

**Paola Unified School District #368**  
**Fall 2023 Bond Issue**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
(updated 11-2-2023)

**Q: How was it determined to run a bond issue?**

A: The current bonds are projected to pay off in 2028. The newest school, Cottonwood Elementary, is now 23 years old and the oldest school is the middle school at 50 plus years old. Ongoing maintenance costs and replacing roofs and other mechanical (HVAC) devices that are reaching end of life are exceeding district capital outlay funds used for maintenance and upkeep. The district is also needing to upgrade learning spaces to meet today's educational best practices, expand our Career and Technical (vocational) Education programs, and create an early learning program for pre-school age children who are at-risk.

**Q: How was the scope of the bond issue determined?**

A: A list of educational programming space needs and maintenance needs for the buildings and grounds were compiled and presented to a community group of parents and patrons. This community group met multiple times to discuss the list of potential projects and the respective costs. Their goal was to keep the mill rate for bond and interest at or below our current rate. At the conclusion of meetings, the community group made a recommendation to the Board of Education who agreed with the recommendations and keeping the mill rate at or below our current rate.

When the initial bond failed in September 2022, the Board of Education asked for community input via a survey provided to the public. Results of the survey were then provided to a community group during a Board of Education work session to gather feedback from those interested in attending. Based on the survey results and community feedback, the scope of work was adjusted. Turf replacement and expansion was deleted from the bond. Career and Technical Education space has been included within the current high school by remodeling existing space, eliminating the need to add on to the existing building which could add to additional maintenance and upkeep costs in the future.

**Q: What is the cost of the bond issue?**

A: \$40,000,000

**Q: Will this bond issue cause my taxes to increase?**

A: Taxes are determined by the district mill levy and a property's assessed valuation. The district has made a commitment that the bond issue will not increase the current mill levy for bond and interest payments that is currently being assessed. The current bond and interest levy is 9.818 mills. With increased valuation, it is possible that the bond and interest mill levy will lower.

**Q: How are property taxes figured?**

A: Information on How Mill Levies Are Computed can be found here:

<https://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zWSWKggdZFE%3d&tabid=403&portalid=0&mid=977>

This Kansas Department of Education document will discuss different mill levies school districts are authorized to levy and how they are computed. Using the formula outlined in the link above, a \$250,000 house would pay \$282.27 in taxes for bond and interest.

**Q: Didn't the school district just run a bond issue?**

A: The last bond issue ran in September 2022 and failed 1593 to 1519. The bond before the September 2022 ballot was approved in 2014 and is projected to pay off in 2028.

**Q: Student enrollment is declining, why are we adding new space?**

A: The proposal is to remodel space for additional Career and Technical Education (vocational) programming within the current high school. Two additional classrooms are proposed to start an early childhood education program that is not currently available to our community due to space limitations at Cottonwood Elementary. Other projects center on updating and maintaining existing spaces, mechanical equipment, roofs, and parking lots.

Information regarding the district enrollment study can be found at:

<https://www.usd368.org/vimages/shared/vnews/stories/62cc1cf7d2423/Enrollment%20Study%20Paola%202021.pdf>

**Q: Doesn't capital outlay pay for end-of-life mechanical issues and upkeep?**

A: The district has done an outstanding job of maintaining our buildings utilizing a multi-year plan. Unfortunately, the need is too great to replace and make the needed improvements. Utilizing our current capital outlay budget, it would take over 20 years to accomplish the needed improvements while falling further behind with the additional routine maintenance items that come up yearly.

**Q: How long will the bond issue take to pay off?**

A: 25 years

**Q: When will the bond issue be voted on?**

A: The bond issue will be voted on as part of the general election being held November 7, 2023.

**Q: When will construction start?**

A: Construction projects would start the summer of 2024.

**Q: When is the deadline to register to vote?**

A: The deadline to register to vote in the general election is October 17, 2023. Voter registration information can be found on the Miami County Election Office Website or at the following web address, <https://www.kdor.ks.gov/apps/voterreg/home/index>, for the Kansas Secretary of State.

**Q: Is advanced voting available?**

A: Yes. Advance voting by mail and in person begins 20 days prior to the election. As a result, advance voting is available October 18 – November 6.

**Q: What is the actual bond language that we will be voting on?**

A: Shall Unified School District No. 368, Miami County, Kansas (Paola), issue general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$40,000,000, to pay the costs to: (a) construct, furnish and equip a Pre-K addition at Cottonwood Elementary; (b) renovate and modernize learning spaces at Paola High School to include expanded Career and Technical Education classroom space; (C) renovate and modernize learning spaces at Paola Middle School; (d) make needed upgrades to maintain district facilities and buildings; (e) make safety improvements to elementary playgrounds and related areas at Cottonwood and Sunflower Elementary Schools; and (f) make all necessary improvements related thereto; all pursuant to the

provisions of K.S.A. 10-101 *et seq.*, K.S.A. 25-431 *et seq.*, K.S.A. 25-2018(f), K.S.A. 72-5457 and K.S.A. 72-5458 *et seq.*?

**Q: Why is additional space needed for early childhood (Pre-K)?**

A: The district currently has two classrooms dedicated to special education pre-school. Only students identified as having special needs and on an IEP are able to participate in this program. There are many students who do not qualify as special education, but are at-risk of not being ready for Kindergarten. Additional space would allow the district to expand early childhood education to these at-risk students and peer models and help fill the gap of Head Start closing and not enough pre-school seats available in our community.

**Q: What are the requirements to qualify for the at-risk preschool program?**

A: Below are the at-risk criteria for children. Students who do not meet the criteria are eligible to be peer models as part of the program.

At-Risk Criteria for Preschool-Aged At-Risk Program	Clarification
1. Poverty (Preschool-Aged At-Risk)	Qualifies for free meals under the National School Lunch Program on September 20, 2022. <i>Note that this criteria will match the criteria for determining which PreK-12 students generate the at-risk weighting for the 2022-2023 school year (in 2021-2022, the Household Economic Survey fulfilled this purpose).</i>
2. Single parent families	Custodial parent is unmarried on the first day of school.
3. Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) referral	The reason for referral must describe the need for the child to attend the Pre-K program and be documented and signed by the DCF agent.
4. Teen parents	At least one parent was a teenager when the child was born.
5. Either parent is lacking a high school diploma or GED	At least one parent is lacking a high school diploma or a GED on the first day of school.
6. Limited English Proficiency	The student must qualify for bilingual weighting and ESOL services must be provided. Forms must be in child's file. See the <a href="#">KSDE ESOL/Bilingual Education Program Guidance</a> for process and criteria. NOTE: ESOL services must be provided by qualified teachers.
7. Lower than expected developmental progress in at least one of the following areas: cognitive development; physical development; communication/literacy; social-emotional/behavior; adaptive behavior/self-help skills	Based on appropriate and valid assessment results, the developmental progress of the child has been determined by a trained professional to be lower than typically expected for his/her chronological age, yet above what would be considered eligible for special education services (based on the procedural manual and guidance materials of specific assessment instruments). Scores that fall at or below the 40 <sup>th</sup> percentile indicate 'at-risk'.
8. Child qualifying for migrant status	Copy of Certificate of Eligibility must be on file.
9. Child experiencing homelessness	Residence of Homeless Student while Homeless must be completed in the KIDS Collection System and the student must be included on the district's official homeless list.

**Q: Will my taxes go down if the bond issue fails?**

A: Not necessarily. The district's current Bond and Interest mill levy will continue to be levied until the current outstanding bonds are paid off. The district will then need to determine how best to maintain the schools and provide the needed improvements. The district could levy mills for Cost of Living and Adult Education that are not currently utilized.

**Q: Will there be cost savings as a result of the needed upgrades?**

A: Yes. There is an expected energy savings with the replacement of HVAC units. The current conditions of the roofs allow for them to be refurbished/recoated instead of replaced. Continuing to wait will require replacement which is costlier. Upgraded LED lighting and installing energy-efficient windows where needed will save on utility costs.

**Q: Why is it being proposed to replace tile floors with epoxy floors?**

A: Tile floors require yearly stripping and waxing to be properly maintained. This is labor intensive and costly. Epoxy floors have a longer life and only require occasional mopping utilizing our floor machines allowing the district to be more efficient with fewer staff. Due to the continued labor shortage, the district has not been fully staffed with custodians for the past three years.

**Q: What Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs will be expanded and enhanced?**

A: An area of programming that is currently not available to high school students at Paola High School is electrical. The bond would relocate the weight room to the multi-purpose room to create space to allow for the creation of an electrical CTE pathway classroom. This would allow students to enter commercial, industrial, residential, and renewable energy pathways depending on their interest and the needs of the local community.

Our current culinary arts kitchen is designed to function similar to residential kitchens that you would find in your house. Although the five work stations prepare students for living on their own, it does not meet the requirements that are found in a commercial kitchen. The bond would convert the existing culinary kitchen to commercial quality and expand the area to replicate commercial standards.

**Q: Why is the Hillsdale Learning Academy building included in the bond issue?**

A: The Hillsdale Learning Academy building was previously home to Hillsdale Elementary. This building now houses the East Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative (ECKSEC) and the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Paola USD 368 is the sponsoring district for both the ECKSEC and PAT programs. This building is the oldest building in the district and needs new windows in the gymnasium and has some settlement and cracking issues that need addressed. The exterior walls need tuckpointed and HVAC systems need upgraded.

**Q: Why does the playground surfacing need upgraded?**

A: Our current playgrounds utilize wood mulch to create a softer landing for students when playing on the playground equipment. Students with mobility issues are unable to fully utilize the playground due to the mulch. The upgraded surface would be a synthetic product with padding that allows for a safer fall zone and allows for students with mobility issues to actively participate with their peers.

**Q: Why is in town bussing not included in the bond?**

A: Bond moneys are restricted for use on building construction, remodeling, maintaining, and furnishing. It cannot be used for operating expenses such as salaries, bussing, utilities, etc. These expenses must be paid for out of the general and supplemental general funds. An explanation of the

different funds can be found at:

[https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/School%20Finance/budget/Budget\\_Fund%20Summaries.pdf](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/School%20Finance/budget/Budget_Fund%20Summaries.pdf)

**Q: What changes were made to this bond proposal compared to the one voted on September 2022?**

A: Last November the Board of Education conducted a survey for district patrons to give their feedback regarding the proposed bond projects. This data was then shared with community volunteers who made recommendations to the Board of Education. Based on the feedback, the following changes were made from last year's bond proposal.

- Career and Technical Education space has been included within the current high school by remodeling existing space, eliminating the need to add on to the existing building which could add to additional maintenance and upkeep costs in the future.
- The following projects were eliminated from the proposal:
  - **Removed:** Asphalt replacement at Sunflower and middle school and accompanying drainage issues
  - **Removed:** Turf replacement and expansion projects
  - **Removed:** Shade structures at baseball/softball complex and playgrounds
  - **Removed:** Exterior sports lighting conversion to LED
  - **Removed:** Replacement of existing playground equipment, as needed

**Q: Does the district have a signed contract with a contractor already?**

A: The board interviewed three construction management firms in June 2022 and approved Newkirk Novak Construction Partners at the July 2022 Board of Education meeting to serve as the Construction Manager contingent on a successful bond passage.

**Q: Are we allowed to see the detailed bids and scope of work to be completed. With the work itemized out?**

A: Final bids and detailed scopes of work are not determined until after the bond issue has been passed.

The district worked with their architectural firm, DLR Group, to get preliminary generalized scopes of work and their construction manager Newkirk Novak Construction Partners (NNCP) to develop an estimated bond cost. These estimates are based on price per square foot, current industry costs and projected inflationary estimates. Detailed itemized bids and scopes are not determined until the actual bond referendum passes and actual bid specifications and designs are completed.

Both DLR Group and NNCP do not charge for pre-bond services until a bond referendum passes. In the case of a failed bond issue, no costs are charged to the district.

DLR Group and NNCP have many years of combined experience in the design and construction industry and, specifically, in the PreK-12 field.

**Q: Why is the bond being marketed as a zero tax rate increase?**

A: The current mill levy for bond and interest is 9.818 mills. The district has committed to not increasing this mill which is a zero tax rate increase. The mill levy is the "tax rate" that is applied to the assessed valuation to determine tax dollars owed.

**Q: What upgrades are proposed for the high school theatre?**

A: When the high school was built 30 years ago, the sound and lighting were state of the art. However, over time, this technology has become outdated and antiquated. Many Paola students pursue careers in theatre performance, set design, and production. The bond would update lighting and sound with current

technology that will prepare students who choose to further their education in theatre. This is in addition to updated acoustics.

**Q: I have a question that is not covered in this document. How can I get my question answered?**

A: The district has set up a link for patrons to ask questions not covered in this document. Questions submitted via this link will be answered and added to this document. To access and ask your question, click on the following link: <https://forms.gle/DtszgSN38ibQMZSW9>

Additional questions may be directed to Matt Meek, Superintendent of Schools, at [matt\\_meek@usd368.org](mailto:matt_meek@usd368.org).