



**ALEXANDRIA**  
Public Schools

# VOTE

## November 5, 2019

Our **Schools**. Our **Community**. Our **Future**.

After several months of community input, deliberation, budget review and discussion, the Alexandria School Board unanimously approved placing a school funding request on the November 5, 2019 ballot. They are recommending a solution that aligns district needs with community values and tax tolerance.

### WHY NOW?

- ✔ This year's budget had a \$1.1 million shortfall. To maintain a balanced budget, the school board cut more than half a million dollars, in addition to drawing down our fund balance, which is a critical safety valve for all districts.
- ✔ Deficit spending is not sustainable. We will have ongoing cuts without additional revenue.
- ✔ State education funding has not kept pace with inflation or increasing costs for the past 15 years. If it had kept pace, our district would have received nearly \$3 million more from the state in 2018-19, and that gap is projected to increase.
- ✔ We pay \$3.5 million annually for critical special education services that aren't reimbursed by the State or Federal governments, even though they mandate the services.
- ✔ Our school district is in the bottom 10% of all Minnesota school districts for general education funding.
- ✔ We are one of the only school districts in the area without a voter-approved operating levy, which means we don't have the additional financial support that many communities provide to help operate our schools.



### WHAT IS THE PLAN?

The Alexandria Public Schools will hold a one-question referendum on November 5, 2019 for a phased-in operating levy. If approved by voters, the additional funding would help the district:

- ✔ Maintain or reduce class sizes
- ✔ Continue with specialist teachers in elementary, such as music, art and science
- ✔ Expand mental health support
- ✔ Maintain or expand real world work experiences at middle and/or high school
- ✔ Provide more financial stability

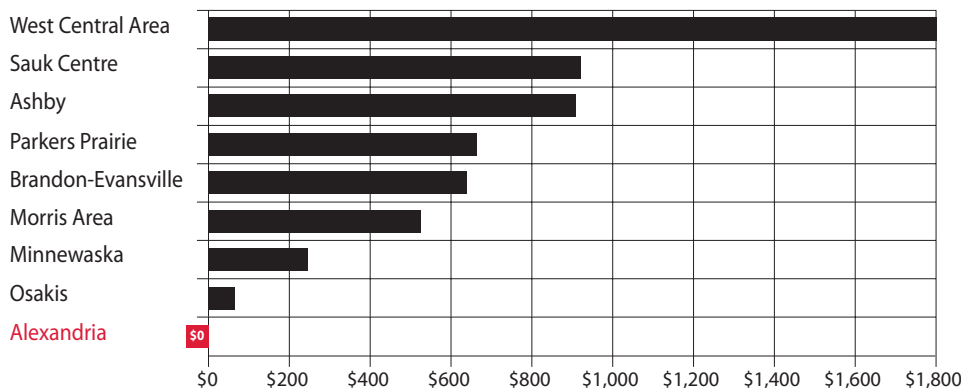
### WHAT IS THE PHASED APPROACH?

The district is proposing a \$595 per student ten year operating levy. Instead of asking voters for this all at once, the district is proposing a conservative approach which asks voters to pay for the increase incrementally over time.

In a phased-in levy, the request is broken down into three smaller amounts of \$375 per student in the 2020-21 school year, increased to \$485 per student in the 2021-22 school year, and then increased to \$595 per student in the 2022-23 school year. The tax impact for homeowners would also be phased in over time. If the referendum request is approved by voters, the \$595 per student would then remain in place for the final seven years of the levy.

## Neighboring school districts

### Voter-approved Operating Levy (dollars per student, 2018-19)

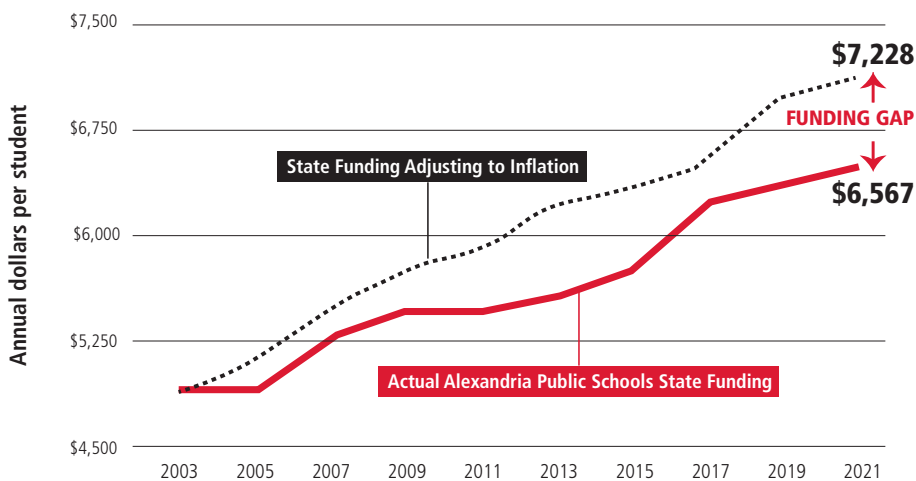


### TAX IMPACT

If voters approve the request, the tax impact on the average homeowner (\$220,000 value home) will be less than \$10 per month in year one.

That impact would increase by less than \$3 per month in year two, less than \$3 per month in year three and then stay at that level. By phasing in the operating levy increase, the tax impact is phased in as well.

## STATE BASIC GENERAL EDUCATION FUNDING PER STUDENT



If state funding had kept up with inflation since 2003, Alexandria Public Schools would have received nearly **\$3 MILLION MORE** in 2018-19. This gap is projected to increase.

Source: Minnesota Department of Education, January 2019 inflation estimates.



## THANK YOU

### FOR YOUR PAST SUPPORT

Alexandria community residents have traditionally been supportive of our schools. We have not asked residents to provide additional support for our schools since the 2011 bond for our high school - and the last operating levy request was 15 years ago.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Over the last several years we have saved taxpayers nearly \$9 million by refinancing our debt. This is part of our ongoing efforts to be fiscally responsible and give taxpayers the best value for their money. The more we save, the more that can go into classrooms for student learning!
- 87% of residents give us an A or B for the quality of our work. The top three reasons for the grades given were: academic standards, quality of instruction and leadership & management. (Based on respondents who offered a grade in a fall 2018 community phone survey.)
- The district uses many tools to listen to the community and determine if and when local financial support is needed to achieve district goals and provide educational excellence for students. Examples include surveys, community conversations, staff presentations, budget projections, program evaluations and Board discussions.

“ *We are only asking for what we need, when we need it. We feel this is the most respectful and fiscally responsible approach for our community.* ”

Julie Critz, Superintendent

### WHAT IF THE REFERENDUM DOES NOT PASS?

If voters do not approve the request, we will need to:

- Increase class sizes
- Cut and/or reduce specialist teachers in elementary, such as music, art and science
- Reduce real world work programs and electives at middle and high school
- Implement more budget cuts

### VOTING INFORMATION

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on November 5, 2019. Early voting begins September 20. Visit [mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org) or call Maggie Timm, Assistant to the Superintendent, at 320-762-2141 ext. 4213 if you have questions about where to vote.



**LEARN MORE**

**VISIT** [alexschools.org/referendum](http://alexschools.org/referendum)

**CALL** 762-2141 ext. 4223

**EMAIL** [referendum@alexschools.org](mailto:referendum@alexschools.org)