

# School Funding Explained, Why Aitkin's Capital Project Levy is Necessary



*Aitkin Student Council President Madison Buisman holds up two dollars, which represents the approximate tax increase per month for a median-value home in the City of Aitkin, if the levy passes.*

Every school district has general fund dollars. This money comes from the state (65%), local taxpayers (30%), and the federal government (5%). On average, school districts in Minnesota receive about \$14,800 annually per student from the state. Generally, this money breaks down in the following way.

- \$8,000 Instruction
- \$2,500 Capital expenses and debt
- \$1,300 Support
- \$900 Administration
- \$900 Operation and maintenance
- \$700 Transportation
- \$500 Food service

Aitkin Public Schools receives \$9,752 per student from the state. Unfortunately, our enrollment has been decreasing, which means less funding from our primary source, the state of Minnesota.

As is the case with all budgets, if a portion of incoming revenue decreases, another source of funding is needed to avoid budget cuts. Our school district has been forced to make some tough decisions over the past three years, which resulted in \$575,000 in cuts due to a shrinking operational budget. Cuts were made to staff, programs, services, and our transportation fleet. A decrease in state support means we need to increase our local support to fulfill all our district's needs.

The school district is proposing to move \$500,000 of technology and transportation expenses out of the general fund and into a Capital Project Levy. If that happens, we will be able to reduce future cuts because general fund dollars will be available to cover expenses related to instruction, building expenses, food service, etc. It also means our one-to-one device program will continue, our infrastructure will be updated, and our technical support will remain strong.

Most districts that have one-to-one device programs rely on capital project levies, or some form of voter-approved funding. Aitkin is one of only nine districts in the state that does not have voter-approved funding. We want our students to receive the best possible education at Aitkin Public Schools. Updating and maintaining our technology is crucial for quality learning and reliable transportation is a necessity.

If the levy passes, a median-value home (\$111,600) in the City of Aitkin would see a tax increase of approximately \$2 per month. A median-value home (\$180,000) in Aitkin County would see a tax increase of approximately \$3 per month.

Mail-in balloting is now open. Please vote on or before November 3, 2020 and visit the district's website to learn more about the Capital Project Levy.

**We care about our students. We care about our community. We are ISD#1.**

Superintendent Daniel J. Stifter