

Why is a levy needed?

The State of Ohio cut funding for Van Buren Local Schools over the past 13 years. Since 2011, federal funding per pupil for Van Buren Schools decreased by 40%. Van Buren Local Schools has not received local additional operating revenue since 2004. The district is deficit spending this financial year.

Why is the levy important for students and the community?

The levy will preserve the educational excellence the district is built upon. The levy would address the budget deficit as well as allow for additional counseling and mental health services, development of Career Exploration and Development programming. Maintenance of current buildings is needed and included in the levy.

What happens if the levy fails?

Failure to find additional revenue will have a drastic impact on our educational programming. The Board of Education and administration will have to make decisions for the next budget on reductions that will have a direct impact on student education. This includes cutting teachers and, of course, opportunities for students.

Why is the Van Buren Local Schools deficit spending?

The district is deficit spending by \$1.745 million this year. Since 2011, federal funding per pupil for Van Buren Schools decreased by 40%, while state funding as a % of total revenues fell from 35% to 26% of revenues. These losses must be absorbed by the district's general fund budget to cover mandated services - many of which are unfunded - shifting the school funding burden to local taxpayers.

Is the school district threatening the community with cuts in teachers and courses for students?

This is not a threat because Ohio law does not permit a school district to spend money it does not have in the bank. We are in desperate financial condition through no fault of our own.

What makes Van Buren Local Schools great?

The Van Buren community has long expected that its schools deliver a comprehensive, quality education to its students. The schools have delivered, providing education that consistently meets or exceeds increasing state and federal educational requirements. This issue will allow the district to preserve the educational excellence the community has come to expect from its schools.

What is on the ballot?

The issue is 1.00% traditional school district income tax levy that will cost \$1.37 per day for a taxable income of \$50,000.

Where is the money going?

This levy is to raise general operating dollars for the district. General operating dollars are used for the day to day operations of the district. Including, salaries and benefits, school supplies, maintenance, custodial, and food service expenses, utility cost, special education, preschool, student College Credit Plus classes, counseling services, transportation costs, extra-curricular activities, and other educational opportunities. Passage of this levy will allow the district to maintain the current level of state and nationally rated staff and programs.

Because 70-80% of the school's expenses are teacher and staff salaries, most of the funds will be used to retain and recruit great instructors. The remainder will support other operating expenses like school supplies, busses, and utilities. Funds will also be used for building maintenance, but not for any new building(s).

Who will pay the levy?

Anyone living in the school district will pay the 1% income tax. Anyone who works in the Van Buren district, but doesn't live in it, does not pay the levy.

Are social security benefits subject to the levy?

No. Social Security benefits will not be subject to the 1% levy.

(I thought) there was a discretionary add on to the renewal within the last year, what is being done with that money?

There was no discretionary add of additional funds on the renewal last fall. The only change to that levy was a change in term from a five-year voting cycle to a continuing term.

Is this a renewal levy? If so, why the income tax for additional money?

Renewal levies don't ask for additional money. This is a new operating levy, not a renewal and not for any building. It's the first new operating money Van Buren Schools has asked for in fifteen years. Imagine not getting a raise for fifteen years, that's the situation our schools are in.

Wasn't there a levy that passed in 2018 for Van Buren Schools? So this is a NEW and additional levy that will also go towards Van Buren?

Yes, the levy passed in 2018 was a renewal. The school received no additional new funds as a result of its passage. Yes, the 1% income tax on March's ballot is a new and additional levy to go to VB operating expenses (not a new building).

Will my property taxes do down dollar for dollar?

You're getting money from my property taxes plus you want 1% of my paycheck. Because it's an income tax, there will be no change in anyone's property taxes. Also, because it's based on income, everyone who lives in the district will support this, not just property owners (please note that social security benefits are not subject to this levy). Every other area school already has an income tax (except Findlay). We are asking for 1%, which is 20% less than the county school average income tax of 1.2%. For someone making \$25,000, this levy amounts to 67 cents a day.

What has Van Buren done to control costs?

Since the passage of the 2005 levy, Van Buren has been fiscally responsible and cost control has been accomplished by:

- 1) Staff contracts that have included pay freezes and below market pay increases.
- 2) Changes made to the district's health-care plan to reduce costs, including higher participant deductibles and employees covering a larger share of the premiums.
- 3) Energy projects to improve fuel and utility costs
- 4) Negotiated billing and cost factors with the Hancock County Educational Service Center and other local school districts for shared services for special needs students.
- 5) Realigned property and fleet insurance to meet current needs.

If this levy does not pass what will be cut?

Two parts to this answer.

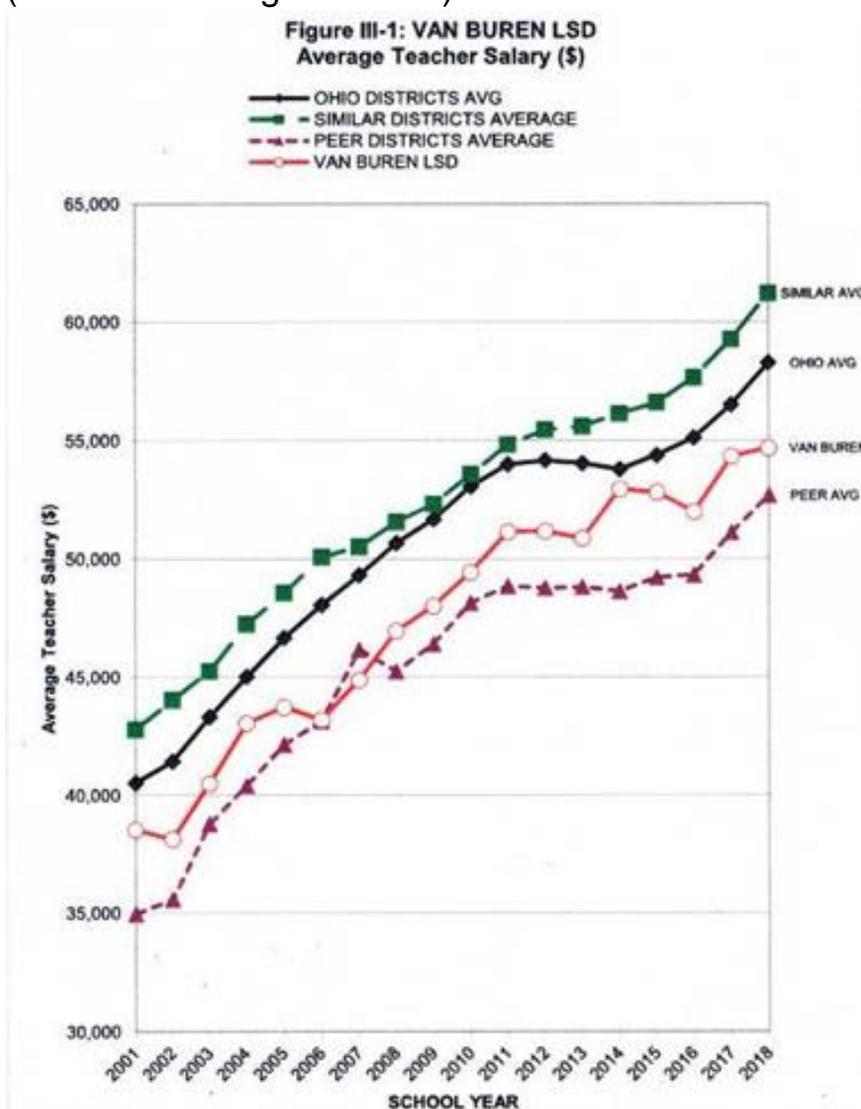
Part 1: In order to stay out of Ohio's financial watch program (we are currently listed as "Precautionary Financial Status"), Van Buren will need to cut about three-quarters of a million dollars from its budget. The Board and administration will be forced to make some very tough decisions about cutting staff, programs, auxiliary services, building usage, transportation, and extracurricular activities for the 2020-2021 school year. Expect fewer teachers, larger class sizes, reduced class options (i.e., Van Buren will need to evaluate programs based on whether or not the state requires them), less bussing, less building usage, and probably no extracurricular support, like field trips. Bottom line: Van Buren will not be the same school, which may lead open enrollment students to attend another school, which further reduces funding.

Part 2: because Van Buren operates on annual contracts, most cuts cannot occur until summer 2020. People will not see the impact of the levy's failure until the fall. That may lead those opposed to levy to say "see it failed and nothing happened. I told you VB didn't need the money". When the 2020-2021 school year begins, people will realize how incorrect that statement is. This levy is on the ballot because the school needs the money to operate.

How do Van Buren's teacher salaries compare to others?

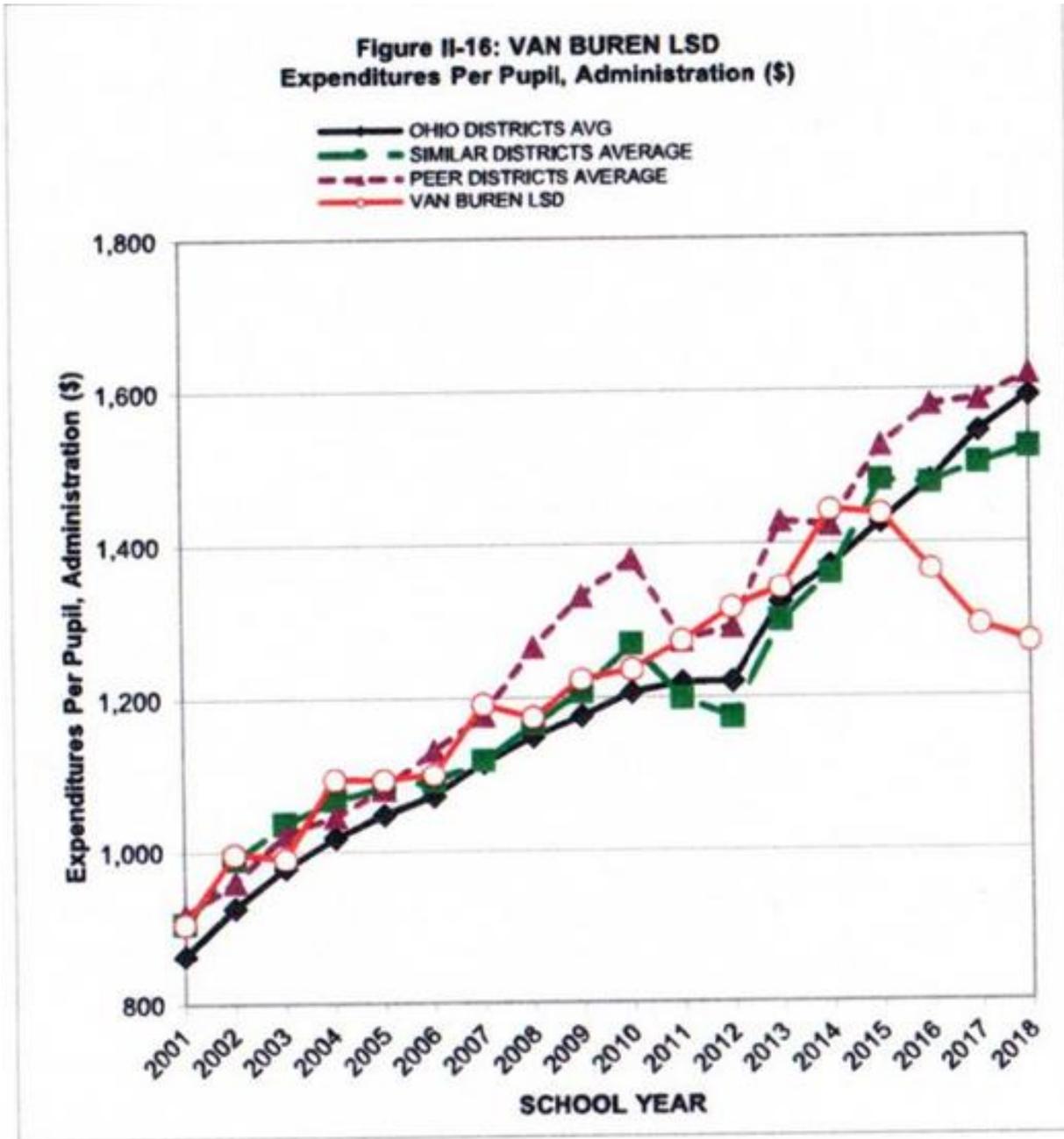
Please see the chart (Figure III-1) that illustrates how Van Buren teachers' average salaries are slightly above our peers (area schools) and less than both the Ohio average teacher salary and what teachers are paid at similar districts. Peer schools are Findlay, Arcadia, Arlington, Cory-Rawson, Liberty-Benton, McComb, Vanlue, North Baltimore, Riverdale, and Carey.

The similar districts line composed of 20 different school districts from around Ohio with median incomes similar to Van Buren. Van Buren median income = \$52,328. Similar district average median income = \$43,768 (that's an average of all 20)



How does Van Buren's spending on administration compare to other schools?

This chart (Figure II-16) shows how Van Buren's spending on administration is less than its peers (area schools), the Ohio average and similar schools.



If the school needs this levy for operating money, how was it able to replace the bleachers?

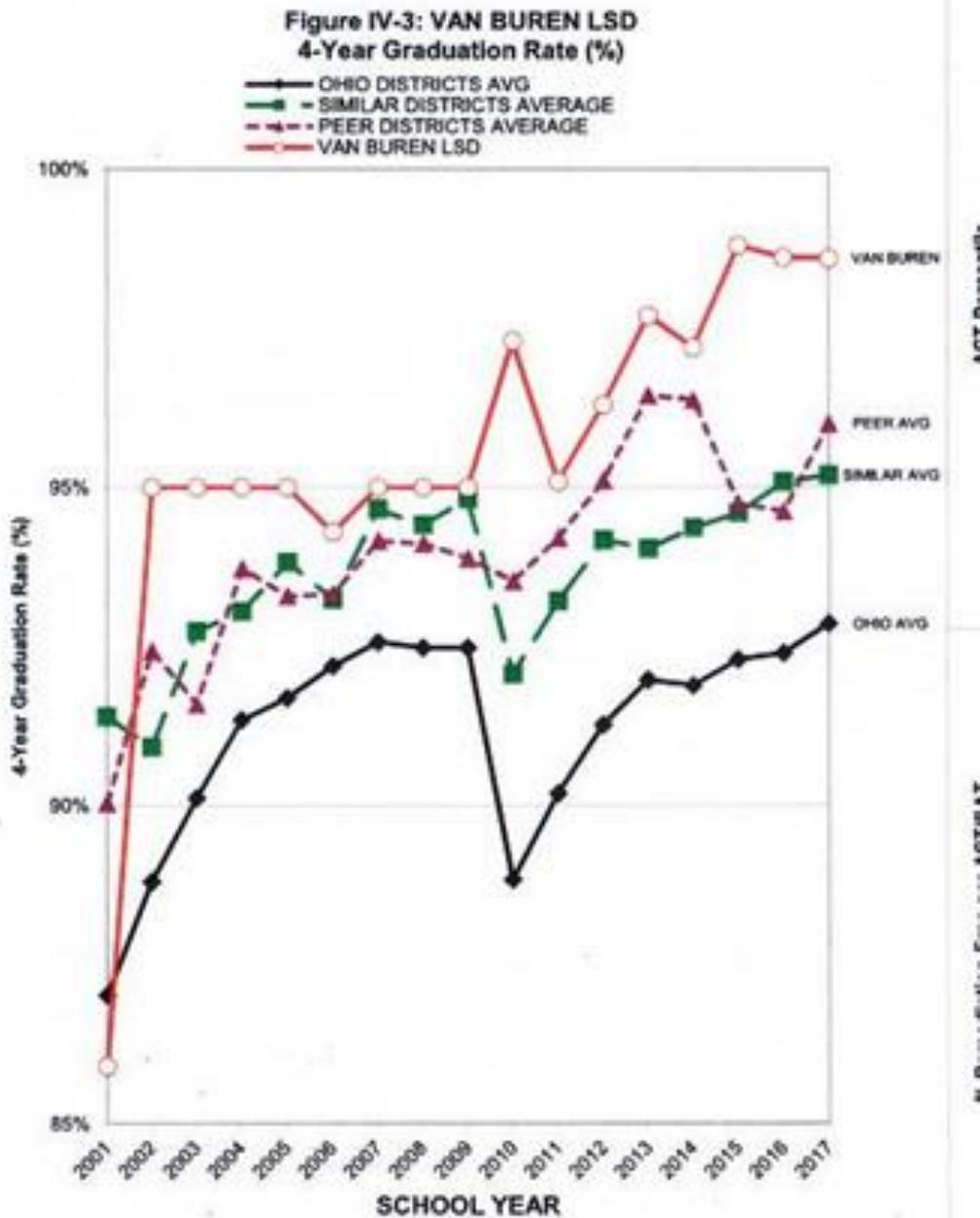
Much of the funding our school receives is for specific purposes. The renewal levy approved last year has 1.5 mills earmarked for permanent improvements (it generates about \$343,000 annually). That money must be used for capital improvements, not day-to-day operating expenses like salaries, utilities, and supplies.

Inspections of both sets of bleachers found them unsafe and hazardous. We, obviously, do not want anyone injured because of unsafe seating. Hence, the need to replace them. Because VB staff and volunteers did as much of the work as possible, replacing the gymnasium bleachers cost \$120,000 and the football bleachers cost \$400,000.

The money being used to repair the football field also comes from the permanent improvement "bucket".

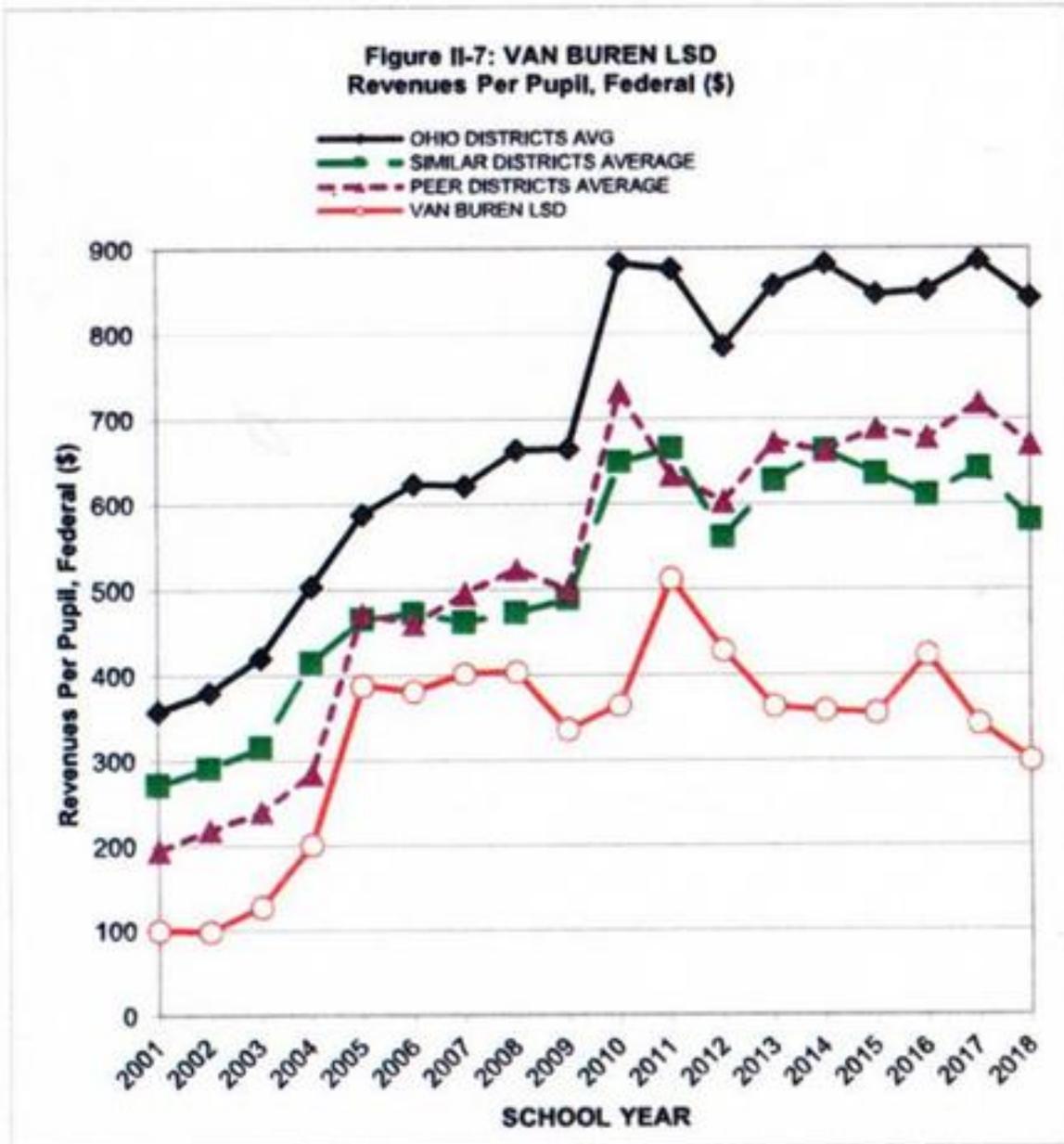
How does Van Buren's graduation rate compare?

As seen in the chart below (Figure IV-3), Van Buren consistently outperforms its peers, similar districts, and the State of Ohio average in terms of student graduation rates.



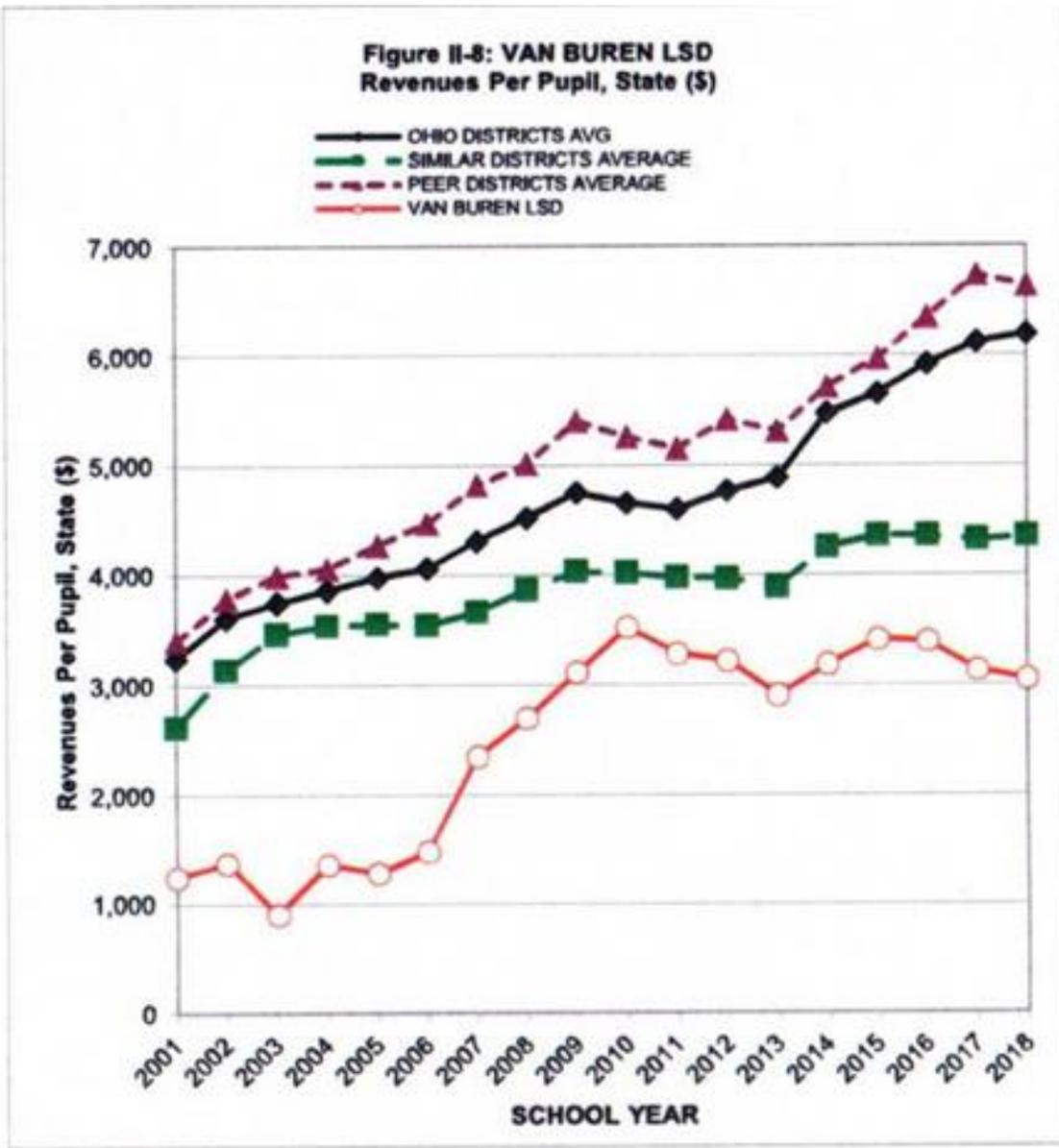
How does the federal funding Van Buren receives compare to other schools?

Van Buren receives significantly less federal funding per student than its peers, similar schools, and the Ohio average. The chart below (Figure II-7) illustrates how Van Buren receives less than half the money that other schools get.



How does VB's state funding compare to other schools?

Because we are considered a "wealthy" district, Van Buren receives significantly less state funding than our peers and the average Ohio school. The chart below (Figure II-8) illustrates how our peers (local area schools) received about \$3,500 more per student in state funding in 2018 than VB did.



The green line shows similar schools (those with median incomes like our district). VB also gets less state funding than them.