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

OPERATING REFERENDUM 2024

The Sun Prairie Area School District has an explicit focus on student achievement, student personal development, academic growth, closing the opportunity gap, and post-high school readiness for **Every Child, Every Day.**

Our School Board has identified a vision for our district that will be served through competitive staff compensation and benefits, supporting programs and opportunities for kids, and meeting the district's fiscal responsibilities.

WE ARE PROUD THAT PRIOR INVESTMENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS ARE YIELDING RESULTS

- Student results have improved across all screening data with **significant improvement among marginalized groups.**
- Staff retention is high. **90% in 2023–2024.**
- Staff satisfaction is high. **Over 86% of staff reported in a survey that all things considered, the district is a good place to work.**
- Students report feeling safe in their schools on average at **more than 4.0 on a 5-point scale.**
- Students have access to **cutting-edge technology.**
- **Over 5,500 meals are served daily** to address food insecurity.
- **Robust communication channels** have been established with the overall community to share information.
- Schools with higher needs are provided more resources through **equitable funding & staffing models.**
- Curricular materials are kept updated & collaborative curricular **decisions are made using current research.**
- Buildings are well maintained and provide **exceptional learning environments.**
- **The district maintains a high bond rating of AA** as rated by Standard and Poor's, and it remains financially stable.

Sun Prairie Area School District
Futures depend on us...every child, every day.

Our district is making progress for our students, our staff, and our community.

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

Please take some time to read the information in this brochure to help you make an informed vote.

Dear Sun Prairie Area School District Community,

We're excited to kick off the 2024-25 school year with a record number of students. Our educators are prepared for the new year at all 15 sites, and elementary teachers are introducing a new literacy curriculum based on the science of reading. Fall sports are underway, and thanks to our partnership with Stuff the Bus, all students have the supplies they need. We look forward to collaborating with local community organizations throughout the year.

Your School Board is dedicated to ensuring all students thrive. As our community diversifies, we're expanding educational programs, including dual language immersion, mental health services in partnership with Building Bridges, and the STEM program at Madison College. We will continue to assess our programs to best serve our students.

Our achievements are made possible by our dedicated educators. We are committed to making this district a desirable workplace, offering competitive salaries, benefits, and a positive work culture.

We also thank our community volunteers and partners who contribute time, talent, and financial support to enrich our students' education. The Board remains committed to being fiscally responsible stewards, prioritizing the maintenance of our buildings and investment in staff.

On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for your ongoing support. It is our honor to serve you.

Every Child, Every Day,

Diana McFarland

Diana McFarland, School Board President

SUN PRAIRIE IS NOT UNIQUE.

School funding challenges are happening statewide, leading to many districts resorting to operating referendums.

Dane County Operating Referendums Since November 2022

Dane County District	Referendum Date	Amount	Enrollment	Per Pupil Per Year
Marshall	April 2022	$975K/yr for 3 yrs & $975K/yr	915	$1,066
Belleville	November 2022	$999,999/yr	955	$1,046
Middleton–Cross Plains	November 2022	Average of $16.4M/yr for 4 yrs	7,059	$2,319
Mount Horeb	November 2022	$4.82M/yr	2,391	$2,016
Oregon	November 2022	$11.4M/yr (phased in over 3 yrs)	4,110	$925
Sun Prairie	**November 2022**	**$9M/yr (phased in over 3 yrs)**	**8,411**	**$1,070**
Verona	November 2022	$19M/yr	5,794	$3,279
Waunakee	November 2022	Average of $3.33M/yr for 3 yrs	4,410	$756
Cambridge	April 2023	$2.4M/yr	909	$2,640
Monona Grove	April 2023	$13.8M/yr (phased in over 3 yrs)	3,696	$1,245
DeForest	November 2024	$7.9M/yr	4,153	$1,902
Madison	November 2024	$100M/yr (phased in over 4 yrs)	25,247	$3,961
McFarland	November 2024	$5.25M/yr (phased in over 3 yrs)	2,390	$2,197
Waunakee	November 2024	Average of $1.6M/yr for 2 yrs & $9.1M/yr (phased in over 2 yrs)	4,410	$2,421

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.**

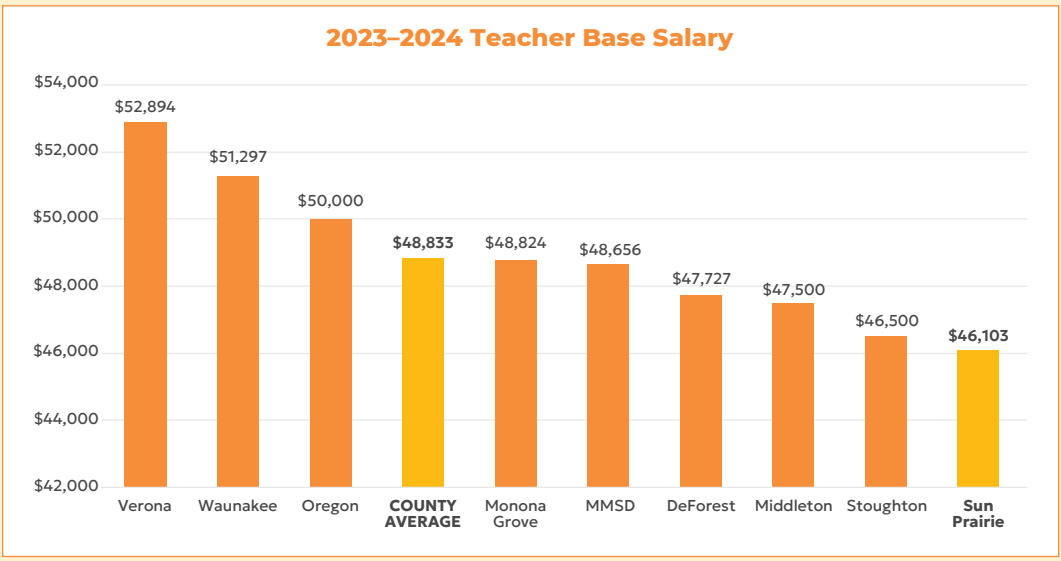
We know that our kids learn best when they are supported by the best staff. Retaining and recruiting high-quality educators leads to better outcomes for students. We retain and recruit the best staff when we have competitive pay and benefits.

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

This is better than the national average.

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.



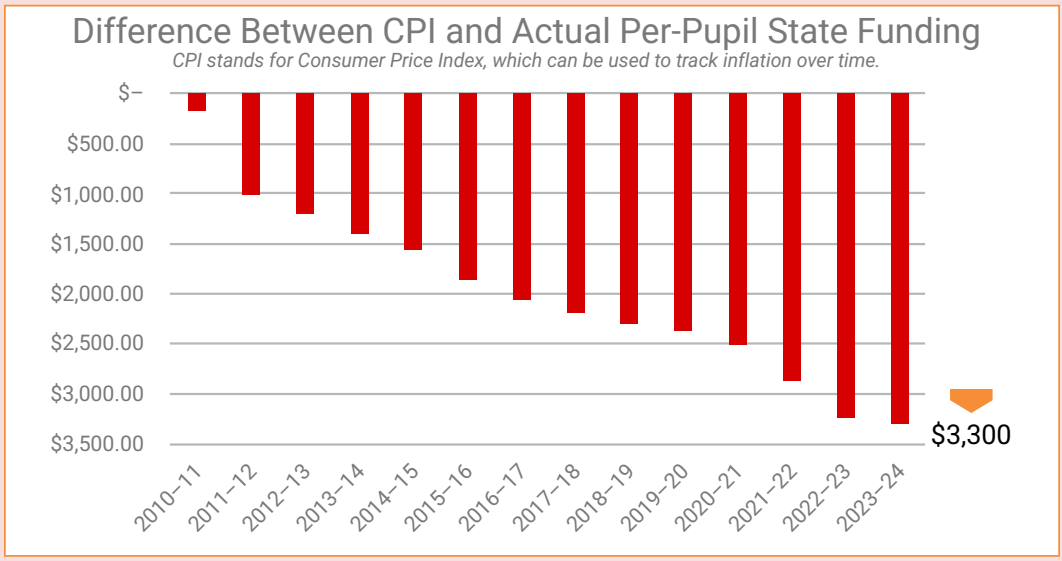
Upon successful passage of the referendum, the district would immediately allocate $3 million to increase pay for our current educators to bring the district above the Dane County Average and **would increase the base salary to $51,402 for those with a Bachelor's degree and $55,402 for those with a Master's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

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.**



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.**

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 staff, kids, 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.

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.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

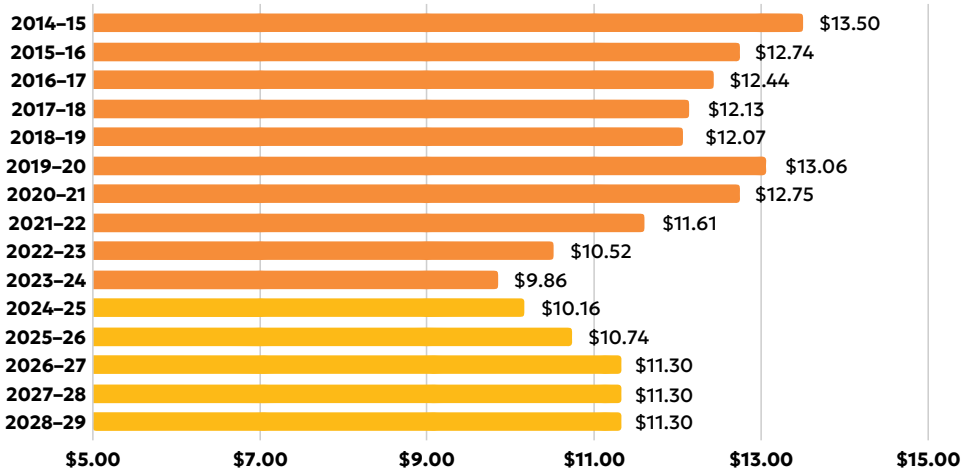
PROJECTED TAX IMPACT OF THE REFERENDUM

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.

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.

Mill Rate by Year



The District's mill rate moves up and down based on the relationship between the total levy and equalized property values.

Total Levy ÷ Total Equalized Value = Mill Rate

WHAT IF THE REFERENDUM FAILS?

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**

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.**

ELECTION DAY

NOVEMBER 5

VOTER INFORMATION
myvote.wi.gov

For comprehensive election information, voter registration, and obtaining absentee ballots, visit **myvote.wi.gov**.

A few reminders . . .

- You must be registered to vote. This requires a valid photo ID.
- Mail-in absentee ballots are available from September 19 through October 31. Request yours today and watch for due dates.
- In-person early voting begins October 22.

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.

LEARN MORE AT AN INFORMATION SESSION

Referendum Open House | Sept. 16, 5:00–6:30 PM
Professional Learning Center, 220 Kroncke Dr., #28

Coffee with the Superintendent | Sept. 18, 8:30–10:00 AM
Bob & Vel's Coffee Shop, Prairie Athletic Club, 1010 N. Bird St.

Virtual Open Door | Sept. 27, 3:00–4:00 PM
The link will be available at sunprairieschools.org/ref2024

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

Virtual Open House | Oct. 18, 6:30–7:30 PM
The link will be available at sunprairieschools.org/ref2024

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

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.

Sun Prairie Area
School District

501 S. Bird Street
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

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.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

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

No student may be unlawfully discriminated against in any school programs, activities or in facilities usage because of the student's sex (gender identity, gender expressions, and non-conformity to gender role stereotypes), color, religion, profession, or demonstration of belief or non-belief, race, national origin (including limited English proficiency), ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, homelessness status, sexual orientation, age, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. Harassment is a form of discrimination and shall not be tolerated in the District. It is the responsibility of administrators, staff members and all students to ensure that student discrimination or harassment does not occur. (SPASD District Policy JB)

If a student or parent/guardian would prefer to have this information translated into Spanish, please contact us at 608-834-6620. Si un estudiante, padre ó guardian prefiere tener esta información traducida en Español, por favor contactenos en el 608-834-6620.
If a student or parent/guardian would prefer to have this information translated into Hmong, please contact us at 608-834-6630. Yog tus me nyuam lub xiv los yog niam thiab txiv/tus neeg muaj cai saib xyuas tus me nyuam xav tau qhov ntawv ntawm no ua lus Hmoob, thov hais rau peb paub rau ntawm 608-834-6630.