

Frequently asked Bond issue questions and answers

Why do our schools need renovation and improvement?

In the important area of education, facilities make a difference in learning and teaching. Outdated or inadequate classrooms and support spaces limit education and the subsequent results. We are proud of our schools, but they have challenges. Safety improvements are at the top of the priority list. Outdated and inefficient HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning) systems need updating. Aging and outdated roofs remain a concern. Additional and specialized education spaces are also needs. Bluestem is in competition with other Districts to provide quality educational and support facilities. Our ability to attract and keep educators as well as new families and students depend on the quality of our schools and educational programs. We have a goal and a priority to take care of our kids and community, that is done through our school system.

How old are our facilities?

Bluestem Elementary School was built in 2001.

Bluestem Middle School was built in 1976 with additions in 1986.

Bluestem High School was built in 1973 with additions in 1991.

When was the last bond?

Passed February 2, 1999 and was paid off in the fall of 2014.

How is enrollment increasing when we have dropped in KSHSAA classification 2A?

KSHSAA classifications are based on enrollment at the high school level. We have graduated several large Senior classes over the past couple of years and replaced them with smaller incoming Freshman classes. However, the grade school and junior high enrollment are at a 10-year high. As these classes cycle through, it is likely we could jump back up to 3A.

How come this bond is more than the last one?

Construction costs continue to increase year after year, therefore we get less building for more money. If we could go back to 1999's prices, our bond project would run roughly the same amount. To compound the issue is the change in school finance at the state level. Our district was provided roughly 40% bond aid on the last initiative, meaning that the State paid for 40%

of the project. This is called equalization. This makes a more level playing field for rural schools with smaller tax bases to build and remodel their facilities. Unfortunately, the legislature has watered down the formula to where USD 205 will receive 0% aid on this project. We have qualified for the aid, so if the legislature reinstates the previous formula, we would begin to receive aid payments for our project; that would then reduce the burden on the local taxpayer.

How do school budgets work?

To simplify it, our money comes in 4 sources: General fund, Supplemental General fund (also called local option budget or LOB for short), Capital Improvement fund, and Bond & Interest fund.

General Fund: This is our largest fund, it is our operating accounts. This money pays the bills (salaries, utilities, classroom supplies, curriculum, other day to day expenses). This fund is provided by the State of Kansas. This fund is tied to enrollment and several additional factors like poverty, special education, and at-risk needs.

Supplemental General: This is just an extension of the General fund and can be used for the same expenses. The difference is that it is funded by the local tax payers. There is a cap on this fund on the amount that can be taxed.

Capital Improvement fund: This fund is also provided by local tax payers. It can only be used for facility improvements and general maintenance. Property, equipment, and vehicles are also purchased from this fund. There is a cap on this fund as well.

Bond & Interest fund: This fund is used only to pay for bond projects that have been approved by the voters (like this one). It is funded by the local tax payers through property taxes approved by an election.

Each fund is used for specific purposes and has required purchasing regulations. We unfortunately cannot make transfers between them.