Entry Name: Spotlight

Organization Name: Tacoma Public Schools

Category: Print Newsletter
“Spotlight” is the best active storytelling communication vehicle we have to reach all of our constituents, and it’s created with intention to make the most use of such a valuable tool. From the timing to the audience to the content, “Spotlight” is designed to share stories that illustrate continued district progress, student support and student success in relation to ballot measures needed to continue that work.

**Audience**
We print 106,000 copies of “Spotlight,” mail 101,600 and distribute almost all of the rest to staff.

Because we mail “Spotlight” to every mailstop in our boundary, it’s not limited to the parent audience - it’s opened to all potential voters. We need all voters to understand the work that’s happening in schools to set children up for daily and long-term success.

Whether or not our staff live in school district boundaries, it’s important to share “Spotlight” with them so they can serve as educated ambassadors for what’s happening across the school district.

**Timing**
We mailed “Spotlight” October and January in order to have content fresh in the minds of voters ahead of the February election. In addition, we plan months ahead to back out the January “Spotlight” drop date to coincide with the set of days during which people receive their ballots in the mail. It’s important to note that in Washington, all elections are conducted by mail-in ballot. There are no in-person polling locations. Understanding this election mechanism is key to our planning and implementation.

**Content**
“Spotlight” stories and visuals are deliberately selected to support district priorities and illustrate how we use levy dollars to support our students.

For example, in our winter issue, we shared the story of Ben, a student unable to verbally communicate until his school provided him an iPad. The iPad, associated software and staff training were paid for with funds from a previous technology levy. We also shared the story of Kaleigha, who has physical challenges that necessitate a support team of counselors, and physical and occupational therapists. Those staff positions are supplemented by levy funding. A story about two students with apprenticeships at a local car dealership illustrate how our levy-funded Career and Technical Education program directly supports the futures of our students.

These stories are all supported with high-quality photographs and inviting graphics.

**Writing style and standard**
Our writing standard, “impeccably accurate,” is maintained by the time and thought we allot to this publication. We report deeply on these stories and have an extensive review process with the story subjects, our internal team and the contractor who designs the publication.
iPad unlocks new world for Ben and other students with communication challenges

Imagine you’re dropped in the middle of a foreign country and can’t speak the language. You can’t find the bathroom, get lost, or anything else you need. You can’t leave that spot until you can say what you need.

Your life changes.

The expression on Ben’s face is pure joy.

The expressions on the faces of his classmates and ‘TACO’ Diploma students is pure awe.

Ben, a freshman at TACO High School, has autism and social anxiety. He is described as “ Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, and unique ways of experiencing the world.

Throughout the day, students are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities designed to help them develop their social skills and self-esteem. The school offers a range of programs and initiatives aimed at supporting students with autism spectrum disorder, including individualized education plans, therapy, and social skills training.

What levy replacements will you see on the Feb. 8, 2022, ballot for Tacoma Public Schools?

A levy is a tax that is imposed by a local government or school district to support specific programs or services within its jurisdiction. In the context of Tacoma Public Schools, a levy replacement would be a new levy proposed in place of an existing one, designed to fund ongoing operations or new initiatives. The specific details of the levy proposals would be outlined in the school district’s budget and recommended by the school board and district administration. Residents and stakeholders would have an opportunity to provide feedback and input during public meetings and hearings before the levy proposals are put on the ballot for a vote.

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Tacoma Public Schools
Every student. Every day.