

KEEP KIDS LEARNING Advocate Toolkit

JANESVILLE COMMUNITY

2024



School Referendum Work Group

Dear Janesville *Keep Kids Learning* Advocate,

Welcome to partnering with Forward Janesville's 500+ member business partners and 100+ active volunteers to secure a brighter future for Rock County through its *Keep Kids Learning* initiative.

A thriving economy starts with a solid investment in education. Strong schools do more than educate—they prepare the future workforce, help recruit and retain employees, support local businesses, and contribute to a vibrant local economy. They also keep our neighborhoods safe, enhance property values, and ensure Rock County remains a desirable place to live and work. And well-resourced educational systems help prevent workforce shortages, rising business costs, and community decline.

Prioritizing education paves the way for business growth, community prosperity, and a stronger future for everyone. This is crucial for the success of our *Keep Kids Learning* initiative, which ensures that our communities in Janesville and Milton stay informed and ready to support local school referendums on Nov. 5, 2024.

To drive this vision forward, Forward Janesville has identified four key actions essential to ensuring Rock County's competitiveness and future prosperity through education:

1. **Building Strategic Partnerships**
2. **Expanding Work-Based Learning**
3. **Championing Lifelong Learning**
4. **Securing Sustainable and Accountable Funding**

But we can't do this alone. That's where you come in. Whether you're a Forward Janesville member or not, we're asking everyone to rally behind the critical task of securing sustainable and accountable funding for education.

We've developed this Advocate Toolkit to equip you with the resources you need to take meaningful action and help build collective support for the referendums in your community:

- **Spread the Word: Share the importance of education with your network.**
- **Engage with Voters: Help everyone understand how to vote and the impact of their vote.**
- **Advocate for Funding: Support sustainable and accountable funding for our schools.**

Please use this toolkit and share it widely.

Thank you for joining our effort to Keep Janesville Kids Learning!

What's in your advocate toolkit?

Welcome to Forward Janesville's **Keep Kids Learning Toolkit**, your comprehensive guide to supporting School District of Janesville's upcoming referendums. Inside, you'll find everything you need, along with tips on how to use each resource.

04

Conversation Starters

Explain why referendums are becoming more common and why our local schools need community support to thrive.

05

JSD Referendum Fact Sheet

A quick reference to help you understand and advocate for sustained school funding.

06

Customizable Sample Scripts

Craft effective emails, lead conversations, and Letters to the Editor to support the referendums. Be sure to make them your own.

07

Around the Town Flyer

Download, print, and post this flyer in your business, home, or community spaces to raise awareness. **PRINTABLE FLYER**

08

Productive Online Conversations

Tips for leading online discussions and engaging in everyday conversations on social media. **SEE GOAL!**

09

Sample Social Media Posts

Copy, paste, or customize these posts to spread the word effectively across your business, personal profiles, or in community groups.

10

Ways to Activate Your Community

Organize your support of the referendum by submitting letters, attending meetings, forming and joining groups, and ordering lawn signs.

11-12

Additional Learning Resources and Info

Learn more about school referendums, watch learning videos, news stories, and find essential voting instructions.

Conversation Starters

Why are so many school districts, including ours, going to referendum?

It's a growing trend across Wisconsin and a statewide issue. By the end of 2024, two-thirds of the nine public school districts in Rock County will have gone to referendum, with one district having gone twice. Across the state, 241 referendum questions have been *presented in 2024*.

What happened to state funding for our schools?

The school funding model from the 1990s promised that the state would cover 66% of local education costs, but today, that contribution is down to about 53%, leaving Wisconsin's per-pupil spending to drop significantly—from 11th in the nation in 2002 to 25th in 2020.

What are the Janesville referendums about?

Janesville voters are being asked to support two referendums: a two-year, \$14.5 million non-recurring operational referendum to replace the measure voters approved in 2020, which is set to expire soon, and a \$151.8 million capital referendum to move forward with Phase 1 of its long-range facilities plan.

How much will it cost me?

The operational referendum has **no** new tax impact—voters will continue paying what they've been paying. The tax impact of the capital referendum will be \$81 for every \$100,000 of property value. So, owning a \$300,000 home would mean an additional \$243 per year, or about \$20.25 per month, starting in the 2025-2026 school year.

What happens if the operational referendum doesn't pass?

Program cuts, staff reductions, and larger class sizes would most likely occur, adversely impacting student outcomes and their ability to be career-, college-, and community-ready.

What about the capital referendum—what happens if that doesn't pass?

If the capital referendum isn't approved, some of the district's critical needs will remain unmet.

Can you explain the difference between an operational and a capital referendum?

An operational referendum asks voters to approve funds for the district's everyday operational costs, like facility maintenance, supplies, utilities, and salaries. A capital referendum is for one-time expenditures, like constructing or enhancing buildings.

What does it mean when a referendum is non-recurring?

A non-recurring referendum is a temporary increase in taxes. Because the requested referendum replaces an expiring referendum, there is no new tax impact for voters.

Will every School District of Janesville school benefit from the capital referendum?

Every school in Janesville will see improvements if the capital referendum passes.

ENSURING a **BRIGHT FUTURE** *for* Janesville Students

While the School District of Janesville is a big source of pride, our district has both operational and facility needs that require the attention of our entire community. District leaders and the Board of Education believe the time has come to address these needs in a comprehensive manner that positions our schools and students for success now and in the years ahead.

On **Tuesday, November 5, 2024**, our community will vote on **TWO** proposed referendum questions:

1 A two-year, \$14.5 million non-recurring **operational referendum** to renew the measure voters approved in 2020.



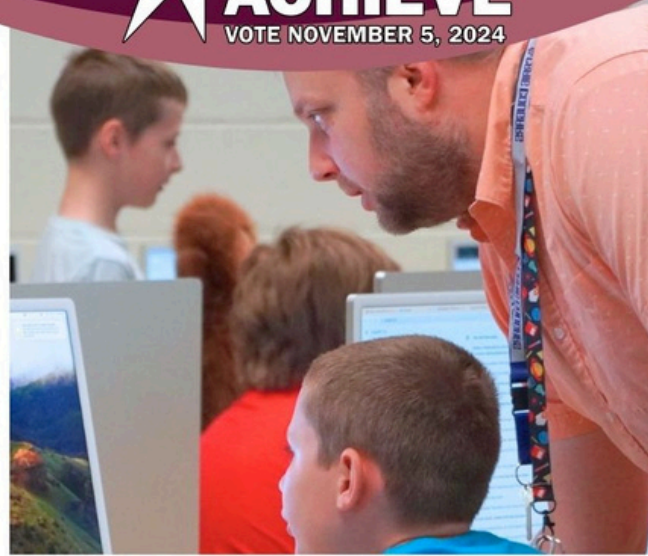
2 A \$151.8 million **capital referendum** to address facility needs across our schools and move forward with Phase 1 of our long-range facilities plan.



WE'RE LISTENING!

During the facilities and operational planning process, we held numerous community and staff engagement meetings. Additionally, more than 3,200 residents responded to our community-wide planning survey. Community input is playing a significant role as we plan for the future.

Learn more about our needs and proposed November 5 referendum questions at:
janesville.k12.wi.us/referendum



Business Leader Outreach Script

[BUSINESS NAME] supports Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning initiative.

As Janesville business owners and leaders, we see that strong schools create a stronger workforce and employer opportunities. Supporting our schools isn't just about education—it's about ensuring a steady pipeline of well-prepared future employees, attracting and retaining top talent, and fostering a thriving business environment.

On Nov. 5, Janesville will be asked to VOTE on two crucial referendums in support of the School District of Janesville: a two-year, \$14.5 million non-recurring operational referendum and a \$151.8 million capital referendum. The operational referendum is essential for maintaining everyday operational costs, including staff salaries, utilities, and facility maintenance. The capital referendum will fund one-time expenditures, such as infrastructure enhancements that will benefit every school in our district.

I'm advocating for these referendums, and so is my business under Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning Initiative. We invite you to join us in backing this critical investment in Janesville's business future. Thank you!

Learn more: <https://www.forwardjanesville.com/keepkidslearning> and follow #KeepKidsLearningFJ on social media

Community Member, Booster Club, Parent Group Script

[I, FAMILY NAME, OR ORGANIZATION'S NAME] support/s Janesville schools.

I know how much our schools mean to our kids and this community. They provide opportunities for our children to learn, grow, and thrive. Our schools are not just educational institutions—they're where we take pride in what we've built and set the foundation for future generations to succeed.

All of that is at risk if we don't say 'YES' on Nov. 5 to both School District of Janesville referendums. Saying no means larger class sizes, fewer learning and extracurricular opportunities, and the long-term plan for school security will be scaled back, including much-needed improvements to our special education classrooms. Plus, we could lose some of our best teachers to other districts where facilities are more secure and referendums are supported. When the time comes, please vote 'YES' and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same. Thank you!

Learn more: <https://www.janesville.k12.wi.us/referendum> and follow #KeepKidsLearningFJ on social media

OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM



The district's current \$14.5 million referendum expires in 2024-2025. The expiring **operational referendum** was approved by over 17,000 district voters in 2020. On November 5, voters will be asked whether to renew the \$14.5 million referendum for an additional two years, through 2026-2027.



A renewed operational referendum would allow SDJ to:



Maintain small class sizes at key grade levels



Continue investments in classroom technology and supporting infrastructure



Attract and retain staff



Address costs related to insurance, supplies, transportation, and utilities



Invest in curriculum resources



Avoid reductions that will hinder the district's mission



Because the operational referendum would be in the same amount as the previous measure, there would be **NO NEW ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT** for district residents.

CAPITAL REFERENDUM

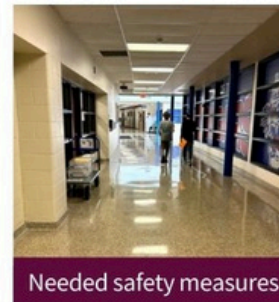


On November 5, our community will also vote on a **CAPITAL REFERENDUM** question, not to exceed \$151.8 million, to address

the district's prioritized facility needs. The \$151.8 million proposal, detailed below, includes the most urgent Phase 1 facilities needs in the district's long-range facilities plan.



Aging electrical equipment



Needed safety measures



Special education spaces

\$124.5 million

to repair or replace high-priority capital maintenance needs

\$11.1 million

to enhance safety and security

\$16.2 million

to improve special education classrooms

The estimated property tax impact of the capital referendum would be \$81 per every \$100,000 of assessed fair market property value. A home valued at \$300,000 would see a property tax impact of \$243 per year (or \$20.25 per month), starting in the 2025-26 school year.



Online Conversations

Tips for Engaging on Social Media

Here's how you can make sure your online interactions are helpful and constructive:

1. Stick to Reliable Info and Credible Sources

Share content from trusted sources, accounts, and reputable news sites. Avoid sharing anything from sources you're unsure about—that way, we keep the message strong, credible, and clear.

- *SDJ Referendum webpage*
- *Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning webpage*

2. Keep It Friendly

A friendly and constructive tone is best. If things start getting heated or confrontational, stepping back is okay. Staying respectful keeps the referendum's focus on track with the right people.

3. Use the Facts

Make sure your points are based on solid facts. You've got great resources in this toolkit (pages 11 and 12) to back you up, so use them to keep your messages accurate and supported.

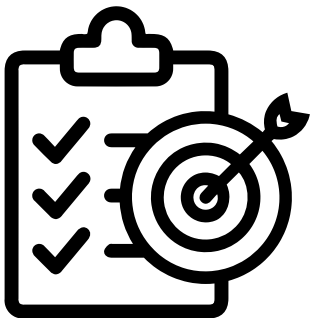
4. Don't Feed the Trolls

If you come across negative or inflammatory comments, it's best not to engage. Responding can often make things worse and distract from what matters. Instead, put your energy into positive discussions.

5. Encourage Good Conversations

Start meaningful conversations by asking questions, sharing your own experiences, and respectfully inviting others to share their thoughts.

GOAL: Lead 15-20 social media interactions before Nov. 5.



- **Search, like, follow, and engage** with Forward Janesville and the School District of Janesville's social media communities
 - SDJ: *Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube*
 - FJ: *Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn*
- **Share messages** from those pages and tag (@) accounts.
- **Encourage others to join** the cause by posting on your accounts with the sample messaging provided (page 9).

#SDJExperience #KeepKidsLearning
#2024Referendum #KeepKidsLearningFJ

Sample Social Media Messaging

Business Owner, Brand, Local Leader Use



Facebook/LinkedIn

As a business leader in Janesville, I see firsthand how strong schools fuel a thriving community. This isn't just about education—it's about securing our future. The upcoming referendums will ensure we have well-prepared employees, attract top talent, and keep our local economy strong. Let's come together to support @Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning initiative and invest in the success of our schools, businesses, and families. Please share, and let's make a difference!

#SDJExperience #SchoolDistrictofJanesville #KeepKidsLearning #KeepKidsLearningFJ

<https://www.forwardjanesville.com/keepkidslearning>



Twitter/X

Strong schools power our community's future! Support the Janesville referendums to ensure well-prepared employees, attract top talent, and boost our local economy. Join us in keeping our schools and businesses strong. #KeepKidsLearning #Janesville

<https://www.forwardjanesville.com/keepkidslearning>



Instagram (use personal photos/video/#s to accompany this post)

Our schools are the heart of Janesville's future. By backing the proposed referendums, we're ensuring our kids are ready for tomorrow's challenges, our businesses thrive, and our community stays vibrant. I stand with Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning initiative! #SDJExperience #Janesville #2024Referendum #KeepKidsLearning #KeepKidsLearningFJ #SupportSchools

Community Member, Booster Club, Parent Group Use

Facebook/LinkedIn

Our kids' future is on the line. If Janesville's upcoming referendums don't pass, the consequences for our students will be severe—fewer educational opportunities, and the plan for facility improvements could fall apart impacting security and classrooms. We might even lose some of our best teachers to other districts. Vote 'YES' on the referendums to keep our schools strong and our community thriving. Please share this and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same! #SDJExperience #2024Referendum #KeepKidsLearning #KeepKidsLearningFJ

<http://www.janesville.k12.wi.us/referendum>

Twitter/X

Our kids need us. If the referendums fail, they'll face fewer opportunities, poorer facilities and security, and the loss of great teachers. Let's protect their future—vote 'YES' and spread the word! #SDJExperience #KeepKidsLearning

#KeepKidsLearningFJ www.janesville.k12.wi.us/referendum

Instagram (use personal photos/video/#s to accompany this post)

The future of our kids' education is at risk. If the referendums don't pass, they could lose essential programs, discontinue facility improvements, and even see their best teachers leave. We can't let that happen. Let's vote 'YES' to keep our schools strong and give our children the education they deserve. 🗳️❤️👊 #SDJExperience

#SchoolDistrictofJanesville #2024Referendum #KeepKidsLearning #KeepKidsLearningFJ

1. Submit a Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor is a powerful way to express your support publicly. You can use the sample script provided on page 6 of the Toolkit to help you start writing one.

ACTION: For the Janesville Gazette, submit your letter [here](#). Include your contact information and follow any guidelines, such as word count.

2. Attend and Speak at Local Meetings

Showing up at local school board meetings and speaking out at community meetings in favor of referendums can make a big impact.

- *School District of Janesville Meetings*
 - Oct. 9: 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at Lincoln Elementary School, 821 Conde Avenue
 - Oct. 16: 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at Washington Elementary School, 811 N. Pine Street

ACTION: Use the sample script (page 6) to prepare and personalize your remarks. Advanced practice and inviting friends or neighbors to show collective support are helpful!

3. Get Organized in Your Community

Forming a group or activating one you are part of, like a booster club, sports team, or school parent group, is a great way to rally support and coordinate efforts in Janesville. Present this toolkit and bring flyers to your next meeting!

Note: Avoid placing flyers in mailboxes, as it is legal to do so without proper postage. Per Sect. 508.3.1.3 of the Domestic Mail Manual (DMM).

Vote Yes Janesville is a community group supporting the School District of Janesville referendums. For more information, contact Oakleigh Ryan at toakleigh@aol.com.

ACTION: Read *Vote Yes! Referendum Secrets* from the organization #SocialSchool4EDU.

4. Request a Presentation

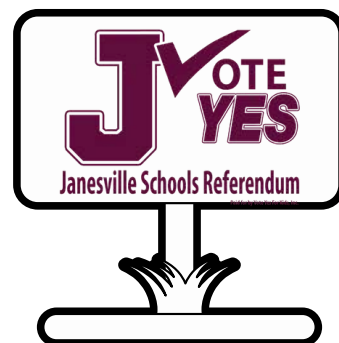
Sometimes, a direct presentation is the best way to inform your community. You can present the toolkit on your own, or Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning Advocates can help!

ACTION: If you'd like to arrange a presentation or invite a guest speaker to participate, contact Claire Gray at claire@forwardjanesville.com.

5. How to Order Lawn Signs

Show a yard sign at home or in your business.

ACTION: Contact Oakleigh Ryan at toakleigh@aol.com for yard sign information.



Additional Resources

Information is Understanding

To better understand why so many Wisconsin school districts have to hold referendums, read/watch this March 2024 feature by *PBS Wisconsin's Here & Now*.

Watch *Wisconsin School Funding: Animated Video Explainer* and learn what is expected to happen to state revenue caps and policy limits in 2025 and the actual cost of students' needs today.

Tune in to hear about Forward Janesville's Keep Kids Learning campaign on *WCLO's "Your Talk Show" with Tim Bremel*—featuring Forward Janesville President and CEO Shar Hermanson and Board member Dave Holterman, recorded on Oct. 1, 2024.

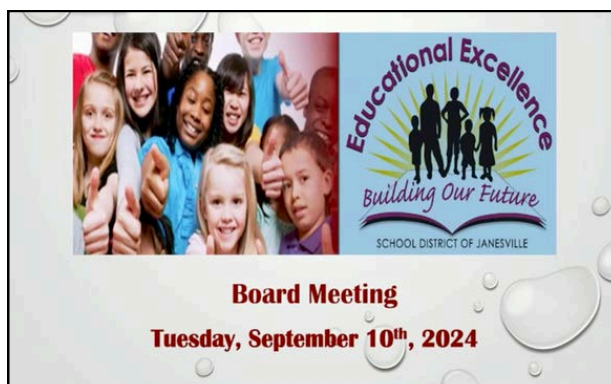
School District of Janesville Referendums Website and FAQ

<https://www.janesville.k12.wi.us/referendum>



Learn More About SDJ and Watch School Board Meetings on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/@JanesvilleSchoolDistrict>

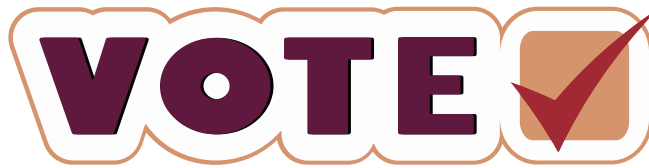


Additional Resources

Janeseville Voting Information

Make sure your vote counts in this important election. Every vote is vital to the future of our schools and our community! Here's how you can make sure your voice is heard:

- Check out the [Janeseville Absentee Voting Page](#) for instructions for absentee voting in Janeseville.
- Remember to **TURN OVER YOUR BALLOT** when casting your vote on the Janeseville referendums. The referendum questions are on the back of the ballot.



Statewide Voting Information

Visit [MyVote Wisconsin](#) for additional information about voting, including where to find your polling place, how to register to vote, check your voter status, and deadlines for the Nov. 5, 2024 election.

Keep Kids Learning | Forward Janeseville

Learn more at Forward Janeseville's [Keep Kids Learning](#) webpage.

Toolkit Sources

- PBS Wisconsin. "Why Are Many Wisconsin School Districts Holding Referendums?" PBS Wisconsin, Accessed September 2024. <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/why-are-many-wisconsin-school-districts-holding-referendums/>.
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- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "State/Federal Aid and Grant Programs Overview." Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Accessed September 2024. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/aid/overview>.
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Wisconsin School Finance System." Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Accessed September 2024. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/outreach/finance-system>.