

Ripple Effect Between Education and Housing

Recent state budget cuts have drastically reduced K-12 public education funding; consequently, some of our local schools are at risk for closure. Wawona Elementary School and Bass Lake Elementary School have been given the rest of this school year and next school year to figure out ways to make up their deficit in order to stay open. This decision was reached at the Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District board meeting March 11. As a result, our schools need community support. In the coming months, you may be asked to assist these schools as they look at ways to keep the schools open long term.

Why are these local schools important? I'll address this question from a REALTOR® perspective as well as from a community perspective.

How are the schools? This may be the most common question fielded by REALTORS®, and the answer plays a role in virtually every residential real estate decision in the United States. This means that quality schools provide a foundation to ensure a flourishing community, and this ripple effect between education and housing necessitates that the real estate community take a direct interest in improving our primary and secondary schools.

According to the *2007 National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers*, schools were listed as a deciding factor for 28% of home buyers. A recent NAR survey showed that Americans rank quality of public schools second only to crime when deciding where to live. Therefore, REALTORS® especially need to be educated about what our schools have to offer as we work with prospective buyers to our area and market listings for our sellers and being knowledgeable about our schools is an essential component of the services we provide.

Of all the local neighborhood amenities that can influence a buyer's decision to purchase a home, proximity to good quality schools is one of the most influential. Even buyers with no children care about the reputation of the local schools because they know that schools directly affect a community's vitality as well as a home's resale value. Whereas young families will often want to know about the performance of local elementary schools and preschools and families with older children will want to know about the performance of high schools and will often want to obtain information on colleges as well. Parents may also want to know about the availability of sports and other extracurricular activities such as art or music. Other important factors are test results as well as the ratio between students and teachers.

We need to get the word out that what we have to offer in our local schools is what people want. It benefits us all when people are attracted to our area, whether you are a REALTOR®, homeowner, business person, local resident, retiree, parent, school classified or certificated employee, or school administrator. More information about our school programs and student success stories need to get out to our community.

I'd like to see a flyer or brochure regarding our local schools and available programs made available to hand out to not only prospective buyers but also to patrons visiting our local businesses, restaurants, doctors' offices, preschools, movie theater, bowling alley, and more. School websites should also be utilized as an educational and communication tool.

I've been a trustee on the Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School Board since November 2006. Although my interest first stemmed from my involvement as a parent, I've come to realize that serving on the school board is beneficial to the community because of my special knowledge of the relationship between quality education and real estate. It also allows me a unique perspective to how a school functions and the role community members can take in supporting our schools. Please consider doing what you can for our local schools and mountain community.

Many of our local service clubs and businesses have realized the connection between schools and the community and have volunteered their time as well as donating funds for various school projects. However, our local schools need you now more than ever.

Beverly Scott, President
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