



STURGEON BAY SCHOOLS

Dear Sturgeon Bay Families and Community Members:

The Sturgeon Bay School District is extremely fortunate to have such a supportive community, dedicated staff, and engaged parents. As a result, our students are experiencing success in fine arts, athletics, and, most importantly, our classrooms.

While we are proud of these accomplishments, there are financial challenges ahead, and we want you to help us navigate them. **The five-year operational referendum voters approved in April 2022 expires next year.** Without continued voter support, we will face a budget shortfall of millions of dollars. That is not a hypothetical risk. It is a financial reality we have faced repeatedly over the past two decades.

This survey will present our financial situation and gather your input on how to move forward. To keep all feedback confidential, survey responses are collected by School Perceptions, an independent research firm.

TWO WAYS TO TAKE THIS SURVEY

Online: (Saves postage expense)

Go to:

www.SPFeedback.com

Enter your code:



Paper: Return to any school office or mail it to School Perceptions, PO Box 607, Slinger, WI 53086.

The survey code can be used only once. To obtain additional surveys for other adults in your household, please call the District Office at 920.746.2807.

Survey deadline: July 8, 2026

If you need additional support to complete this survey (including a different language), please contact the District Office. Survey results will be reported at a board meeting and available on our website.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Sincerely,

Dan Tjernagel

District Administrator

Mike Stephani

Board President

Allison Haus

Board Vice-President

Jake Schulz

Board Treasurer

Angela Kruse

Board Clerk

Cathy Meyer

Board Member

Cliff Wind

Board Member

Damion Howard

Board Member

Wayne Spritka

Board Member

Andrew Starr

Board Member

Budget Challenges

- Since 2007, Sturgeon Bay voters have regularly approved educational programming operational referendums. In 2022, voters approved renewing the referendum. **That funding, which will provide our schools with \$3.8 million next year, expires in 2027.** At the same time, we are receiving less federal funding and are seeing reductions in state general school aid.
- **At the same time, the District is experiencing increasing costs** in areas such as transportation, utilities, insurance, and special education services.
- The state limits the amount of money available to our schools from state aid and local property taxes. This funding level increased with inflation until 2009. **Funding limits have not kept up with inflation in the 17 years since.**
- Student enrollment has declined. Because these declines are spread across grade levels, they do not necessarily result in staffing/operational savings. **This is an issue because the amount of money we receive is based on the number of students we serve.** Across Wisconsin, 75% of school districts have fewer students now than they did 15 years ago.

Sturgeon Bay has implemented a long-term staffing plan to respond to declining enrollment and remain financially responsible. In recent years, the District has reduced staff through retirements and resignations, including the equivalent of three full-time positions this past school year.

Over the next several years, the District anticipates reducing an additional 15 positions, which equates to \$1 million in annual savings.

Even with these efforts, we are projecting a budget shortfall. We are not alone. Most school districts in Wisconsin (87%), including all the school districts in Door County, have asked their voters to increase funding through an operational referendum.

Would you support Sturgeon Bay Schools pursuing a replacement operational referendum?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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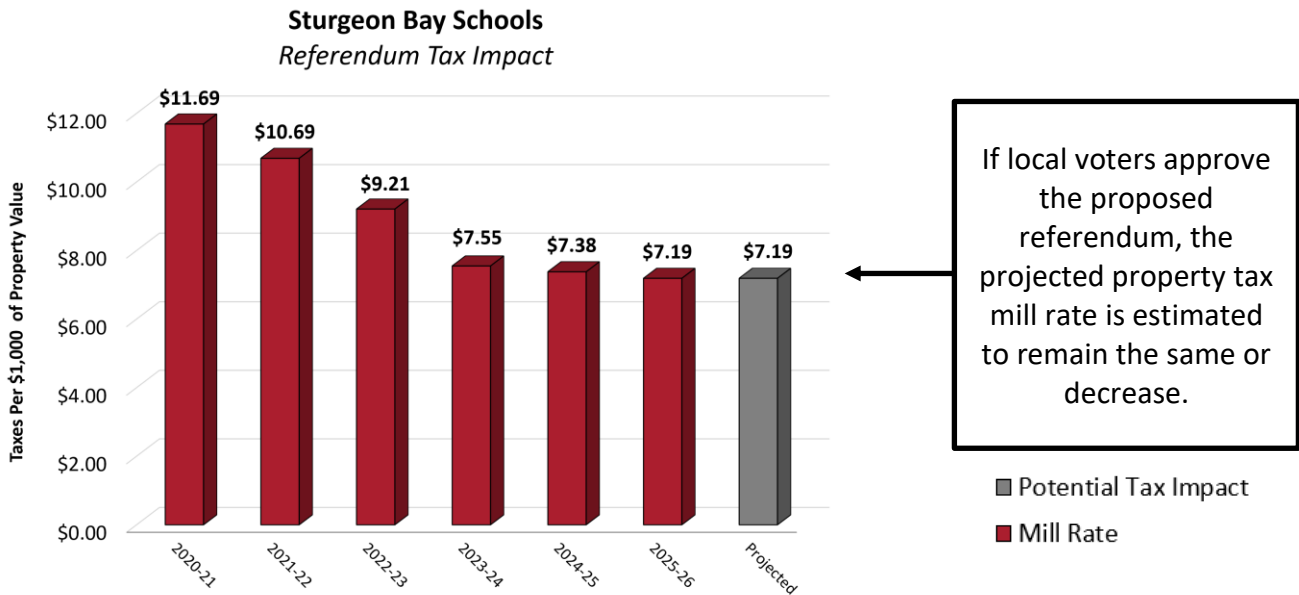
Comments/questions/suggestions:

Proposed Plan to Maintain Current Educational Programming

The current referendum will provide the District with \$3.8 million next year. **The proposed referendum would be for a reduced amount (\$3.5 million each year for five years).**

Please note: If the state provides more budget authority in the future, the School Board is committed to not spending all the money approved in this referendum.

The District's share of local property taxes is calculated using a mill rate. This rate is the amount of tax a property owner pays for every \$1,000 of their property's assessed value.



Would you support an educational programming operational referendum that provides Sturgeon Bay Schools with \$3.5 million for each of the next five years?

Approval would not increase the District's property tax mill rate over the current level, based on current projections.

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Undecided
- Probably no
- Definitely no

If you would not support the replacement referendum, what are the main reasons?

