



Operating Referendum 2022



Sun Prairie Area
School District
Futures depend on us...every child, every day.

Dear Sun Prairie Area School District Community,

We have a lot to be proud of in the Sun Prairie Area School District. We are starting the 2022–2023 academic year with a new secondary configuration, including the new and stunning Sun Prairie West High School, a refreshed Sun Prairie East High School, a new amazing space for Prairie Phoenix Academy, and a reconfigured and beautiful Central Heights Middle School. Plus, the new Bank of Sun Prairie Stadium at Ashley Field has already been enjoyed by thousands of District residents.

We have also in all other District facilities, by installing new lockers, bathrooms, furniture, flooring, lighting, HVAC, carpeting, paint, and windows, and tearing down walls to make our learning spaces more collaborative. We have much to celebrate when it comes to our facilities. With three high schools, three 6th–8th-grade buildings, and nine elementary schools, **our School District is in great shape for the foreseeable future.**

But buildings do not teach children; people do. **We have made great strides in recruiting and retaining the best teachers, staff, and administrators who work tirelessly for our students each and every day.** Three years ago, our median salary for teachers was below the Dane County average, and we are proud to say that we are now slightly above the Dane County median. But we cannot regress. We must do everything we can to recruit and retain the highest quality staff so that our children are prepared for the ever-changing world we live in.

We do not want to increase class sizes at this critical time or reduce the number of staff that make our District the best place for our students. We have come too far.

We believe our brightest days are still in front of us. **Thank you for your ongoing support of our faculty, staff, and most importantly, the 8,400 children who are relying on us every day.**

On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for reading the important information in this newsletter. It is our honor to serve you.

Every Child, Every Day,

Steve Schroeder
Board of Education President

Bryn Horton
Vice President



In this newsletter, we provide:

- Critical facts about school funding and projected budget deficits
- Information about the November 8, 2022, \$9M operating referendum
- Consequences of a failed referendum
- Opportunities to engage and learn more

Why phase in a \$9 million operating referendum now?



Operational costs have increased exponentially.

For instance:

- Our busing contract has gone up 5%.
- Our utilities cost has gone up 10%.

Costs to maintain an exceptional workforce have grown exponentially.

- We've attracted an extraordinary staff and don't want to regress.
- Wages have been tied to inflationary increases and are slightly above Dane County average.

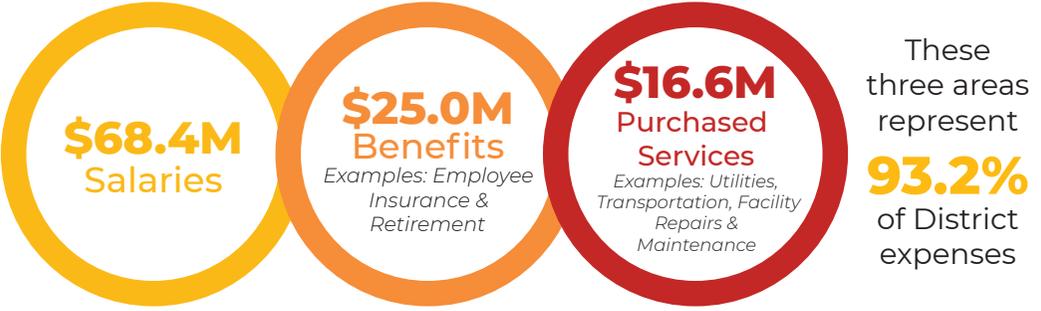
State funding has stagnated.

- While costs have gone up, the state has not increased funding to help schools keep pace.
- Per-pupil funding has not increased for the last two years.

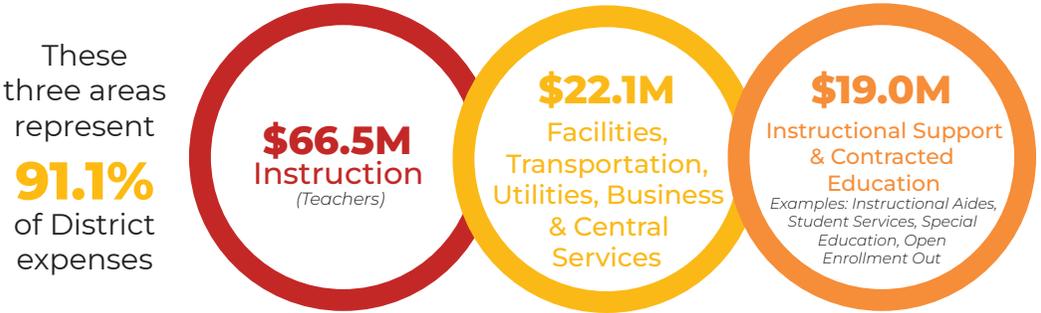


As recently as 2011, Wisconsin's per-pupil funding was **\$1,166** above the national average. In nine years, we have fallen **\$754 below** the national average. **This is before two years of a \$0 increase from our state.**

SPASD Top Three Operating Expenses by Type (The What)



SPASD Top Three Operating Expenses by Function (The What For)



Where will the referendum funds go?



Funding challenges are happening statewide.

40

operating referenda
in Wisconsin this
November.

8 of 16

Dane County districts
have operating
referenda this
November.

Dane County Operating Referenda Since November 2020

| Dane County District | Referendum Date | Amount |
|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Middleton–Cross Plains | November 2022 | \$7.345M, \$13.79 M, \$19.435M, \$24.9/yr for 4 yrs |
| Verona | November 2022 | \$19M/yr |
| Oregon | November 2022 | \$5.42M, \$8.42M, \$11.4M/yr over 3 yrs |
| Sun Prairie | November 2022 | \$9M/yr phased in over 3 yrs |
| Waukegan | November 2022 | \$1M, \$3M, \$6M/yr for 3 yrs |
| Mount Horeb | November 2022 | \$4.82M/yr |
| Bellevue | November 2022 | \$999,999/yr |
| Waterloo | November 2022 | \$700,000/yr for 5 yrs |
| Marshall | April 2022 | \$975,000/yr for 3 yrs |
| Cambridge | April 2022 | \$150,000/yr |
| Madison | November 2020 | \$33M/yr |
| Monona Grove | November 2020 | \$3.7M/yr for 4 yrs |
| Waukegan | November 2020 | ~\$2.1M/yr for 5 yrs |
| Deerfield | November 2020 | \$500,000/yr for 5 yrs |



The referendum question is for \$9M per year.

Step into \$9M over 3 years

~\$3M/yr phased each year for 3 years to a consistent \$9M each year after that.
The amount for each year's phase-in will depend on state funding, inflation, and mill rate management.

What is the impact for you, the taxpayer?

Due to increasing property values and state equalized aid, the District's mill rate is projected to go down. **Even with a successful referendum, the mill rate is expected to drop by about 30 cents.**

| Property Value | Cumulative 3-Year Projected Tax Impact |
|----------------|--|
| \$200,000 | \$ - 44.07 |
| \$300,000 | \$ - 66.10 |
| \$400,000 | \$ - 88.14 |
| \$500,000 | \$ - 110.17 |

With a successful referendum, your property tax rate is still projected to be lower after three years than it is currently.



TAX CALCULATOR

We encourage you to use the tax calculator on our web page to calculate the estimated impact on your property.

Information Sessions

In-person and virtual opportunities for you to ask questions and learn more are coming up over the next few weeks.

Friday, September 23 — Virtual Open Door, 9:00–10:00 a.m.

Link will be available at sunprairieschools.org.

Monday, September 26 — Referendum Open House, 5:00–6:00 p.m.

District Support Center, 501 South Bird Street

Wednesday, September 28 — Coffee with the Superintendent in the Community, 8:00–9:15 a.m.

Wednesday, September 28 — Virtual Open Door, 12:00–1:00 p.m.

Link will be available at sunprairieschools.org.

There will be several more events scheduled during the month of October. We hope to see you there!

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What happens if the referendum fails?

A: If the referendum is not approved on November 8th, the District will develop a process for making **significant budget reductions** for the 2022–2023 school year and beyond. We will need to reduce our largest expenses, including salaries, benefits, and purchased services.

Q: How does the building of Sun Prairie West High School factor into this referendum?

A: In 2019, our community passed a capital (building) referendum to build and remodel schools. That money cannot be used for ongoing expenses.

In 2019, the community also passed an operating referendum dedicated solely to the costs of operating and staffing the new Sun Prairie West High School.

The need established in this 2022 referendum is independent and separate from past referenda. **This referendum is a result of a lack of state funding and not a result of building and remodeling schools.**

Q: How does the governor's recent announcement of additional funding impact the budget?

A: The governor announced funding for Wisconsin schools from the federal American Rescue Plan Act. Sun Prairie's amount of approximately \$756K will be helpful in reducing the \$4M budget deficit for 2022–2023. An additional allocation is targeted toward student mental health. This is an area of focus that our community identified in our updated strategic framework refresh. **In short, these allocations help, but they are one-time funding that help bridge our current budget until more permanent funding is obtained through a referendum.**

Q: What is the difference between capital and operating referenda?

A: In a **capital referendum**, funds are borrowed and paid back with interest. This type of referendum is most often used for building projects.

In an **operating referendum**, there are no interest payments because there are no borrowed funds. The referendum amount is levied each year (pay as you go) and is more cost-efficient for the community.

What's on the ballot?

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET TO EXCEED REVENUE LIMIT BY \$9,000,000 FOR RECURRING PURPOSES

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of the Sun Prairie Area School District, Dane and Columbia Counties, Wisconsin, that the revenues included in the School District budget be authorized **to exceed the revenue limit** specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, **by \$9,000,000 beginning with the 2022–2023 school year, for recurring purposes consisting of expenses related to maintaining class sizes, student services, and staff compensation, providing for substitute teacher coverage, increasing mental health services for students, and ongoing safety and facility maintenance.**



Voter Information

[MYVOTE.WI.GOV](https://myvote.wi.gov)

For comprehensive election information, voter registration, and obtaining absentee ballots, visit myvote.wi.gov.

ELECTION DAY



A few reminders . . .

- You must be registered to vote. This requires a valid photo ID.
- Mail-in absentee ballots are available from September 22 through November 3. Request yours today and watch for due dates.
- In-person early voting begins October 27.

Thank you to our community for your past support of Sun Prairie Schools!



Sun Prairie Area
School District
501 S. Bird Street
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Strong public schools:



Are an economic engine for our community



Make our community a desirable place to locate for both business and residential purposes



Protect property values



We commit to providing an outstanding value for invested dollars.



STAY INFORMED. LEARN MORE.

sunprairieschools.org/district/referendum2022

Referendum information will be mailed to all residents, posted on the District website, and offered at info sessions.

Contact Us

Email: ref2022@sunprairieschools.org

Janet Rosseter, Assistant Superintendent of Operations | 608-834-6683

Phil Frei, Director of Business and Finance | 608-834-6510



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

No student may be unlawfully discriminated against in any school programs, activities or in facilities usage because of the student's sex (gender identity, gender expressions, and non-conformity to gender role stereotypes), color, religion, profession, or demonstration of belief or non-belief, race, national origin (including limited English proficiency), ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, homelessness status, sexual orientation, age, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. Harassment is a form of discrimination and shall not be tolerated in the District. It is the responsibility of administrators, staff members and all students to ensure that student discrimination or harassment does not occur. (SPASD District Policy 7B)

If a student or parent/guardian would prefer to have this information translated into Spanish, please contact us at 608-834-6620. Si un estudiante, padre o guardian prefiere tener esta información traducida en Español, por favor contactenos en el 608-834-6620.

If a student or parent/guardian would prefer to have this information translated into Hmong, please contact us at 608-834-6630. Yog tus me nyuam lub xiv yog niam thab txiv/vus neeg muaj cai salb xyuas tus me nyuam xav tau qhov ntawv ntawm no uai us Hmobb, thov hais rau peb paub rau ntawm 608-834-6630.