused some districts to already begin to make cuts in supplies, programs, and staff.

Willapa Valley’s administrators and school board are determined to stay within reasonable spending limits to remain responsible stewards of district resources. The district supports spending that directly positively impacts student learning. The WV district tries not to limit supplies, curriculum materials, field trips, professional development for teachers, and opportunities for kids. Careful negotiating will allow the district to continue to provide strong educational programs.

