WINTER 2025

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LODI
COMMUNITY LINK

Understanding Wisconsin School Finance

The Statewide Picture

Wisconsin continues to face a statewide school funding crisis. Many residents wonder why property taxes keep rising while schools struggle to maintain programs and attract teachers. The challenge lies in the state's complex funding formula, revenue limits, and unfunded mandates that affect all 421 school districts — including Lodi.

When the school funding formula and revenue limits were first created, they were intentionally tied to inflation to ensure a sustainable and predictable way to fund schools over time. However, that connection was eliminated in 2009, and since then, per-pupil increases have not kept pace with rising costs. If funding had continued to track with inflation, schools would receive an additional $3,380 per student in 2025 — representing approximately $5.07 million in lost purchasing power for the School District of Lodi. To fill this gap, more than 85% of Wisconsin districts (including Lodi) have turned to operational referenda, which fund essentials like class sizes, instructional materials, and utilities — not extras.

Special Education: A Growing Cost

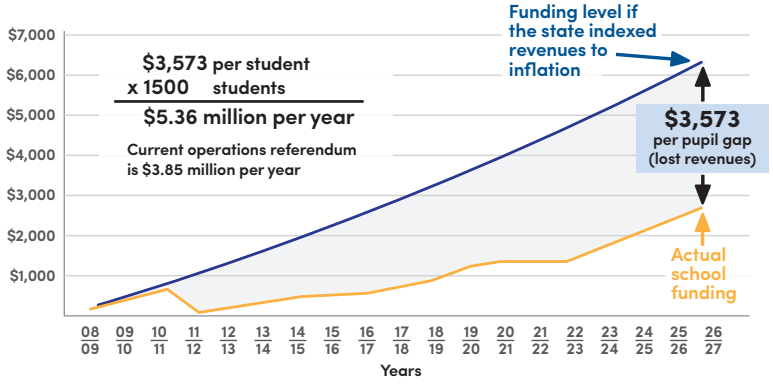
Students with disabilities make up over 15% of Wisconsin's school population, yet the state has the lowest reimbursement rate in the country, at only about one-third of the actual cost. In Lodi, approximately $2.6 million is transferred each year from general education funds to meet federally required special education services— reducing resources available to all students.

Property Taxes and the State Budget

The most recent state budget provided a $325 per-pupil increase each year of the biennium but no new general school aid. As a result, local taxpayers shoulder a greater share of school costs - this is due to the state budget decision not because of any change in the district. Because Lodi is considered "property-wealthy" under the state formula, this impact will be felt more sharply here than in many districts. While the state budget included $1.5 billion in income and sales tax relief, it did not provide property tax relief.

Why Referendum?

The history of revenue gaps leads to referendums



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Community Team Studies Facilities and Outdoor Spaces

The School District of Lodi has formed the Community Viability Team (CVT), bringing together community members, students, staff, business leaders, and local officials to help shape the future of our schools and facilities. The Board of Education has developed guiding principles to help drive this team's work, focusing on accessibility, student opportunities, community needs, and long-term sustainability. Meeting monthly, the CVT will review current facilities, explore future improvements, and build consensus on long-range priorities. These priorities will be presented as recommendations to the Board of Education, which will then seek community input through a survey to help solidify these priorities and ensure they align with the community's vision. With support from planning partners Plunkett Raysich Architects, Point of Beginning Engineering, and CG Schmidt Construction, the team will ensure that a wide range of voices are heard throughout the process. The work will conclude in early 2026, providing a roadmap that reflects community values and supports Lodi students for years to come.

Follow the CVT's progress on our district website or by scanning this code

Strategic Planning Refresh in Action

The Strategic Plan Refresh is headed toward the finish line in the School District of Lodi! After gathering valuable input through surveys, interviews, and idea fairs this summer, the Strategic Plan Refresh Committee—made up of a broad range of community members—has been hard at work analyzing the data. Their goal is to identify the themes that reflect our community's priorities for the future of the district. We are grateful to everyone who shared their voice during the data-gathering process, as well as to the committee members for their dedication to this important work. The committee aims to present a refreshed strategic plan to the Board of Education at their December meeting, helping set the course for the next five years in the School District of Lodi.

Discover more about this work on our website or by scanning the code.

Looking Ahead

Wisconsin's school funding system is outdated and unsustainable. Lodi has taken steps to maximize efficiency and act as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, but continued community support is essential to:

- **Keep class sizes manageable and provide modern learning opportunities**
- **Provide targeted interventions and supports to students who need them the most**
- **Maintain competitive teacher salaries**
- **Update facilities and technology**

The district's current operational referendum sunsets at the end of the 2026–27 school year. The School District of Lodi anticipates returning to voters in November 2026 with a replacement referendum to continue supporting these priorities and sustain educational quality for students.

To continue engaging the community in these important conversations, the Board of Education hosted its third annual Community Engagement Session on November 3rd. This year's session focused on how the 2022 referendum funds are being used, the impact of the recent state budget on local taxpayers, and the ongoing study of our outdoor athletic spaces and facility improvements that will support Lodi's long-term success.

To view the presentations shared at the community engagement session scan this QR code

For additional information about how Wisconsin schools are funded, visit the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's School Finance page: dpi.wi.gov/sfs/outreach/finance-system.

Career Fair Deep Dive

Every school year, we strive to offer opportunities that help our high school students engage in learning that goes beyond the everyday skills and knowledge they gain in their classrooms. One of these opportunities is the Lodi High School Career Fair, which has continued to grow since its inception, both in the number of presenters and the variety of career paths represented. This year, over 40 professionals spoke with our students about topics such as hard work, perseverance, and future career options, helping them envision what life after high school might look like. Presenters included former graduates, parents, community members and even school board members. We are truly grateful to all the individuals who generously gave their time to help our students explore the possibilities that lie ahead.

School District of Lodi – Community Connection Business Partnerships

Helping To Grow Future Community & Business Leaders

The School District of Lodi Community Connection Business Partnerships initiative aims to foster partnerships between schools and the local community, helping students explore potential career pathways and develop the skills needed for future employment.

Core Opportunities: Annual Jobs Fair, Annual Career Fair, Community Classroom Partnerships, Senior Reality Day, & Educator Appreciation Treat/Coffee Cart Sponsorship

Looking to get involved:

School District of Lodi
115 School Street Lodi, WI 53555