



Building a Better Future Bond/Finance Campaign

**2023 National School Public Relations Association
Communication Awards**



Kay Villella, APR, Director, School/Community Relations
763-391-7002 | VillellaK@district279.org

Osseo Area Schools
11200 93rd Ave. N
Maple Grove, MN 55369

ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools
PreK-12 District | 20,400 students
Communications Department
(4 Team Members)



About Osseo Area Schools

In November 2022, Osseo Area Schools, Minnesota's fifth-largest district with over 20,400 students, successfully passed a two-question referendum for increasing both operating and technology revenue despite a harsh tax climate.

The operating levy funds 12% of day-to-day learning expenses and enhances critical classroom supports. The technology levy increased funding for classroom technology, cybersecurity, and tech support staff while prioritizing schools safety and digital learning spaces.

The ***Building a Better Future*** referendum campaign aligned with the district's ***new strategic plan***. Primary quantitative and qualitative research informed campaign goals, objectives, timelines, strategies, tactics, and key messages. The research and objectives provided the foundation for a strong evaluation plan.

Passing both referendum questions was the overarching goal. During a noisy statewide election, the district's campaign objectives included raising awareness and motivating target audiences to vote on or by Nov. 8, 2022. Skillful implementation saturated communication channels.

Objectives for both internal and external audiences:

- 95% of staff will understand their role in the referendum by late spring and August.
- 95% of staff will be able to share basic information about the referendum by late spring and August.
- 100% of schools/departments/programs participate in referendum training, including creating a tailored communication plan by late spring and August.
- 70% of community members will vote.
- 80% of parents/caregivers will be aware of the referendum and vote.
- 90% of active voters will know where and how to vote on the referendum.

The district had a varied history of passing tax initiatives, with only 5 out of the last 12 questions gaining approval. The communications plan used by Osseo Area Schools in this election was effective in passing these referendum levies during a busy election season. (The governor and all state offices, U.S. House, local legislators, and a city proposal were also on the crowded ballot).

Voters approved both questions — question 1 by 54.42% and question 2 by 50.20%.

With success from this campaign, a Phase 2 bond referendum campaign will kick off in 2023. The evaluation of this campaign, along with another ***community survey*** will provide data to inform the next campaign.





Research

A metropolitan area district, Osseo Area Schools (MN) is a highly respected public school district serving eight municipalities.

The district relies on voter-approved operating and technology levies (referendum funding) for 15% of the district's budget. The levies expire in 2024, unless renewed by voters. To support rising costs, the district is seeking to renew and increase both levies (legally required language: revoke and replace). The total amount at stake is \$49 million per year for 10 years.

The Osseo Area School Board unanimously approved the Building a Better Future referendum on March 22, 2022, as recommended by two community-based committees — the Committee on Financial Involvement School-Community Accountability Liaisons (FISCAL) and the District Technology Advisory Committee (DTAC).

The student body is diverse: 38.5% white, 26.6% Black, 16% Asian, 9.6% Hispanic or Latino, 6.9% two or more races, and 2.3% American Indian; 48.1% of students are economically disadvantaged, 1.4% are experiencing homelessness, and 11.6% are English Language Learners. The district translates all communication into five languages.

Based on district demographics and translation requirements, all campaign messages would be concise, using everyday language.

A January 2022, random-sample formal **community survey** assessed public opinion concerning the proposed two levy questions.

- An analysis revealed that district support and public opinion were negatively impacted by the pandemic, online learning and classroom masking policies.
- Positive ratings of the school board, district administration, school principals and teachers had shifted downward, particularly in intensity, but remained within the top quartile of metropolitan area suburban school districts.
- The district's financial management was viewed favorably, so mismanagement was not an issue.
- The survey indicated voters would likely support both the operating levy and the capital projects levy for technology.
- Despite a chaotic environment, the district would begin a referendum campaign in its strongest position in decades.

Demographic and voter data:

- District residential population: 160,000
- Statewide voter turnout: typically 65%
- Hennepin County voter turnout: typically 77%
- Residents with school-age children: 33%
- Recent surveys showed 99 percent of parents hold a favorable view of Osseo Area Schools' exceptional teachers
- 98% of parents trust the district to prioritize the best interests of their children.
- 96% of parents are proud of Osseo Area Schools and would recommend the district to others.



Programming enhancements had a higher priority than class size reductions. Programs geared toward meeting the learning needs of "struggling" and "average" students were very popular with residents. Additionally, increased support for students' social, emotional and mental health needs was a priority.

A higher-than-average voter turnout was anticipated due to a busy election, season which included the governor, all state offices, the U.S. House, all local legislators, a city initiative, and three school board seats.

- Information targeted to the following groups could yield even larger support and voter turnout:
 - Residents under 35 years old
 - Households with preschoolers and toddlers
 - Households with current Osseo Area Schools students (excluding alum parents who opposed the levies)
 - Renters
 - Democrats and Independents
 - Political moderates and liberals
 - African-American households
 - Women
 - Households in the eastern part of the district were more supportive than the western part.



Issues monitoring:

- The **City of Maple Grove would also be requesting a half-cent sales tax** (around \$3.20/month) for a community center upgrade.
- More than 41% of the district residents lived in the City of Maple Grove and would see three tax increase questions on their ballot.
- Teacher contract negotiations were unresolved, and teachers were working under an expired contract.

Planning

Campaign planning began almost a year before election day. The district worked with Barbara Nicol PR on research and planning and CEL Marketing PR Design to complete design/creative, website, and digital communications strategies. Captivate Media was a video partner on the project. Detailed plans allowed the communications team to engage leaders and key communicators across the district in a clear, concise and consistent campaign.

The **Building a Better Future campaign** would be a two-phase approach:

- **Phase 1 (2022 Election):** operating and technology levies to address learning needs
- **Phase 2 (2023 Election):** bond levy to address facilities needs

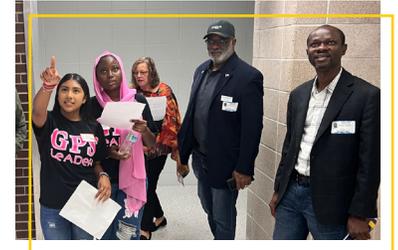
Campaign Goals:

- Ensure an informed voting public by providing timely, relevant and easily accessible information
- Equip parents, staff, and other key stakeholders to be trusted ambassadors of referendum information to other voters
- Minimize “surprised” voters by sharing information before the noisy fall election season
- Encourage participation in the election by parents, staff, and key district stakeholders

- Minimize misinformation and immediately correct and clarify any
- Comply with all legal requirements for holding and communicating about a referendum
- Build pride in and support for the district, staff, and scholars/students

Target audiences:

- Staff
- Parents/caregivers and community education participants
- Students aged 18+
- Greater community voters, elected officials and businesses



Objectives for each audience were:

- Staff
 - 95% of staff members understand their role for the referendum by late spring and August.
 - 95% of staff members will be able to share basic information about the referendum by late spring and August.
 - 100% of schools/departments/programs participate in referendum training, including creating a tailored site communication plan by late spring and August.
- Parents/caregivers and community education participants
 - 90% of parents/caregivers will know where they vote by Nov. 8.
 - 90% of parents/caregivers will be aware of the referendum by Nov. 8.
 - 80% of parents/caregivers will vote on Nov. 8. (Note: always and often combine to 75%)
- Students aged 18+
 - 60% of students 18+ will know where they vote by Nov. 8
 - 60% of students 18+ will be aware of the referendum by Nov. 8.
 - 50% of students 18+ will vote on Nov. 8
- Greater community, including elected officials and businesses
 - 80% of community members will know where they vote by Nov. 8.
 - 80% of community members will be aware of the referendum by Nov. 8.
 - 70% of community members will vote on Nov. 8. (Note: always and often voters combine to 65%)

Communication Strategies

To meet their objectives, Osseo Area schools needed clear, concise messaging that was easily translated and quick to respond any misinformation. Several communications strategies were deployed:

- Clear, concise information in everyday language. Provide additional details on the district website.
- Engage school-based teams for local impact messaging.
- Maximize the use of key communicators' social media or blogs.
- Utilize one-to-one communication whenever possible.
- Focus on rapid response to questions, rumors, and misinformation.



- Ensure staff understand “what’s in it for them” and the logical consequences of failure.
 - Keep the focus on local impact and local benefit — avoid state or national issues.
 - Ensure two-way communications

Finally, teachers at all levels were supported with civics and social studies lessons on voting. Students who appreciate the value of their vote can grow into strong community stewards in the future.

Key Messages

- For the first time in nearly a decade, the community is being asked to reinvest in district schools to maintain services and address growing needs.
- Growing needs include safety and security, academic interventions, digital learning spaces, and social-emotional supports.
- These levies are part of a multi-year plan called *Building a Better Future*. Phase I will focus on learning and technology needs via the operating and capital projects levies. Phase II will focus on facility needs via a bond. The bond will be presented to voters in the next few years after adequate research has been completed.
- Two-thirds of residents think our schools are a good investment and recognize the importance of supporting that investment with local tax dollars.
- 83% of residents think it is very important or absolutely essential for our students to be able to effectively use computers and other technology.
- Voters will be asked to consider increasing both the operating and technology levies on the Nov. 8, 2022 ballot. If both requests are approved by voters, the tax increase for the average homeowner (\$250,000 value home) would be about \$9 per month.

Implementation

In the spring and fall of 2022, Osseo Area Schools implemented referendum training for each school and program site to ensure internal stakeholders understood and could speak the referendum messaging. Each site received a **toolkit** with messaging, marketing materials and graphics and additionally received weekly emails with tools, tips, and updates.

To ensure two-way communication, the district used dedicated email and phone hotlines, a staff-only option for internal questions and concerns, ThoughtExchange, and Blackboard mass notifications tools.

The **informational campaign** launched on April 4, 2022 through the end of the school year. A second push resumed the third week of August 2022, immediately preceding the new school year. Early voting began on September 23, 2022, and ended on election day, November 8, 2022. The campaign launched in five languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, Vietnamese and Somali.

Implementation of the campaign involved senior district leaders (superintendent, finance, legal counsel and communications), community relations, publications, translators, and building level teams across the district.

Tactics

The following tactics were implemented to reach the goals, objectives, and strategies. Tactics were shared districtwide, schools and programs could easily share information via their communication channels.

- **District Website:** district279.org/BetterFuture included hero images/videos, articles, pop-ups, and FAQs. *Building a Better Future* microsite was linked site-wide, via school and program pages. Website content was translated.
- **Informational Videos in multiple languages**
 - ***Building a Better Future***
 - ***The Future is in Our Classrooms*** Series
 - ***Connecting with fifth grade teacher Paola Morantes-Villalobos***
 - ***Connecting with first grade teacher Bryan Bjorlin***
 - ***Connecting with high school teacher Sarah Meaghan Eiler***
 - Six community meetings (recorded for rebroadcast)
 - ***April 19, 2022***
 - ***May 3, 2022***
 - ***May 17, 2022***
 - ***September 20, 2022***
 - ***October 4, 2022***
 - ***October 18, 2022***
 - Get Out the Vote
 - ***Get Out and Vote!***
 - ***Early Voting 2022***
- **Social Media:** Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn were used to disseminate messaging in the **Spring of 2022** and **Fall of 2022**. #BetterFuture
- **Flyers and handouts** that include an overview, tax impact, operating focus, technology focus, logical consequences, and early voting info. Both detailed and at-a-glance versions were shared with schools and programs, including FACE and Community Education, and shared online and with presentation groups as well.
- **Staff badges** were distributed with talking points: one side with key messages, the other side with a QR code to the main campaign website to make information readily available if they were asked questions.
- **Electronic displays** such as the outdoor sign at the Osseo Area Schools Educational Service Center, and smaller billboards and electronic signs in the City of Osseo, the Maple Grove Community Center, and the Brooklyn Park Community Center.
- **Yard signs** that build pride placed on school properties next to busier roadways.





Evaluation

Both referendum questions passed. Question 1, the operating levy, passed at 54.42% with 58,416 votes cast. Question 2, the technology levy, passed at 50.20%.

While the ultimate measure of success of the Building a Better Future campaign was the successful passing of two questions, evaluation of the other objectives will inform a 2023 bond levy to address facility needs.

Internal and external stakeholders report the communication tactics were effective in informing the community about the Building a Better Future campaign and district needs. Most importantly, community awareness of the student needs was high.

Gaining approval of approximately \$500 million in local funding to support student learning, this informational campaign yielded a positive return on investment, at a cost of <.05% of revenue approved.

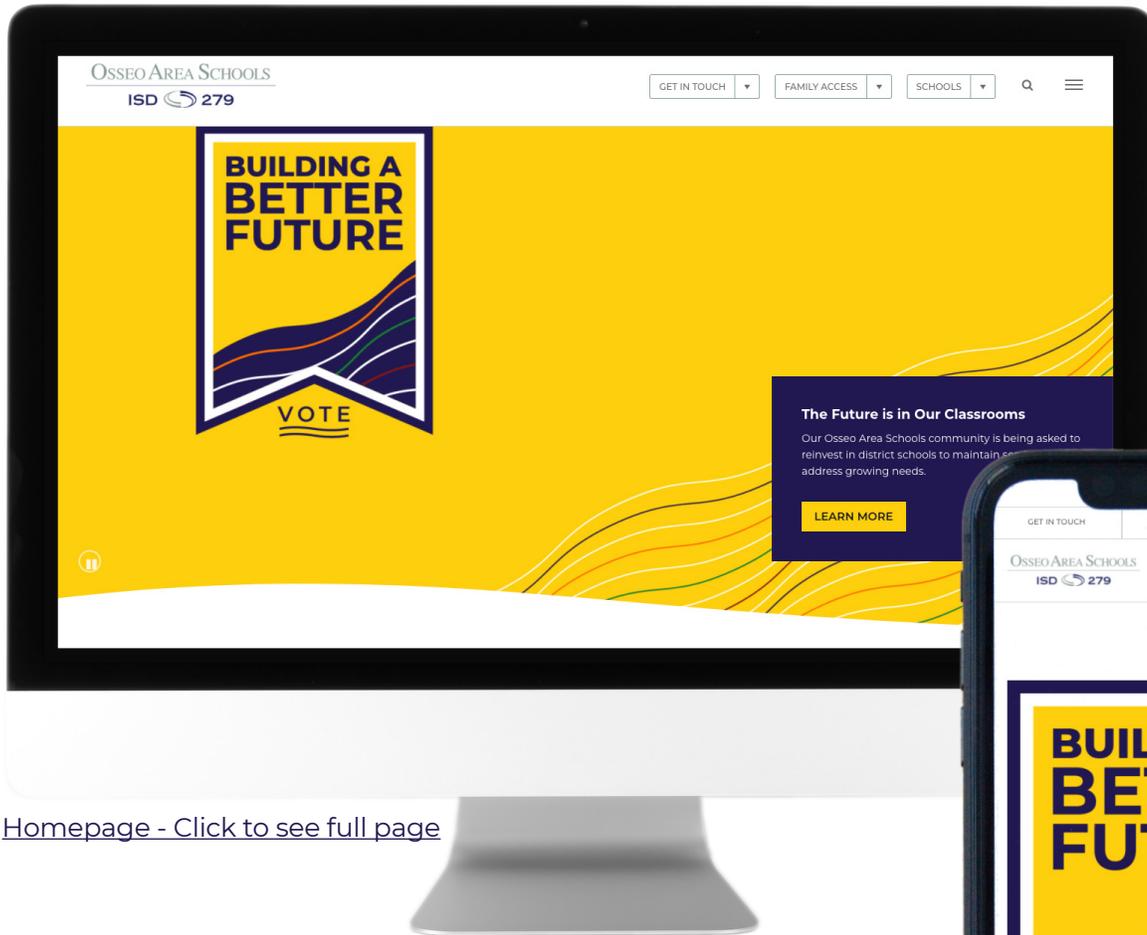
- 20 weeks of district e-news messaging to approximately 57,000 parent and community subscribers and 3,500 staff subscribers. Click rates were highest at the start of both informational campaigns (April and August).
- 22,883 page views of district279.org/BetterFuture with a big spike in viewership the last two weeks before the election – thousands compared to hundreds.
- Social media reach to thousands of residents
 - Facebook posts on the district account: 45,364 people reached
 - Facebook ads on the district account: 34,469 people reached
- 10,999 video views directly on YouTube with additional views across social media
- Direct mail sent to 66,552 residences and property owners
- 60 referendum presentations given by the District Referendum Team
- ThoughtExchange had 60 active participants during informational meetings
- Flyers distributed to 40+ apartments, senior residences, and community sites
- Info booths at a dozen community events (apartments, farmers markets and other)
- Hotlines received 32 emails and 15 phone calls. We would consider this to be relatively quiet. Most of our referendum teams responded similarly, saying they received between 0 and 15 questions from the start of the first informational campaign in the spring. The lack of activity across the hotlines implies communication was clear and understandable.

Voter Participation

Note: 93,971 registered voters as of July 2022

- Q1: 58,416 voters on the operating levy question (62% turnout)
- Q2: 55,547 voters on the technology levy question (59% turnout)
- This election had 7,233 more voters than the last similar election (2002).
- The registered voter list from the Minnesota Secretary of State's office was compared with the district's number of parents/caregivers and staff residing in the district.

Mobile and Desktop Pages

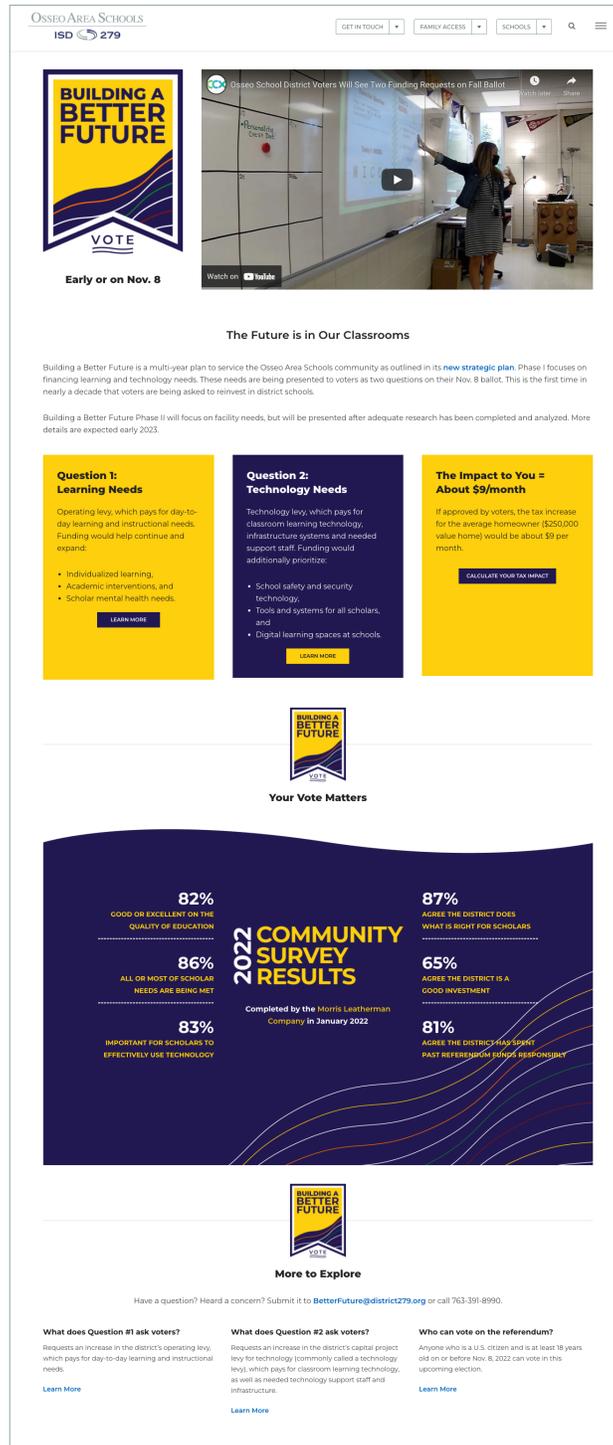


[Homepage - Click to see full page](#)



[Referendum Landing Page - Click to scroll full size](#)

Landing Page



The screenshot shows the website's landing page for the 'Building a Better Future' campaign. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'GET IN TOUCH', 'FAMILY ACCESS', and 'SCHOOLS' menus. The main content area features a large banner with the 'BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE' logo and a 'VOTE' button, with the text 'Early or on Nov. 8'. Below this is a video player showing a woman presenting in a classroom. The central text reads 'The Future is in Our Classrooms' and explains the 'Building a Better Future' multi-year plan, focusing on financing learning and technology needs. Three key messages are highlighted in colored boxes: 'Question 1: Learning Needs' (Operating levy), 'Question 2: Technology Needs' (Technology levy), and 'The Impact to You = About \$9/month' (tax increase). A '2022 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS' section displays statistics: 82% for quality of education, 86% for scholar needs, 83% for technology use, 87% for district investment, 65% for good investment, and 81% for past referendum responsibility. The page concludes with a 'More to Explore' section and contact information.

[Click to see full size](#)

Informational Videos

[Building a Better Future:](#)
[Know the facts on the district's learning](#)
[and technology needs](#)

[The Future is in our Classrooms –](#)
[Connecting with Fifth Grade Teacher](#)
[Paola Morantes-Villalobos](#)

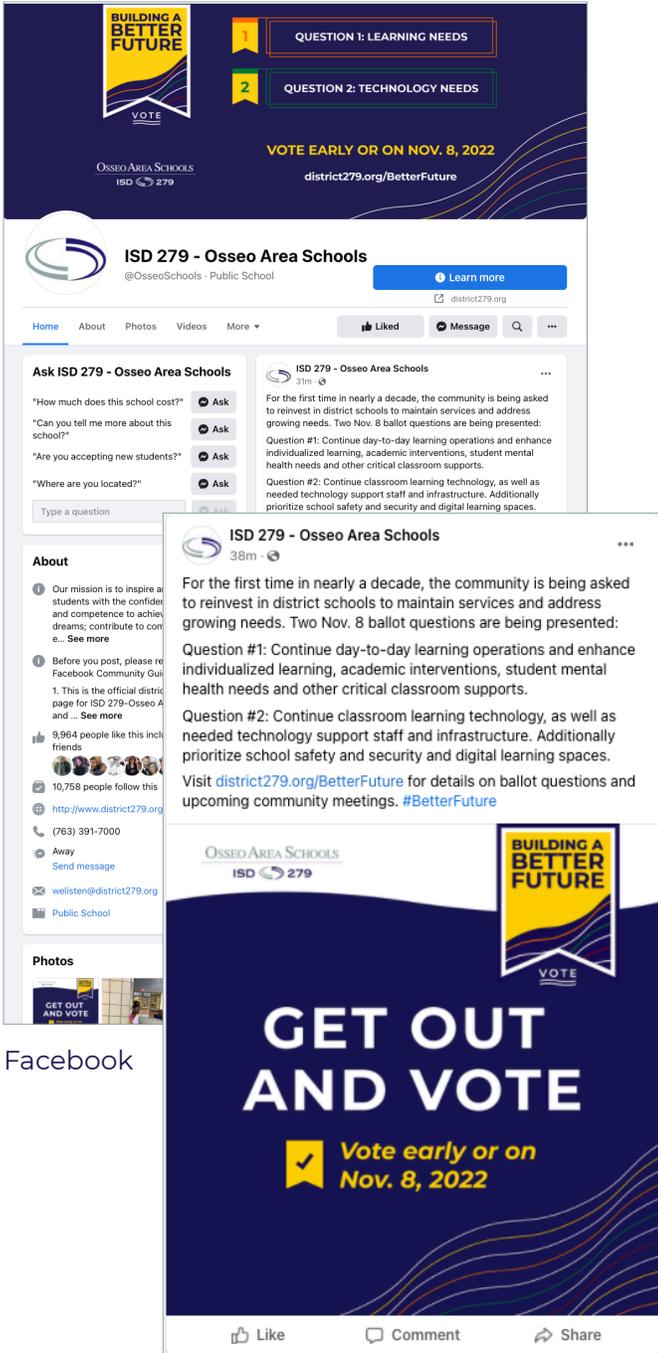
[Building a Better Future:](#)
[Question 1 Learning Needs](#)

[Building a Better Future:](#)
[Question 2 Technology Needs](#)

[Get Out and Vote](#)

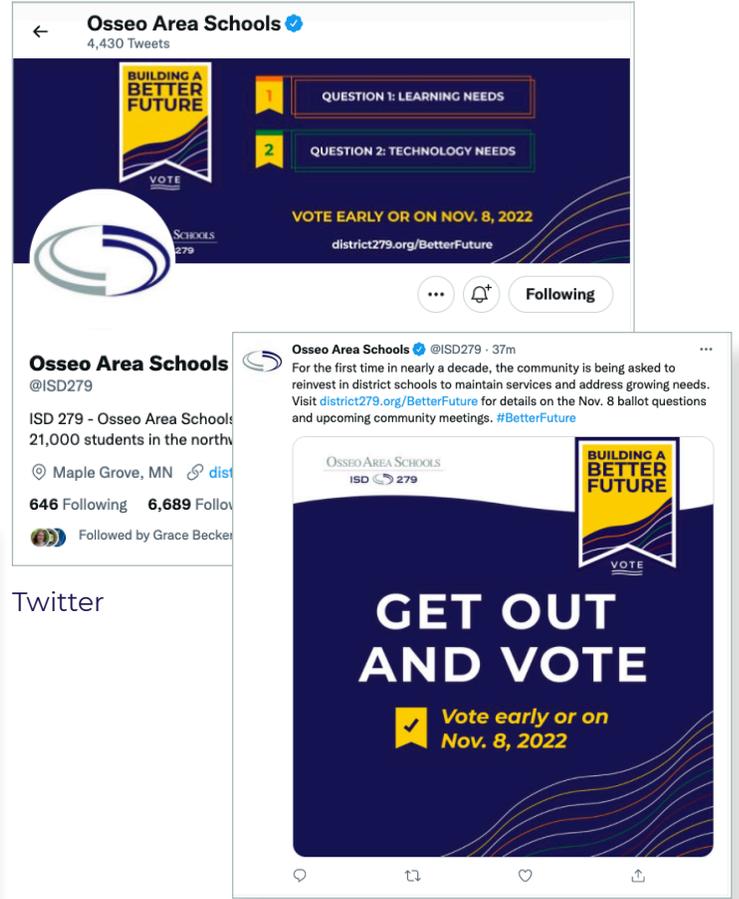


Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn



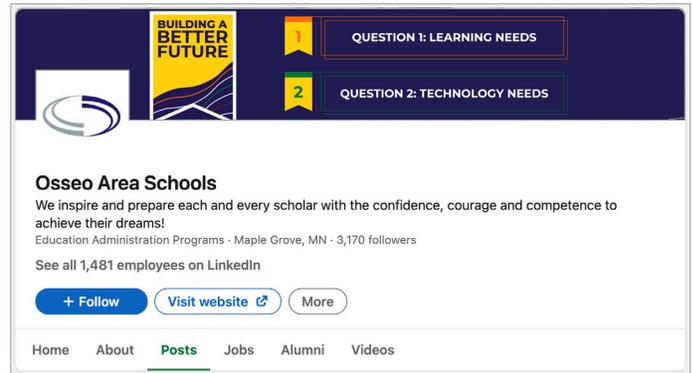
The Facebook post features a dark blue header with the 'BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE' logo and 'VOTE' text. Below the header, two numbered questions are listed: 'QUESTION 1: LEARNING NEEDS' and 'QUESTION 2: TECHNOLOGY NEEDS'. A call to action reads 'VOTE EARLY OR ON NOV. 8, 2022' with the URL 'district279.org/BetterFuture'. The main post content includes the school's name 'ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools', a mission statement, and details about the ballot questions. A large graphic at the bottom of the post says 'GET OUT AND VOTE' and 'Vote early or on Nov. 8, 2022'.

Facebook



The Twitter post shows the 'Osseo Area Schools' profile with 4,430 tweets. The tweet content is identical to the Facebook post, including the header, questions, and 'GET OUT AND VOTE' graphic. The tweet text reads: 'For the first time in nearly a decade, the community is being asked to reinvest in district schools to maintain services and address growing needs. Two Nov. 8 ballot questions are being presented: Question #1: Continue day-to-day learning operations and enhance individualized learning, academic interventions, student mental health needs and other critical classroom supports. Question #2: Continue classroom learning technology, as well as needed technology support staff and infrastructure. Additionally prioritize school safety and security and digital learning spaces. Visit district279.org/BetterFuture for details on ballot questions and upcoming community meetings. #BetterFuture'.

Twitter



The LinkedIn profile for 'Osseo Area Schools' features the same header and questions as the other platforms. The bio states: 'We inspire and prepare each and every scholar with the confidence, courage and competence to achieve their dreams! Education Administration Programs : Maple Grove, MN - 3,170 followers See all 1,481 employees on LinkedIn'. The profile includes a '+ Follow' button, a 'Visit website' link, and a 'More' button. The navigation bar at the bottom shows 'Home', 'About', 'Posts', 'Jobs', 'Alumni', and 'Videos'.

LinkedIn

Facebook Posts

ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools
Oct 9, 2022 · 🌐

Scholar mental health needs, which are often called social-emotional supports in education, help scholars learn to get along with others. These sup... See more



The need for mental health services is outpacing resources.
When available, they;

Help scholars learn to get along with others

District279.org/BetterFuture

ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools
Oct 6, 2022 · 🌐

Time and time again, our community surveys show that family, friends and neighbors are a main source of information for our Osseo Area School... See more



THE FUTURE IS IN OUR CLASSROOMS

Our Osseo Area Schools community is being asked to reinvest in district schools to maintain services and address growing needs.

Oct. 4, 2022
Park Center Senior High School

youtube.com
Building a Better Future Community Informational Meeting - Oct. 4, 2022

ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools
Oct 28, 2022 · 🌐

In less than two weeks, our Osseo Area Schools community will determine the long-term direction of school safety, learning and... See more



Make a plan to vote!

- Vote early by mail or in person by Monday, Nov. 7, or
- Vote on election day, Tuesday, Nov. 8

Details via "How Do I Vote" at district279.org/BetterFuture

ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools
Oct 18, 2022 · 🌐

Get informed! The last community informational meeting on *Building a Better Future* is being held tonight, at 6 p.m., at Maple Grove Senior H... See more



COMMUNITY INFORMATIONAL MEETING

6-7:30 p.m. on Oct. 18
at Maple Grove Senior High School
or virtually on YouTube

TUE, OCT 18, 2022
Community informational meeting on Building a Better Future refere... ☆ Interested

ISD 279 - Osseo Area Schools
Oct 20, 2022 · 🌐

Get informed! Vote! As Osseo Area Schools families reenergize over MEA break, it's important to also take some time to look at the details of the *Bui...* See more



GET OUT AND VOTE

Vote early or on Nov. 8, 2022

Large Content Overview Flyer

English - Click to see full size

Spanish

Somali

Vietnamese

Hmong

Community Meeting Poster

English - Click to see full size

Spanish

Somali

Vietnamese

Hmong

Community ED

Newsletter

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
ISD  279

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE
VOTE

Referendum Election for Learning and Technology Needs

For the first time in nearly a decade, the community is being asked to reinvest in district schools to **maintain services and address growing needs**. The current voter-approved levies – operating and capital projects for technology – are set to expire soon. Together they make up approximately 15% of the district's financial resources, which equates to about \$43 million a year.

1 **QUESTION 1:** Focuses on the operating levy, which pays for **day-to-day learning and instructional needs**. If approved by voters, it would provide an additional \$7 million annually for the district to continue and expand:

- Individualized learning,
- Academic interventions,
- Scholar mental health needs, and
- Other critical classroom supports.

2 **QUESTION 2:** Focuses on the technology levy, which pays for **classroom learning technology, infrastructure systems and needed support staff**. If approved by voters, it would provide an additional \$2.3 million annually for the district to additionally prioritize:

- School safety and security technology,
- Tools and systems for all scholars, and
- Digital learning spaces at schools.

15% OF DISTRICT BUDGET
Current Voter-Approved Operating and Technology Levies

Without funding, \$5 million would need to be cut in the 2023-24 school year, resulting in:

- Insufficient safety and security resources
- Increased class sizes
- Diminished academic support
- Outdated and unreliable technology tools, systems and spaces
- Limited support services for scholars, including mental health

Without funding in 2024-25, \$49 million would need to be cut. Results would be more extensive and include cutting at least 450 staff members.

TAX IMPACT
If both requests are approved by voters about

\$9/month
on average household (\$250,000 valued home)

Learn more about Building a Better Future by:  Visiting district279.org/BetterFuture, submitting a question to BetterFuture@district279.org, or follow online [#BetterFuture](https://twitter.com/BetterFuture).



GET OUT AND VOTE  *Early or on Nov. 8, 2022* | district279.org/BetterFuture | [#BetterFuture](https://twitter.com/BetterFuture)

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
ISD  279

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE
VOTE

Referendum Election for Learning and Technology Needs

For the first time in nearly a decade, the community is being asked to reinvest in district schools to **maintain services and address growing needs**. The current voter-approved levies – operating and capital projects for technology – are set to expire soon. Together they make up approximately 15% of the district's financial resources, which equates to about \$43 million a year.

1 **QUESTION 1:** Focuses on the operating levy, which pays for **day-to-day learning and instructional needs**. If approved by voters, it would provide an additional \$7 million annually for the district to continue and expand:

- Individualized learning,
- Academic interventions,
- Scholar mental health needs, and
- Other critical classroom supports.

2 **QUESTION 2:** Focuses on the technology levy, which pays for **classroom learning technology, infrastructure systems and needed support staff**. If approved by voters, it would provide an additional \$2.3 million annually for the district to additionally prioritize:

- School safety and security technology,
- Tools and systems for all scholars, and
- Digital learning spaces at schools.

TAX IMPACT
If both requests are approved by voters about

\$9/month
on average household (\$250,000 valued home)

15%
Current Voter-Approved Operating and Technology Levies

DISTRICT BUDGET



GET OUT AND VOTE  *Vote early or on Nov. 8, 2022* | district279.org/BetterFuture

[Have You Heard Page - Click to see full size](#)

Staff Badges

[Full Page Ad - Click to see full size](#)

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE
VOTE

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
ISD  279

The Future is in Our Classrooms

This fall, voters in Osseo Area Schools will be asked to weigh in on two school funding questions that would maintain services and address growing needs. This is the first time in nearly a decade that voters are being asked to reinvest in district schools.



GET OUT AND VOTE  *Early or on Nov. 8, 2022* | district279.org/BetterFuture | [#BetterFuture](https://twitter.com/BetterFuture)

ECFE Ad

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE
VOTE

Phase I: Referendum for learning and technology needs

Q1: focuses on the operating levy, which pays for **day-to-day learning needs**. It would provide an additional \$7M annually to expand: individualized learning, academic interventions, scholar mental health needs and other critical classroom supports.

Q2: focuses on the technology levy, which pays for **classroom learning technology, infrastructure systems and needed support staff**. It would provide an additional \$2.3M to additionally prioritize: school safety and security technology, tools and systems for all scholars and digital learning spaces at schools.

The current voter-approved levies – operating and capital projects for technology – are set to expire soon. Together they make up approx. 15% of the district's financial resources (\$43 million a year).

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT TAXES?
If both questions are approved: about **\$9/month** on average household (\$250,000 valued home).

NEED MORE DETAILS?
district279.org/BetterFuture
763-391-8990 | #BetterFuture



Early voting starts Sept. 23
Election Day is Nov. 8

Yard Signs



Banner



Stickers



Direct Mailer

GET OUT AND VOTE
ON NOV. 8, 2022

Strong schools equal strong communities

82% GOOD OR EXCELLENT ON QUALITY OF EDUCATION

86% ARE PROUD OF OUR SCHOOLS AND WOULD RECOMMEND THEM TO OTHERS

86% ALL OR MOST SCHOLAR NEEDS ARE BEING MET

83% IMPORTANT FOR SCHOLARS TO EFFECTIVELY USE TECHNOLOGY

87% TRUST THE DISTRICT DOES WHAT IS RIGHT FOR SCHOLARS

81% THINK THE DISTRICT HAS RESPONSIBLY SPENT PAST REFERENDUM FUNDS

Completed by the Morris Leatherman Company in January 2022

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
ISD 279

Referendum election for learning and technology needs

Osseo Area Schools is the fifth largest school district in Minnesota, but its per student operating levy is on the bottom half compared to the largest suburban districts in the state.

In regard to its technology levy, Osseo Area Schools is in the middle compared to the largest suburban districts in the state.

It's been almost a decade since the Osseo Area Schools community has been asked to increase their local funding for schools. Educational needs have significantly grown over this time. The state's financial contributions, which are about 70% of the district's budget, have not kept pace with inflation or increasing needs for more than two decades. If state education funding had simply kept pace with inflation, Osseo Area Schools would receive \$15 million more this year alone.

Continued Pressure on the Budget Due to Inadequate Funding
State General Education Funding Per Student

QUESTION 1: Focuses on the operating levy, which pays for day-to-day learning and instructional needs. If approved by voters, funding would maintain services and further expand:

- Individualized learning
- Academic interventions
- Scholar mental health needs
- Other critical classroom support

QUESTION 2: Focuses on the technology levy, which pays for classroom learning technology, infrastructure systems and needed support staff. If approved by voters, funding would maintain services and additionally prioritize:

- School safety and security technology
- Tools and systems for all scholars
- Digital learning spaces at schools

* If state funding had kept up with inflation, Osseo Area Schools would receive \$15 million more this year alone. This gap is projected to increase.
* Source: Minnesota Department of Education

Interior Half Spread

Sample Ballot Questions

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

The board of Independent School District No. 279 (Osseo Area Schools), Minnesota has proposed to revoke the School District's existing referendum revenue authorization of \$1,801.72 per pupil, scheduled to expire after taxes payable in 2023, and replace that authorization with a new authorization of \$2,125.97 per pupil, subject to an annual increase at the rate of inflation. The proposed referendum revenue authorization would be first levied for taxes payable in 2023 and applicable for ten (10) years unless otherwise revoked or reduced as provided by law.

Shall the revocation of the existing referendum authorization and the new authorization proposed by the board of Independent School District No. 279 (Osseo Area Schools), Minnesota be approved?

PASSAGE OF THIS REFERENDUM WILL RESULT IN AN INCREASE IN YOUR PROPERTY TAXES

2 School District Question 2
Revoking Existing Technology Capital Project Levy Authorization; Approving New Authorization

The board of Independent School District No. 279 (Osseo Area Schools), Minnesota has proposed to revoke the School District's existing capital project levy authorization in the amount of 3.701% times the net tax capacity of the School District, scheduled to expire after taxes payable in 2023, and to replace that authorization with a new capital project levy authorization in the amount of 4.701% times the net tax capacity of the School District to provide funds for the acquisition and installation of improved instructional technology, safety and security technology, systems for instruction, and technology support staff. The proposed capital project levy authorization will raise approximately \$11,192,293 for taxes first levied in 2022, payable in 2023, and would be authorized for ten (10) years. The estimated total cost of the projects to be funded over that time period is approximately \$11,929,230.

Shall the revocation of the existing capital project levy authorization and the new authorization proposed to fund technology proposed by the board of Independent School District No. 279 (Osseo Area Schools), Minnesota be approved?

PASSAGE OF THIS REFERENDUM WILL RESULT IN AN INCREASE IN YOUR PROPERTY TAXES

Estimated Tax Impact

Less than **\$9/month** on average household (\$250,000)

Go to the tax impact calculator at district279.org/BetterFuture to determine your tax impact.

Taxable Market Value	Question 1		Question 2	Questions 1 and 2 Combined	
	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Approximate Monthly Impact
\$150,000	\$48	\$13	\$61	\$5	
\$200,000	\$64	\$19	\$83	\$7	
\$250,000	\$80	\$24	\$104	\$9	
\$300,000	\$96	\$30	\$126	\$11	
\$350,000	\$112	\$35	\$147	\$12	
\$400,000	\$128	\$41	\$169	\$14	
\$450,000	\$144	\$46	\$190	\$16	
\$500,000	\$160	\$51	\$211	\$17	

APARTMENTS AND NON-RESIDENTIAL HOMESTEAD

Taxable Market Value	Question 1		Question 2	Questions 1 and 2 Combined	
	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Approximate Monthly Impact
\$250,000	\$80	\$32	\$112	\$10	
\$500,000	\$160	\$64	\$224	\$18	
\$1,000,000	\$321	\$128	\$449	\$38	
\$2,000,000	\$641	\$256	\$897	\$74	

COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL

Taxable Market Value	Question 1		Question 2	Questions 1 and 2 Combined	
	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Yearly Impact	Approximate Monthly Impact
\$250,000	\$80	\$28	\$108	\$9	
\$500,000	\$160	\$61	\$221	\$18	
\$750,000	\$240	\$93	\$333	\$28	
\$1,000,000	\$321	\$126	\$447	\$38	
\$2,500,000	\$801	\$322	\$1,123	\$94	

What if the Referendum Questions Aren't Approved?

If voters do not approve the referendum questions, \$5 million would need to be cut in the 2023-24 school year, resulting in:

- Insufficient safety and security resources
- Increased class sizes
- Fewer opportunities for individualized learning
- Diminished academic support
- Reduction in electives and opportunities at all levels
- Outdated and unreliable technology tools, systems and spaces
- Fewer technology support staff for families and employees
- Limited support services for scholars, including mental health

Without local funding in the 2024-25 school year, meaning both levies are allowed to expire, \$49 million in cuts would be needed. Results would be similar to those listed above, but at higher levels or degrees. This would include cutting at least 450 staff members as well as safety/security resources and technology tools, systems and spaces.

Official Referendum Explanation

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 279
(OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS), MINNESOTA

NOTICE: HEREBY GIVEN that a special election has been called and will be held in and for Independent School District No. 279 (Osseo Area Schools), Minnesota, on Nov. 8, 2022, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. to vote on the two questions.

Question 1: Revoking Existing Referendum Revenue Authorization; Approving New Authorization
Question 2: Revoking Existing Technology Capital Project Levy Authorization; Approving New Authorization

For School District Question 1, the property tax portion of the revenue authorized will require an estimated referendum tax rate of 0.2878% for taxes payable in 2023 of the referendum market value of all classes of taxable property in the School District, as defined by Minnesota Statutes, Section 126C.01, Subdivision 3, which includes certain agricultural property, seasonal property and post-secondary student housing.

The projected annual dollar increases for typical residential homesteads, apartments, commercial/industrial properties, and most other classes of property within the School District are as shown in the table, subject to an annual increase in the rate of inflation with respect to School District Question 1.

For agricultural property (both homestead and non-homestead), the taxes for School District Question 1 will be based on the value of the house, garage and one acre of land. For School District Question 1, there will be no referendum taxes paid for seasonal recreational residential property (e.g., cabins) nor on the value of agricultural land and buildings.

The figures in the table are based on taxes for the voter approved referendum and capital project levies only, and do not include taxes for other purposes.

The precincts and polling places for the special election will be the precincts and polling places used for the state general election.

All qualified electors residing in said School District may cast their ballots at the polling places for the precincts in which they reside during the polling hours specified above.

A voter must be registered to vote to be eligible to vote in the special election. Unregistered individuals may register to vote at the polling places on election day.

Dated: August 23, 2022. BY ORDER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD
Deanna Erdelyi, Clerk

15% The current voter-approved levies — operating and capital projects for technology — make up about 15% of the district's financial resources.

DISTRICT BUDGET

GET OUT AND VOTE ON NOV. 8, 2022

district279.org/BetterFuture

Interior Full Spread - Click to see full size

Digital Signage



Stadium Scoreboard



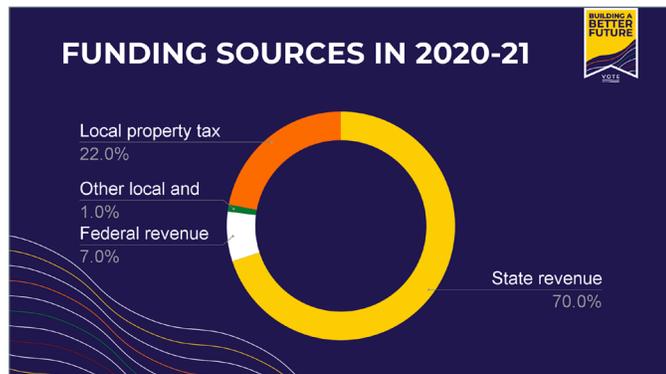
Digital Billboard

Staff Presentation



WHAT IS THIS ELECTION LINGO?

- ▶ **Referendum:** a public vote on a measure(s).
- ▶ **Levy:** a tax collection.
- ▶ **Operating levy:** A set dollar amount divided amongst taxpayers. Property values determine the amount each taxpayer pays. The funds go toward **learning needs**.
- ▶ **Technology levy:** A set dollar amount divided amongst taxpayers. Property values determine the amount each taxpayer pays. The funds go toward **technology needs**.



Messaging Summary

Building a Better Future: November referendum election for learning and technology needs

Note: If you or a person you're talking with has a detailed question that is challenging to answer, please don't hesitate to email BetterFuture@district279.org or call 763-391-8990.

Key messages to use in conversations

- *Building a Better Future* is a multi-year plan to service the Osseo Area Schools community as outlined in the new [strategic plan](#). Phase I focuses on learning and technology needs and Phase II on facility needs.
- This is the first time in nearly a decade that voters are being asked to reinvest in district schools to maintain services and address growing needs.
- Question 1: focuses on the operating levy, which pays for day-to-day learning and instructional needs. If approved by voters, it would provide an additional \$7 million annually to continue and expand:
 - Individualized learning,
 - Academic interventions,
 - Scholar mental health needs, and
 - Other critical classroom supports.
- Question 2: focuses on the technology levy, which pays for classroom learning technology, infrastructure systems and needed support staff. If approved by voters, it would provide an additional \$2.3 million to also prioritize:
 - School safety and security technology,
 - Tools and systems for all scholars, and
 - Digital learning spaces at schools.
- Visit district279.org/BetterFuture for additional details on the ballot questions, upcoming community meetings (Sept. 20, Oct. 4, Oct. 18) and voting info.

Short summary to share in parent/caregiver communications

Building a Better Future: November referendum election for learning and technology needs

For the first time in nearly a decade, the Osseo Area Schools community is being asked to reinvest in district schools to maintain services and address growing needs.

- **Question 1 focuses on learning:** Continue day-to-day learning operations and enhance individualized learning, academic interventions, scholar mental health needs and other critical classroom supports.
- **Question 2 focuses on technology:** Continue classroom learning technology, infrastructure systems and support staff. Additionally prioritize school safety and security, tools and systems for all scholars and digital learning spaces at schools.

Visit district279.org/BetterFuture for additional details on the ballot questions, upcoming community meetings and voting info.

Email Signatures

Copy and paste information below (before Nov. 8):

<<Name>>
<<Title>>
Osseo Area Schools
Office: 763-000-0000 x.00000
District279.org

Our mission is to inspire and prepare each and every scholar with the confidence, courage and competence to achieve their dreams, contribute to community; and engage in a lifetime of learning.

Vote on or before Nov. 8! Information on the upcoming *Building a Better Future* referendum, including ballot questions and answers to frequently asked questions, are available at district279.org/BetterFuture.



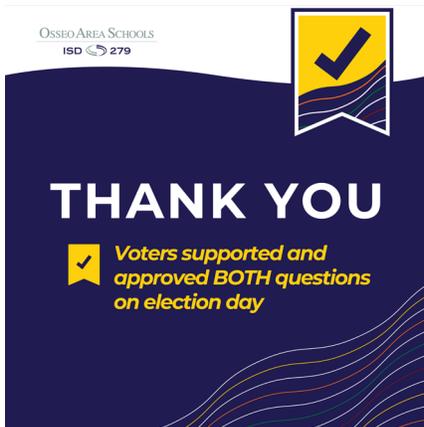
[View the full toolkit here](#)



Thanking the Community



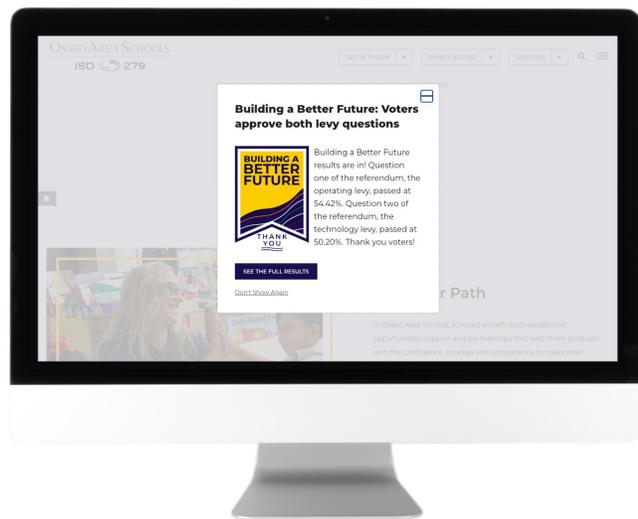
Yard Sign Attachment



Social Post



Referendum Results Webpage



Website Pop-up



Reflection

Osseo Area Schools reports their project was a team effort “through and through.” Multiple internal staff groups and departments shared the workload to make their vision a reality, making a difference for Osseo scholars and families.

- **School/program staff** reported they felt very informed (96%).
- **Survey results from referendum teams**
- Jamboard debrief with cabinet
- ThoughtExchange debrief with Learning Leaders
- Debrief with Morris Leatherman
- Debrief with Barbara Nicol Public Relations
- Debrief with CEL Marketing PR Design
- Additional formal survey will be done prior to the August 2023 bond election

Through teamwork, dedication and clear campaign organization, every person knew what tactic they were responsible for and their timeline for completion. Active engagement in the community communicated district needs and intent across all audiences. Initial surveys show Phase I of the referendum protected the district’s reputation, even during a tax-sensitive climate.

Kay Villella, APR, Director, School/Community Relations shares: “We based our campaign on the values within the NSPRA code of ethics: ‘be guided constantly by pursuit of the public interest through truth, accuracy, good taste and fairness.’ Our campaign intent was to be truthful and transparent, always accurate and clear, and equitably support all district scholars.”

Final Campaign Expenses for Future Planning

	Total
Research phase (including two formal surveys)	\$52,000
Planning, messaging and theme development	\$6,000
Graphics and website	\$84,000
Printing & postage (including legal notices)	\$50,000
Videos	\$40,000
Advertisements	\$10,000
Translations (beyond in-house translation)	\$3,000
	\$245,000