

VOTE NOV. 5
OUR COMMITMENT TO
OUR STUDENTS
OUR STAFF
OUR COMMUNITY

OPERATING REFERENDUM 2024

STAFF INFO

Updated 10/18/24

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Wisconsin funding for public schools has not kept up with inflation since 2010.

REFERENDUM PASSES



◇ **Current class sizes and staffing levels** remain consistent.



◇ **Teacher and staff pay becomes more competitive** with other Dane County districts.



◇ **Increased programming** and support for all students.



◇ Expanded **4K and early learning offerings**.



◇ More opportunities to **connect students with the trades**.



◇ **Maintain budgets** for current programs and operations.



◇ SPASD property taxes would **increase for three years and remain steady or decrease after**.

REFERENDUM FAILS TO PASS



◇ **Significant staff layoffs** of over 10% of the district's total staff. About 182 positions would need to be cut over the next 5 years.



◇ Teacher pay remains **below the Dane County average**, giving other districts a competitive edge to recruit and retain staff.



◇ Students learn best when taught and cared for by the best staff. **Losing staff will make it harder to support students and improve student results.**



◇ **Significant cuts** to student programming and school and department budgets.



◇ SPASD property taxes **would not increase**.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR STAFF?



\$4 million

RESPOND TO OUR STUDENTS' NEEDS

- ◇ Increased funding for programs and supports for students.
- ◇ Expanded access to 4-year-old kindergarten and early learning offerings.
- ◇ Continuing to expand access to the trades and to career planning for high school students.
- ◇ Meeting the needs of a diverse and growing student body from early childhood through the transition to adulthood.



\$7 million

PROVIDE COMPETITIVE TEACHER & STAFF PAY

- ◇ Support competitive pay and benefits for all staff in Sun Prairie compared to other Dane County districts.
- ◇ This would benefit all staffing categories. Because there is an existing wage study focused on professional educators, teachers would see an immediate impact.
- ◇ Wage studies for all other groups will occur over the next 3 years.



\$14 million

MAINTAIN DISTRICT OPERATIONS

- ◇ The district keeps up with cost of living adjustments and inflation, and it is able to maintain health insurance and the Employee Wellness Clinic.
- ◇ Over 80% of our budget funds staffing. This means that \$11 million of these operating funds will maintain staffing levels, pay, benefits, and current class sizes.
- ◇ Maintain budgets for current programs and operations.

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: *Can't the district fix the budget shortfall by spending less?*

A: Education is a people business. Schools need people to run, and 80% of our budget is for staff. **Even if we significantly cut all other expenses, we would still have to lay off staff to balance the budget without a successful referendum.**

Q: *Is this referendum happening because the district spends too much or doesn't manage money well?*

A: No. An outside accounting firm checks our district's finances every year, and we have a good record with no major problems. We also have a high AA bond rating, which shows we manage our money well. **This referendum is needed because the State of Wisconsin hasn't given enough funding to public schools for over ten years.**

Q: *Which positions would be affected by staff reductions?*

A: No decisions have been made about staff reductions at this time. **If the referendum fails to pass, the district will work on creating a process to reduce budgets and staffing in a way that is aligned to the district's strategic priorities.**

Q: *Will this referendum only benefit professional educators in the system?*

A: The \$7 million investment would help support all current staff and attract new staff to our district. A recent wage study focused on professional educators, so teachers would see an immediate benefit. **But the district also plans to look at pay and benefits for all staff to stay competitive and keep the best people on our team.**

Q: *Is the problem that the district has too many district administrators?*

A: No. Our district isn't "top-heavy." **Out of 16 school districts in Dane County, 12 have more administrators per student than Sun Prairie. Just like any team, our district does better with good leaders.** District-level administrators help improve the district by guiding the district's goals, supporting staff, planning assessments and tracking student progress, implementing strategy, ensuring consistency across all 15 school sites and 4K, and maintaining smooth operations.

Q: *How has the district affected property taxes?*

A: The district makes up only one part of property taxes. **From 2020 to 2023, the school district's portion of taxes actually went down by an average of 7.4%, even with a referendum in 2022.** Other things, like rising property values and other local taxes, can make tax bills go up, but these are beyond the district's control.