



Understanding Your Tax Bill

Why did school district taxes increase?

State funding decisions are a significant reason taxes increased this year.

While taxes increased, it did not result in revenue increases for school districts that kept pace with inflation.

For the 2025-26 school year, the Sheboygan Area School District received \$2.6 million less in state aid. When the state pays less, local taxpayers must make up the difference. If state funding had remained stable and voucher payments had not increased, the school tax increase would have been about 5.2% instead of 15%.

Other key factors include:

- No increase in state aid to public schools, despite a \$4.6 billion state surplus
- Special education funding is falling short, creating an \$800,000 gap
- State revenue limits have not kept pace with inflation, resulting in approximately \$32.5 million less each year since 2009
- Wisconsin has fallen from 11th to 26th nationally over the past twelve years in per-student school funding—the fastest decline of any state
- Growing voucher school costs, now 19% of the school tax levy
- No impact from the middle school construction referendum on this tax increase

What caused this year's tax increase?

The state reduced funding to the Sheboygan Area School District by \$2.6 million, resulting in local taxpayers covering a larger share of school costs.

Is the district spending more?

No. In fact, the district is making budget reductions because state funding has not kept up with inflation.

Did the middle school referendum cause this?

No. The recently approved middle school construction projects did not increase the operating budget and did not contribute to this tax increase.

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DID YOU KNOW?

The 2025 levy increase was driven largely by state funding and policy decisions, rather than new spending choices made by the district.



Building Bright Beginnings with SASD 4K

The SASD provides a strong start for young learners through a variety of four-year-old kindergarten (4K) program options. Designed to meet the developmental needs of four-year-old children, 4K programs offer a nurturing, play-based learning environment where students grow socially, emotionally, and academically.



EARLY LEARNING CENTER

The Early Learning Center (ELC) is the Sheboygan Area School District's flagship 4K program, proudly serving the majority of the district's four-year-old kindergarten students.

The ELC features bright, open classrooms, a library, a preschool-sized outdoor playground, and a spacious indoor recreation area—creating an engaging environment where children can learn, play, and grow.



Additional SASD 4K Options

4K at Elementary Schools

- Cleveland Elementary School
- Lincoln-Erdman Elementary School

Choice-based 4K programs, including charter schools and community partnerships:

- Lake Country Academy
- Sheboygan Leadership Academy
- Here We Grow Childcare Center
- John Michael Kohler Arts Center
- Sheboygan County Head Start
- Y-Koda Nature School at Maywood

To apply for choice-based 4K programs, complete the online School Choice application on the SASD website.

Through hands-on activities and guided play, students begin building essential skills in language development, social interaction, and early academics—laying the foundation for a successful educational journey in the Sheboygan Area School District.

Program Schedule

4K classes are typically offered as half-day sessions, either in the morning or afternoon, five days a week.

Age to Enroll

To enroll in 4-year-old kindergarten, a child must be four years old on or before September 1 of that school year.

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Could this tax increase have been smaller?

Yes. Without state aid reductions and increased voucher payments, the levy increase would have been about 5.2% instead of 15%.

- 40% of the levy increase was due to the reduction in state aid.
- 14% of the levy increase was related to vouchers.
- The referendum had no impact on the levy.

How does special education funding factor in?

The state promised to reimburse 42% of special education costs, but is falling approximately \$800,000 short, leaving a funding gap that must be covered locally.

Is the SASD financially stable?

Yes. The SASD maintains a strong Moody's Aa1 bond rating and remains committed to fiscal responsibility while protecting student learning. We continue to make careful budget adjustments to ensure long-term sustainability and to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, even as state budget decisions create challenges for public schools and local taxpayers.



Source: Wisconsin Policy Forum, a Statewide Nonpartisan Organization



SASD Leads the Way in Leadership Development

Strong schools are built by strong educators. That's why the Sheboygan Area School District continues to invest in developing teachers and school leaders from within.

Over the last 10 years, SASD has made a strong investment in teacher professional growth through our on-site, staff-led Teacher Development Institute. This two-year program supports educators as they participate in coursework aligned with district priorities and conduct a research project. To date, more than 160 educators have completed or are currently participating in the program, helping build leadership capacity across the district.

In future years, the program will expand to include a longer, more in-depth action research phase. This work will conclude with an annual Leadership Research Presentation Night, where participants share their findings. The research can then be implemented districtwide to strengthen teaching practices, respond to student needs, and improve learning outcomes in classrooms across SASD.

The Teacher Development Institute is offered in partnership with Lakeland University. SASD staff members who teach the courses are also adjunct instructors at Lakeland. Teachers who complete the Teacher Development Institute earn 18 credits toward a master's degree, with an option to continue at Lakeland University to complete the degree - all at no cost to the teacher.

Building on this success, SASD launched a Principal Development Institute last school year to prepare future school leaders. Participants are selected for their commitment to instructional excellence, student success, and collaborative leadership. The inaugural cohort includes three staff members who will engage in professional learning, mentorship, and job-embedded leadership experiences.



Community Presentation Night

The Teacher Development Institute Research Presentation Night for Cohort #9 will showcase classroom-based action research by teacher-leaders focused on strengthening teaching and learning across the SASD. Cohort members will share key takeaways and be recognized for their commitment to professional growth and leadership. Community members, families, and staff are invited to attend. Light refreshments will be served.



Thursday, April 16
5:00-6:30 PM



SASD Administrative Services Building
Board Room
3330 Stahl Road, Sheboygan

By growing leaders internally, the district is investing wisely in its people—strengthening schools, supporting students, and building a strong future for the entire community.

Indicator	Peer Group Average	SASD
ELA Proficiency	41.2%	43.4%
Math Proficiency	38.7%	45.4%
Achievement Score	54.5%	59%
ELA Achievement Score	55.6%	58%
Math Achievement Score	53.2%	59.9%

COMPARATIVE PEER DISTRICT ANALYSIS

An independent analysis conducted by the ECRA Group, a K12 analytics and research firm, identified the Sheboygan Area School District as outperforming the comparable group average in every category of overall proficiency and achievement scores, while serving the second-highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

PEER DISTRICTS FOR COMPARISON

Peer Districts in Wisconsin were selected based on similar enrollment levels and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

Source: ECRA Group K12 Data and Analytic Solutions (2024-25 data)



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PROJECT UPDATE

Thank you, SASD residents, for your support in rebuilding and remodeling Farnsworth and Urban Middle Schools!

Middle school projects remain on schedule, with most interior designs complete. Preliminary renderings and a virtual walk-through of both schools are available on our website.

The anticipated timeline calls for construction at Farnsworth to begin in June 2026. At Urban, some site demolition may begin in the spring, though the majority of construction activity is also expected to start in June 2026.

View monthly project reports and renderings at www.sheboygan.k12.wi.us/referendum.

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