



From the Desk of Dr. Mark Rollefson

Superintendent of the Yorkville Joint #2 School District

March 7, 2023 | Issue #19

Why Is There An Operations Referendum?

This March 8th newsletter is about question #2 on the April 4th ballot. Question #2 is an Operations Referendum in the amount of \$900,000 recurring annually. It is known as an Operations Referendum. This is for ongoing annual costs that are no longer fully supported through state dollars.

During the summer of 2022, the District did a study of teacher compensation in comparison to other districts. When comparing our Yorkville teacher salaries to those of CESA2, we fall in the bottom 33% of these comparables. CESA2 includes schools in a large region from Middleton to Wilmot. It includes large and small districts, suburban and rural, high schools, and K-8's.

The study we completed also looked at K-8 schools in the southeast corner of the state from Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth counties. This also placed the teachers in the Yorkville School District in the bottom 33% of our comparables.

To narrow down the pool of comparables only to the K-8 schools in our athletic conference, the results were still the same, placing us in the bottom 33%.

When considering that our students have ranked consistently in the top 10% of the State of WI on standardized tests, we have done quite well. However, this could soon change if we do not remain competitive. It was only a short 10 and 20 years ago we would benefit from a large number of teacher applicants for vacancies in Yorkville School.

Similar to nearly all lines of work today, this has changed. It is normal to receive 0-3 applicants per vacancy, and in many cases we are doing cold calls just to recruit people. Recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers is important.

The study was compelling to the Yorkville Board of Education to include this in the Operations Referendum on the ballot (Question #2) on April 4.

What Else Would The Operations Referendum Dollars Be Used For?

Additionally, the Operations Referendum is intended to take care of annual and ongoing maintenance needs, above and beyond that which is covered by the Maintenance Referendum (Question #1 on the ballot). Examples of these items are a rotation for painting, rotation for staff/student desks and chairs (some are over 35 years old, carpeting replacement rotation, changing of filters, and maintenance of

Why Do These Items Listed Above Need Referendum Dollars? Should You Not Include These In Your Budgeting Every Year?

Yes. In fact, for many decades compensation and minor maintenance items were covered in annual budgets. Revenue limits were put into action in 1992, thereby reducing the ability of the district to simply raise the levy without asking the public. Frankly, this was a wise move to protect the onslaught of greater and greater taxes without checks and balances. Those checks and balances now come in the form of a referendum.

Further impacting school budgets is the decrease in state aid. Please reference the graph included in this communication showing the \$3.9 Billion change in state aid to schools since 2011 (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Wisconsin Budget Project*). By design, the dollars are not coming from the State of WI any longer, but rather placing the decision on local taxpayers instead.

An argument to support this notion is that rather than the State of WI deciding which school receives which amount of money, the question remains local. If a local referendum passes or fails, it is local dollars, impacting local programming, and for local children.

Didn't We Just Pass An Operations Referendum?

Yes. We passed a 5-year non-recurring referendum for \$670,000. The last of those five years ends on June 30, 2023. The \$670,000 falls off the tax roll starting July 1, 2023.

The current referendum question (question #2 on April 4th ballot) replaces the \$670,000 per year by an extra \$230,000 per year, for a total of \$900,000 annually.

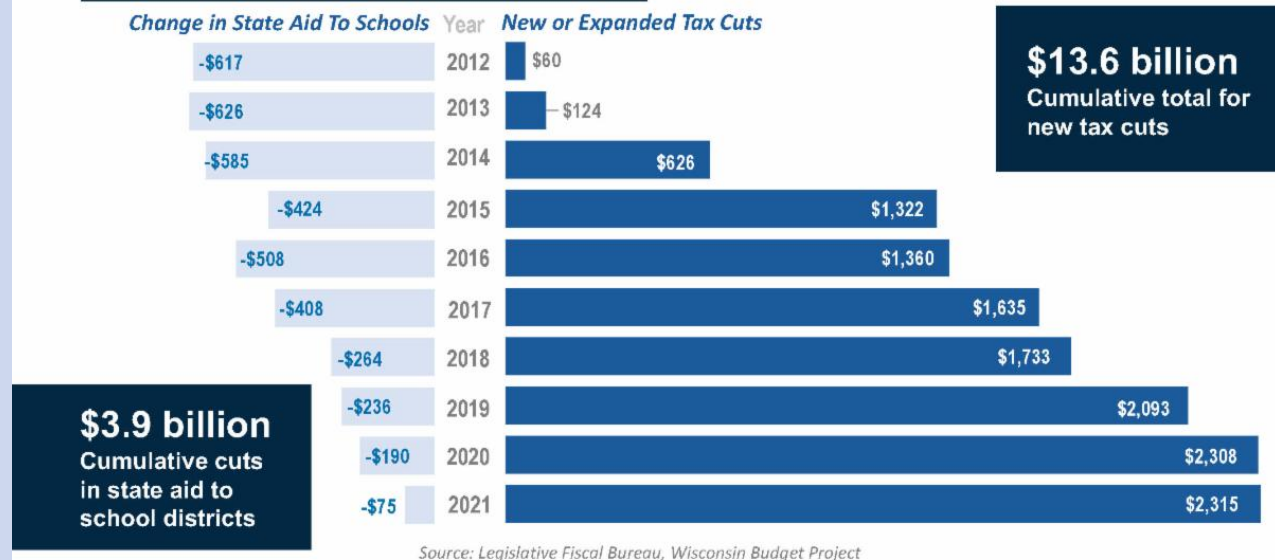
What If The State Of WI Changes Its Approach And Begins To Fully Fund Schools Like They Did Approximately Twenty Years Ago?

This is not anticipated. The decisions to place revenue limits AND to reduce state aid to schools were in large part designed to place the responsibility locally. Less money from the state implies either unsupported schools or increased local support via referendum.

Please reference the graph below, provided by the *Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Wisconsin Budget Project*.

Tax Cuts increase, Even as State Aid to School Districts Remain Below 2011 Level

Change in state aid to school districts, compared to 2011. Amounts are shown in millions, and in 2020 dollars. State aid to public school districts excludes property tax credits, aid to non-district charter schools, and aid to private schools.



I Heard Governor Evers Is Proposing Increased Funding For Schools. How Might This Impact Yorkville School?

In his proposal there are two key items that could impact Yorkville. The first is a per pupil increase. The impact of this increase varies from school district to school district. Total enrollment, percentage of students open enrolled, and declining resident student enrollment are factors in the WI State Aid Formula.

If Governor Evers' proposal to increase per pupil aid occurs, the projected impact on Yorkville is an increase of \$1,650 on the annual budget. This \$1,650 is not per student, but a grand total impact on the annual aid received from WI. This is an estimate.

The second item in Governor Evers' proposal is to fully fund 4K students. In the past, these students were funded at 60%. About two-thirds of our 4K students are residents of Yorkville. When entering this into the WI State Aid Formula calculating student aid for next year, this is actually a negative impact on Yorkville. It results in a loss of \$7,030 in total WI aid support for Yorkville for next year. This is also an estimate.

The WI State Aid Formula is very complicated and we are happy to sit down with anyone who wishes to see the numbers entered and calculated.

Does Recurring Mean Forever?

Yes. The roughly 20 year trend as explained above is here to stay. The costs we anticipate and explained above are also here to stay.

What If The Unlikely Does Actually Happen? What If The State

Changes Course And Fully Funds Schools Again, Like They Did Many Years Ago?

School Boards need to be held accountable. The Board of Education is not required to levy the full amount each year. There are many School Boards across WI that have made the wise and prudent decision to levy less than the full amount available.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Education to protect their taxpayers for such oversight. In a small tight knit community such as Yorkville, this transparency and accountability is evident and capable.

Question #1 On The Ballot

Nearly all of the communications in newsletters for the past few months have been regarding the first question on the ballot. As a reminder, that first question is a Bond (or Construction) Referendum for \$12.1 Million to repair many mechanical systems and facility issues that have outlasted their life expectancy.

This money cannot be spent on day-to-day operations, student Chromebooks or textbooks, transportation, teacher compensation, curriculum, or utilities, as examples.

If you need more information on question #1, please read these past newsletters:

1. [Accountability, Mill Rate and Defeasance - January 25, 2022](#)
2. [Open Enrollment Impact on Yorkville - September 7, 2022](#)
3. [Aging Infrastructure \(Larger Maintenance Items\) - October 13, 2022](#)
4. [Molybdenum in Our Drinking Water - November 1, 2022](#)
5. [The Mill Rate Went Down - November 18, 2022](#)
6. [Facility Study Results - December 15, 2022](#)
7. [Referendum: Yorkville Vote - January 18, 2023](#)
8. [School Referendum: Communication, Accountability & Transparency - January 26, 2023](#)
9. [Next Year's Calendar and Referendum Information - February 24, 2023](#)

You may also find information by visiting <https://yorkville.referendumfacts.org/> and scrolling to the bottom of the homepage to view several videos regarding Yorkville School District's needs and our upcoming referendums.

Please click [here](#) to access the monthly calendar of events and upcoming opportunities to learn more about the referendum.

Feel Free To Reach Out

If you have any questions or comments it is beneficial to me to hear from you. My email address is mark.rollefson@yorkville.k12.wi.us.

LEARN MORE: REFERENDUM INFO NIGHTS

THURS
MAR
2

6:00 PM

WED
MAR
15

6:00 PM

TUES
MAR
28

7:00 PM

ALL EVENTS: Yorkville Elementary School

COFFEE WITH MARK TUESDAYS @ 9:00 AM

Have coffee with
Dr. Mark Rollefson
and get your questions
answered.



Visit: Yorkville.ReferendumFacts.org



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