

Superintendent's Report

August 15, 2023



OUR MISSION

Every student, every day will be empowered with learning opportunities for growth, creativity and curiosity, in preparation for their future in a global community.

OUR VISION

Duluth Public Schools provides an academically engaging, safe and inclusive environment with high expectations and responsible use of resources.

OUR CORE VALUES

Learning



Developing a love of learning through life-long inquiry.

Excellence



Having high standards for all through accountability, integrity and authenticity.

Equity



Creating conditions of justice, fairness and inclusion so all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Collaboration



Working in partnership with staff, families, students and community.

Belonging



Providing a welcoming and accessible environment where everyone feels safe, seen and heard.

Topics

- Student Reports
- Referendum Logo, Messaging and Updates

FUTURE FORWARD

NOVEMBER 2023 REFERENDUM

Learn more at

FutureForward709.org

Referendum Overview

Residents will vote on a two-question referendum during the election on Tuesday, November 7. If approved, the two questions will provide approximately \$7.9 million to protect and strengthen academic and mental health supports, expand and enrich high school curriculum and invest in technology to help students learn.

We used COVID-relief funding to support these services over the past few years, which produced positive outcomes for our students. However, that funding has ended. The referendum would restructure existing debt that is currently paid by our general fund to free up funding to help protect staff levels, provide enhanced programming for high school students and student support services, and authorize a capital projects levy to provide dedicated funds for investments in student technology.

Referendum Overview

The school board intentionally developed the plan to have less impact on homeowners than other funding alternatives. For example, the tax impact is significantly less than a traditional operating levy. If the referendum is approved, owners of a \$289,000 home would see a tax increase of \$11.85 per month.

Referendum Goals

During the last year, our district worked with teachers, students and community members to create a three-year strategic plan for our schools. Among the goals outlined in that plan are:

1. Provide Social Emotional Learning for all pre-K-12 students and give access to resources that support their mental health and social-emotional learning.

Academic, mental and emotional health supports improve learning experiences for students, which in turn improve performance. The severe impact of the pandemic on learning and our students' mental health has further heightened the importance of individualized support for long-term student success.

Referendum Goals

2. Enhance high school programming to improve graduation rates.

When students have more course options to choose from, they are more interested in the material and more motivated to learn. Expanding and enriching high school class offerings provides students with more opportunities to develop their skills and interests, create a more equitable and inclusive school environment and improve student achievement. Our goal is for all high school students to have a clear career path upon graduation.

Referendum Goals

3. Provide relevant and engaging learning experiences through technology that support multiple pathways to student achievement.

A strong technology program that provides devices, software, and reliable maintenance is essential to fostering student engagement and positive outcomes. Technology enables teachers to use their time more effectively and diversify the ways they reach students.

Referendum Goals

4. Maintain a budget that meets the educational needs of our students.

Our district has worked hard to put our finances in order to reach a point where we can maintain a balanced budget and a healthy reserve fund. We recognize that inconsistent state funding and the evolving needs of our students requires new strategies to preserve and enhance the quality of our services for students.

Our Challenges

- **One-time COVID relief funds are expiring, threatening progress we have made to strengthen services for our students.**
- **We lack a comprehensive technology integration program to equip students, teachers and staff with the tools and resources necessary to thrive in the digital age.**
- **Without a funding plan, our district will need to cut other important services to meet the needs of our students.**

How Will This Impact Students?

- **Academic, mental and emotional health supports such as counselors, academic interventionists, and Social Emotional Learning models improve behavior and attention in classes.**
- **Better technology helps students find new ways to understand their subjects and allows teachers to use their time more effectively.**
- **A healthy budget will bolster our district's ability to adapt to new challenges and protect existing programs.**

What Will the Tax Impact Be?

If the referendum is approved, owners of a \$289,000 home would see a monthly tax increase of \$1.00 for Question One and \$10.85 for Question Two, for a total of \$11.85 per month.



What happens if the referendum fails, or only one question is approved?

The referendum plan was developed as a package deal, because together the two questions achieve our goals at a lower cost to homeowners than a single-question operating levy. If only question one passes, we will lack an integrated plan and replacement cycle for technology, challenging our schools with a patchwork of devices, software and higher costs. Our district will face a budget deficit and will need to make significant cuts, which would impact classroom education, student services and staffing levels.

The referendum is a community-wide decision. Our district's goal is to ensure everyone has the facts they need to make an informed vote on or before Election Day.

Voting

- Early/Absentee Voting begins on Friday, September 22nd
- In-person early voting is available Friday, September 22nd through Monday, November 6th at the St. Louis County Elections Office, 100 N 5th Ave W. #214, Duluth, MN 55802
- Voters must submit completed absentee ballots in person or by mail to the District Service Center, Attn: Election Clerk, 709 Portia Johnson Drive, Duluth, MN 55811 by Tuesday, November 7th at 8:00 p.m. to be counted
- Vote in person on Election Day, Tuesday, November 7th between 7:00 a.m - 8:00 p.m. Find your polling place [here](#)
- All voters must be registered to vote before casting their ballot. You can [register to vote](#) before November 7th and save time on Election Day. If you forget to register before Election Day, Minnesota allows same-day voter registration.

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