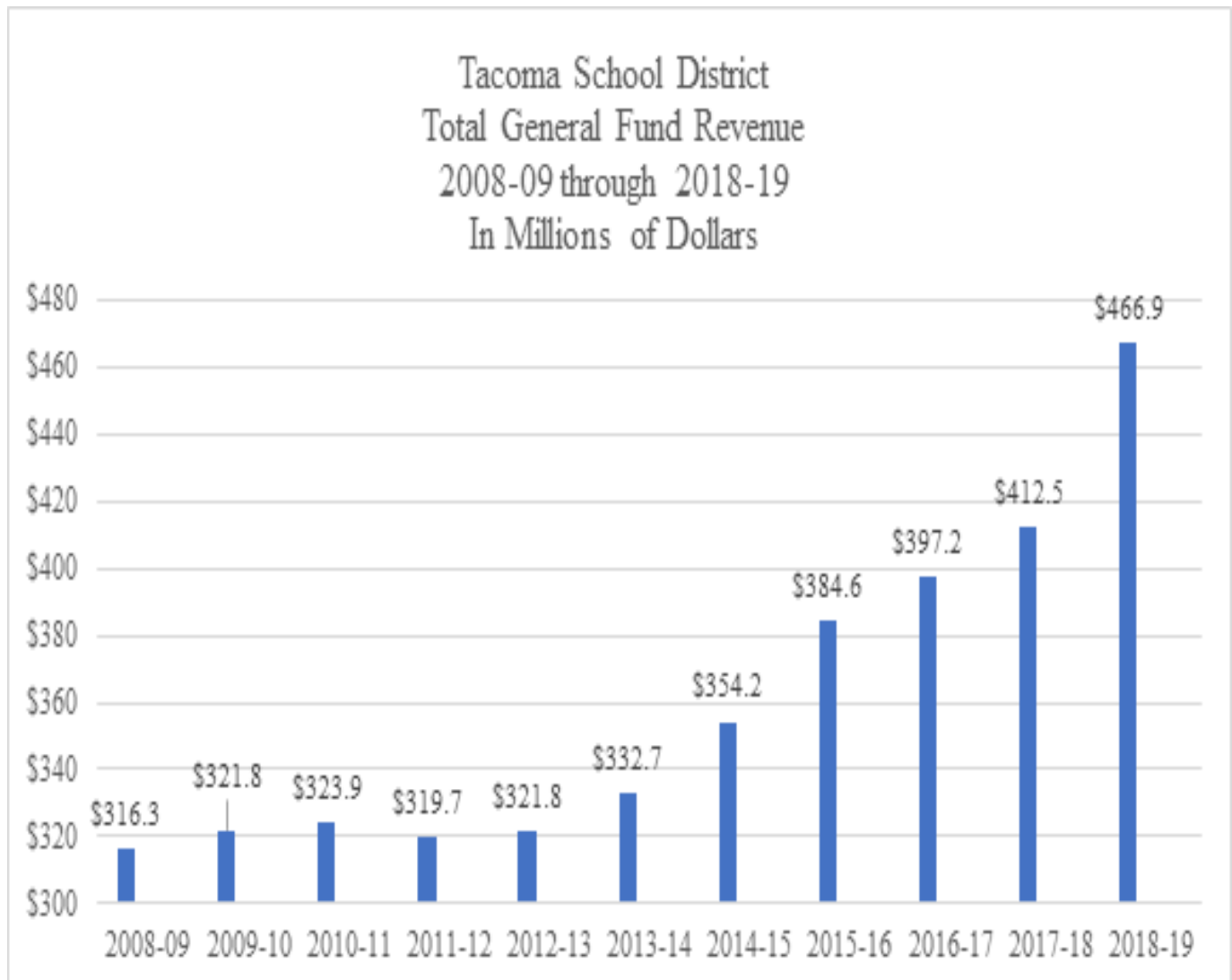


Tacoma school officials say they plan to lay off teachers after receiving record-high funding from the state

By LIV FINNE | Feb 20, 2019



In 2017, the state legislature enacted local property tax relief, and at the same time passed record levels of state funding for schools. The idea is to make sure the state is funding basic education for all children, while removing inequities that allowed wealthy school districts to gain a disproportionate funding advantage.

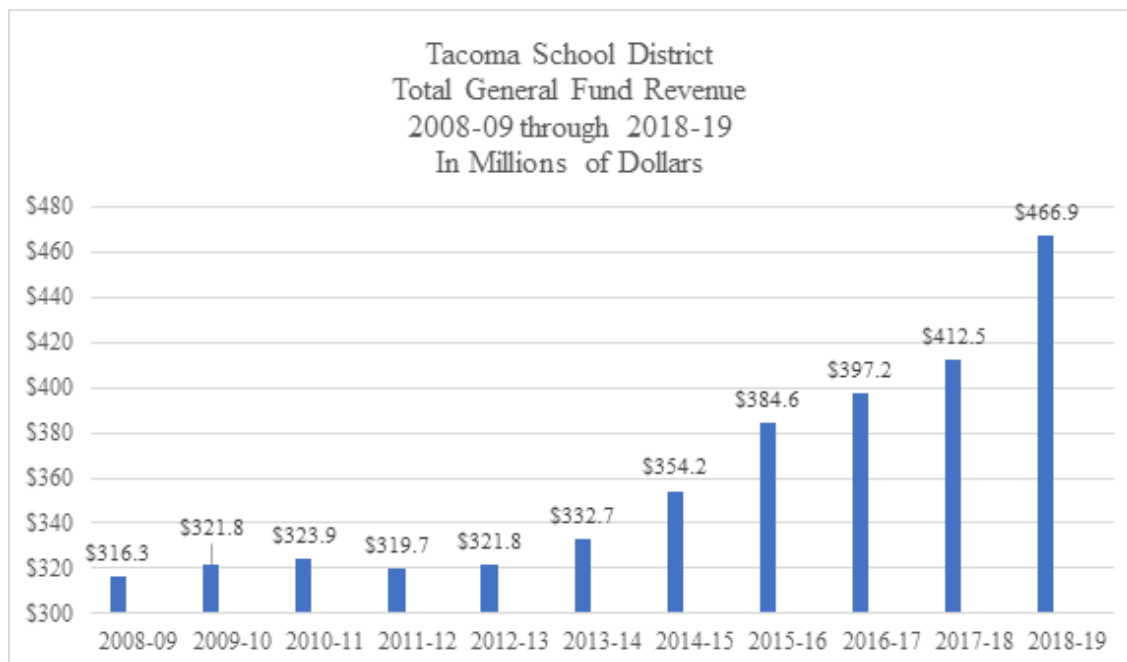
Tacoma Superintendent Carla Santorno (salary and benefits \$347,161 a year) now says the state-funding increases will not prevent her from possibly laying off teachers. She also says she wants to cancel the local property tax relief the legislature enacted.

Tacoma homeowners and other property owners are due to receive at least \$32 million in tax relief this year, at the same time Tacoma school district officials are getting record funding of \$467 million for education (for the 2018-19 ten-month school year). The bonus of \$54 million lawmakers gave Tacoma schools is intended to prevent lay offs and cuts to student services while districts transition to full state funding.

The funding surge has provided dramatic increases in money for K-12 schools across the state. Lawmakers increased the state property tax and boosted school funding to \$22.8 billion (up from \$18 billion), over \$14,000 per student, which is more than tuition at many private schools.

Still, school officials in Tacoma have issued service-cut threats, and are moving forward with planned public meetings to hear from frightened parents, as *The News Tribune* reports [here](#).

Tacoma's budget has increased by \$151 million in ten years, a 48% increase (all numbers from Tacoma school budget documents).



Now Tacoma district officials are complaining that next year local families will be getting property tax relief. But local tax relief is just one part of a larger policy, one that greatly increases state spending on schools. The purpose is to make school funding fairer for everyone.

Superintendent Santorno and Tacoma School officials have never had so much money as they do now. Yet they want to cancel \$32 million in local property tax relief; a tax cut that would mostly benefit working families and the elderly living on fixed incomes. They also want to go back to a system that depends on high local taxes for schools, a system that disproportionately benefits property-rich districts.