education news

an official publication of the Little Falls Township Public Schools

LITTLE FALLS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 2021

Referendum will improve education and facilities

Plan adds instructional space, replaces basic building components

RESIDENTS will vote December 14 on a school improvement plan that is the product of more than a year of preparation, refinement, and input. The plan adds valuable instructional space which will allow the district to offer more programs and resources, and it addresses basic facilities needs.

Educational highlights

Academic achievement has skyrocketed over the past several years. The high test scores in English and math have made School No. 1 and School No. 3 the best middle school and elementary school in Passaic County, respectively. In 2019, School No. 3 was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, an honor given to just a handful of schools in the state.

The school improvement plan was developed to continue the district's evolution and offer more dynamic and engaging programs to kids. The plan solves space issues in each building that are hampering program expansion and preventing the delivery of more beneficial experiences and activites.

The keystone of the project is the expansion of our early childhood program with the addition of **eight pre-K classrooms at School No. 2**. This provides space for preschool for all Little Falls children and gives the district the opportunity to take advantage of state funding that would pay for the program. Research shows that a high quality preschool experience helps students form key academic and social skills, preparing them for kindergarten and beyond.

The improvement plan also provides more room for the **music and fine arts program** with the addition of an **auditorium** at School No. 1 (available for community use). And a **small group instruction room** at School No. 3 will provide room for multiple classes and even whole grades to engage in the same hands-on activity in one shared space.

Facilities improvements

Just like with your home, school building components wear out despite regular maintenance. The district's custodial staff works wonders, but years of wear and tear have taken their toll on our buildings.

The improvement plan includes:

- **basic heating, ventilation, and air conditioning improvements** such as the replacement of boilers and air handlers.
- **replacement of classroom and hallway floors**, much original to the school's construction. In some areas, the floor is buckling and cracking.
- **interior door replacement** throughout the district. Most doors date back to the original construction of the buildings. Some are half-doors open at the bottom. The replacement doors will be sturdier and have stronger locking mechanisms, making them more secure.

The plan will be financed over time to minimize the annual cost to taxpayers. If the referendum is approved by voters, the average home (assessment of $314,000) would see an increase of approximately **$23** per month.

Little Falls Board of Education
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Remember to VOTE December 14

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Little Falls Township Public Schools Improvement Project

*********ECRWSS****
Residential Customer

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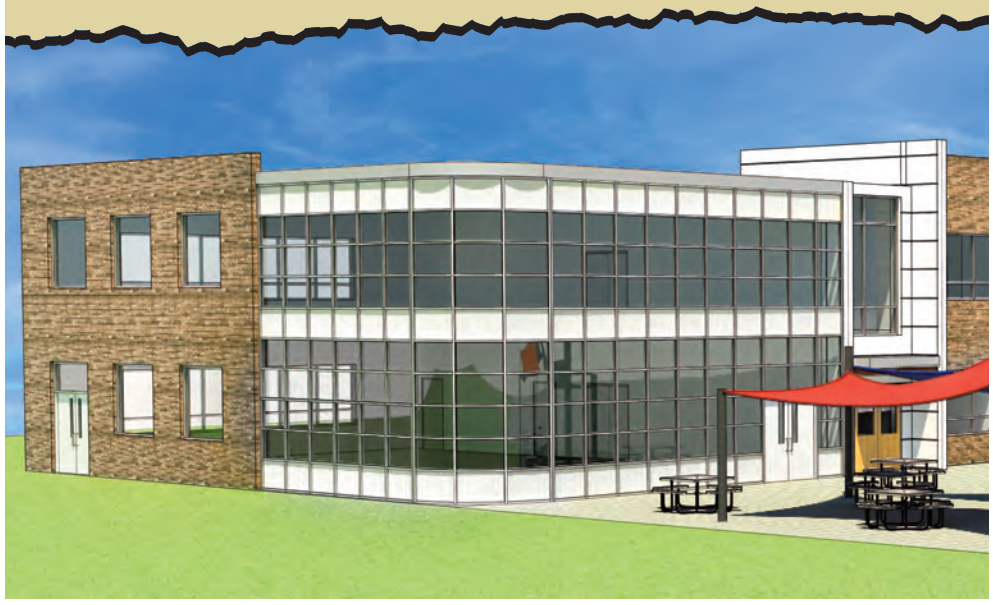
Room for full-day preschool



School No. 2 (grades PK–2)

8 preschool classrooms

New media center

New kitchen & cafeteria

Interior renovations and finishes

Exterior upgrades

More room for music & the arts

Better athletic facilities

School No. 1 (grades 5–8)

Cafeteria expansion

Addition of auditorium and turf field *(available for community use)*

Gym refurbishment with replacement of bleachers

Interior renovations and finishes

Exterior upgrades

Space for hands-on instruction

School No. 3 (grades 3 & 4)

New cooperative learning room

Drainage improvements

Interior renovations and finishes

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Addresses aging buildings

District-wide Infrastructure

Heating & ventilation improvements
(new boilers, air handlers, etc.)

Modernized energy controls

Central air conditioning

Class & hallway floor replacement

Extensive interior door replacement
(Some existing doors and floors date back to original construction)

Better energy efficiency

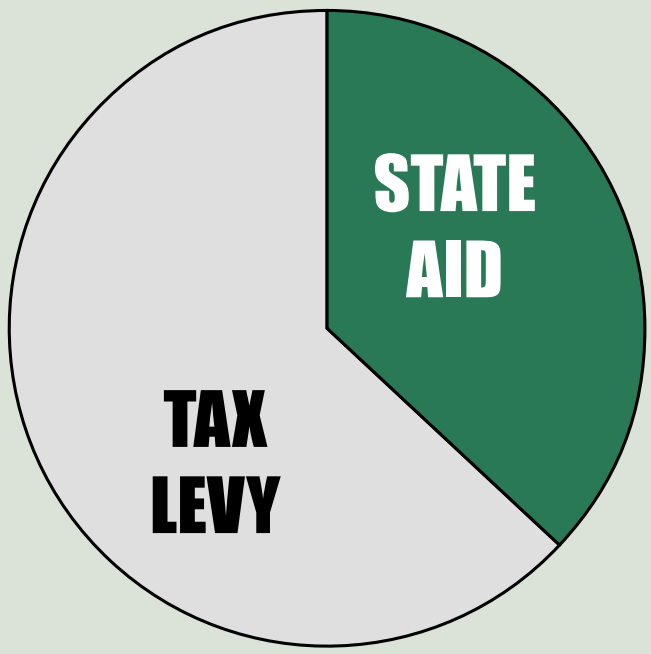
***Top**, leaking boilers at School No. 1;*
***above,** cracked flooring at School No. 1*

State pays 37% of cost

Financial information

Total referendum:	$35.1 million
Paid by state:	$13.2 million
% paid by state:	**37%**

If the referendum is approved, the **average home** in the district (assessment of $314,000) will see an increase of **about $23 per month.**



Questions ? ? Answers ?

When will the work be completed?

If the referendum is approved, the work will be done in phases and be finished by the fall of 2024. Here's the anticipated schedule:

Phase 1 – Construction
School No. 2
Summer 2022 – Fall 2023

School No. 3
Summer 2022 – Spring 2023

School No. 1
Summer 2023 – Fall 2024

Phase 2 – Renovations
School No. 2
Summer 2023

School No. 3
Summer 2023

School No. 1
Summer 2024

How was the improvement plan developed?

The school improvement project has its roots in the district's multi-year strategic plan which was developed collaboratively by community members, parents, teachers, students, board members, and administrators. Those objectives, coupled with the board of education's 2019-2022 goals, provided the foundation for the board's buildings & grounds subcommittee and the education subcommittee to craft the improvement plan.

In the spring, Superintendent Tracey Marinelli met with a dozen community groups and leaders to share the conceptual draft of the plan and hear input.

How will the school improvement plan be paid for?

The proposed work will be paid for through a bond issue. This method allows the district to finance the cost at a very low interest rate and spread out payments over a number of years. This minimizes the annual tax impact to homeowners. The cost of the improvement plan will be spread over 30 years.

What experience does the district's architect have?

The district is working with RSC Architects, an award-winning Hackensack firm that specializes in design for schools and colleges. RSC clients include Passaic Public Schools, Northern Valley Regional School District, Union City Public Schools, and the Bergen County Special Services School District, to name just a few.

What if I cannot vote on December 14?

Mail-in ballots are available through the county clerk's office.

Why wasn't the school improvement plan on the Election Day ballot?

The district did not know the amount of state aid it would receive until mid October. This crucial information was needed for the board of education to determine whether to move forward with the plan. The late notification also did not provide enough time for the resolution to appear on the Election Day ballot.

The New Jersey Department of Education determines the dates when districts may hold votes. The first date after state aid notification is December 14.

Vote Tuesday, Dec. 14

Time: 3 – 8 p.m.
Place: local polling locations

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