



December 12, 2025

Willie Jett, Commissioner of Education
Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Subject: Proposal for Revised Review & Comment
 North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools, ISD #622
 Cowern Elementary Addition & Renovations

Dear Commissioner Jett:

On February 28, 2019, North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District 622 submitted a bond project proposal for district-wide improvements to its school buildings and facilities. This proposal was submitted in accordance with Minnesota Statute 123B.71, to MDE for review and comment and is attached for reference.

Subsequent to the positive Review & Comment from MDE, including the Commissioner's letter, School District 622 conducted a successful Bond Referendum on May 14, 2019. The overall project bond amount of \$275,000,000 included work at the District's Cowern Elementary School for a secure entrance / main office addition and modern furniture, which was completed in 2022.

The 2019 proposal identified that a significant number of deficiencies would remain after the completion of the bond project including mechanical and electrical improvements, casework replacements, ceiling and lighting improvements, toilet room improvements and new finishes. The district's architecture and engineering consultant, Wold Architects & Engineers, grouped these deferred maintenance items into a larger \$19,780,000, multi-year project. In accordance with Minnesota Statutes 123B.595, this was submitted and previously approved as part of the District's FY27 LTFM 10-year plan with funding allocated through the sale of facility maintenance bonds.

The District is near completion of the 2019 bond projects and has a current balance of \$34,000,000 of the general obligation school building bonds issued in 2019. Due to several years of low interest rates, a favorable construction market, and diligent project management, the District is estimating a remaining fund balance of \$18,000,000 to be utilized consistent with the 2019 ballot language

Concurrently, the district has experienced steady enrollment and is projecting slight growth of an additional 200 ADM through 2030. In 2022, District 622 started dual-immersion programs at Richardson Elementary (Hmong) and Castle Elementary (Spanish). Over the last three years, these successful district wide language programs have created capacity issues at Richardson Elementary (functional capacity - 596; current enrollment - 583) and Castle Elementary (functional capacity - 618; current enrollment - 677). Both schools now operate the dual immersion program grades K-3, each year needing at least one additional classroom for the program forcing specialists to operate on carts at both these sites.

The District explored options that included capacity additions at various elementary sites and different boundary changes. Cowern Elementary School, currently 53,091 SF, was identified as the preferred location for a two-story, 28,994 SF (14,497 SF per level) classroom capacity addition and a one-story, 2,645 SF cafeteria/kitchen addition based on the following criteria:

- The attendance boundaries for Richardson, Castle and Cowern elementary schools are immediately adjacent to each other allowing the district to make minor but impactful boundary changes to better balance enrollment at these schools and allow the successful growth of the dual immersion programs.
- In combination with the upcoming large deferred maintenance project planned at Cowern, a building addition would create a sizable construction project that would be more attractive to reputable bidders and drive competition / competitive pricing.
- A capacity addition would improve Cowern's operational efficiency by expanding it from a 2-½ section to a 4-section building, grades K-5. The renovation and expansion work would increase its current functional building capacity of 396 to 596.
- Improvement to the overall learning environment with the creation of flexible classroom spaces for independent, small group, and large group learning in both the new addition and in the existing building by repurposing existing classrooms into flexible learning areas. This work is consistent with the 2019 project work and would utilize the remaining funding in a manner consistent with the 2019 ballot language.

The district has developed a plan in conjunction with its project team:

- Wold Architects & Engineers - Architectural & Engineering
- Adolfson & Peterson - Construction Management
- Ehlers and Associates - Financial Consultants
- Knutson, Flynn & Deans - Legal Counsel

The estimated construction cost of the Cowern Additions and Renovations project is \$27,000,000 with a total project cost budgeted at \$36,800,000. Funding for the project will be provided by the remaining, on hand general obligation school building bonds, along with general obligation facility maintenance bonds, for which the District has already received MDE authorization.

Remaining GO School Building Bonds (funds on hand)	\$17,020,000	(45%)
LTFM - Facilities Maintenance Bonds (FY26 - FY28)	<u>\$19,780,000</u>	(55%)
Total Estimated Project Cost	\$36,980,000	(100%)

The district does not anticipate any additional operational costs, as staff will be shifted between the three elementary schools to accommodate this capacity addition. As with other buildings in the district, the new energy efficient mechanical and electrical systems installed during construction will cost less to operate than those before the renovations.

Attached are the following supporting documents:

- [February 28, 2019 Bond Project Proposal / Review and Comment](#) (previously approved) with a summary of the projects can be found on our website at www.isd622.org/about/2019-2025-building-bond-program.
- [Historical and Projected Adjusted Average Daily Membership \(ADM\)](#)
- [November 30, 2025 Enrollment Report](#)
- Long-Term Facilities Maintenance documentation (previously approved)
 - [July 11, 2024 MDE Approval Letter to sell facility maintenance bonds](#)
 - [July 1, 2025 Cowern Elementary Deferred Maintenance Project Narrative](#)
 - [FY27 LTFM 10-Year Expenditure Plan](#)
- Cowern Elementary Renovations & Additions Project Information:
 - [Site and Building Plans](#)
 - [Construction Estimate](#)
 - [Construction Project Milestone Schedule](#)
- [School Board Resolution](#) dated December 16, 2025, approving this revised Review & Comment Proposal

For additional information or for any questions, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. On behalf of School District 622, I thank you in advance for your cooperation and consideration of this proposal, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Christine Tucci Osorio, Superintendent

Enc.

cc: Sara Guyette, Director of Operations
Josh Anderson, Director of Finance and Technology