



Sault Area Public Schools

A great place to learn

Frequently Asked Questions

November 7, 2023

Bond proposal



When is the election?

Election Day is November 7, 2023. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

What is on the ballot?

On the ballot is a \$57 million bond proposal to construct a new K-4th grade elementary school, update Sault Area High School and Career Center, and update and equip playgrounds and playfield areas.

How were the bond projects developed?

The bond proposal began with an in-depth assessment of Sault Area Public Schools' facilities. The assessment was conducted in the Summer of 2022 by architects and engineers working with members of the school district's administration. The review process focused on the following:

- Improving safety and security;
- Exploring the cost of renovating Lincoln and Washington Elementary Schools vs. consolidating the schools into one new K-4 facility;
- Improving the learning environment to support the educational program at Sault Area High School and Career Center by creating flexible learning spaces; and,
- Improving operating efficiencies and reducing operational costs.

Following the facility study, an initial project list was developed to address facility needs at the elementary and secondary levels. At the elementary level, two options were considered. The first option was to renovate both elementary schools. The second option was to close both school schools and build a new K-4 facility on the high school/middle school campus.

At the secondary level, the project list included making interior and exterior improvements, including creating more flexible learning spaces, remodeling the pool area into a multi-use space, constructing a new entrance to the gym area to prevent access to the academic area of the building, renovating locker rooms and bathrooms, adding an elevator for ADA compliance to reach the second floor, creating a band practice area and performance stage, and updating the parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks.



How were the community and members of the staff included in the development of the bond projects?

Following the facility study, a series of focus panels were conducted to gain community, parent, staff, and student input on the proposed options. Focus panel participants were provided with a brief review of the two options under consideration for the elementary level. Then, focus panelists were asked a series of questions about what they liked about the proposed options, what questions they had about the proposed options, and what option they would prefer the school district bring to the voters.

In addition to the focus panels, the school district sought additional community and staff input through an online survey. All staff and community members were invited to participate in the survey and express their opinions about the bond proposal projects.

After all this information was reviewed, the project list was finalized. The project costs were identified, and an application to the Michigan Department of Treasury was submitted for review and approval. The Board of Education set the election after receiving approval of the bond application from the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Why is the bond proposal necessary?

The bond proposal will improve the educational environment for our youngest learners as well as for secondary students. Projects are designed to improve operational efficiencies by reducing the number of buildings maintained by the school district, improving security response time with all facilities located on one campus, and improving drop-off and pick-up of students for families who have students at multiple grade levels.

Is student enrollment growing or declining in Sault Area Public Schools?

During the last decade, student enrollment has slowly been declining. It is projected that during the next five years, enrollment will decline 2.5%.

Why is the pool area being converted into a multi-use space?

The pool was closed in 2018 due to major structural and mechanical issues. Due to the current condition of the pool and surrounding structure, it is estimated that repairing the pool area and restoring the pool for student instructional and competition use would cost approximately \$12 to \$15 million dollars ([EGLE](#)). The current pool foundation is crumbling and can not hold water, the mechanical systems (filters and pumps) are beyond repair, and in order to meet [MHSAA](#), the pool and surrounding area would have to be expanded to meet the lane length, lane quantity, and depth requirements. In addition, the annual maintenance of the pool would take away from the school district's operational budget. Converting the pool area into a multi-use space will provide additional academic learning spaces as well as an additional practice area for team sports and events.



Without a pool, will the school district be able to offer swimming instruction and support a swim team?

Providing student and community swim options is a need that is recognized by community and school leaders. To address this issue, representatives from the Sault Area Public Schools, Lake Superior State University, City officials, Tribal Leaders, and The Community Foundation have created a task force to develop a plan to address this community need.

What are the benefits of building a new school to serve K-4 students?

A facility review revealed that due to the renovation needs of these facilities, it would cost nearly the same to replace these buildings with one New K-4 Elementary School located on the high school/middle school campus. The new school will serve all K-4 students and include classrooms designed to meet the educational needs of our youngest learners. It will also provide designated spaces for art, music, STEM, and gym classes. In addition, one elementary facility will improve operating efficiencies and eliminate drive time between buildings for K-4 staff members that currently serve two schools. Parents who have students at multiple schools will benefit from all school buildings being on one campus.

How long will it take to construct the new K-4 elementary school?

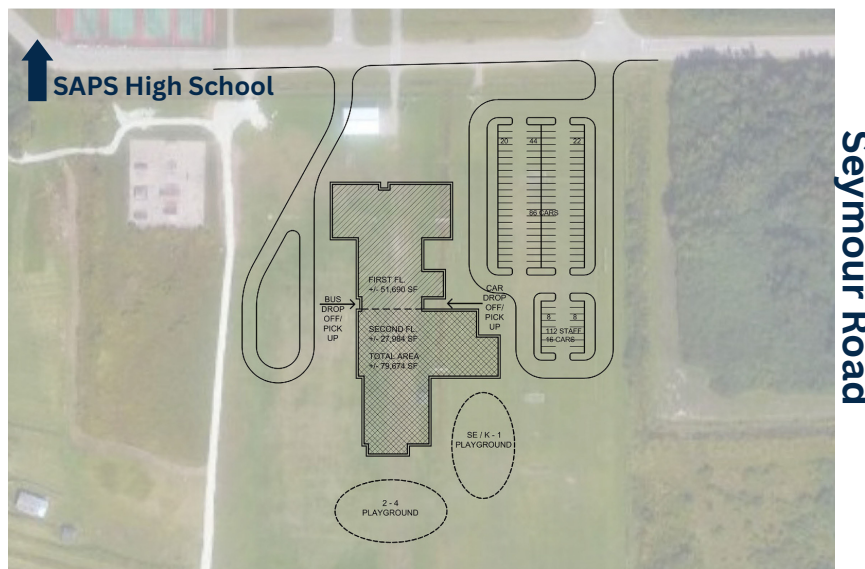
The design phase for the school will begin following voter approval. In addition, a construction schedule will be developed for the completion of all projects. It is estimated that the building will open for students in the Fall of 2026.

Once the new K-4th grade building is constructed, what will happen to Washington and Lincoln Elementary School sites?

Plans will be finalized if voters approve the bond proposal. It is anticipated that both sites will be sold to create single-family housing options for residents.

Where on the high school/middle school site will the new K-4 building be located?

Below is the suggested location of the new K-4 elementary school building.





When was the last bond proposal to update the schools approved by voters?

The last bond proposal was approved by voters in 2014. All 2014 bond projects were completed on time and within budget.

What will this bond proposal cost?

The bond proposal will require a 2.55 mill increase over the 2023 tax rate. The cost for homeowners is calculated on their home's taxable value, which is approximately one-half of the market value of their home. For example, a homeowner owning a home with a \$100,000 market value and a taxable value of \$50,000 would have a yearly cost of \$127.50 or \$10.63 per month.

Take $.00255 \times$ your taxable value = your yearly cost

The school district has provided a tax calculator on their website for community members. Click [HERE](#) to see your estimated yearly cost.

Why are the bonds being sold in two series?

To save on interest costs. By issuing the bonds in two series, the school district receives bond sale revenue in two time periods as opposed to one. If the school district sold all bonds at one time, the overall cost would be higher as interest would accrue immediately.

Are there property tax exemptions available to residents?

Yes. The Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit is one property tax exemption available to taxpayers. The exemption is based on household income. Residents can consult their tax specialist to determine if they are eligible for this tax credit.

Is the bond millage rate estimated to be the same for the entire life of the bond proposal?

No, the bond millage rate is estimated to remain at 4.87 mills (new bond and existing debt) through 2029. Then, it is estimated that the bond millage rate will decline due to bond repayment and the taxable value growth of the community. The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2024, under current law, is 3.22 mills (\$3.22 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation).



What safety updates or upgrades are included with the bond proposal?

The new K-4 elementary school will have a secure entry. Bus loops and parent drop-off areas will be separated. Playgrounds will be updated for appropriate grade levels and ADA-compliant accessible.

At the high school, a new secure entry to the gym and multi-purpose area will be constructed to prevent visitor access to the academic area of the building.



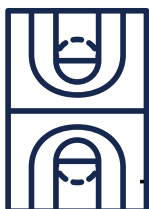
What technology updates or upgrades are included with the bond proposal?

Teacher computer stations will be replaced, and instructional technology such as touchscreen interactive displays will be purchased and data projectors will be replaced. In addition, the wireless infrastructure will be upgraded.



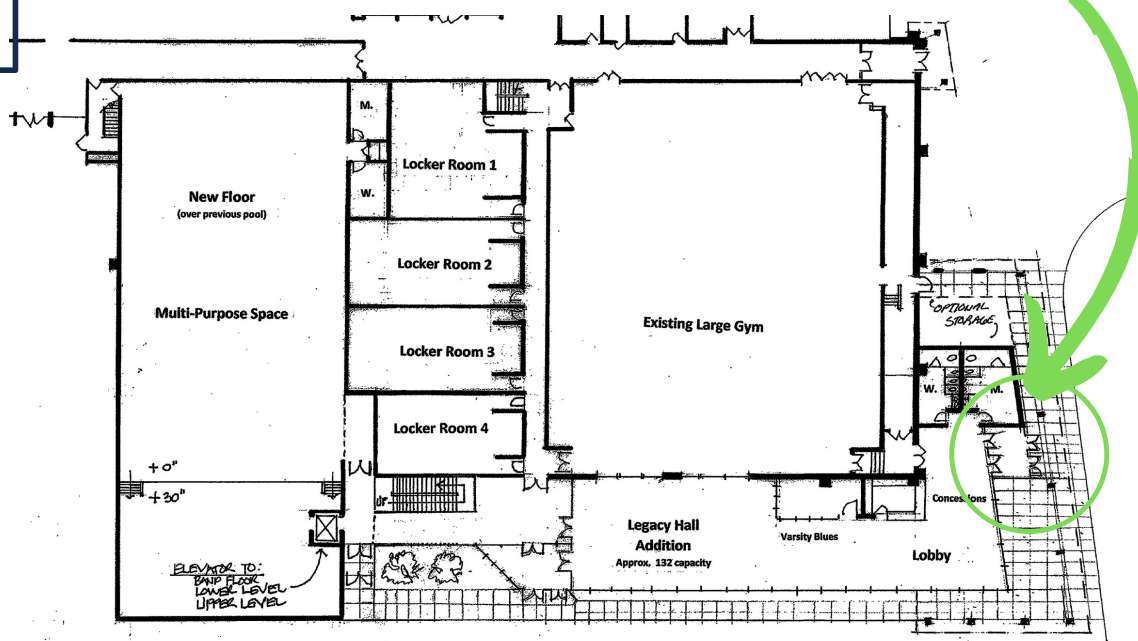
What improvements for the arts are included with the bond?

The band currently practices in the choir room, which is not an appropriate band space or an ADA-accessible space. With the bond, the band room would have its own designated space and performance area in the new multi-purpose room. The performance area in the new multi-purpose space will also be used for K-12 school performances and events.



Where will the new entrance to the gym and the multi-purpose space be added at the high school?

The new entry will be located on the northeast side of the existing gym.





What is a bond?

A bond is a state-approved funding process for an identified list of projects. When voters approve a bond proposal, the school district sells bonds in the authorized amount and uses the bond sale proceeds to pay for the bond proposal projects. Bonds are typically paid back in 20-30 years.

In many ways, the bonding process is like a homeowner refinancing their home and making payments over a period of years. The Sault Area Public Schools' bond proposal length is 30 years.

Can bond proposal funds be used for employee salaries, repairs, maintenance, or operating expenses?

No. Bond proposal funds cannot be used for employee salaries. They also cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs or other operating expenses. Bond proposal funds must be used only for purposes specified in the ballot language, and, as required by state law, they must be independently audited.

Bonds can be used for:

- Constructing new school buildings
- Constructing additions to existing school buildings
- Remodeling existing school buildings
- Energy conservation improvements
- Land purchases
- Site development and improvements
- Athletic and physical education facility development and improvements
- Playground development and improvements
- Refunding debt (if new/present value savings can be demonstrated)
- Direct bond program costs such as professional fees, election fees, issuance costs, qualification fees, insurance fees, and final audit costs
- School bus purchases
- Purchasing furnishings and equipment
- Technology purchases are limited to hardware and communication devices that transmit, receive or compute information for pupil instructional purposes only. The initial purchase of an operating system and customized application software is allowed if purchased with the initial hardware

Bonds cannot be used for:

- Salaries, service contracts, lease payments, installment contracts, and supplies
- Repairs, maintenance, or maintenance agreements
- Purchasing automobiles, trucks, or vans
- Portable classrooms purchased for temporary use
- Uniforms
- Textbooks
- Upgrades to an existing computer operating system or application software
- Computer training, computer consulting, or computer maintenance contracts



What is the exact language for the bond proposal?

SAULT STE. MARIE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOND PROPOSAL

Shall Sault Ste. Marie Area Public Schools, Chippewa County, Michigan, borrow the sum of not to exceed Fifty-Seven Million Dollars (\$57,000,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds therefor, in one or more series, for the purpose of:

erecting, furnishing, and equipping a new elementary school building; erecting additions to, and remodeling, furnishing and refurbishing, and equipping and re-equipping the Sault Area High School and Career Center building; acquiring and installing instructional technology and instructional technology equipment for the school buildings; and preparing, developing, improving, and equipping playgrounds, a play field/area, and sites?

The following is for informational purposes only:

The estimated millage that will be levied for the proposed bonds in 2024, under current law, is 3.22 mills (\$3.22 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation). The maximum number of years the bonds of any series may be outstanding, exclusive of any refunding, is thirty (30) years. The estimated simple average annual millage anticipated to be required to retire this bond debt is 3.83 mills (\$3.83 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation).

The school district does not expect to borrow from the State to pay debt service on the bonds. The total amount of qualified bonds currently outstanding is \$3,420,000. The total amount of qualified loans currently outstanding is \$0. The estimated computed millage rate may change based on changes in certain circumstances.

(Pursuant to State law, expenditure of bond proceeds must be audited and the proceeds cannot be used for repair or maintenance costs, teacher, administrator or employee salaries, or other operating expenses.)





Who can vote in this election?

Residents of Sault Area Public Schools who will be 18 years of age or older on Election Day and are registered to vote can vote in this election.

Where can I get more information about voting (such as how to register, where to vote, and absentee voting)?

Go to the Michigan Voter Information website (www.michigan.gov/vote) or call your local Clerk's Office.

When can registered voters obtain an absentee ballot?

Absentee ballots are required by Michigan law to be available to registered voters after September 28, 2023, through Election Day. Registered voters can request an absentee ballot application from your Clerk's Office or by going online to www.michigan.gov/vote and clicking on *Vote at home*.

Do I need to update my voter registration to vote in this election?

You need to update your voter registration if you have changed your name or address since the last time you voted. You can do this at any Secretary of State Office or your local Clerk's Office.

A YES vote typically means that a voter supports a ballot proposal. Is that the case in this election?

Yes. Voters who support the Sault Area Public Schools' bond proposal should vote YES; voters who oppose the bond proposal should vote NO.





How will residents be informed about the bond proposal?

School District officials are sharing information about the bond proposal through direct mailings, social media, the school district website and app, community and staff presentations, and the news media. To view a complete list of bond projects and learn more about the bond proposal, visit www.saultschools.org and click on *Bond Election Info*.

Where can residents get more information and answers to their questions about the bond proposal?

To learn more about the November 7, 2023 bond proposal...

- Go to www.saultschools.org and click on *Bond Election Info*
- Call any Sault Area Schools Administrator
- Contact Amy Scott-Kronemeyer, Superintendent of Schools, at 906-632-5653 or by email at amy@eupschools.org.

Tell us what you think about the bond proposal. Click the link below or scan the QR code to take a short survey. www.research.net/r/SAPSbondproposal

