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ECFE in the Park:

Select Wed, 10-11:30am. Location Varies.

All of the fun of ECCE classes coming to a park near you! More info: biglakece.com.

Community Education Summer Kickoff

Thur, June 6, 11am-2pm. BLMS Grounds.

Start your summer with Big Lake Community Ed! Petting zoo, Ninja Anywhere, yard games, face painting, food vendors, and more! More info: biglakece.com.

Summer Meals

Mon-Thu, June 4-Aug 15. BLMS.
7:30-8:45am & 11am-12:30pm daily

Free meals served daily for kids 18 and under. No registration or forms required, just show up and eat! No meals served June 19 or July 4.

Big Lake Community:

Welcome to our very first Community Connection Newsletter! I am so excited to introduce this new platform, aimed at strengthening the bond between Big Lake Schools and our broader community.

Inside, discover updates on recent projects and potential new initiatives that showcase the excitement happening in our district. Our goal is to keep you in the loop and engaged every step of the way!

We also recognize the importance of transparency, which is why we provide, and will continue to provide, you with budget information. By openly sharing this information, we aim to foster trust and accountability within our community.

I encourage you to explore the contents of this newsletter, and please, email communications@biglakeschools.org with any feedback. Your thoughts are invaluable, and are what drives us to improve and better serve your needs.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership in education. Together, we can ensure every student receives the exceptional education they deserve, fostering a thriving community for us all!



Tim Truebenbach
Superintendent, Big Lake Schools

Celebrating Progress: An Update on School Facility Projects

In November 2021, our community approved a \$30 million bond referendum to renew and restore our district facilities. Thanks to your support, we've made great progress, updating classrooms and facilities efficiently and within budget. Moving forward, we promise to continue to prioritize excellence and accountability as we maintain transparency and integrity in all projects. Our community's commitment to our students is what drives us forward. Together we can build a brighter future for our students and community! **For the latest updates, visit: biglakeschools.org/renew-restore**

Recent Progress Updates

- **High School Innovation Lab & Collaborative Center:** BLHS led the way with our districtwide media center remodels. The new space offers versatile rooms and makerspaces for flexible, collaborative, and independent learning.
- **Fitness Center:** This state-of-the-art facility will soon open for community use! Watch for our summer soft launch with formal membership options being announced in the fall Community Ed catalog. Summer fitness classes and personal training opportunities also available through Community Ed! **Updates: biglakeschools.org/fitness-center**
- **Independence Elementary STEM Remodel (Phase 1):** Classrooms and HVAC systems have been updated in the west wing of the building, and the District Office relocated to Independence to accommodate the new fitness center.
- **Upcoming Summer 2024 Projects:** HVAC updates and classroom and library remodels at Independence Elementary STEM (east wing); Library and parking lot remodel at Liberty.



Families: Complete the Annual Updater by July 1!

We are already planning for the next school year! Keep an eye out for the annual updater, which opens June 1 and needs to be completed by all families with children entering grades 1-12 by July 1. Full instructions will be emailed.

Big Lake High School Celebrates Military Alumni with a New Display



As part of our ongoing effort to recognize and celebrate the achievements of our students, Big Lake High School is excited to unveil a new display dedicated to honoring our Military alumni.

This display, located near the school's front entry, showcases images of alumni who are currently serving or have served in the Armed Forces. It aims to ensure that their bravery and dedication are never forgotten.

If you (or a loved one) are an active duty Military member or Veteran who graduated from Big Lake Schools, visit biglakeschools.org/military-recognition and fill out the form so we can properly honor you!

MN READ Act: A Focus on Literacy

Last spring the Minnesota legislature passed the READ Act. The goal of the READ Act is to have every Minnesota child reading at or above grade level every year, beginning in kindergarten, and to support multilingual learners and students receiving special education services in achieving their individualized reading goals. This legislation not only replaces the Read Well by Third Grade mandate, but also requires teachers responsible for teaching the MN English Language Arts standards to complete one of the MDE approved literacy courses.

Big Lake Schools will require qualifying teachers to train in LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading & Spelling) or OL&LA (Online Language and Literacy Academy) based on their teaching assignment. Both LETRS and OL&LA are grounded in structured literacy and evidence based practices. Both also focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. OL&LA is a one-year program, while LETRS is a two-year program that is more appropriate for teachers teaching foundational literacy skills. By using both programs, we can customize our professional development to be both effective and efficient.



Eye on the Ballot: Big Lake Referendum 2024

On Tuesday, November 5th, Big Lake Schools will hold a referendum that asks residents to vote on three ballot questions to sustain and enhance quality education for students.

Question One

Will ask to renew the district's existing technology levy for a 10-year term.

The levy currently provides approximately \$930,816 each year for:

- the 1:1 device program
- software updates
- digital curriculum
- other technology costs

Question Two

Will ask to increase the district's general education revenue by \$400 per pupil for a 10-year term to support essential district operations, including:

- classroom materials
- small class sizes
- facility operations
- salaries
- other educational expenses

Question Three

Will ask to invest \$29 million to build a new multi-purpose facility, which would include new space for special education, physical education, activities, and community education and events.

The facility would serve as a collaborative space for both school and community use.

Approval of Question Three is contingent upon the approval of Question Two.

How Would the 2024 Referendum Impact Taxpayers?

The referendum aims to sustain existing revenue that our students rely on while providing new opportunities for learning and community activities. Of the three questions, only one would result in a net tax increase if approved by voters.

- **Question One:** If approved, our district's existing technology levy will be extended for another 10 years. Approval of this question would not require a tax increase since it is an existing levy.
- **Question Two:** If approved, our district's voter-approved operating levy will be increased by \$400 to the state average of \$1,081. The tax impact on a home valued at \$400,000 would be \$15.17/month.
- **Question Three:** If approved, our district will invest \$29 million to build a new multi-purpose facility that will include additional space for special education, physical education, activities and community events. Due to the expiration of existing debt, **approval of this question would have no net tax impact on residents.** Approval of Question Three is contingent upon approval of Question Two.

Learn More:

BigLakeThrivingTogether.org

Visit our referendum website, BigLakeThrivingTogether.org to find the information you need to make an informed vote.

You will find an easy-to-use tax calculator, answers to frequently asked questions, details on where and when to vote on Election Day, and more.

We are dedicated to transparency. See the back cover to learn more about district funding and how the referendum would impact our overall budget.



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School Funding 101: Making the Cents Make Sense

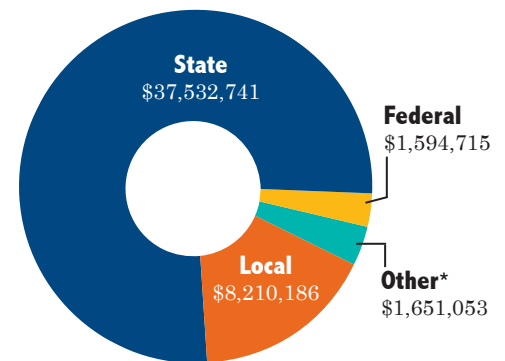
The referendum in November is an important decision for our entire community. Before voters head to the polls, Big Lake Schools is committed to being transparent about how funds are currently used in our schools and how the referendum would factor into the district’s budget, if approved by voters.

How is Big Lake Schools Funded?

Most of the funding Big Lake Schools receives for operating expenses comes directly from the state government. For each “pupil unit” enrolled at our schools, our district receives a specific dollar amount from the state. Big Lake Schools also receives smaller contributions from federal and local sources. Local funding includes funding from voter-approved levies. Voter-approved levies, such as technology and operating levies, are opportunities for local residents to approve additional funding for schools. Funding from these levies comes from a tax on property within our district.

In 2015, voters in Big Lake School District authorized a technology levy, which provides our schools with \$930,816 per year to support devices, maintenance, software and other technology. In 2015, voters also approved an operating levy, which today provides \$681 per pupil. Together, these local sources supplement our district’s general fund. The general fund is used to support all operating expenses, such as employee wages, classroom supplies, regular building maintenance, and contracted services like bus transportation.

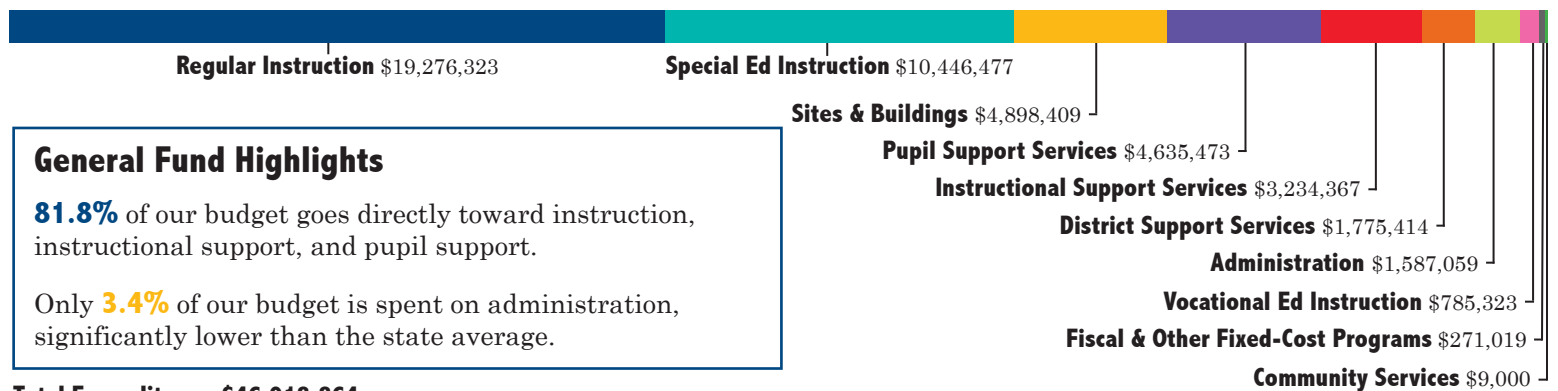
2023-2024 General Fund Revenue



*Other includes insurance proceedings from hail damage in July 2023. This is one-time money, not an ongoing revenue source.

Total General Fund Revenue: \$48,988,695

2023-2024 General Expenditures by Program



General Fund Highlights

81.8% of our budget goes directly toward instruction, instructional support, and pupil support.

Only **3.4%** of our budget is spent on administration, significantly lower than the state average.

Total Expenditures: \$46,918,864

What About Bonds?

Significant school maintenance projects, like renovations or new construction, cannot be paid for from the general fund. Instead, districts must sell general obligation bonds to pay for a project, which they then pay off over time, similar to a home mortgage. Funding to pay off bonds comes from a levy on local property, much the same way as a technology or operating levy. For building bond projects, voter approval is required.

Voters approved bonding projects for Big Lake Schools in 2021; see inside pages for project details. In 2016, a smaller bond project constructed secure entrances at all buildings, renovated the high school auditorium, improved HVAC systems, and expanded and improved ball fields and the elementary playground.