



NOVEMBER 3, 2009 VOTE

LEVY FOR LEARNING FAQ

More information: SpringLakeParkSchools.org

Get answers to your questions: Hotline: 763-795-5195 or Supt@district16.org

LEARN ABOUT THE LEVY FOR LEARNING ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Why are district voters going to the polls on Nov. 3?

In addition to a School Board election, there are two School District 16 questions on the November 3, 2009 ballot. The School Board passed a resolution to do so on Sept. 8.

Question 1 would RENEW the 1999 Levy for Learning (\$1.5 million/year) that would otherwise expire in 2009.

This will not raise your taxes – it will extend an already existing levy. If this existing funding source is not renewed it will be lost, necessitating \$1.5 million in reductions.

Question 2 would REVOKE the current Levy for Learning approved in 2002 (\$156.44 in taxes for the average district homeowner) and REPLACE it with a Levy for Learning with a tax impact of \$253.35 for the average district homeowner.

This would result in a net tax increase of \$8.08 per month for this homeowner. (This existing 2002 Levy for Learning would have to be renewed within the next few years.) Replacing it now, with an increase, would help to close our current \$1.5 million funding gap (an amount we cut last spring) and minimize annual cuts.

Each levy question would directly benefit teaching and learning, help to retain class sizes, and reduce the need for significant annual reductions. Without a "yes, yes" outcome, significant cuts will be necessary.

What happens if both questions pass?

Renewal of Question 1 and the passage of Question 2 would keep funding in place that we have had for the past ten years, and do much to eliminate the existing gap between revenues and expenditures. It would not enrich us, but would instead keep our head above water and avoid serious reductions to our educational programs.

If Question 1 passes, but Question 2 fails, what happens?

Renewal of Question 1 would keep funding in place that we have had for the past ten years. However, because the district's fixed costs increase annually, the renewal of only Question 1 would still not allow us to keep all of our existing staff and programs in place.

Consequently, if Question 1 passes and Question 2 fails, significant cuts (\$1.5 million dollars) will likely be made for the 2010-11 school year.

If both Questions fail, what happens?

In this worst-case scenario, the district would lose funding that's been in place since 1999. An additional \$1.5 million dollars (a total of \$3 million) would likely

need to be cut from the budget for the 2010-11 school year.

Including the \$1.5 million that the district already cut for the 2009-10 school year, the district would risk having to consider a total of \$4.5 million in cuts in a very short time period.

Yes, cuts would have a significant effect on the classroom.

- The teaching staff would be reduced. This would result in larger class sizes, fewer class choices, and a reduction of the number of non-classroom teachers (specialists).

- Additionally, it would mean further transportation modifications, including number of routes, distances, and length of time on buses.

- Increases in athletic/activity fees, which haven't been increased since 2002, would be affected. (The high school athletic fee for the first child is \$200 for the first sport, \$150 for a second, \$125 for a third).

The district would have to return to voters, perhaps as early as 2010, with a new Levy question.

When was the last time voters approved a Levy Referendum?

The district has not come to voters with a Levy for Learning since 2002.

Didn't voters just approve a levy in 2006?

In 2006, voters approved a Bond Referendum which funded major repairs, renovation, and expansion projects in our schools. These funds are for

construction projects only and cannot be used for funding classrooms.

Then what is the difference between a Levy and a Bond?

Bond is for Building: Bond referendum levies are used by districts to renovate or build facilities.

Levy is for Learning:

Operating levies are used by districts to support class sizes and classroom learning.

In 2006, we needed a Bond referendum to support our much-needed (Bond is for Building) Long-Range Facilities Improvement Program.

This fall, we need to renew (at no increase in taxes) our expiring ten-year Levy approved in 1999 (Levy is for Learning) and expiring in 2009 to support our class sizes and ongoing programs.

In a separate ballot question, we are asking to revoke, replace, and increase a ten-year Levy for Learning approved in 2002, that would need to be renewed prior to 2012.

What will be the financial impact on my home/business?

If Question 1 passes, your taxes will not increase. If Question 2 passes, taxes would increase by \$8 per month on the average home in the district (\$200,000).

Check out the [Property Tax Calculator](#) on the website.

How can I learn more about the levy, ask a question, share comments?

■ Visit our website:
www.SpringLakeParkSchools.org

■ There are numerous meetings and informational sessions scheduled before the November 3 election.

[View the list of scheduled meetings](#) on the website.

■ Can't make it to a meeting? We'll schedule one you can attend: at your home with a group of neighbors, at a coffee shop, at a civic group meeting, wherever.

■ Have a question or comment? Call our Levy Hotline, 763-795-5195, or email us at Supt@district16.org. We'll try to respond to every comment or question within 24 hours.

If both questions pass, will you come back again next year asking for a Levy?

Unfortunately, education funding by the state is neither adequate or stable. It is not possible to make a predication or a promise. Without adequate support from the state, it is possible that we would need to seek another levy in the near future.

Even a few months ago, we thought these Levy for Learning ballot questions would significantly reduce—or even eliminate—the need to go to the public for years to come.

The present economic conditions, and the State's inability to provide adequate, consistent funding have caused us to revise that outlook.

Does the district realize that the economy is just now beginning to rebound?

Yes, that's why we surveyed our residents in July 2008, and surveyed them again in May 2009. Each time, they indicated support for a referendum to renew, and to increase, our Levy for Learning rather than to see reductions in services or increases in class sizes.

So yes, we fully recognize the economic climate and uncertainty, but we also recognize the needs of our students, which means seeking adequate resources for the challenges of preparing them for college and the work world.

To wait another year would derail our goals and vision for our students and their achievements; to do so would force us to cut teachers and staff and increase class sizes; to do so would require us to raise fees and consider the elimination of programs, activities, and services.

Can't you run things more efficiently?

We believe we are extremely efficient. To illustrate, for \$9.16 per hour per student, we provide teachers, counselors, special education, transportation utilities, meals, textbooks, principals and secretaries, specialists, nurses, custodians, and a whole lot more.

What has the district done to curb costs/reduce expenditures?

Last spring, as we do every year, we modified our required services to be as efficient, effective, and as safe as possible while still retaining our parent support and public satisfaction. In doing so, we made cuts and modifications totaling \$1.5 million.

In making these cuts, we made every effort to be sure that our quest for efficiency didn't negatively affect our need for effectiveness in educating students.

This would no longer be the case if there are further cuts.

Another round of cuts of this size will most definitely affect classrooms.

The district and school board analyzed most operations of the school district, utilized a participatory citizen-staff process, and made cuts and modifications that included reducing the traditional average increase in salary and benefits packages, reducing district administration, reducing the transportation budget, and implementing energy efficiency improvements in all of our schools.

A full [list of reductions and modifications](#) made to the 2009-10 Budget can be found on the website.

Why do you need to ask voters for money? Doesn't the state provide adequate funding to schools?

There are many ways to answer this question. A few key points are listed:

■ We have been conservative in our requests for funding from residents, continuing to be one of only several metro-area school districts to not seek a levy increase since 2002.

■ Out of 48 metro school districts, 30 receive more referendum funding for their students than Spring Lake Park receives.

■ Funding is sporadic and inconsistent. In a three-year span that includes last year, this year, and next, the average annual increase per student has been only 0.33%.

■ The District's fixed costs increase by about 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 % each year due to inflation, yet the State's funding allowance per student has increased annually at a rate of 1.45% since 2001-02.

■ Our District receives over \$3 million less each year than the actual costs incurred to provide state and federally mandated programs for Special Education and English Language Learners.

■ There has been no increase in the Levy for Learning revenue per student since the last Levy for Learning was approved in the fall of 2002. As recent and current funding remains flat, state and federally-mandated needs—and costs—increase.

When and where will voting take place?

The Levy for Learning questions will be on the ballot for the Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2009 General Election.

Polls are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm

There are only two polling locations:

■ **For District 16 residents who live Fridley and Spring Lake Park:**

Precinct 1
Woodcrest Elementary School,
880 Osborne Rd, Fridley

■ **For District 16 residents who live in Blaine:**

Precinct 2
Westwood Intermediate School,
701 91st Avenue NE, Blaine.

Prepared and paid for by Independent School District No. 16 (Spring Lake Park), 1415 81st Avenue NE, Spring Lake Park, MN 55432-2071. This publication is not circulated on behalf of any candidate or ballot question.