

1. What did voters approve on April 7, 2015?

Voters authorized an \$18.2 million referendum in order to address significant facility needs and create advanced digital collaborative learning spaces to facilitate a rigorous modern curriculum. Approximately \$14.4 million will finance capital improvements and \$3.8 million will finance student-centered learning environments at the middle and high school levels.

2. What projects are included in the referendum?

The District created the [proposed projects list](#) based on a comprehensive [long-range facilities plan](#) (developed during the 2013-2014 school year) as a result of walk-through assessments of facilities in collaboration with administration, head custodians and outside consultants. The plan identified significant needs grouped into four main categories: capital replacement; safety and security; energy improvements; and technology infrastructure. The needs include replacing deteriorating brick, aging boilers, and inefficient single-pane windows, some of which are 50 years old. Other efforts involve flooring, roofing, and creating advanced digital collaborative learning spaces that facilitate a rigorous modern curriculum at the middle and high school levels.

3. When will the projects be completed?

Construction planning and project scoping is well underway across the Mequon-Thiensville School District with all of the projects scheduled to be completed by the end of the 2016-2017 school year. A project timeline will be posted soon.

4. What buildings are affected?

The referendum addresses significant large-scale facility needs in all of MTSD's buildings, including Range Line School. Currently, MTSD students, community members and businesses utilize Range Line School on an average of 13 hours a day Monday-Friday and 4 hours a day Saturday-Sunday. Range Line houses the District's Early Childhood Program, the Mequon-Thiensville Recreation Department and several business tenants who lease building space, including Range Line Preschool and Childcare.

Advanced digital collaborative learning spaces would be created at both of MTSD's middle schools and Homestead High School to prepare students for college and careers. *View Question #7 for more about Student Centered Learning Environments.*

5. How much will I pay as a result of the referendum?

The fiscal impact on homeowners is less than originally proposed. The District borrowed funds at a rate of 2.96 percent, which was significantly less than the 3.5 percent projected rate. The lower rate saved taxpayers almost \$800,000 in interest costs.

As proposed, the District structured debt related to the April 2015 referendum with a goal to minimize the tax impact for the first three years until debt related to the 1998 referendum is retired. As a result, there will be no increase from our current debt rate of \$0.54/\$1,000 for 2015-16. For the next two years, the tax increase will be \$0.14 and \$0.15 per \$1,000 from the current debt rate. After this three-year period, the amount taxpayers would pay annually would decline by an average of \$0.08 per \$1,000 from the current debt payments. [View the MTSD Financing Plan Illustration.](#)

The three-year tax impact of \$18.2 million borrowing on a home with equalized or fair market value of \$350,000 is reflected below:

2015-16 – annual tax increase - \$ 0.00
2016-17 – annual tax increase - \$49.00
2017-18 – annual tax increase - \$52.50

6. Is the artificial turf field at Homestead High School part of the referendum?

No, the installation of a multi-sport turf field is funded entirely by the Homestead Booster Club's Highlander Strong Campaign. Construction beyond the field at Homestead High School is included in the referendum. For example, MTSD will replace the outdoor track as the current track is beyond its useful life. Referendum dollars will also be used to level and irrigate the soccer field, improve tennis courts and replace deteriorating indoor locker rooms. The upgrades associated with MTSD's referendum will impact physical education students and community members who currently utilize Homestead High School. A live [webcam](#) is broadcasting the construction work 24 hours a day.

7. What is a Student Centered Learning Environment?

Student-centered learning capitalizes on student interests in an active, collaborative environment that promotes successful learning. It shifts the focus in the classroom from the teacher (in traditional education) to the student. The district will create advanced digital and collaborative environments at the secondary level that facilitates a rigorous modern curriculum, supports increased personalized learning, and prepares students for college and career work environments. Those environments include:

- A variety of instructional spaces to accommodate traditional classroom instruction as well as individual, small and large group learning
- Enhancing students' ability to utilize interactive technology tools
- Additional learning spaces to provide equity among sites for specialized programming, including special education, learning interventions, music, art and physical education
- Adaptable furniture and other fixtures that have the functionality to allow for reconfiguration based on learning needs

[CLICK HERE](#) to watch a video regarding student centered learning environments at the middle school level and [CLICK HERE](#) to watch a video at the high school level.

8. Is the facilities referendum a result of deferred maintenance?

No, MTSD's referendum is not the result of deferred maintenance. The majority of projects are capital projects, not deferred maintenance projects. The District has maintained the boilers, roofing, flooring and windows in its buildings well beyond their useful lives; now they are in need of replacement. For example, the District has caulked and sealed school building windows to extend its useful lives (some of which are 50 years old); now they are in need of replacement. The floors have been resurfaced and sealed to the point that they now need to be replaced.

Additionally, budget shortfalls and declining enrollment have forced the District to prioritize spending. The District increased the annual maintenance budget over the last several years to address facility needs while continuing to invest most of its available revenue into each child's quality education. District administrators' top priority during these challenging fiscal times is to shield the classroom as much as possible in order to provide the highest quality education to its students. As a result, MTSD has earned the status as the best K-12 school district in the state of Wisconsin for the second consecutive year, *Newsweek* ranked Homestead High School #1 in Wisconsin, #10 in the Midwest, and #98 in the nation. Additionally, Lake Shore and Steffen Middle Schools rank in the top 10 of approximately 230 6th-8th-grade middle schools in Wisconsin; and Lake Shore was nominated for a National Blue Ribbon Award. The District has the option to invest additional dollars into the maintenance budget, but at what cost to the children?

While the district has done a good job maintaining its facilities, state school finance laws make it difficult for schools to save money over time to address maintenance and improvements in the same way that a homeowner might. As a result, school districts generally are compelled to seek a capital referendum to cover the costs of such items.

9. How much does the District invest in facilities in the current budget?

The District invests more than \$700,000 of the operational budget annually for the general maintenance of school buildings and grounds. The maintenance program has been effective in ensuring that all facilities are safe, clean and operates in proper condition through the end of their useful life. Despite fiscal challenges, MTSD has not reduced its general maintenance budget. In fact, the District has increased the budget over the last few years in order to address significant facility needs.

MTSD has stretched taxpayer dollars to the maximum. Through careful maintenance and management, the District has been able to extend the life cycle of many District facilities. According to American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the life expectancy of MTSD's windows is between 15 and 20 years old, yet MTSD has been able to maintain them for up to 50 years; now they are in need of replacement. Heating systems require regular maintenance in order to be efficient, but even well maintained systems only last 15 to 25 years. Many of MTSD's heating systems have been maintained to last approximately 50 years; now they need to be replaced.

10. Why did the district seek a referendum in 2015?

The District's facilities needs must be addressed in the near future in order to maintain a quality learning environment that supports academic achievement and remains competitive at a local and national level. The [long-range facilities plan](#) was constructed as a result of the District's strategic plan (Goal #3, Objective C), prompting the need to address significant facility needs. A community ad-hoc committee recommended seeking a facilities referendum to address those needs.

11. How was the long-range facilities plan developed?

The Board of Education commissioned a facilities conditions report from Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA) in 2012. During the 2013-2014 school year, the District developed a [long-range facilities plan](#) as a result of walk-through assessments of facilities in collaboration with administration, head custodians and outside consultants. The assessment of facilities resulted in a list of projects prioritized by planning teams based on the TregoEd process. This plan was presented to the school board in April 2014.

12. What does the term "life cycle" mean?

Life cycle describes the process facilities go through, from introduction to eventual replacement/repair. MTSD has effectively managed to maintain (or extend) the life cycle of our facilities through our limited budget for capital improvement. Many of the proposed projects in this referendum are associated with life cycle concerns including the replacement of deteriorating brick, aging boilers, and inefficient single-pane windows.

The District sought community support to address these needs in 2002, but the referendum failed. As a result, MTSD has gone 15 years without investing in any large-scale life cycle projects until now.

13. Can I read the results of the community survey?

Yes, please [CLICK HERE](#) to read results from the community referendum survey administered in November 2014.

14. How can I stay informed about the referendum?

- [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the referendum construction website (<http://www.mtsd.k12.wi.us/about/construction.cfm>)

15. How does this referendum benefit the community?

Investing in the Mequon-Thiensville School District has significant returns for all community members whether they have children in the school system or not. Strong schools create strong communities, which creates strong property values.

16. Is the District in a good financial position to support a referendum?

Yes, taxes in Mequon and Thiensville compare favorably with other communities. The District's 2014-15 mill rate of \$8.54 per \$1000 of equalized valuation is the 35th lowest out of 368 K-12 school districts in Wisconsin (\$1.72 below state average) and the 2nd lowest rate in comparison to eleven local area school districts. For more information please [CLICK HERE](#).

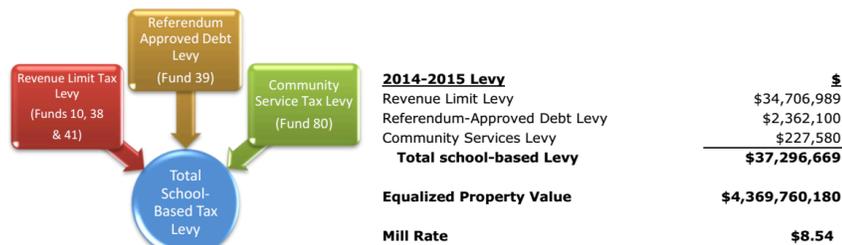
The financial condition and credit profile of the District is strong such that Moody's Investors Service assigned the highest rating, Aaa, to Mequon-Thiensville School District. MTSD is 1 of only 5 Wisconsin schools to hold the top rating. Due to the District's excellent credit rating, the District was able to borrow funds at 2.96 percent, significantly lower than the 3.5 percent projected rate. The lower rate saved taxpayers almost \$800,000 in interest cost.

17. What is a mill (tax) rate?

School district property is generally located in more than one municipality. For school purposes, property values are "equalized" by the Department of Revenue to reflect market value rather than assessed value. A tax levy rate is arrived at by taking the total school tax levy divided by the equalized valuation of the District, multiplied by \$1,000. Tax levy rates are reflected in "mills" or property tax dollars levied per \$1,000 of equalized property value.

Total School Based Tax Levy and Mill Rate

School district property taxes include the Revenue Limit Levy (General, Non-referendum Debt and Capital Expansion Funds), Referendum-approved Debt Levy (Fund 39) and the Community Services Levy (Fund 80).



18. Through the 1998 referendum, community members invested \$28 million into the expansion of Homestead High School despite enrollment trends indicating a decline in enrollment. Why does MTSD think the community should invest in another facilities referendum?

There are some in the community who hold the belief that the 1998 facilities referendum was an unwise investment of taxpayers' dollars since enrollment trends indicated a decline in enrollment. Although the declining enrollment data indicated a decline in 1998, the need to upgrade the science wing, replace the outdated cafeteria, improve student services facilities (counseling and other student support services), and improve the music education instructional space were all necessary facility enhancements regardless of the enrollment trends.

The 1998 facilities referendum positioned Homestead High School to maintain and in many cases accelerate its exemplary instructional services which has lead recently to a school record ACT composite of a 26.0 and being ranked by Newsweek as one of America's top 100 high schools. The successful 1998 facilities referendum allowed Homestead High School to continue its legacy of being one of the best high schools in Wisconsin.