

The Madison Metropolitan School District is faced with a major challenge that has consequences for the entire district. Area growth is causing current overcrowding in the Leopold and Chavez Elementary attendance areas, as well as anticipated overcrowding in other schools in the West and Memorial attendance areas. In the not so distant future, new housing developments in the LaFollette attendance area will challenge the district as well. The long-term solution to these challenges must include building new schools in these areas. The challenges have been thoroughly examined from all sides and the most immediately pressing portions of the solution have been placed on the Tuesday November 7th ballot.

This past spring, the school board unanimously decided to ask voters to consider a \$23.5 million referendum. The single question composed of three parts will address these issues: the funding of the construction of a new elementary school in Linden Park, one of Madison's fastest growing neighborhoods; the financing of a cafeteria and remodeling to address existing overcrowding at Leopold Elementary School; and the refinancing of existing debts for past land purchases and building projects to take advantage of the favorable financial climate and free up money from the revenue caps. The property tax impact will be \$29.21 for six years and less thereafter based on an assessment of an average home of \$239,400. This referendum addresses the physical and fiscal needs of the school district and affirms the long tradition of providing neighborhood schools where enrollment justifies our long-term investment.

This plan of investment in our schools originated with parents, district staff and community members working together. The West/Memorial task force spent several months analyzing different options to address overcrowding in the Memorial attendance area. The task force explored using space in other buildings and found that the available district buildings were small, far from the areas of growth, and used for other important functions. There is some classroom space on the East Side but not nearly enough to accommodate recent and projected West Side growth. Other options explored included boundary changes, pairing of schools and portable classrooms. None of these options are a long-term solution to address the challenge of area growth. The task force recommended that the construction of a new elementary school and an addition to Leopold was the best solution for the district. Without a new school in the Memorial attendance area, Chavez, Crestwood, Falk, Huegel and Stephens are projected to be above capacity by 2011. Leopold is currently at 108% capacity with more students projected than can be handled by the current capacity. Not building in these areas will have programmatic repercussions and consequences that will be felt by our students, staff and community.

The consequences for a failed referendum will bring short-term boundary adjustments that will only exacerbate the problem. For instance, programmatic changes such as increasing class sizes or the elimination of School Age Guarantee in Education. SAGE is a state funded program that lowers class size and has been proven to assist in closing the achievement gap. Other options to consider will be to convert common spaces to classrooms, which may leave art, and music classes without dedicated classrooms. To me these options are unacceptable and short sighted. Our students need to be in educationally sound environments to learn. Passage of this referendum best serves the needs of the district at large as well as those of the students, teachers, families and neighborhoods adversely affected. Passing the referendum will demonstrate the Madison Metropolitan School communities' continued commitment to doing what is right for all our children.

Area growth is a challenge that affects our entire district. The planners for the City of Madison predict that thirteen thousand new homes will be built in the Memorial attendance area over the next twenty years. Currently, there are over 6,000 elementary school students in the West and Memorial attendance areas with many more to enroll in the future. These housing developments will need basic services such as police and fire protection, neighborhood parks and of course, schools. I hope you will join me in support of the Madison school district referendum on Tuesday November 7th. Vote YES to continue adding value to our Madison Public Schools!