



2024 Mill Levy Proposal

Poudre School District | July 31, 2024

Agenda for today's discussion

1. Poudre School District By the Numbers
2. 2024 possible ballot measure proposal
3. Possible ballot measure proposal goals
4. Next steps
5. Questions and discussion



By the Numbers: 2023-24 School Year

Teacher recruiting and retention

 **92%**

Retention rate for PSD's teachers and licensed staff. The district has a 78 percent retention for classified staff and 90 percent rate for its administration.

 **9% to 12%**

Average Poudre School District teacher salary is 9 to 12 percent less than similar districts along the northern Front Range, presenting a challenge in recruiting and retaining exceptional teachers.

Fiscal stewardship

 **\$6.6 million**

Reductions in staffing and operating budgets in schools next year due to declining enrollment.

Our facilities are aging

 **\$1 billion**

Estimated amount of capital improvements and maintenance needs in school buildings with no dedicated funding to address these needs.

 **\$800,000**

Annual amount available to Poudre School District in its general fund to maintain the district's schools and facilities. An estimated \$1 billion in funding for improvements and maintenance is needed.

 **32**

Number of PSD schools that do not have mechanical cooling, with classroom temperatures reaching well above 85 degrees during the hottest months of the year.

By the Numbers: 2023-24 School Year

Our students are succeeding

 **623**

PSD students receiving Career and Technical Education (CTE) industry certifications, showing that they have real-world, job-ready skills for the workplace.

 **98%**

98% of students who take four or more courses in one of PSD's career pathways graduate high school on time.

 **86.9%**

Graduation rate for the class of 2023, the second highest graduation rate for Poudre School District in more than a decade.

 **80%**

Percentage of PSD high school students participating in career and technical education courses, compared to 72 percent state average.

 **66%**

Percentage of PSD graduates earning free college credits.

 **21.6%**

Increase this year in literacy reading scores at the elementary school level. Typical annual increases are closer to 7 percent.

 **16%**

High school students who requested work-based learning opportunities during the 2023-24 school year. 1,106 out of 8,767 high school students earned credit in a work-based learning course this year.

Why we invited you

- **We all share a commitment to high-quality public education in our community**
 - We value your input as the district strives to address the financial challenges it faces and ensure our students continue to access excellent educational experiences
- **Who is in the room**
 - Elected officials from our local municipalities (i.e. City of Fort Collins, Larimer County)
 - Community partners (i.e. Colorado State University, the Center for Family Outreach, etc.)
 - Business representatives
 - Members of District Committees like the District Advisory Board (DAB), District Advisory Committee (DAC), and the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council (EDAC)



Values

- Declining enrollment
- Declining birth rates
- Housing prices
- Charter schools
- Staffing challenges
- Number of empty seats
- Budget challenges
- Infrastructure needs
- Teacher salaries
- Stewards of taxpayer dollars
- School of Choice
- School performance



Preparing for Our Future

- We are dedicated to the district's vision of supporting and inspiring every child to think, to learn, to care, and to graduate prepared to be successful in a changing world.
- To accomplish these goals more effectively, **community support for additional funding in a mill levy is needed to:**
 - Attract and retain exceptional teachers and staff
 - Renovate schools to create career and technical education spaces, and update curriculum, resources, and materials to prepare students for their futures
 - Maintain our aging buildings to extend their useful life
 - Support neighborhood schools



2024 Mill Levy Proposal



Debt Free Schools Mill Levy

- The Board of Education is considering a question for the November election **to provide up to \$49 million annually** to maintain the district's schools as part of the state's Debt Free Schools Act.
- If passed, the mill levy would:
 - ✓ Create a **dedicated revenue source** to improve and extend the useful life of the district's buildings.
 - ✓ **Allow the district to reprioritize more of its general fund** for recruitment and retention, classroom resources, career and technical education, and neighborhood schools.

Tax Estimate: (Maximum)

**Up to \$25.40 per
year**

for every \$100,000 in home value

\$114.40 per year

for every \$100,000 in commercial
value



Goals of Ballot Question

- ✓ **Attracting and retaining the best teachers and school support staff by maintaining competitive salaries and providing necessary classroom materials.**
- Our district faces challenges attracting and keeping exceptional teachers and staff because of high cost of living and housing.
 - Average PSD teacher salary is less than similar districts along the Front Range.
 - First year teacher salaries are \$6,700 less than Cherry Creek and \$4,000 less than St. Vrain Valley Schools.
- PSD has honored the work of our teachers with pay raises that surpass inflation rates. However, getting closer to the pay offered in similar Front Range district – which will help attract and keep highly-qualified teachers – will require additional funding.



Goals of Ballot Question

- ✓ **Providing the well-rounded education that today's students will need for tomorrow's jobs and careers.**
 - Our schools and curriculum must adapt to educate today's students for tomorrow's jobs and careers. This ballot proposal would help:
 - **Expand classrooms for career, technology, and skilled trades classes** that provide students with real-world job skills.
 - **Provide the highest quality, up-to-date, and innovative classroom materials** at all grade levels so teachers and students have the best tools possible for learning.
 - **Invest in books, technology, and other library materials and facilities** needed for students to develop skills for the future.
 - **Create replacement cycles** for musical instruments, athletics equipment, and other necessary classroom materials.



Goals of Ballot Question

- ✓ **Maintaining and improving school buildings and facilities** used by teachers, students, librarians and other staff to ensure secure, adequate, and comprehensive learning environments.
 - This ballot proposal would help the district extend the useful life of its buildings while ensuring safe and healthy learning environments by:
 - Replacing outdated electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems.
 - Addressing routine repairs and renovations to extend the useful life of buildings.
 - Reducing costly emergency repairs.



Goals of Ballot Question

- ✓ Ensuring that students have the individual attention and the greater sense of community they need to learn and thrive by **supporting small, neighborhood schools**.
 - The Board has heard support for maintaining small, neighborhood schools and wants to explore funding to support comprehensive programming in these schools.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is causing some of the district's recent budget challenges?

The district has been experiencing declining enrollment over the past decade. Both Larimer County, the national census, and the district's data show declining birth rates in our region. The incoming kindergarten class in PSD's neighborhood schools is one of the smallest in more than 10 years.

Since school funding is allocated in Colorado on a per-pupil basis, declining enrollment means the district and individual schools receive less funding to provide comprehensive programming at schools and maintain buildings.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is causing the decline in enrollment in PSD? Are families choosing charter schools?

Birth rates in our district area have been declining for many years. The district's entering kindergarten class, in our non-charter schools, has approximately 1,400 students, compared to the more than 2,500 students in our 12th grade class.

Some families in our district are choosing to attend charter schools. PSD has five district-authorized charter schools.

All schools in our district, including charters, are being impacted by declining birth rates.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What happens if enrollment continues to decline in PSD?

Passing a mill levy override would help PSD to mitigate the long-term impacts of enrollment decline on the district's funding.

However, if enrollment continues to decline precipitously, as projected, it is still possible that the district will need to consider school consolidation or closure in the future.

It is also possible that other tax-related measures on the ballot in November 2024, if passed, would reduce the amount of funding for services provided to children.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Didn't the district receive more money when property taxes increased?

The state's School Finance Act sets the annual funding amount for each district across Colorado. If local property tax collections increase, the district's base funding stays the same and the state reduces its share of funding for the district.

State law allows the district to receive local voter approval for additional funding to address specific needs. In this case, PSD is considering asking voters to approve additional funding in a debt free mill levy. If the measure passes, it will also allow more general fund dollars to go toward students, teachers, and classrooms.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will charter schools receive additional funding from this proposal?

State law requires a portion of locally approved mill levies or bonds to be shared with charter schools.

Q. Will this money be prioritized for students and classrooms?

Yes. More than 86% of the district's funding goes directly to schools, students, and teachers. 14% of the district's funding goes toward support services that directly benefit students and classrooms too.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why doesn't PSD eliminate School of Choice?

Offering School of Choice is required by state law in Colorado. PSD cannot eliminate School of Choice.

Q. We have heard the reason for school consolidation was about preventing a reduction in services in schools, not about funding. Is this true?

These are one in the same. As enrollment declines in schools, the funding allocated to these schools also declines because funding is allocated per pupil in Colorado. Less funding means that schools must reduce services provided to students, like specials (i.e. art, music, physical education) and counseling, etc.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why did PSD leadership receive salary increases during for the 2023-24 school year?

The district has committed to ensuring that all employee groups (teachers, classified, and administrative staff) are paid at market rates. As part of this effort, all PSD employees received salary increases for the 2023-24 school year.

The district is committed to ensuring that all staff are paid at market rates.

Cost of living in our region continues to increase and it is important for pay rates to keep up.



PSD: Your Best Choice

- **Literacy**

- 21.6% increase in literacy scores in just one year
- Excellent teachers and curriculum

- **Mental Health and Belonging**

- 42% decrease in number of students planning to harm themselves
- Collaboration with Larimer County, Colorado State University, Mathew's House, and many others are benefiting our students' well-being

- **Graduation with Options**

- 86.9% four-year graduation rate is second-highest in more than a decade
- 98% of students who take four or more courses in one of the PSD career pathways graduates from high school on time
- Partnerships with Larimer County and the Bohemian Foundation are supporting growth of the career pathways that PSD offers to students



*“Children are 20% of our population but 100%
of our future.”*

- Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, 1993



Next Steps and Timeline

- The Board of Education sent a letter in July to households in the district sharing information about the possible mill levy.
 - The survey included in the letter received more than 3,000 responses.
 - Responses to date indicate support for the possible measure.
- The Board of Education will provide additional outreach and information to the community during August.
- The Board of Education has until **Friday, September 6**, to make a final decision about whether to refer the ballot question.
 - If the Board decides to refer the question to voters, a local citizens' committee will form to share information with voters about the ballot question.



Questions and Discussion



Small Group Discussion Questions

- Please introduce yourself/organization you represent
- **Based on the information you heard, what resonated most with you and/or what do you want to learn more about?**
- **How can we work together and collaborate for the benefit of our students and community?**
- **What haven't we talked about together today that we should have?**
 - Please email boe@psdschools.org your thoughts!



District Needs Your Feedback

We value feedback from every member of our community. Please take a few moments to complete a short survey by visiting <https://bit.ly/PSDsurvey> or scanning the QR code:



Survey available in Spanish at <https://bit.ly/PSDespanol> and Arabic at <https://bit.ly/PSDArabic>.

Have feedback on topics that we haven't discussed today, but should have? Please email the Board of Education with your thoughts
boe@psdschools.org.



Draft of Possible Ballot Question

In order to make more general fund revenues available for the purposes set forth below, shall Poudre School District R-1 taxes be increased by up to \$49,000,000 annually commencing in tax collection year 2025 for the purposes authorized and in accordance with section 22-54-108.7, C.R.S., (the Debt Free Schools Act), with the effect that more general fund revenue will be available to improve and maintain the quality education including but not limited to:

- Attracting and retaining the best teachers and school support staff by maintaining competitive salaries and providing necessary classroom materials
- Maintaining and improving school buildings and facilities used by teachers, students, librarians and other staff to ensure a secure, adequate and comprehensive learning environments, including replacing outdated electrical, plumbing, HVAC systems, and addressing other repairs and renovations to extend the useful life of buildings and reduce emergency repairs
- Providing the education that today's students will need for tomorrow's jobs and careers, including expanding classrooms for career, technology, and skilled trades classes that provide students with real world job skills and providing the books, technology, and other library materials and facilities needed for students to develop these skills for the future
- Providing arts, music, and physical education supplies and facilities so students receive a well-rounded education
- Ensuring that students have the individual attention and the greater sense of community they need to learn and thrive by supporting small, neighborhood schools

And shall such additional revenue from this tax be deposited into the supplemental capital construction, technology and maintenance fund and used for ongoing cash funding for capital construction, new technology upgrades, and maintenance needs of the District; and provided that expenditures will be subject to an annual audit and citizen oversight; and shall the District be authorized to collect, retain and spend all revenues from such taxes as a voter approved revenue change?

