



Lewiston-Altura Public Schools

POST-REFERENDUM SURVEY

Dear Lewiston-Altura Public Schools Staff, Parents, and Community Members:

The District's operating levy and bond referendum questions were unsuccessful in the November 2023 election. The operating levy was narrowly defeated (12 votes) and the \$26.6 million building bond referendum question had 42 percent approval with voters. The needs the referendum would have funded will not go away. In fact, the needs are becoming more urgent as the budget deficit and building needs directly impact the quality of education for all learners in our community – from cradle to career and beyond.

The District is facing a significant budget deficit for next school year. School board members and district administrators are reviewing data, seeking input, and making plans for more than \$500,000 in budget reductions for next year.

ADDITIONALLY, CRITICAL BUILDING NEEDS REMAIN INCLUDING:



Safety and security



Aging infrastructure and worn finishes, including the high school roof which needs urgent repair



Outdated and undersized educational spaces

The purpose of this survey is to provide feedback on what was proposed in the November 2023 operating levy and bond referendum election; NOT select options for a future referendum. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Gwen Carman, Superintendent

WE ARE ASKING PARENTS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PLEASE RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY. PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN THE POST-REFERENDUM SURVEY IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

ONLINE

Scan the QR code to the right with your phone camera or visit bit.ly/LASD_CommunitySurvey to complete the survey online.

PRINT

Download and print the survey at www.lewalt.k12.mn.us. Once complete, drop off or mail to **Lewiston-Altura Public Schools, 100 County Road 25, Lewiston, MN 55952.**

MAIL

Call **507-523-2191** to have a survey mailed to you. Once complete, drop off or mail to **Lewiston-Altura Public Schools 100 County Road 25, Lewiston, MN 55952.**

All responses must be submitted online or postmarked by January 26, 2024.

Scan the QR code below with
the camera on your smart phone
or visit the website link to
complete the survey online.



https://bit.ly/LewistonAltura_StrategicPlan

About You

Please tell us about yourself.

1 What is your age?

- ☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46–55 ☐ 56–64 ☐ 65+

2 Are you an employee of the District?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

3 Do you have school-aged children?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what school(s) do they attend?

- ☐ Lewiston-Altura Public Schools ☐ Immanuel Lutheran (Silo) School ☐ Other
☐ St. John's Lutheran School ☐ Home School

4 Do you live in the District?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

5 Please select all that describe you:

- ☐ Own a home in the District ☐ Own a business in the District ☐ Own agricultural land in the District
☐ Rent in the District ☐ Own commercial property in the District ☐ None of the above

6 Where do you live?

- ☐ Lewiston ☐ Utica ☐ Rollingstone
☐ Altura ☐ Stockton ☐ None of the above

7 What are your primary sources of information about the school district? Check all that apply.

- ☐ District website ☐ Social media ☐ Meetings
☐ Local newspaper ☐ Email ☐ Other
☐ Word-of-mouth ☐ District staff
☐ District newsletter ☐ Mailings

7 What do you like about the District?

8 What do you believe is the most serious issue facing the District?

9 How would you rate the District in the following?

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

☐ Great ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

☐ Great ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION SHARING

☐ Great ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

☐ Great ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor



**“ To educate a Caring, Adaptable, Respectful,
Determined, Successful community of learners. ”**

Lewiston-Altura Public Schools Mission Statement

Election Feedback

Did you vote in the November 7, 2023 election?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Choose not to answer

If you didn't vote, why? Check all that apply.

- ☐ No time/too busy
☐ Forgot
☐ Unable to get to the polls due to illness/mobility
☐ Ballot didn't impact me/No kids in District
☐ Not interested in the issue
☐ Thought it would pass

Did you feel informed about the election?

- ☐ Very informed ☐ Somewhat informed ☐ Not too informed ☐ Not at all informed

Operating Levy Referendum Feedback

The November operating levy did not win voter approval.

An operating levy supports teaching and learning throughout the District. The operating levy referendum question proposed to renew the District's current referendum revenue authorization of \$52 per pupil unit and increase revenue by \$708 for a total referendum amount of \$760 per pupil unit.

Please provide feedback on the operating levy ballot question.

How did you vote on the \$760 per pupil operating levy?

- ☐ I voted "Yes" ☐ I voted "No" ☐ I did not vote ☐ Choose not to answer

If you voted "No," why? Check all that apply.

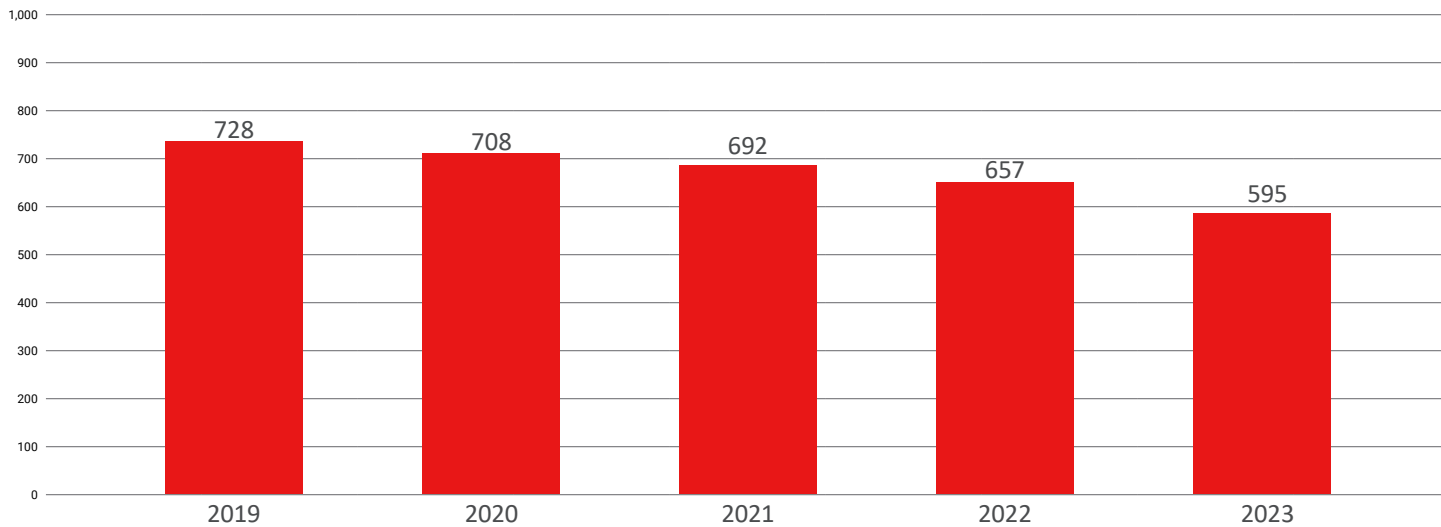
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive/tax impact was too large | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not believe it is needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feel there are areas the District can cut to save money and address the budget deficit | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have kids in the District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacked trust in the District | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (if so, specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacked information regarding what was being proposed | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feel the District should focus on the facility projects | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I will never support any school referendum | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Question previous District spending | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned with current economy | _____ |

NEXT STEPS

The proposed \$760 per pupil operating levy would have generated \$415,000 per year to support the day-to-day operations of the District. **These funds were needed as the District is projecting a budget deficit of approximately \$700,000 for the 2024-25 school year.**

The deficit is the result of two primary challenges:

- **Decreased enrollment:** The majority of operating funds the District receives comes from the State. Those funds are based on the number of students in the District. As enrollment declines, so does the amount of funding. Unfortunately, operating expenses can't be reduced at the same rate or the District would have extremely large class sizes, inadequate support staff, and reduced program offerings.

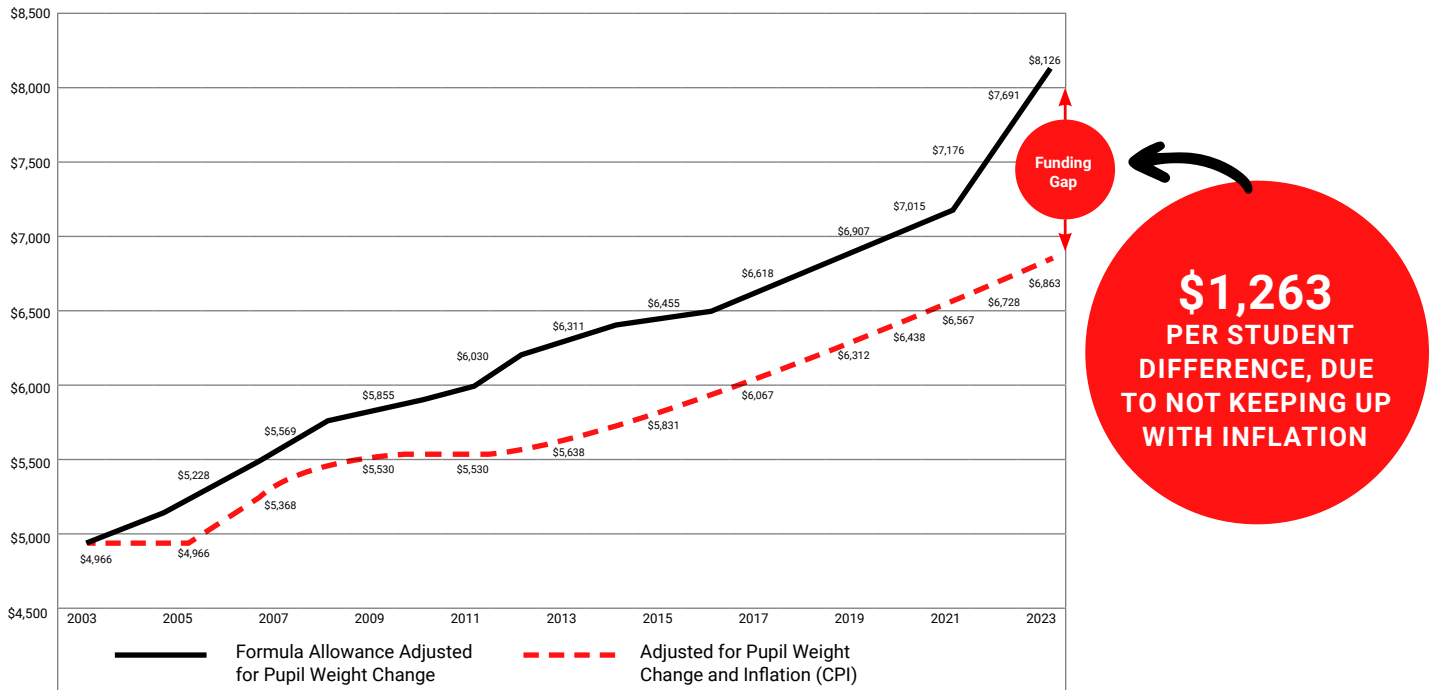


- While enrollment has been declining over the past five years, projections indicate that enrollment will stabilize in 2028 and beyond.
- With 133 fewer students today, the District received \$1.3 million LESS from the state in 2023 than it did in 2019.



- **Reduced State Funding:** The basic general education formula has not kept up with inflation for many years. The District receives \$1,263 less per student than they did 20 years ago. **This calculates to \$751,485 that the District did NOT receive this year to fund District operations.**

GENERAL EDUCATION FORMULA ALLOWANCE



As a result of the failed operating levy, and the need to balance the budget for the 2024-25 school year, the school board **will be making a minimum \$500,000 in reductions** and **looking to increase revenue** through increased fees (ex. admission to events, participation in co-curriculars, etc.).

These cuts will solve the challenges only through the 2024-25 school year, but no further, as expenses will continue to increase in the coming years.

What advice would you give the District?

- ☐ Run another operating levy
- ☐ Continue making cuts to balance the budget
- ☐ Not sure/need more information

If "not sure," what additional information would you like to receive?

Budget Cuts

As a result of the unsuccessful operating levy in the November election, the district will need to make budget adjustments (reductions and increasing fees). School board members and district administrators are now reviewing data, seeking input, and making plans for more than \$500,000 in budget adjustments for next year. Further budget adjustments will also be needed in future years if additional funding isn't secured.

Which cost saving measures should the District do to meet their budget? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Increase class sizes to over 30 students per class
 - ☐ Eliminate electives and course offerings
 - ☐ Further reduce the number of high school electives and course offerings
 - ☐ Reduce the staff that support students
 - ☐ Reduce advance placement and college credit options
 - ☐ Reduce number of student instructional days
 - ☐ Further increase student fees
 - ☐ Pursue consolidation with a neighboring school district to share costs
- NOTE: Property taxes will still be paid by L-A school district residents, and could be at an even higher rate.*
- ☐ Further increase ticket fees
 - ☐ Further reduce number of clubs, activities, and athletic teams
 - ☐ Reduce staff benefits
 - ☐ Freeze salaries
 - ☐ Further reduce program and building budgets





What additional adjustments should the District make to meet their budget?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Operating Levy Support

If voters do not support an operating levy, the District will need to continue making cuts. **We are concerned what additional reductions will mean to educating our students, retaining staff, and maintaining our facilities.**

The following options have been developed to address the operating budget deficit:

-  **OPTION 1:** Significantly reduce number of staff, programs, activities, and services for students.
-  **OPTION 2:** Ask voters again to support the \$760 per student levy, reductions will still be needed.
-  **OPTION 3:** Ask voters to support an \$860 per student levy, future reductions will still be needed.
-  **OPTION 4:** Ask voters to support a \$960 per student levy to balance the budget and be more likely to maintain more programs and services for students.

The following table shows the tax impacts for each option.

ESTIMATED PROPERTY VALUE	PROPERTY TAX IMPACT							
	OPTION 1: CONTINUE TO CUT		OPTION 2: \$760 PER STUDENT		OPTION 3: \$860 PER STUDENT		OPTION 4: \$960 PER STUDENT	
	ANNUALLY	MONTHLY	ANNUALLY	MONTHLY	ANNUALLY	MONTHLY	ANNUALLY	MONTHLY
\$100,000	No increase	No increase	\$109	\$9.08	\$124	\$10.33	\$140	\$11.67
\$150,000	No increase	No increase	\$163	\$13.58	\$186	\$15.50	\$209	\$17.42
\$200,000	No increase	No increase	\$218	\$18.17	\$248	\$20.67	\$279	\$23.25
\$300,000	No increase	No increase	\$327	\$27.25	\$373	\$31.08	\$419	\$34.92
\$400,000	No increase	No increase	\$435	\$36.25	\$497	\$41.42	\$558	\$ 46.50

Which option would you support?

- ☐ **OPTION 1:** Continue to cut programs
- ☐ **OPTION 2:** \$760 per student
- ☐ **OPTION 3:** \$860 per student levy
- ☐ **OPTION 4:** \$960 per student levy
- ☐ I'm not sure/need more information
- ☐ I will not support any levy

Bond Referendum Feedback

The bond referendum questions proposed critical building renovations and additions. Through an extensive facility analysis and community engagement process, the following critical needs were identified:

- Safety and security
- Aging infrastructure and worn finishes
- Outdated educational spaces
- Undersized gymnasium and no dedicated performance space
- Build a bus garage

Based on those needs, two bond referendum questions were proposed:

- Question 1 – Elementary and secondary building needs and bus garage/\$26.645 million
- Question 2 – Remodel current gymnasium into auditorium; build new gymnasium, locker rooms, and concessions/\$12.540 million

Please provide feedback on each of the two bond referendum ballot questions.

How did you vote on the \$26.6M bond referendum question?

- ☐ I voted "Yes" ☐ I voted "No" ☐ I did not vote ☐ Choose not to answer

If you voted "No" to question 2 for \$26.6M, check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive/tax impact was too large | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support the music program addition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support the improvements at the elementary school | <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned with current economy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support the improvements at the high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not believe it is needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated the District closed the Altura Intermediate School | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have kids in the District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support the building of a bus garage | <input type="checkbox"/> I will never support any school referendum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support adding a multi-purpose room for wrestling, dance, and community use | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (if so, specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacked trust in the District | <hr/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacked information regarding what was being proposed | <hr/> |

How did you vote on the \$12.5M bond referendum question?

- ☐ I voted "Yes" ☐ I voted "No" ☐ I did not vote ☐ Choose not to answer

If you voted "No" to question 3 for \$12.5M, check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too expensive/tax impact was too large | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not believe it is needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support the additional gym at the high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have kids in the District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not support the need for an auditorium at the high school | <input type="checkbox"/> I will never support any school referendum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacked trust in the District | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (if so, specify): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lacked information regarding what was being proposed | <hr/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned with current economy | <hr/> |

NEXT STEPS

The facility needs of the District are not going away. If the District is unable to secure a voter-approved bond, funds from the general operating budget will need to be used to address critical infrastructure and building system updates, reducing the amount of funding available for teaching and learning.

What advice would you give the District?

- ☐ Run another bond referendum
- ☐ Address only emergency facility needs through the District's general operating budget - as much as possible - and accept that other needed improvements will not be done and the physical condition of the buildings will continue to decline
- ☐ Not sure

If "not sure," what additional information would you like to receive?

LEWISTON-ALTURA STRATEGIC PLAN | 5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



STUDENT SUCCESS

Provide all students the education they need for success: academically, socially, and emotionally.



EFFECTIVE STAFFING

Hire, maintain, train, and support staff to be as effective as possible.



FINANCE

Be financially healthy and sustainable.



FACILITIES

Have facilities that are safe, modern and conducive to 21st Century Education.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engage with parents, community members and business members.



SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW WITH THE CAMERA ON YOUR SMART PHONE OR VISIT THE WEBSITE LINK TO VIEW THE LEWISTON-ALTURA PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN.
bit.ly/LewistonAltura_StrategicPlan

Bond Referendum Support

The following table shows the tax impact for various referendum amounts. **IMPORTANT NOTE: The original \$26.6 million bond projects, that received 42% support, would now cost \$29 million due to a year's delay in construction and inflation.**

A potential project list has not been revised and no decisions have been made. Bond amounts for this survey were selected to help the District understand your willingness to support a tax increase to address critical building needs should they consider another bond referendum in the future.

TAX IMPACT TO ADDRESS CRITICAL SCHOOL BUILDING NEEDS

TYPE OF PROPERTY	ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE	BOND REFERENDUM ESTIMATED IMPACT					
		\$20 MILLION BOND		\$25 MILLION BOND		\$29 MILLION BOND	
		ANNUALLY	MONTHLY	ANNUALLY	MONTHLY	ANNUALLY	MONTHLY
RESIDENTIAL HOMESTEAD	\$100,000	\$93	\$7.75	\$123	\$10.25	\$147	\$12.25
	\$150,000	\$179	\$14.92	\$235	\$19.58	\$280	\$23.30
	\$200,000	\$265	\$22.08	\$347	\$28.92	\$413	\$34.42
	\$300,000	\$437	\$36.42	\$571	\$47.58	\$679	\$56.58
	\$400,000	\$609	\$50.75	\$795	\$66.25	\$945	\$76.25
COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL	\$100,000	\$237	\$19.75	\$308	\$25.67	\$366	\$30.50
	\$250,000	\$670	\$55.83	\$873	\$72.75	\$1,038	\$86.50
AGRICULTURAL HOMESTEAD** <small>(average value per acre of land and buildings)</small>	\$5,000	\$1.18	\$0.10	\$1.54	\$0.13	\$1.83	\$0.15
	\$7,000	\$1.66	\$0.14	\$2.16	\$0.18	\$2.56	\$0.21
	\$9,000	\$2.13	\$0.18	\$2.77	\$0.23	\$3.30	\$0.28
AGRICULTURAL NON-HOMESTEAD* <small>(average value per acre of land and buildings)</small>	\$5,000	\$2.37	\$0.20	\$3.08	\$0.26	\$3.66	\$0.31
	\$7,000	\$3.31	\$0.28	\$4.31	\$0.36	\$5.13	\$0.43
	\$9,000	\$4.26	\$0.36	\$5.55	\$0.46	\$6.59	\$ 0.55

*Ag2School Property Tax Relief Bill: Estimated tax impacts represent a 70% reduction due to the School Building Bond Agricultural Credit.

Read more at: <https://www.house.mn.gov/comm/docs/ff0ef859-f36d-49a0-bd42-dcf861e1553c.pdf>

#Homestead examples exclude the house, garage, and one acre, which has the same tax impact as a residential homestead.

How much of a tax impact would you support through a bond referendum, assuming the projects included were acceptable to you?






- ☐ I would support a \$29 million bond referendum
- ☐ I would support a \$25 million bond referendum
- ☐ I would support a \$20 million bond referendum
- ☐ I would only support a smaller bond referendum
- ☐ I would not support any bond referendum
- ☐ I'm not sure/need more information

COMMENTS

[illegible]

THANK YOU + NEXT STEPS

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the November 2023 Referendum. Lewiston-Altura Public Schools continues to face significant budget challenges and critical building needs. We have tentatively set the following timeline to move forward with a plan to address these challenges.

-  **January:** Communicate budget reduction plans for 2024-25 school year with stakeholders
-  **February:** Post-Referendum Survey Results presented to School Board
-  **February:** Reconvene Facilities Taskforce
If you are interested in joining the Facilities Taskforce, email Gwen Carman, Superintendent, at gcarman@lewalt.k12.mn.us expressing your interest. Please provide your name, address, and phone number, and let us know if you have or had any children in the District. The next Facilities Taskforce meeting will be February 12, 2024, in the evening.
-  **March:** Community Engagement Sessions
-  **April:** Facilities Taskforce Recommendation to School Board
Recommendations to the School Board and decisions on whether to proceed with another operating levy and building bond referendum.

SURVEYS MUST BE DROPPED OFF OR POSTMARKED BY January 26, 2024.

MAIL OR DELIVER TO:
Lewiston-Altura Public Schools
100 County Road 25, Lewiston, MN 55952