Lake Mills Area
SCHOOL DISTRICT

120 East Lake Park Place
Lake Mills, WI 53551

PRSRT STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM RETAIL

**********ECRWSS ****

Local
Postal Customer

OPERATING REFERENDUM 2026

On **Tuesday, November 3, 2026,** Lake Mills Area School District residents will vote on an operational referendum request to exceed the state-imposed revenue limits by $2.9 million a year for the next four years. **The funds would be used for these *operational needs*:**



Maintain Student Educational Programs & Class Sizes



Retain High-Quality Teachers & Staff



Support Essential Operations (Buses, Technology & Maintenance)

STEWARDSHIP

Lake Mills is one of the few WI public school districts that has operated for more than a decade without an operational referendum, even as state funding has not kept pace with inflation. **Our conservative budgeting, below-average teacher salaries and debt refinancing have helped stretch taxpayer dollars.** Still, rising costs for insurance, utilities, transportation and mandated curriculum changes contributed to a $705,000 budget deficit in 2025-26.

WHY NOW?

Current budget projections show a $1.2 million shortfall in 2026-27 just to maintain current operations. **Without additional funding, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain our buses and buildings, replace outdated technology, and provide competitive salaries.** Our salaries remain below our neighboring districts, making it challenging to retain and attract teachers. **This could lead to larger class sizes and fewer programs and opportunities for students.**

JOIN US! Referendum Info Sessions

- **Thurs. Sept. 17**, 6:00-7:00 p.m.
  Lake Mills **High School**
- **Wed. Sept. 30**, 6:00-7:00 p.m.
  Lake Mills **Middle School**
- **Tues. Oct. 13**, 5:00-6:00 p.m.
  Lake Mills **Elementary School**

Fair Market Property Value	Per Year	Per Month
$100,000	$40	$3.33
$200,000	$80	$6.67
$300,000	$120	$10
$400,000	$160	$13.33
$500,000	$200	$16.67

The estimated tax impact is **40 cents per $1,000** of your property's 2026 fair market value, **or $40 for every $100,000 of value**.

Lake Mills Area
SCHOOL DISTRICT

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

– OUR STUDENTS, OUR COMMUNITY –

Fall 2026



INSIDE:

2024 Facilities Referendum Progress

BACK COVER:

Operating Referendum November 3

Lake Mills High School has been recognized among the **nation's Best High Schools** by *U.S. News & World Report* for the **eighth consecutive year.**



Dear Community Members,

Thank you for your continued investment in the Lake Mills Area School District. Our theme for the school year, **Empowering Minds — Building Futures, is more than a slogan. It is our promise to the community.** Every lesson taught, every relationship built, and every challenge a child overcomes empowers our students to believe in themselves and build their future. There is no more important work than the work we do together to support the students in Lake Mills.

However, the lack of stable and predictable funding at the state level has left the District with an ongoing financial deficit between our expenses and the funding available to cover them.

Just like many households, the school district is experiencing rising costs for things like utilities, transportation, competitive salaries, and insurance. To help address these ongoing increases, the Lake Mills Area School Board has placed an operational referendum question on the November 2026 ballot, asking voters to allow the District to exceed the state revenue limit by $2.9 million a year for the next four years. I'll explain its potential impact in greater detail throughout this newsletter.

We have a proud history of being fiscally responsible while being in the top quarter of the state in achievement. Let's work together for an even stronger future.

Dr. Tonya Olson, District Administrator

2024 FACILITIES REFERENDUM PROGRESS

Lake Mills Area SCHOOL DISTRICT

PROUD PAST. **STRONGER FUTURE.**

The $51.2 million 2024 Facilities Referendum approved by voters had a $0 tax increase. The referendum allowed the District to address unresolved facility needs, including these priorities:

- ✔ Address, high-priority safety, security, site, and capital maintenance needs at all schools
- ✔ Reconfigure outdated learning spaces and special education areas at the high school
- ✔ Provide classroom space for early learning programming at the elementary school

THANK YOU to our Lake Mills community, the Collaborative Advisory Team, and survey respondents for shaping the 2024 plan that reflects the needs of our students and community.

- ✔ Renovate space for Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) programming, site safety, and health services at the middle school
- ✔ Replace small lower-level gym at the high school with a new, larger gym for school & community use

Here's a look at work that has been completed — with more projects underway.

Early Learning Center Addition Opens



Lake Mills Elementary School held a ribbon cutting event to celebrate the exciting completion of the new early learning addition. Construction began last October, and the addition was **completed in time to welcome our youngest learners for the new school year**. The thoughtfully designed learning spaces and furniture support our play-based curriculum while encouraging language development, problem-solving, creativity, and student agency.



If you'd like a tour, please call Principal Mrs. Wendy Sallam at 920-648-2338.

Energy Efficiency & Safety

- District-wide LED lighting upgrades
- Heat pumps replacement at the MS
- New generators at the MS & HS
- Upgrades to electronic door access, cameras, and intercoms

Middle School Library Renovation



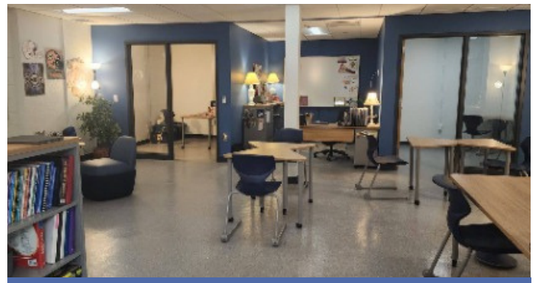
The newly renovated middle school library is a bright, modern space built to promote literacy engagement and 21st century learning skills development. Students can now **explore hands-on projects in the new STEM and makers area**, get lost in a good book in one of our flexible seating areas, or step into private breakout rooms for media projects and small-group learning.

Right outside, a **vibrant, full-wall mural brings the history and folklore of Lake Mills to life**, connecting our community's story to our exciting learning in the middle school. The new library has been transformed into a dynamic, future-ready hub that inspires curiosity, creativity, and collaboration.

Scan to learn more:

HS Transforms Classrooms Built in 1964

Lower-level classrooms that were added in 1964 to Lake Mills High School have been transformed to finally provide students with disabilities and specialized services with learning environments they deserve. Modern, functional classrooms support the needs of our students with intellectual disabilities and those participating in the transition program for students ages 18–21. The new dedicated space for speech and language services addresses the soundproofing and acoustical challenges of the previous plywood-enclosed area. Occupational and physical therapy services have new classrooms rather than the former locker room.



These improvements ensure every student has access to a learning space that reflects their needs and the high expectations we have for all students.

New 'Bus Garage'

Our bus drivers are grateful for the new, dedicated transportation facility on Oasis Lane next to the AmericInn. The former bus barn, located on the high school campus, had a dirt floor, no air conditioning, and no dedicated office space for the team. The new site provides office space, a washing bay, and space for our drivers, with a more accessible and secure location to serve our students and families. The transportation team has given the new facility a new name: the Bus Garage, a name that better reflects the new space.

Facilities Referendum Can <u>Not</u> Be Used for Operational Needs

State law requires school districts to use two different referendums to distinguish between ongoing operating expenses and long-term facility needs. Facilities referendum funds can not be used for operations.

TYPE OF REFERENDUM	WHAT IT FUNDS
Capital (Facilities) Referendum:	Bricks & Mortar Projects
Operational Referendum:	Daily Learning & Operations

Learn more! lakemills.k12.wi.us/district/referendum

lakemills.k12.wi.us/district/operational-referendum **Learn more!**