

Pinellas County School Referendum Renewal on November 2020 Ballot for all Pinellas Voters

In 2004, Pinellas voters approved a property tax to directly enhance Pinellas County schools. Voters have renewed it every four years since. In 2019, it cost the average single family homeowner in Pinellas \$85.85 for the year or \$7.15 a month, producing approximately \$44.5 million. If the voters of Pinellas County do not renew the tax, that funding will disappear from our classrooms next year.

The Referendum provides a dedicated local source of funding over and above State monies. 100% of Referendum funds directly benefit students (no administrative costs) and all spending is monitored by an independent citizen oversight committee.

BALLOT TITLE: APPROVAL OF THE CONTINUATION OF ONE-HALF MILL AD VALOREM TAX FOR SCHOOL OPERATING EXPENSES

BALLOT QUESTION: Shall the Pinellas County School District ad valorem millage of one-half mill per year be continued beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2025, for necessary operating expenses including funds to recruit and retain quality teachers; preserve reading programs and music and art classes; and provide current textbooks and technology, sharing funds with charter schools proportionate to student enrollment as required by law, with expenditure oversight by an independent citizens financial oversight committee?

A YES vote will renew the tax for four years. A NO vote will stop the additional funding to our schools.

How Referendum Money Is Used

The new COVID Normal – The Referendum helped Pinellas bring remote learning to life and will assist us moving forward.

- Many of the laptops and iPads purchased with Referendum funds were loaned to students who lacked devices for remote learning.
- Technology is integrated into many classes. Expanded digital music and sound engineering tools allowed students to record year end projects remotely. [See an example](#)
- E-books were made widely available and more are being purchased. The Referendum funds enough books to be sent home with students.
- Programs help students prep for SAT and ACT tests that weren't possible during the disrupted school year and testing fees are waived for those who can't afford them.
- Additional "high touch" art supplies (like paint brushes and mouth pieces for wind instruments) are being purchased to limit the possible exposure of sharing.
- Referendum materials will be made available to classroom and remote learning students alike.

Recruiting and retaining quality teachers – Great teachers are the key to everything.

- For the 2020/21 school year, teachers will receive a salary stipend of \$5,231.
- Publicly supporting teachers helps us recruit the 400-600 new teachers we need each year and helps keep the good ones, both in classrooms and remote.
- Additional training and materials are continuously available to improve teacher skills.

How Referendum Money Is Used Continued

Preserve reading programs – Small group instruction, new culturally relevant texts and reading intervention help students succeed.

- Classrooms have content-rich, relevant books, magazines and reference materials. Students receive copies they can take home and mark up to improve their understanding and retention.
- Based on student needs and interests, each school selects books, e-books and e-readers they want for classroom libraries and school-wide or grade-wide projects.
- Literacy support in technical subjects presents an additional challenge. Science and Social Studies classes receive textbooks and interactive materials to support reading proficiency in those fields.
- Early readers (first through third grade) receive small group instruction with additional teacher support.
- In the coming school year a program is being rolled out for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties to help them learn how to decode words.

Preserve music and art classes – The Referendum supports robust arts education programs and supplies our students with needed materials.

- Referendum funds supply equipment like drying racks, kilns, music stands and risers; music classes with materials like instruments and sheet music; and art classes with consumables like paint, clay and paper.
- All schools now have digital art labs offering courses like drawing, photography, stop motion animation and Adobe Illustrator.
- In the 2019/20 school year 16 schools taught guitar, orchestra was featured at 27, and all elementary schools offered music. Without the Referendum there would be no funds for guitar or orchestra or elementary music materials.
- Instrument rental fees are waived for students who can't afford them and High Schools receive band uniforms.
- Referendum funds created community partnerships allowing student collaboration with local artists & musicians, teaching support from the Florida Orchestra and field trips to art museums to study art, history and social studies.

Provide current textbooks and technology – Technology is vital to future careers and integrated into all aspects of student learning.

- Referendum funds support growth opportunities for our students by supplying 3-D printers, STEM, hands on building and collaboration, robotics study and computer coding programs.
- Students engage with software platforms that support collaboration, real-time challenges, visual and audio explanations, adjusted reading levels and more in multiple subjects.
- Technology tools let students, parents and teachers monitor subject proficiency and allow for remediation assistance or the ability to work ahead based on student progress.
- Every Pinellas classroom has an interactive Smart board allowing for enhanced student participation and integration with on-line tools and resources.
- Schools select e-books and readers as well as traditional bound books to refresh their libraries each year.
- Referendum funds have purchased additional licenses to online software, allowing remote learners a more fully integrated classroom experience.

Learn more at CitizensForPinellasSchools.com and pcsb.org/referendum