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

OPERATING REFERENDUM 2024

The School Board and the district are bringing forward for community consideration a **$25 million recurring operating referendum phased in over five years.**

$25 million
phased in over five years

WE HAVE MOMENTUM AND ARE SEEING IMPROVED RESULTS FOR OUR STUDENTS.

Student results have improved across all screening data, with **significant improvement among marginalized groups.**

2–3rd-grade students have **significantly improved in their ability to read grade-level texts.**

Schools with higher needs are provided more resources through **equitable funding & staffing models.**

86% of our students in surveys report **feeling safe in their schools.**

The majority of our youngest learners leave our 4K program **meeting or exceeding developmental expectations.**

Over 5,500 meals are served daily to address food insecurity.

REFERENDUM FUNDS WOULD BE USED TO MAINTAIN THIS MOMENTUM.

We remain good stewards of our communities' investment in the finances and facilities of the district and maintain a high AA bond rating by Standard and Poor's.

School funding challenges are happening statewide as the state's funding for public education continues to lag behind the pace of inflation. This has led to 79 school district operating referendums this fall.

79
referendums are on the ballot statewide this fall.

Dane County school district operating referendums in November 2024:

- DeForest: $7.9 million per year
- Madison: $100 million per year (phased in over 4 years)
- McFarland: $5.25 million per year (phased in over 3 years)
- Sun Prairie: $25 million per year (phased in over 5 years)
- Waunakee: Avg. $1.6 million per year for 2 years & $9.1 million per year (phased in over 2 years)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TAXES?

PROJECTED TAX IMPACT OF THE REFERENDUM	
1st Year, 2024 Tax Bill	30¢ per $1,000 of property value
2nd Year, 2025 Tax Bill	58¢ per $1,000 of property value
3rd Year, 2026 Tax Bill	56¢ per $1,000 of property value
After the 3rd Year	No additional tax increase from the referendum

The total tax impact over the five-year roll-in is **$1.44 per $1,000 of property value.**
If your house is valued at $300,000, the school district's portion of your annual tax bill is projected to be $432 higher after the five-year roll-in period.

AFTER FIVE YEARS, THE DISTRICT'S PORTION OF THE TAX BILL FOR A $300,000 HOUSE IS PROJECTED TO BE HIGHER BY:

$36 per month **$8.30** per week

ANSWERS TO SOME QUESTIONS WE'VE HEARD:

Q: WHY IS THE DISTRICT GOING TO REFERENDUM TWO YEARS AFTER THE 2022 REFERENDUM?

A: In 2022, our community passed a $9 million recurring operating referendum to address growing costs and stagnating state funding. We are grateful for our community's support. The 2022 referendum was designed with the best information available to us at the time. **Since then, our fiscal landscape has changed in ways we didn't anticipate, including a less-than-adequate biennial state budget.**

In 2022, we didn't know:

- Inflation would remain near 8%
- Insurance costs would increase by nearly 20%
- Utilities costs would increase by nearly 30%
- The state would not fill in the gap created when federal COVID dollars ran out after the legislature indicated that they would.

Q: IS THIS REFERENDUM BECAUSE THE DISTRICT BUILT SP WEST HIGH SCHOOL?

A: In 2019, our community passed a capital (building) referendum to build and remodel schools to address overcrowding issues at the secondary level. It also passed an operating referendum dedicated solely to the costs of operating and staffing SP West High School.

This referendum is independent and separate from the opening of new schools. This referendum would still be needed even without SP West. The fact is costs have increased at a rapid pace while state funding has not caught up.

The district is already efficient with how it budgets its funds. This purpose of this referendum is to allow our community to share its priorities with us before we embark on any significant budget and staffing reductions.

Q: HOW HAVE MY SCHOOL TAXES CHANGED OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS?

A: The district has done a case study of property taxes. In most cases, the district's portion of property taxes is actually lower now than it was in 2020. In fact, the 2023–2024 mill rate is lower than it was predicted to be during the 2022 referendum.

However, school funding only makes up a portion of the total property tax bill. Other taxes, which the district does not have control over, may have increased.

Additionally, property values in Sun Prairie have increased dramatically in recent years. Higher property values, while good for those wishing to sell their homes, can lead to higher property taxes.

It is important to note that if the 2024 referendum passes, the district's mill rate is still projected to be lower than it was during the 2019–2020 fiscal year.

Q: WILL THIS REFERENDUM ONLY BENEFIT PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS IN THE SYSTEM?

A: The proposed $7 million investment in competitive staff compensation and benefits is to support our existing staff and to make our district competitive when recruiting new staff.

The district's human resource department has completed a wage study focused on professional educators, so they would see an immediate impact. However, **compensation for all staff categories would be studied so that the district can identify ways to remain competitive in compensation and benefits so we can recruit and retain the best staff.**

The 2024 Referendum is in service to our district's three commitments: to our students, to our staff, and to our community.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR STUDENTS

PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING — $4 million

OUR MISSION: **To inspire and prepare every child, every day, by providing relevant, engaging, and innovative learning experiences in and out of the classroom.**

OUR DISTRICT IS RAPIDLY CHANGING

Our students' needs are increasing more than ever before.

In 2022:	In 2024:
26.8% of students were eligible for free & reduced lunch.	**34.9%** of students are eligible for free & reduced lunch.
187 students were experiencing homelessness.	**294** students are experiencing homelessness.
607 students were multilingual learners.	**690** students are multilingual learners.
Our district's enrollment was **8,411** students.	Projected enrollment is **8,632** students.

The above statistics are the highest Sun Prairie has ever seen.

Through our diverse array of programming, our students are able to explore their passions and develop new skills to carry them beyond their time in school, all while building connections with their peers and our staff. The district's priorities include:

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS' EARLY LEARNING

Our 4-year-old Kindergarten program (SP4K) sets our students up for success. Students who go through the SP4K program enter Kindergarten meeting or exceeding developmental targets for their age group.

REDEFINING THE HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE FOR JUNIORS & SENIORS

Academic and career planning is woven throughout our students' educational experience to get them college and career-ready. This includes helping to connect students with the trades.

The district would allocate $4 million in referendum funds to respond to our students' needs and continue to find ways to support every child, every day.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR STAFF

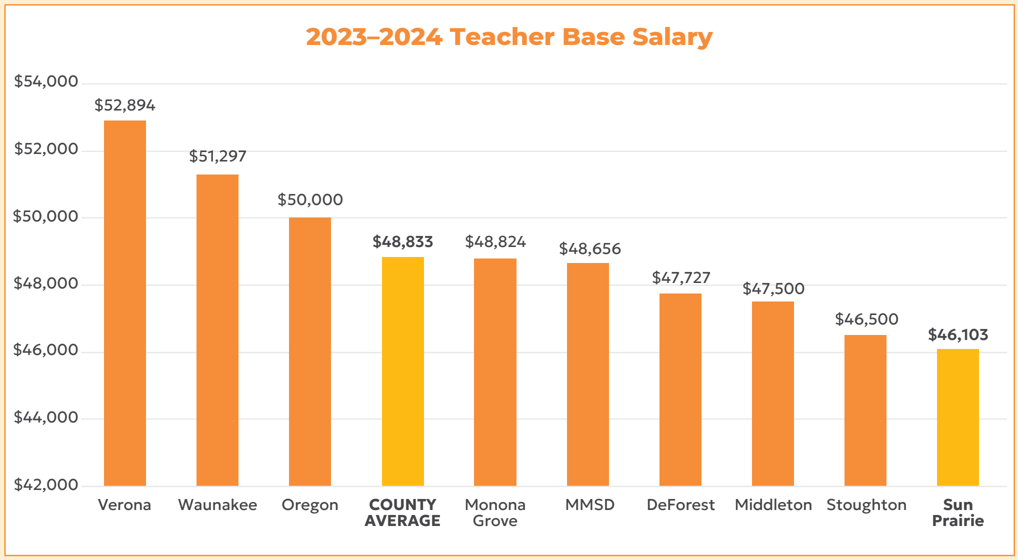
STRENGTHEN COMPETITIVE STAFF COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

$7 million

OUR GOAL: **To recruit and retain the best staff.**

Teacher retention in Sun Prairie is **90%**

This is better than the national average.



We know that our kids learn best when they are supported by the best staff. Retaining and recruiting high-quality educators leads to better outcomes for students. We retain and recruit the best staff when we have competitive pay and benefits.

In 2019, Sun Prairie passed an operating referendum to increase teacher salaries to the Dane County average. Our district was in line with this average as recently as the 2021–2022 school year.

Since that time, other area districts have made teacher salaries a core component of their operating referendums. Within two years, movement by other districts has shifted Sun Prairie below the county average.

Upon successful passage of the referendum, the district would immediately allocate $3 million to increase pay for our current educators to bring the district above the Dane County Average and **would increase the base salary to $51,402 for those with a Bachelor's degree and $55,402 for those with a Master's degree.** The remaining $4 million would be held to fund future adjustments to remain competitive for all staff categories.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY

STABILIZE OPERATING EXPENSES

$14 million

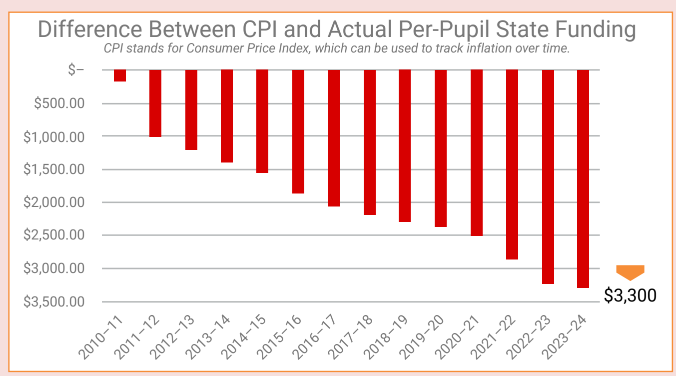
OUR RESPONSIBILITY: **To remain good stewards of our communities' investment in the finances and facilities of the district.**

Our fixed expenses have continued to rise while state funding has not kept pace with inflation. From 2010–2024, we received $3,300 per student less than inflation during the same time. If state funding had kept up with inflation, our district would have $27.7 million more to use to support our students, staff, and community.

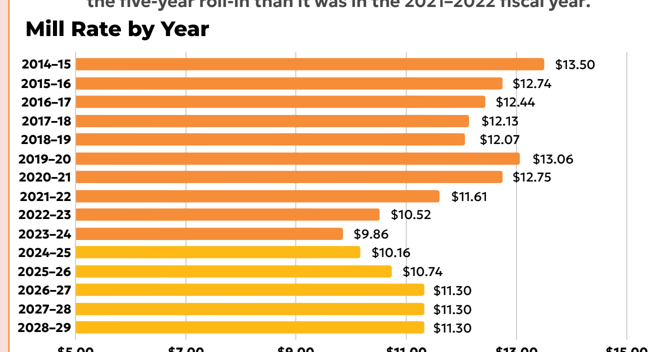
Without the referendum, the district will experience a $6 million budget deficit for the 2025–2026 school year. The deficit is projected to increase to $14 million over subsequent years. Without additional revenue, the district will need to engage in significant budget reductions.

We have carefully managed our budget. The mill rate for the 2023–2024 fiscal year was $9.86, which is significantly ***lower*** than the $11–$12 that was predicted during the 2022 Referendum and represents a sizable reduction from a mill rate of $13.06 during the 2019–2020 fiscal year. This means that the mill rate has decreased over the past five years, even with the referendum approved by voters in 2022. **Our district has accomplished this through diligent budget stewardship.**

The district would allocate $14 million in referendum funds to maintain district operations and address the costs of fixed expenses without disruptive reductions to staff or student programming.



If the referendum is successful, the mill rate will still be lower after the five-year roll-in than it was in the 2021–2022 fiscal year.



STAY INFORMED. LEARN MORE.

sunprairieschools.org/ref2024
Referendum information will be mailed to all residents, posted on the District website, and offered at info sessions.

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

CONTACT US

Email: ref2024@sunprairieschools.org

Dr. Brad Saron
Superintendent | 608-834-6502

Dr. Nick Reichhoff
Assistant Superintendent of Operations | 608-834-6683

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

Please get in touch with pjlux@sunprairieschools.org if you would like to invite Superintendent Saron to attend a group of your friends, neighbors, or organization so you can learn more about the Referendum, and he can answer your questions.

LEARN MORE AT AN INFORMATION SESSION

Open Door with the Superintendent | Oct. 4, 3:30–4:30 PM
District Support Center, 501 S. Bird St.

Annual Electors Meeting & Open House | Oct. 7, 4:30–5:30 PM
Sun Prairie East High School, 888 Grove St.

Open Door with the Superintendent | Oct. 11, 3:30–4:30 PM
District Support Center, 501 S. Bird St.

Coffee with the Superintendent | Oct. 16, 8:00–9:15 AM
Liv's Drink Emporium, 3140 Edmonton Dr., #100

Open Door with the Superintendent | Oct. 18, 4:00–5:00 PM
District Support Center, 501 S. Bird St.

Referendum Open House | Oct. 23, 6:00–7:15 PM
Royal Oaks Elementary School, 2215 Pennsylvania Ave.

WHAT IF THE REFERENDUM FAILS TO PASS?

Without the referendum, the district will experience a $6 million budget deficit for the 2025–2026 school year. The deficit is projected to increase to $14 million over subsequent years. Without additional revenue, the district will need to engage in significant budget reductions. Education is a people business. Over 80% of our budget funds staffing. This means reductions to our largest expenses would include salaries, benefits, and staffing levels.

Over **80%** of our budget goes toward staffing.

The following is for illustrative purposes only of what a $14 million reduction might look like. Any reduction process will be developed with a strategic vision and would not be simple across-the-board cuts.

Staffing	Current State	Illustrative Reduction
Total full-time staff	1294	182
Estimated Personnel Reductions		**$12,691,000**
Other Budgets		
Department Budgets	$6,960,000	$974,000
Athletics & Activities	$1,400,000	$196,000
Capital Projects	$1,200,000	$168,000
School Budgets	$1,184,549	$165,836
Summer School	$1,100,000	$154,000
Estimated Other Budget Reductions	**$11,844,549**	**$1,658,236**
Total Regular Staffing & Other Budgets		**$14,349,236**

OUR PROMISES TO OUR COMMUNITY IF THE REFERENDUM IS SUCCESSFUL

1. The district will not seek additional operational funds for the duration of the five-year roll-in (through the 2028–2029 school year).
2. The district will not levy the full taxing authority if it is not needed.
3. The district will not use referendum funds to significantly expand staffing. Instead, these funds will support our current staff.
4. The district will continue in its commitment to improve results for students.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET TO EXCEED REVENUE LIMIT BY $25,000,000 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 $25,000,000 beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, for recurring purposes consisting of expenses to provide for staff compensation and benefits, for educational programming, and to maintain operations.**

VOTER INFORMATION

myvote.wi.gov

VOTE NOV. 5

VISIT OUR WEBSITE