



CARDINAL STRONG

*You spoke. We listened.
Levy for Learning. Bond for Buildings.
Vote Nov. 5.*

2024 REFERENDUM GUIDE



ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, NOV. 5.

Make a Plan – Vote on or before Election Day. Every vote counts!

Our Mission

Lewiston-Altura Public Schools is a mission-driven PreK-12 school district where we strive “To Build a Caring, Adaptable, Respectful, Determined, Successful Community of Learners”.

GO CARDS.

Our 2023-2028 Strategic Plan focuses our work on five strategic priorities with supporting goals to help us achieve our mission. We align policies and resources to these strategies and goals to achieve our mission.

We have made great progress towards achieving the goals outlined in the strategic plan. The operating Levy for Learning and Bond for Buildings referendum proposal before voters in the General Election on November 5, will propel us forward to further achieve our goals in the areas of Finance and Facilities.

2023-2028 Strategic Plan Priorities



Student Success. Provide all students the education they need for success: academically, socially, and emotionally.



Effective Staffing. Hire, maintain, train, and support staff to be as effective as possible.



Finance. Be financially healthy and sustainable.



Facilities. Have facilities that are safe, modern, and conducive to 21st century education.



Community Engagement. Engage with parents, community members, and business members.



Our Strengths

Learning Starts Early

Early Childhood, Preschool, and Cardinal Club programs offer play-based learning aligned with state standards, preparing our youngest students for kindergarten success.

Student Success

The district continues to work on action steps to meet their student success goals. School leaders and teachers are aligning instruction and assessments to academic standards to ensure student success.

Rigorous High School Classes

High school students can take career-focused and college-prep courses with concurrent enrollment allowing them to earn college credits while attending Lewiston-Altura High School.

Graduation Rates Soar

Graduation rates for Lewiston-Altura students are above state averages and many of our neighboring school districts. Most students engage in post-secondary education.



You spoke. We listened.

Dear Lewiston & Altura Residents,

For over six months, the school board engaged with the community through an online survey and meetings, following the November 2023 referendum. Feedback revealed concerns about the proposal's cost and opposition to a new performance space, replacement gym, and bus garage. Additionally, community members stressed the importance of building trust, increasing transparency, and improving financial management. We're addressing these concerns.

In November 2024, we will ask voters to consider an operating Levy for Learning and a Bond for Buildings. This new bond request is \$19 million less than the previous proposal, focusing only on essential building needs.

The operating Levy for Learning request remains the same as last year. In response to your feedback, we made budget adjustments totaling \$771,000 through cuts and fee increases. The levy supports teachers, staff, curriculum, and extracurriculars. However, if approved, it will only be a temporary solution; further adjustments will be needed due to declining enrollment and inflation.

Our community is #CardinalStrong. The next generation needs better facilities, excellent instruction, and curriculum aligned to state standards to succeed and continue this tradition.

Learn more at www.cardinalstrong.net and vote by November 5, 2024.

- Lewiston-Altura School Board

What's on the Ballot?

Lewiston-Altura Public Schools is facing significant budget challenges and facilities needs that far exceed annual funding. On July 8, the School Board unanimously agreed to place a two-question ballot before voters in the Nov. 5 General Election:

Question #1: Levy for Learning

\$760/student for 10 years to support classroom learning, including:

- Teachers and Staff
- Curriculum and Classroom Supplies
- Extracurricular Activities

Question #2: Bond for Buildings

\$19.95 million (including bond costs)

- Classroom Improvements
- Mechanical Systems and Finishes Upgrades
- Safety and Security Improvements

Important Note: The \$760/student operating levy is not an individual tax. The average Lewiston-Altura homeowner, with a \$200,000 home will only pay an additional \$18/month or \$216/annually.

Scan the QR-code to the right to determine the tax impact on your property.



Operating Needs

The school district is facing persistent operating budget challenges due to declining enrollment, lack of sufficient state/federal funding to meet the rising costs of inflation, and facilities that continue to age and have increased maintenance needs.

Examples of Operating Budget Areas:

- Curriculum & Instruction materials
- Student Educational Activities & Experiences
- Teacher & Staff Salaries
- Maintenance Supplies
- Transportation

While the operating levy will help the budget deficit, future adjustments will still be necessary for the reasons listed above. Long-term budget relief is needed for all public-school systems to relieve this burden on local taxpayers.



Did You Know?



How is this referendum different from last year?

We listened and we heard you.

Over six months, the school board engaged with community members through a post-referendum survey and meetings. Feedback indicated that the November 2023 proposal was too costly and lacked support for a new performance space, replacement gym, and bus garage. The community also emphasized the need for the school district to build trust, increase transparency, and improve financial management. In response, we return with a Levy for Learning to support academic success for all learners. And the Bond for Buildings is \$19 million less than the previous proposal.

Operating Solution: Levy for Learning

Operating Levy Referendum for \$760/student.

- Renew \$52/student operating levy
- Increase operating levy by \$708/student
- Levy for 10 years; including inflation

Increasing the levy will allow the District to continue to provide quality education, attract and retain quality teachers and staff, maintain current opportunities for students, and reduce future budget cuts.

Further budget reductions & fee increases will be needed annually even with a successful levy referendum, due to declining enrollment and state funding that has not kept pace with inflation.

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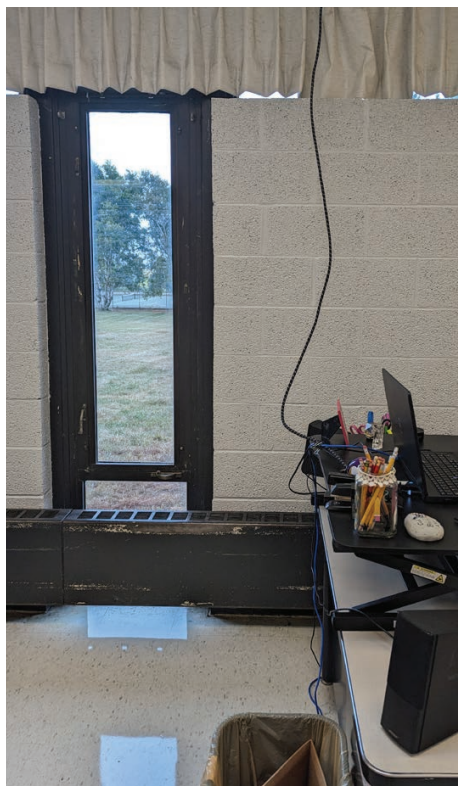


Facility Needs

It has been 28 years since voters last approved school facility updates through a bond referendum. Since then, the district has relied solely on annual long-term facility maintenance funds to make essential repairs, which has limited the ability to address significant needs in aging buildings.

Many classrooms, including high school science labs, band rooms, and career and technical education spaces, are outdated. These spaces lack the infrastructure required for modern equipment, student collaboration areas, and flexible learning environments critical to today's educational programs.

This inadequate infrastructure restricts hands-on learning, making it harder for students to collaborate effectively and prepare for the future workforce. The need for facility upgrades is urgent as the current learning spaces fall behind modern technological and educational standards, limiting the district's ability to support students' success. Updating these facilities will provide an environment that better meets the demands of modern education and supports more engaging, innovative teaching methods for all students.



Schools from 1966 weren't built with the wiring to meet today's tech demands.



1966 High School science labs equipment and furnishings are worn and need replacement.



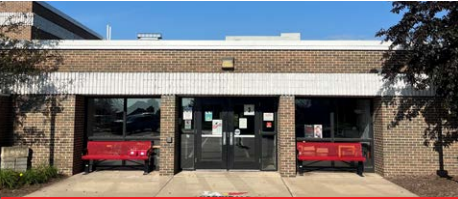
Elementary teachers store materials to the ceiling to create a sound barrier between classrooms and hallways.



Aged masonry on both buildings needs repair due to water infiltration.



The 1996 high school bleachers are inadequate and unsafe.



Both school entrances need updating to route visitors through the main office, ensuring a warm welcome and a safe environment.



Did You Know?



When was the last bond referendum to update school buildings?

The last successful bond referendum was 28 years ago, in 1996. It brought some important upgrades to the buildings.

At the high school, it included:

- new classrooms
- the addition of a C-gym
- updated junior high locker rooms, and
- a weight room.

At the elementary school, there was:

- a two-story addition featuring four classrooms and
- storage space below.

Facility Solution: Bond for Buildings

Bond Referendum for \$19.95 million (including bond costs)

After gathering input from a scientific survey, community engagement meetings and working with a community taskforce to study the needs and possible solutions, the school board selected a list of basic needs to be addressed in this referendum:

Classroom Upgrades

General classrooms, science labs, and art spaces are undersized and outdated. They lack systems to support existing equipment and technologies. Student collaboration and flexible learning spaces are also needed for today's learning.

Mechanical Systems & Finishes Upgrades

The high school was built in 1965 and the elementary school in 1974. Most of the building systems and finishes are from the original construction, have reached the end of their service life, and need replacement.

Safety & Security Improvements

The school entrances need updates to route visitors through the main office to ensure a warm welcome to the schools and safe learning environment for students and staff. Parking lots at both schools need a redesign to ensure student safety and improve traffic flow for parents and buses.

Proposed Projects — Elementary School



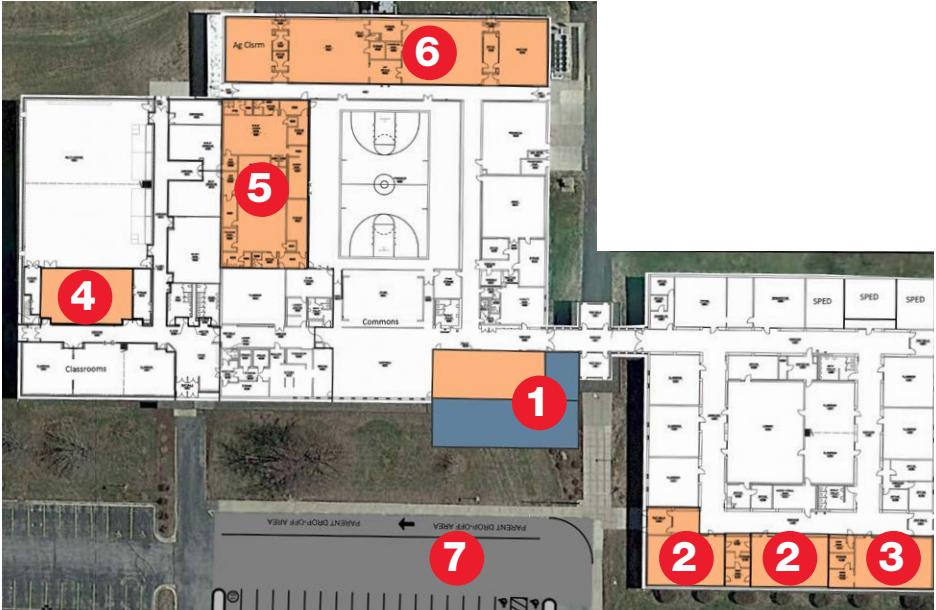
LEGEND

- 1 Secure entry and office update
- 2 Larger kindergarten rooms
- 3 Repurpose shower area as family restroom
- 4 Increase restroom capacity
- 5 Separate bus and parent drop-off

- Plumbing
- Tuckpointing
- Windows replacements
- Door and hardware upgrades
- Gym equipment and flooring upgrades
- Parent Bus Drop-off site improvements
- New playground equipment
- Remodeled office space
- A small addition to create a secured entry
- Remodel existing space into a family restroom
- Classroom casework and wall upgrades to address sound issues
- Remodeling of existing space to create larger kindergarten rooms
- Remodeling of group restrooms to increase capacity and meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements

Facility Solution: Bond for Buildings

Proposed Projects – High School



LEGEND

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Secure entry and main office | 5 Locker room improvements |
| 2 Science lab improvements | 6 Shop/Ag/Tech Ed/Shops improvements |
| 3 Art room improvements | 7 Separate bus and parent drop-off |
| 4 Student flex space | |

- Fire alarm system replacement
- Plumbing
- Truckpointing
- Roofing Replacements
- Windows replacements
- Door and hardware upgrades
- Classroom casework replacements
- Main Gym flooring replacement
- New C-Gym bleachers
- An addition to create a secured entry and provide adequate office space
- Renovations to update the science and art classrooms
- Renovations to update the locker rooms
- Update the existing Tech Ed/Shops spaces
- New bus drop-off area

Strong Schools. Strong Communities.

When we invest in our schools, we're investing in the future of our communities. The proposed referendum directly supports improvements that will benefit everyone, now and for years to come:

- **Invest in the Future:** Strong, well-maintained schools attract families, boost local business, and enhance property values, contributing to the overall vitality of the community.
- **Support Student Success:** Updated facilities with modern technology ensure that all students can learn in safe, efficient environments that foster creativity and growth.
- **Strengthen the Workforce:** High-quality education prepares students with the skills they need to contribute meaningfully to the local economy and workforce.



By supporting this referendum, you're not just funding school improvements—you're investing in the future of our communities. A commitment to our schools today will help ensure a stronger, more vibrant tomorrow, where our students thrive, and our communities grow. Strong schools truly mean strong, prosperous communities for everyone.



The Cost

The median, or average, home value in Lewiston-Altura Public Schools for taxes payable in 2024 is \$230,970.

Question #1: Levy for Learning

Operating Levy

- Cost: \$760/student for 10 years
- Tax Impact on a \$200,000 home: \$18.00/month or \$216/year
- Tax Impact on a \$250,000 home: \$22.50/month or \$270/year

Question #2: Bond for Buildings

Bond Referendum

- Cost: \$19.95 million over 20 years
- Tax Impact on a \$200,000 home: \$22.67/month or \$272/year
- Tax Impact on a \$250,000 home: \$30.08/month or \$361/year

Important Note: The \$760/student operating levy is not an individual tax. The average Lewiston-Altura homeowner, with a \$200,000 home will only pay an additional \$18/month or \$216/annually. Scan the QR-code below to determine the tax impact on your property.

Tax Calculations

If both questions are approved, property taxes would increase:

- \$40.67/month or \$488/year on a \$200,000 home
- \$52.58/month or \$631/year on a \$250,000 home



Calculate your
tax impact
here!

70% CREDIT

Tax Credit for Agricultural Landowners

The School Building Bond Agricultural Tax Credit (Ag2School) is a 70% tax break on the cost of existing, proposed, and future school construction debt and it is automatically applied to your property tax bill.

**62% OF LEWISTON-ALTURA RESIDENTS
QUALIFY FOR THIS CREDIT.**

Did You Know?

Lewiston-Altura Public Schools See Gains in MCAs

Lewiston-Altura Public Schools saw student achievement gains in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment tests (MCAs) that help districts measure student progress.

- Scores climb in Reading, Math and Science.
- Attendance rates are approximately 10 percent above the state average.
- Graduation rates are above the state average again this year.

The operating Levy for Learning is crucial to providing teachers, staff, curriculum and learning materials to continue student success.



Why does the school district need more operating funds?

1. To address the budget deficit caused by rising costs, declining enrollment, and state funding that has not kept pace with inflation.
2. To pay for curriculum and instruction, programs, and activities to support student success.

The school district is asking for an operating levy renewal and increase totaling \$760/pupil unit in the Nov. 5 General Election.

The district's current operating levy – which expires next fiscal year – is currently \$52/pupil unit while the state average for rural MN is \$850/pupil unit.


The Ballot

VOTING REMINDER – **TURN YOUR BALLOT OVER TO VOTE FOR THE LEVY FOR LEARNING AND BOND FOR BUILDINGS ON THE BACK OF THE BALLOT!**

Special Election Ballot

Independent School District No. 857
(Lewiston-Altura Public Schools)

November 5, 2024

Instructions to Voters:
To vote, completely fill in the oval(s) next to your choice(s) like this: 

To vote for a question, fill in the oval next to the word "Yes" on that question.
To vote against a question, fill in the oval next to the word "No" on that question.

School District Question 1
Revoking Existing Referendum Revenue Authorization;
Approving New Authorization

The school board of Independent School District No. 857 (Lewiston-Altura Public Schools) has proposed to revoke the school district's existing referendum revenue authorization of \$51.92 per pupil and to replace that authorization with a new authorization of \$760 per pupil. The proposed referendum revenue authorization would be applicable for ten years, beginning with taxes payable in 2025, and increase each year by the rate of inflation beginning with taxes payable in 2026, unless otherwise revoked or reduced as provided by law.

Yes Shall the increase in the revenue proposed by the school board of Independent School District No. 857 be approved?

No

BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

School District Question 2
Approval of School District Bond Issue

Yes Shall the school board of Independent School District No. 857 (Lewiston-Altura Public Schools) be authorized to issue its general obligation school building bonds in an amount not to exceed \$19,950,000 to provide funds for the acquisition and betterment of school sites and facilities at the Elementary School and High School, including the creation of secure entrances; the construction of traffic flow improvements; renovations and upgrades to create larger kindergarten classrooms, flexible learning spaces, and improved career and technical education (CTE), science and art classroom spaces; remodeling and upgrades to create Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible restrooms and improved locker rooms; and the completion of various deferred maintenance projects at school sites and facilities?

No

BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

Did You Know?



Why not address facility needs a little at a time?

The proposed plan addresses the district's most pressing facility needs while minimizing taxpayer burden. Tackling projects in phases would slow progress and increase costs due to inflation and repetitive work.

By addressing all needs together, the district can capitalize on economies of scale, reduce mobilization fees, and avoid duplicate tasks like ceiling removal for upgrades.

This efficient approach ensures high-priority projects are completed in a cost-effective manner, preventing disruptions and minimizing long-term expenses for taxpayers while enhancing educational spaces for students and staff.

What happens if the operating levy and bond questions both fail?

The district needs both questions to pass for financial stability and to avoid statutory operating debt by fiscal year 2028. The operating levy is critical to maintaining existing programs. If it fails, significant cuts will be necessary across programs, staff, athletics, activities, and administration.

Additionally, since annual funding for building needs is limited, emergency improvements must come from existing revenue, negatively impacting the operating budget. The district currently faces over \$700,000 in essential roofing repairs. With the roofs being 20-27 years old, the district has been warned that it risks losing insurance coverage, resulting in higher premiums if renewal is denied.



Voting Information

In Minnesota, you can register at your polling place on Election Day.

Early Voting Began September 20!

You can cast your votes in the November 5, 2024, General election by voting through absentee ballot, either in person or by mail beginning September 20.

Early Voting in Person

Early voting will take place at the Winona County Office Building located at 202 West 3rd Street, Winona, MN, M-F 8 a.m.-4 p.m. on regular business days.

EXTENDED HOURS FOR EARLY VOTING

Saturday, October 26 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29 until 7 p.m.

Saturday, November 2 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sunday, November 3 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Monday, November 4 until 7 p.m.

Absentee Voting by Mail

Early voting for the General Election starts September 20. You can vote early with an absentee ballot. Process for mail-in ballots:

- Request your mail-in ballot with a mail ballot application.
- Fill out the application completely.
- Submit the request to your local election office. (Minnesota Secretary of State – Find County Election Office)
- Election official: Chelsie Wilbright
- General phone: 507-457-8830
- Website: <https://www.co.winona.mn.us/168/Auditor-Treasurer>



Election Day Voting

Polls are open Tuesday, November 5 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Vote at your regular polling location.

Scan the QR code to
pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us
to find your polling place.



Lewiston-Altura Public Schools
100 County Road 25
Lewiston, MN 55952

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- Safety and Security Improvements

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Lewiston, MN
55952
Permit No. 5



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