



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Heather Crocker  
Communications Director  
Blaine County School District #61  
208-578-5005  
HCrocker@blaineschools.org**

**January 17, 2018**

## **School Board Wants to Shift Funds From Buildings to Instruction: Total Tax Collections Would Remain Same Under Proposed Changes**

Hailey, ID -

The Blaine County School District Board of Trustees will ask voters March 13 to reallocate property taxes collected for schools so that more money will go into student instruction and less into buildings.

“Total property taxes collected by the district would remain the same,” Board Chair Shawn Bennion said. Trustees unanimously approved the ballot measure on Tuesday (January 16, 2018.)

The district now collects property taxes totaling almost \$6 million a year earmarked for buildings and technology. The levy, known as the Plant Facilities Levy, was passed in 2009 when the district anticipated needing an additional elementary school. Since that time, enrollment has grown less than expected and a new school is not currently needed.

In order to reallocate the money in Blaine County, voters would have to approve the ballot measure by majority vote. It would reduce the Plant Facilities Levy, now at almost \$6 million a year, to \$2.99 million a year. It also would add a Supplemental Levy, totaling \$2.99 million a year. Supplemental levies are in effect in 93 of Idaho’s 115 school districts.

In a memo to the Board of Trustees, Superintendent GwenCarol Holmes said the Supplemental Levy would be used for the following if it passes:

1. Maintain elementary and secondary school class offerings that exceed the state requirement. These include smaller class sizes, preschool, all-day kindergarten, athletics, art, drama, choir, band, orchestra, career technical education and world languages.

2. Accelerate the district's effort to close achievement gaps among students. Students living in families with incomes below the poverty line, learning English as a second language and identified with learning disabilities are lagging in meeting state standards of achievement. The ballot measure will provide continued funding of programs to help all students meet state standards.
3. Provide a modest salary increase to retain and recruit the best staff. Salary negotiations for the 2018-19 academic year will begin in May.
4. Address additional unfunded objectives from the Strategic Plan adopted in 2015. This includes programs such as the community request for outdoor education for middle school students.

For the past two years, the district has addressed the difference between revenues and expenses by cutting \$2.5 million from district and school departments, reducing district-level staffing, and implementing voluntary and mandatory salary cuts for year-round administrative staff.

Even if the levy passes, Holmes, said, the district would be unable to do the following:

1. Restore positions eliminated in previous years.
2. Make significant increases in staff or class offerings without achieving savings in other areas.
3. Allow salary schedules to be fully adjusted for inflation.

A reduced Plant Facilities Levy of \$2.99 million annually for the next two years is expected to cover the costs of building maintenance, technology purchases and replacement, and debt payments. It already has funded improved heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems at aging schools, as well as additions and improvements at schools throughout the district.

The Board of Trustees will hold a community forum on Wednesday, January 24 from 6:00-7:00 p.m. at Carey School. A schedule of additional forums will be announced shortly. Additional information about district finances and the proposal is on the district's website at [Levy Proposal](#).

For more information, go to [www.blaineschools.org](http://www.blaineschools.org) or call (208) 578-5005.

###