



Dear Families and Community Members:

I am excited and honored to have been chosen to lead the St. Francis Area Schools! One of the many things that drew me to this community was the strong sense of pride students, staff, parents, and community members have for the school district. I am also impressed with the multitude of opportunities available to our students and how our staff continually go above and beyond each and every day to equip our students with the knowledge and skills to empower them to achieve their dreams and reach their full potential. That commitment to our students is guided by the three words you will find beneath our logo: **equip, empower, and achieve.**

As I began my work here this fall, I identified two key needs for the District:

1. Improve achievement and better prepare our students for college, careers, and life after high school.
2. Ensure we have the funding necessary to support our programs and services.

Our staff are working hard to address the first priority. This survey is one step in developing a plan to address the second priority, **our growing budget shortfall**. This is not a new issue. The District has made significant reductions to balance our operating budget in each of the last 5 years. Even with the reductions that have been made to date, **the District is forecasting a \$1.2 million budget shortfall for the 2020-21 school year.** We are concerned what additional cuts will mean to educating our students and retaining quality staff.

We need your help! Our plans going forward must reflect the needs of our students and the priorities of taxpayers. This survey is an opportunity for every resident 18 years of age and older to have a voice in the planning process. Therefore, we are asking you to please take the time to respond to this survey.

TAKE THE SURVEY IN ONE OF TWO EASY WAYS

Online:

- 1) Simply go to the survey website: **www.Feedback2000.com**
- 2) Enter your Survey Access Number:

By Paper:

If you do not have Internet access, please return the survey to the school office or mail to:
School Perceptions, 317 E Washington St., Slinger, WI 53086.

Each Survey Access Number can be used only once. To obtain additional surveys for other adults in your household, please call the District Office at 763-753-7022.

Please complete the survey by April 10, 2020.

To collect this feedback, we are working with School Perceptions LLC, an independent firm with expertise in conducting community surveys. All survey data is returned to School Perceptions to ensure respondent anonymity.

Final survey results will be reported at the Board of Education meeting on April 27 and will also be available on the District website: www.isd15.org.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

Beth Giese
Superintendent, St. Francis Area Schools

School Funding Background Information

There are two types of referendum funding school districts can utilize: **Operating Levies and Facility Bonds**.

An **Operating Levy** helps fund programs and services. These funds support day-to-day operations, such as staffing, educational programming, and student services. These funds are used the same year they are received.

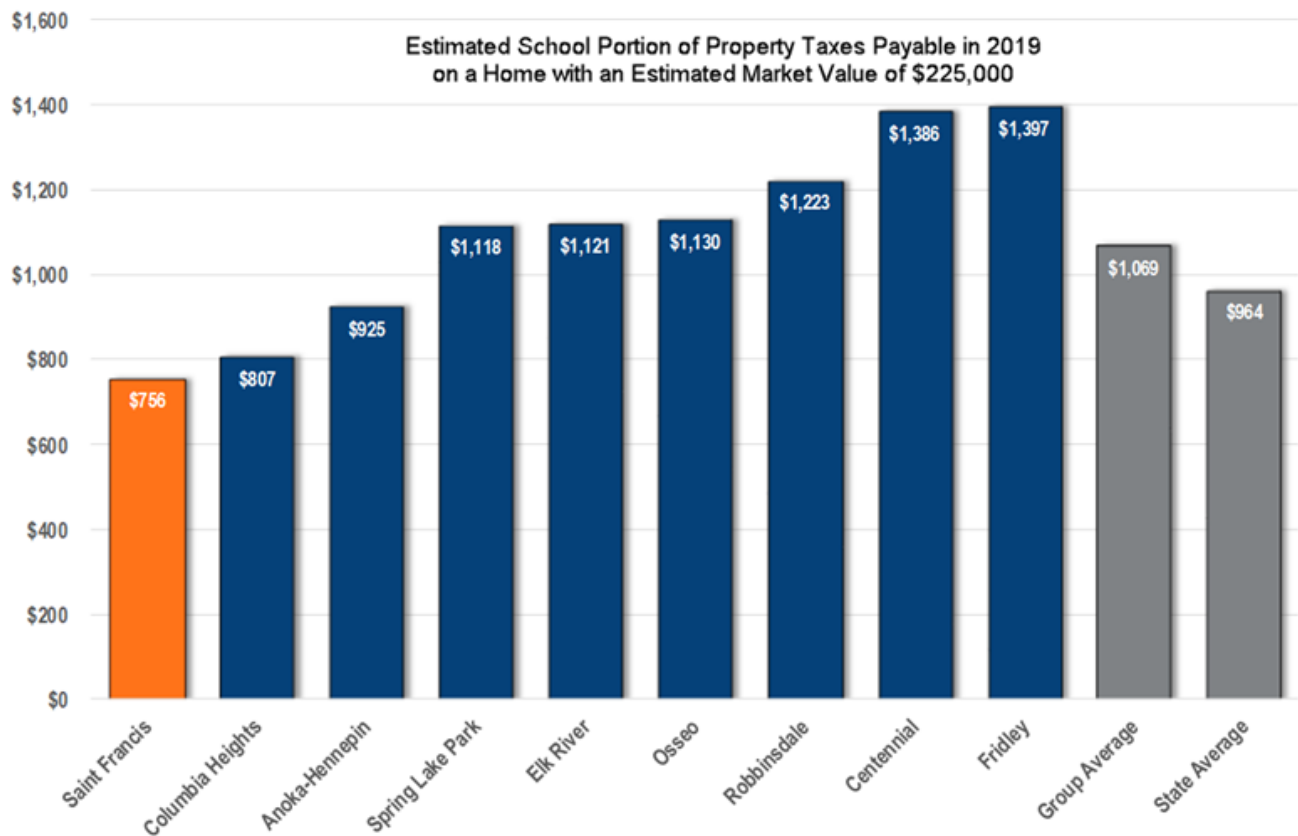
A **Facility Bond** is used to pay for major building projects. Much like a home mortgage, a bond is typically financed over an extended period, often 20 years. This financing method was used last year to update our schools and improve school security. **In simple terms, Bonds are for building, Levies are for learning.**

The recent construction projects did not contribute to our budget deficit. Construction project funds (bonds) cannot be used for general operating expenses. The construction projects are currently on time and on budget. It is important to note that **even if the construction projects had never happened, we would still be dealing with the same budget situation.**

Based on the state's current funding formula, there is no indication that school funding will increase at a level needed to maintain current programs and services. **Therefore, the District will need to pass an operating levy or consider making additional cuts for the 2021-22 school year.** This issue is not unique to our District. In fact, **nearly 70%** of school districts across the state have operating levies in place.

School Funding Background Information

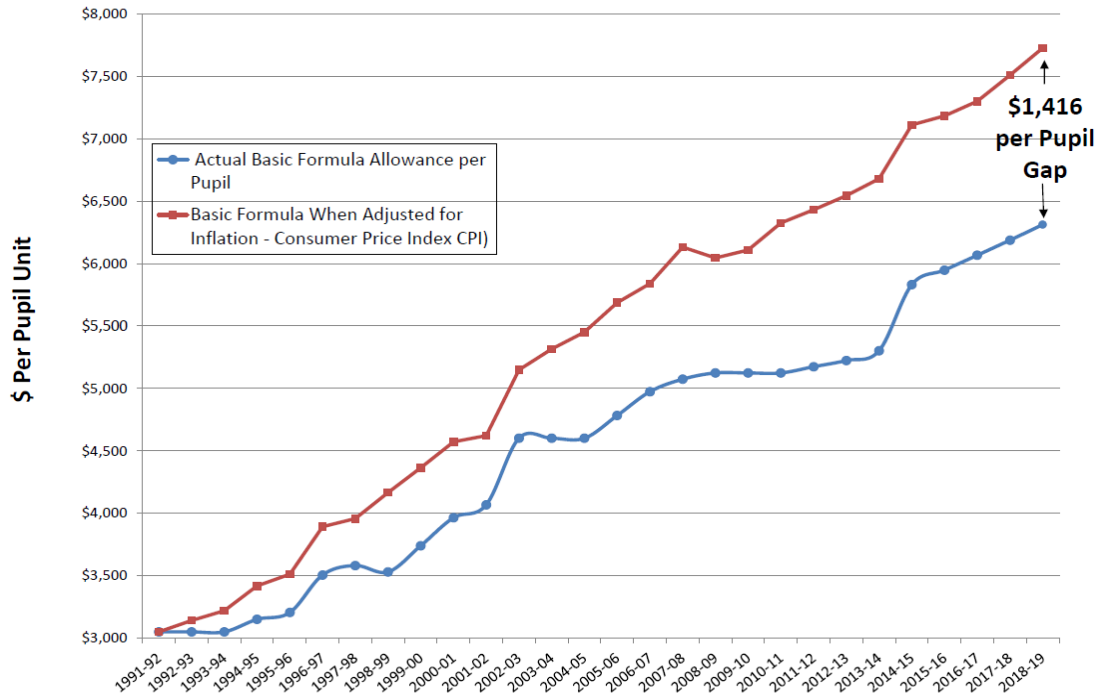
The St. Francis Area School District works hard to be good stewards of taxpayers' dollars. As such, the District has the lowest tax rates in the area, and District residents pay \$208 less in school taxes on a \$225,000 home than the state average.



School Funding Challenge

School districts receive the majority of their funding from the state. The largest portion of this funding, which comes from the basic general education formula, has not kept up with inflation, resulting in school districts receiving \$1,416 less per student than they did in 1991. In addition, there have been numerous new mandates for schools since this time, most of which require additional staffing but no additional state funding. These are the major reasons why St. Francis, along with many school districts across the state, are facing significant budget challenges.

State Funding Per Student



Operating Levy

As a result of this decrease in funding from the state and increasing costs, the District has experienced a budget shortfall in each of the past 5 years. Because an operating levy failed to win voter approval, the District has been utilizing fund balance (cash reserves) to address some of the budget shortfall. This practice is no longer an option as the fund balance will soon be depleted, and the District needs cash on hand to fund day-to-day operations without short-term borrowing. In addition, the District:

- ✓ Reduced teaching and support staff positions
- ✓ Eliminated administrative positions including 3 elementary deans and 1 assistant high school principal
- ✓ Increased class sizes
- ✓ Cut one School Resource Officer (SRO)
- ✓ Reduced department and building budgets
- ✓ Delayed curriculum purchases
- ✓ Eliminated technology upgrades
- ✓ Reduced high school class offerings
- ✓ Increased student fees (*Note: St. Francis now has the highest student activity fees in the area*)

Even with these cuts, the District is forecasting a budget shortfall averaging more than \$500,000 per year (\$350 per student) for each of the next 10 years. **We are concerned what additional cuts will mean to educating our students and retaining quality staff. Therefore, the District is again exploring the option of asking voters to support District operations through an operating levy.**

Would you support an operating levy to reduce the amount of future budget cuts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Comments/suggestions:

Cost Saving Options

If voters do not support a \$350 per student levy, the District will need to make further cuts to balance the budget. While the District does not endorse any of the following, they must consider all options to reduce expenses.

Please check your response to each of the following:

<p>Class Size: Typical core class sizes across the District range from 23 to 31 students. Occasionally, some classes are larger or smaller depending on enrollment.</p> <p>Should the District further increase class sizes to reduce costs?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion
<p>Curriculum: Our District reviews and updates the curriculum in each subject area on a rotating basis to ensure current content and use of best teaching practices. This practice has been delayed in recent years to save money.</p> <p>Should curriculum updates be further delayed to save money?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion
<p>College Credit and Elective Courses: Currently, the high school offers College in the School and advanced placement (AP) classes that allow students to receive college credit while in high school. In addition, elective classes such as agriculture education, art, business, computer science, music, family and consumer science, technical and trades education, world languages, and other offerings are available for middle and high school students. The District could reduce or eliminate these offerings.</p> <p>Should the District reduce college credit and/or elective courses to save money?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion
<p>Athletic/Activities: The District has already raised athletic and activity fees for middle and high school students, making our fees the highest in the region. Even with this increase, participation fees only provide an additional \$13,000 per year.</p> <p>Should the District implement even higher fees for student participation?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion
<p>Athletic/Fine Arts/Co-Curricular Offerings: The number of athletic, fine arts, and other co-curricular offerings in the District could be reduced.</p> <p>Should the District reduce the number of athletic/fine arts/co-curricular offerings?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Opinion
<p>Support Staff: Administrative assistants, educational assistants, and custodians all play a critical role in helping our schools function efficiently and allow us to best meet the needs of students.</p> <p>Should the District reduce support staff to save money?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Opinion
<p>Pupil Services Staff: Pupil services staff (interventionists, school counselors, school psychologists, etc.) provide academic, social-emotional support, and guidance to students and families.</p> <p>Should the District reduce pupil services staff to save money?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Opinion
<p>Technology: The District's technology infrastructure, including wireless access and servers, as well as classroom technology, computers, and iPads, need to be updated on a regular basis to best meet students' learning needs.</p> <p>Should the District consider delaying technology updates to save money?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Opinion
<p>Transportation: The District already eliminated bus routes; additional routes could be eliminated, increasing ride times to over an hour for some students.</p> <p>Should the District eliminate additional bus routes to reduce costs?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Opinion

Comments/suggestions:

Funding to Support Operations

The District will develop a budget to operate our schools based on the community feedback received through this survey. The following options have been developed:

OPTION 1: Hold an operating levy that will provide an additional \$250 per student for each of the next 10 years, requiring the District to continue to cut current programs/services, based on survey feedback.

OPTION 2: Hold an operating levy that will provide an additional \$350 per student for each of the next 10 years, allowing the District to maintain current programs/services and balance the current budget.

OPTION 3: Hold an operating levy that will provide an additional \$450 per student for each of the next 10 years, allowing the District to maintain current programs/services AND reinstate and/or add new programs and services.

The District would like to know your level of support for a levy. The following table shows the projected tax impacts for various levy amounts.

Per Student Levy Amount		OPTION 1 \$250	OPTION 2 \$350	OPTION 3 \$450
Type of Property	Estimated Market Value	Annual Property Tax Increase		
Residential Homestead, Apartments and Commercial/ Industrial Property	\$100,000	\$34 (\$2.83/month)	\$48 (\$4.00/month)	\$61 (\$5.08/month)
	\$150,000	\$51 (\$4.25/month)	\$71 (\$5.92/month)	\$92 (\$7.67/month)
	\$200,000	\$68 (\$5.67/month)	\$95 (\$7.92/month)	\$123 (\$10.25/month)
	\$250,000	\$85 (\$7.08/month)	\$119 (\$9.92/month)	\$153 (\$12.75/month)
	\$300,000	\$102 (\$8.50/month)	\$143 (\$11.92/month)	\$184 (\$15.33/month)
	\$400,000	\$136 (\$11.33/month)	\$191 (\$15.92/month)	\$245 (\$20.42/month)
	\$500,000	\$170 (\$14.17/month)	\$238 (\$19.83/month)	\$306 (\$25.50/month)
Based on the tax increases listed above, which operating levy would you support?		<input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$450 per student levy <input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$350 per student levy <input type="checkbox"/> I would support a \$250 per student levy <input type="checkbox"/> I would only support a <u>smaller</u> levy <input type="checkbox"/> I would <u>not</u> support any levy <input type="checkbox"/> I would support a levy <u>greater than \$450</u> per student, allowing the District to maintain as well as reinstate/add even more programs and services <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure/need more information		

INFORMATION FOR AG. LAND OWNER: For the purposes of an operating levy, land taxed as agriculture is excluded from this referendum market value tax. Only the market value of the house, garage, and one acre of agriculture land is taxed.

Comments/suggestions:

Respondent Information

Please check your response to each of the following:

What is your age?

- 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-64 65 and older

Is your primary residence in the St. Francis Area School District? Yes No

In which municipality/township is your primary residence?

- Athens Township Linwood Township Stanford Township
 City of Andover City of Nowthen Other
 City of Bethel City of Oak Grove
 City of East Bethel City of St. Francis

Are you an employee of the St. Francis Area Schools? Yes No

Do you have children attending the St. Francis Area Schools? Yes No

If you have school-aged children, what school(s) do they attend? (Select all that apply)

- Cedar Creek Elementary East Bethel Elementary St. Francis Elementary
 St. Francis Middle St. Francis High St. Francis Learning Center
 Public school outside of the District Private school Homeschool
 Online/virtual school Early Childhood Other:

Home Value Impact

The value of a person's home can be affected by the quality of the school district.

Overall, what impact do you feel the quality of the St. Francis Area Schools has on your home value?

- Positive impact Little to no impact Negative impact Do not own a home in the District

Communication

Keeping our communities informed of what is happening in our schools is a priority of the school district.

How would you like to receive information regarding the St. Francis Area Schools? (Select all that apply)

- District and school mailings Email District/school website
 Automated phone messages Automated text messaging Facebook
 Twitter Instagram Attend informational meetings
 Attend School Board meetings Anoka County Union Herald Infinite Campus Parent Portal
 Other:

Comments/suggestions regarding how we can improve our District communications:

St. Francis School District
c/o Independent School Dist #15
4115 Ambassador Blvd. NW
Saint Francis, MN 55070

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Please complete the survey by [April 10, 2020](#).

This publication was produced for the residents of the St. Francis Area Schools. Due to the overlap of postal routes, residents from neighboring school districts may receive this publication. Given the limitations of bulk mailing, this overlap was difficult to eliminate without significant cost. Thank you for your understanding.