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**Howard Elementary School** Principal Allan Chinn stands in one of the long hallways of the school and talks about the problems faced by his teachers and students in a building that was built in 1949. Chinn attended the school as a child.

# Yes for Schools effort kicks off

*Supporters urge voters to approve a bond measure for building upgrades and other capital expenses*

**By SUSAN PALMER**  
*The Register-Guard*

The irony is not lost on the teachers and administrators at Howard Elementary School. For several years it's been a "technology immersion school," but the building is so old that it doesn't have the electrical power to completely support computers in all the classrooms.

While the school boasts a one-to-one laptop-to-student ratio, all those computers can't

actually be turned on at the same time.

Teachers such as Allison Kreider wind up jury-rigging the connections. Student desks have power strips attached to them with small clamps, the power cords wrapped around desk legs and snaking across the floor to wall outlets.

Kreider has figured out which outlets to use to keep from blowing a circuit breaker, but every now and then a teacher temporarily loses power

to the classroom.

It's one of many reasons that Howard Elementary is among the first on the list for replacement in the Eugene School District if voters back a bond measure in May. Supporters launched the Yes for Schools campaign for Measure 20-210 at Howard on Monday to draw attention to the district's aging buildings, many of which date to the 1940s and '50s.

Constructed in 1949, Howard back then welcomed students who are now in their 70s, said Eugene School Board President Jennifer Geller. Back in their day, the school was off a dirt

road, people rarely locked their doors at night, nobody owned a computer and the term "energy efficient" had yet to be coined, she said.

Today, schools must support computers and Internet access in the classroom, foster more collaboration among teachers and students, and keep children safe from harm that was unimaginable seven decades ago, said Sabrina Parsons, CEO of Palo Alto Software.

Parsons is co-chairing the campaign with Eugene attorney Gerry Gaydos.

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# Yes: Four schools would be replaced, technology upgraded

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Businesses care about the quality of local schools and Parsons, who has nearly doubled her work force in the past few years, said that one of the first things people do when considering relocating to Eugene is research the caliber of its schools.

While state income taxes cover most of the costs of educating students, it's up to local communities to provide the structural support in the form of buildings, technology, textbooks and other classroom materials, she said.

"We can't do much about the state budget, but the bond can do a lot to fix schools that are old," Parsons said.

Besides benefiting students, Gaydos said, the bond improvements will mean local economic development in the form of construction projects for local contractors.

The Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce supports the bond, he said.

Howard, with its long narrow hallways and isolated classrooms, doesn't support student and teacher collaboration, said Principal Allan Chinn, who knows Howard well, having attended the school as a child. Replacing the school rather than renovating it will be less disruptive because the new structure will be built on the playground while students continue attending in the old building, he said.

The \$170 million bond would replace four aging schools and improve technology and update textbooks and security districtwide.

Roosevelt Middle School is among the buildings that would be replaced.

Roosevelt eighth-grader Margaret Gleason was on hand Monday to lobby for the bond.



PAUL CARTER/The Register-Guard

In a third grade classroom at Howard Elementary School, wires to power computers are wound around the legs of desks and snake across the floor to electrical outlets.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

If voters approve the bond, here's what \$170 million would pay for

**Replacements or major renovations:** At Roosevelt (\$42 million) and Jefferson/ATA (\$35 million) middle schools and Howard (\$32 million) and River Road (\$24 million) elementary schools

**Additions:** At Gilham Elementary School (\$5 million) and Kelly Middle School (\$2 million)

**Technology upgrades:** Districtwide

**Instructional materials:** Update science lab equipment and science, writing and math textbooks

**Security:** Includes surveillance video equipment and security fencing

**Odds, ends:** Building repairs, bus purchases

Describing Roosevelt teachers as "great" and the school's many educational programs as "really cool," Margaret also pointed out the building's problems: broken down lockers that don't lock, classroom heaters that make so much noise students can't hear

the teacher, a heater that last year just flat fell off the wall, the ceiling over the library that almost caved in.

"It's a really great school," she said, "but the building doesn't mirror that."

If approved, the bond

would increase taxes by 24 cents per \$1,000 assessed property value. Property taxes would increase by about \$42 a year for the homeowner of a residence with assessed value of \$174,000, the district median.

The bonds would be

paid off in 20 years.

As of Monday, no political action committee had registered to oppose the measure. Supporters include the Eugene Education Association PAC, which made a \$1,500 contribution, and the Oregon School Employees Association, which donated \$5,500.

Last year, while the district was reviewing its long-range facilities plan, some worried parents complained about proposals by an outside consultant to consolidate Edison and Camas Ridge elementary schools, but those plans were shelved by the school board after several public meetings.

A survey of voters the district conducted in January indicated that even with other money measures on the May ballot, 64 percent said they fa-

vored the bond.

A spate of recent parental concern about changing schedules at the high schools is unlikely to erode support, said Joy Marshall, director of Stand for Children, an education advocacy group in Eugene.

"I'm not hearing people connecting the two," she said.

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