

The School District of Fort Atkinson is committed to delivering the quality opportunities and services each student needs to achieve his or her academic and personal potential.

Dear SDFA Families & Friends,

I am hopeful that this newsletter finds you and yours enjoying a great start to 2014. As the school year continues to race by, my attention becomes even more focused on April 1, 2014. That is a day that community residents will make a critical decision that will significantly impact our schools, our community, and our quality of life here in Fort. On April 1, 2014, the School District and its Board of Education will seek community approval to allow the school district to exceed the revenue limit.

As your new Superintendent, my job is to help you and other community members understand the referendum and the question being asked of you so you may make a well-informed decision. In addition to the information contained in this newsletter you will also be able to access information on our website: www.fortschools.org. There will also be a host of upcoming referendum presentations at a variety of school and community events. If you would like to receive referendum information via email or text, please provide us your contact information by following this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X59W5GX>.

The magnitude of this referendum on our community and its children requires your full attention and understanding. A successful referendum will help us maintain educational programs and services that we have come to expect for our children. Strong schools elevate our quality of life and keep our community strong. Thank you in advance for taking the time to stay informed.
 ~ Jeff Zaspel

February 2014

Why Do We Need A Referendum?

The School District is in the last year of a three-year referendum that was passed in 2011. At the end of this school year the District will lose \$694,000 of revenue as the referendum sunsets. That loss of revenue combined with a lower level of financial support from the State creates the financial burden to be addressed by the April 1st referendum. Although the School District is committed to maintaining and strengthening quality educational programs and services for our students, the loss of referendum dollars and the decrease in State funding will not allow us to do so.

What will this do to my taxes?

Equalized Value of Home	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	3-Yr Total Additional Cost
\$100,000	-\$17	-\$1	+\$18	\$0
\$200,000	-\$35	-\$3	+\$37	-\$1
\$300,000	-\$52	-\$4	+\$55	-\$1

It is estimated that there will be a net zero tax impact over the course of the three years of this referendum resulting in no additional tax burden to local homeowners. Due to the financial planning of the District and the prepayment of outstanding debt, it is possible for this referendum to be \$1.75 million without a tax levy increase.

THANK YOU SURVEY RESPONDENTS... RESULTS IN!



Thank you to the 700 plus community members who completed the Community Feedback Survey regarding the upcoming April referendum. The feedback provided was valuable to the Board Members as they made a very important decision that will dramatically impact the future of the School District of Fort Atkinson. At its January 16th meeting, the Fort Atkinson School Board determined the April 1st referendum amount. The ballot will ask District voters to approve a referendum amount of \$1.75 million for a period of three years which would have no estimated impact on property taxes, yet will require the District to make to up to \$339,132 in cuts for the 2014-15 school year.

Board of Education Determines Referendum Amount **NO Property Tax Increase**

- \$ 1.75 Million For Three Years
- No estimated Increase in Property Taxes Over Three Years
- Requires Additional District Cuts

Survey Results: The survey that closed on Monday, January 13, had a total of 723 responses. It asked community members to provide feedback on two community advisory recommendations: Option A (\$1.75 million) and Option B which proposed a referendum of \$1.9 million which would minimally increase property taxes over the next three years. The property taxes on a \$175,000 home would increase an estimated \$20 over the next three years. Option B would also have been for three years and would have required up to \$189,132 in cuts for the 2014-15 school year. The results of the survey are as follows:

- In response to the question regarding how likely the respondent would be to support Option A, 70.6% of respondents said they would be supportive of this referendum, while 29.3% replied they would not support this option.
- In response to the question regarding how likely the respondent would be to support Option B, 68.6% of respondents said they would be support of this option, while 31.5% replied they would not support this referendum.
- When asked if the respondent had a preference of Option A or Option B, 45.4% responded that they would prefer Option B (\$1.9 million), 23.1% replied they would prefer Option A (\$1.75 million), 15.6% said either option was acceptable to them, and 16% said neither option was acceptable.

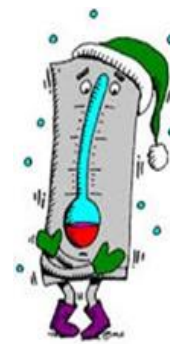
The public was also asked to openly share any thoughts and/or feedback regarding the upcoming referendum with the Board of Education. Some of the themes that emerged from these comments were as follows:

- A \$20 per year tax increase is acceptable if it means fewer cuts to our schools.
- There have been enough cuts to public education and our schools; this referendum is needed to avoid further reductions.
- Option A (\$1.75 million) is the preferable option because it does not raise our taxes.
- The District needs to learn how to live within its budget.
- What are the specific cuts that are going to be made with or without the referendum?
- Why don't we cut all of the "extra" stuff and just teach the basics like math, reading and science?
- Can't the District use the "tools" from Act 10 to balance its budget?

The Board reflected on how multiple survey respondents wanted to know what would be cut if the referendum were unsuccessful. Board members agreed

that they would not be publishing a list of reductions prior to the April 1, 2014 vote. Sentiments were shared regarding how all programs and services are valuable to Fort Atkinson children and help us to meet our mission of providing quality services and opportunities for all students. Board Vice President Rodger Thomann stated that this Board has no desire to put programs and services and their advocates in an adversarial position based on any pending reductions.

The District is working through the comments and developing a questions and answers document to try to address the questions and concerns shared through the survey. This document will likely be available within the coming weeks on the District's website and shared at community engagements in the next couple of months. There will also be an effort to address the main themes of the feedback as the Board meets with the community to share the need for the referendum prior to the April 1 vote.



INCLEMENT WEATHER

It has been quite the winter so far and although we would likely expect to have a snow day or two we have now canceled school for five days, not for snow but for ice and bitter cold temperatures. Here are some answers to the many weather related questions received:

Q: How is the decision made to call off school?

A: Student safety is always the main factor that is considered when making the decision. In doing so, I consult with the bus company and area superintendents. I review weather forecasts, advisories, and warnings. Each situation is unique and is dealt with considering the specific circumstances.

Q: Who is notified of the decision and when?

A: As soon as the decision is made, I get the word out to area television and radio stations. In addition, we post information on our District website and use an automated calling/emailing/texting system to let our families know of the decision to call school. Considering the circumstances and the timing of the decision to cancel school, the automated notices may be targeted at a specific time that is most likely to reach parents. Our goal is to communicate to as many people as we can in the most convenient way and provide families ample notice to make necessary arrangements.

Q: How many snow days do we have?

A: The District allows up to three inclement weather days that do not need to be made up.

Q: Since we have exceeded the three inclement weather days, do we have to make up the days?

A: The answer to this question is complicated and we are currently considering our options. We will let families know as soon as a decision has been determined.

Superintendent's Parent Advisory Meetings

You are invited to attend Superintendent's Parent Advisory meetings hosted by the Superintendent on the second Wednesday of each month.

Meetings are held at the Luther Administration Building in Conference Room A (upstairs) from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. This one hour meeting is a great way to receive answers to your questions and to share your ideas and opinions.

Please consider joining us for a Superintendent's Parent Advisory meeting for the 2013-14 school year. Your input and ideas are very important and valued. Hope to see you there!

F. COURSE SELECTION: Fort Atkinson
A. High School will hold its Course Selection
H. Program on Thursday, February 6th, from
S. 4:00 to 7:30 p.m. and on Tuesday, February
11th, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. in the
gymnasium and commons. It is essential that
students and their parents attend one of the
scheduled Course Selection Programs.

The high school will release students at 1:40 pm on Tuesday, February 11th to accommodate participation in this program.

A letter with all course selection details will be mailed home to each student. This year the Program of Studies book will be posted on the high school web site. If you need a printed copy or cannot attend one of the two days for course selection, please contact Mrs. Miller, Pupil Services Support Staff, at 920-563-7811 Ext. 1143. Parents are encouraged to contact counselors with questions and/or requests for appointments for consultation prior to February 3rd.

OPEN ENROLLMENT APPLICATION WINDOW

February 3 - April 30, 2014

Wisconsin's inter-district open enrollment program allows parents to apply for their children to attend school districts other than the one in which they live.

Important open enrollment dates

- February 3 – April 30, 2014 – Parents must submit applications online or directly to the nonresident school district.
- June 6, 2014 – Nonresident school districts must mail notices of approval or denial.
- June 13, 2014 – Resident districts must notify applicants if the application is denied.
- June 27, 2014 – Parents of accepted applicants must notify the nonresident district if the student will attend the nonresident district in the 2014-15 school year.

For more information, please contact Debbie Kopps, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Zaspel, at koppsd@fortschools.org or Public School Open Enrollment Program, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841. Toll-free: 888-245-2732 or openenrollment@dpi.wi.gov. Website: http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_psctoc

More information is also available on the School District of Fort Atkinson's website at www.fortschools.org

Early Entrance to Kindergarten Screening

The Fort Atkinson School District will hold screening for possible Early Entrance to Kindergarten candidates on April 17th, 2014 at Luther Elementary School.

To be considered for early entrance, your child must reside within the School District of Fort Atkinson boundaries, be intellectually and academically advanced, and not turn five years old by September 1st. School Board Policy requires parents to submit a written request for early entrance consideration by March 1st. Reasons for the request and descriptions of advanced intellectual and academic abilities should be included in the letter. The request for early entrance consideration should be mailed to Dr. Jeff Zaspel, Superintendent of the Schools, 201 Park Street, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact John Peterson, Director of Pupil Services, at (920) 563-7804 or Susan Henn, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, at (920) 568-4478.

For information on Kindergarten Welcome Day, please see back

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF



FORT • ATKINSON

OUR MISSION

The School District of Fort Atkinson is committed to delivering the quality opportunities and services each student needs to achieve his or her academic and personal potential.

IMPORTANT FACTS

1. Students must be five years old by September 1, 2013, and must reside within the School District of Fort Atkinson to attend Kindergarten Orientation at our schools.
2. Each session is scheduled for 1 ½ hours which includes activities for the child and their parent/guardian to participate in together.
3. For those students who will be attending kindergarten at a parochial school next fall, parents should contact that school for direction concerning their registration process. However, we do ask that you inform the School District of Fort Atkinson of your intentions.
4. This orientation is not intended for the district's 4 year old kindergarten. If you have questions regarding 4 year old kindergarten please call 563-7817.
5. Because of enrollment numbers and enrollment trends, it is **extremely important** that you register your child in next year's kindergarten class. Appointments will be made on a **first-come, first-served** basis.
6. If you questions regarding your child's neighborhood school, please contact John Peterson, Director of Pupil Services, at 563-7804.
7. If you know of a child that is 5K eligible that has not received this letter, please encourage them to call as well.

KINDERGARTEN WELCOME DAY

For Parents/Guardians & their 5 Year Old

We welcome you and want you and your child to become more familiar with our 5 year old kindergarten classroom and program.

Please join us in learning more about our learning community at Kindergarten Welcome Day on:

Friday, May 16, 2014

(Registration Between April 7th – April 17th)

To best meet the scheduling needs of our families as well as to assure we have opportunity to get to know you and your child, each of our elementary schools will hold four welcome sessions:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
8:00 AM	9:45 AM	12:00 PM	1:45 PM

Registration for our 5K Welcome Day will take place between April 7th and April 17th. You can register your child for a session on May 16th one of two ways during this registration window:

1. Register Online at www.fortschools.org. There will be a link on the main page to register your child at their neighborhood school.
2. Register by phone at your child's neighborhood school:

Barrie Elementary	563-7817
Luther Elementary	563-7828
Purdy Elementary	563-7822
Rockwell Elementary	563-7818

*We look forward to seeing you at
Kindergarten Welcome Day on
Friday, May 16th!*

Visit us online at www.fortschools.org