

Bond issue Q&A

On May 6, 2019, the Maize Board of Education unanimously approved a plan to pursue a \$108.2 million bond election to meet the needs of Maize USD 266's rapidly growing student enrollment. The plan is a vision for growth, safety, innovation, and opportunity that will provide improvements for all students.

The plan would have **zero effect** on the bond and interest mill levy rate and would provide necessary relief for the district's five elementary schools, currently at 91 percent capacity, and two middle schools, currently at 90 percent capacity.

The district is providing answers to community questions to help OneMa1ze better understand the plan and the needs behind it. Should you have additional questions not answered here, please e-mail facilityplanning@usd266.com.

What is the bond plan?

The bond election, if approved by the state, will include two questions during an Aug. 27 special election:

- **Question One:** The construction of two intermediate centers that would house fifth and sixth grade students. Safety and security improvements to meet the district's top priority: the safety of students and employees. This includes a storm shelter at Complete High School Maize, the district's alternative high school. Upgrades to the aging 23-year-old Maize High School. Needed additions and renovations to Maize South High School.
- **Question Two:** Indoor pool and auditorium to meet the needs of a growing district. Safe outdoor playgrounds for elementary school students. New indoor STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) labs for elementary schools.

[Learn more by clicking here to access the May 6, 2019 Facilities Committee Presentation to the Maize Board of Education.](#)

How much do residents pay in taxes already to Maize USD 266?

- The district has lowered taxes three out of the past four years.
- The district has saved taxpayers millions of dollars through careful bond debt management, specifically a fairly recent bond refinancing.

How would this bond have zero change to the district's bond and interest mill levy?

By balancing current and future bond and interest, the district would be able to assume the additional bond with zero change. Strategic planning and the refinancing of past bonds by shortening the terms allow for flexibility in the current bond scenario.

The mill levy is the tax rate applied to assessed valuation to generate tax revenue.

In 2018-19, Maize USD 266's mill levy dropped from 60.550 to 59.790, the third annual decrease from 62.826 since 2015-16.

Maize USD 266's mill levy remains competitive with area districts.

How will this bond make Maize Schools safer?

Maize USD 266 has an outdated access control system and outdated security cameras. The current access control system does not allow the capability for the district to monitor exterior doors that may be jarred open and operates on an antiquated platform. The current video surveillance system performs below its capacity due to limited server space and lacks many of the features available today.

Teachers currently use magnets as a way to quickly lock their classroom doors in the event of a school emergency. Upgrades to classroom locking capabilities will provide staff and students with an increased barrier should the need arise. The Facilities Committee believes the students and employees of Maize USD 266 deserve a better and safer system.

The bond also would add a storm shelter to Complete High School Maize, the district's nationally award-winning alternative high school that is the only school in the district that does not have a shelter. In the event of an emergency, students and employees must leave their school and take shelter at a neighboring district building by going outside and into potentially harmful and threatening severe weather.

What is the urgency?

Maize USD 266 is working quickly through this facilities process, anticipating that it will need to open new schools by August 2021..

New schools take about two years to design and build, and Maize USD 266 will run out of room in at least one of its schools by 2020.

New state legislation limits the amount of bond money schools statewide can cumulatively seek each year and, due to current and forecasted enrollment growth, the district could not afford to wait another year.

What about student enrollment growth warrants facility additions?

The district is growing rapidly and needs more classroom space. The buildings that are most crowded are elementary schools, at 91 percent capacity, and Maize Middle School, which will be at capacity beginning in August for the 2019-20 school year. Our elementary schools are among the largest in the state of Kansas, each housing 588 to 713 students depending on

building size, and the district does not wish to expand these, for reasons including safety, efficiency, and the strain on support services, including food services, counseling, etc.

How full are our schools?

Overall, our schools are 89 percent full, the following school level breakdown:

- Elementary (five schools): 91 percent full
- Middle (two schools): 90 percent full
- High school (two schools): 74 percent full
- District total: 89 percent full

The district's current student enrollment is as follows:

- Elementary (five schools, grades kindergarten through fifth): 3,184
- Middle (two schools, grades sixth through eighth): 1,713
- High school (two schools, grades ninth through twelfth): 2,222
- Total district enrollment: 7,119

What did the district's most recent demographic studies say about growth?

Wichita State University's Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs Public Policy and Management Center conducted a Student Enrollment Forecast for Maize USD 266 in May 2016. The WSU study projected an average enrollment growth at approximately 142 students per year. Professional demographic firm RSP conducted an enrollment report for the district in 2014-15 and presented it on Jan. 9, 2015. The RSP projection estimated the district would grow at approximately 107 student annually.

How have apartment complexes contributed to the growth?

Apartments themselves do not contribute significantly to district growth. As of April 2019, only 63 of the district's 7,728 students -- less than 1 percent of the student body -- live in three newer apartment complexes in the district (SunStone Apartment Homes, Watercress Apartment Homes, and The Vue Luxury Apartments). Please note this is not a comprehensive total of all apartments in the district.

While Maize USD 266 works to stay informed about residential developments in the district boundaries that may affect student enrollment, it does not have any direct control of those projects. Growth may include single- or multi-family housing. The district maintains relationships and communication with both the cities of Maize and Wichita regarding development and residential growth.

Are the district's feeder boundaries for middle and high schools involved in the issue?

Under the plan, a new intermediate school would be added to each boundary feeder, meaning one fifth- and sixth-grade building that would feed to Maize Middle School and one fifth- and

sixth-grade building that would feed to Maize South Middle School. This change means that students would begin to attend their boundary schools in fifth grade. This differs from the current pattern of students attending their boundary schools starting with middle school in sixth grade.

While the Facilities Committee reviewed whether the bond issue should alter student placement for grades kindergarten through fourth, it decided not to recommend any changes for those grades.

What is the benefit of intermediate schools?

They would meet long-term needs: Intermediate Schools provide the district with a solution for continued student enrollment growth, as well as flexibility for various building uses in the long-term future.

They would be developmentally appropriate: The schools would be designed with fifth- and sixth-grade students in mind, including for their developmental needs, as well as the transition from elementary school to middle school.

They would relieve pressure from crowded buildings: Relocating one grade each from elementary and middle schools alleviates crowding concerns in the district's most full buildings.

What is the facilities committee's role?

Starting in January 2019, a team of about 40 students, parents, teachers, Maize Board of Education members, architects, and other district employees who already are engaged in the school community began to meet regularly. They reviewed data and discussed pros and cons of various options. Their feedback guided the process, and they were encouraged to question and challenge the plans as they developed. The committee presented its recommendations to the school board on May 6.

Were other options besides new construction considered?

While the facilities committee reviewed all options, many of the district's schools are landlocked and/or among the largest physical buildings in the state, making additional expansions problematic in terms of building support. Architectural estimates show that expanding schools up by adding a second floor would be an expensive option to the point of being cost-prohibitive.

The facilities committee considered an option for a standalone sixth-grade center for the north feeder system, but that option was not favorable for a number of reasons.

The addition of a new middle school would be both cost-prohibitive for many years but also shrink the enrollment at the middle school level to a point detrimental to the participation in school activities.

How much would the state contribute to a bond project?

Financially, state support for Kansas public school bond projects has changed. For example, Maize USD 266 currently receives 43 percent state aid for its last bond issue, which voters approved in June 2015. That meant that local residents paid for 58 percent of the bond projects via property tax dollars, while districts in the state who are much more property tax-wealthy subsidize the remaining 43 percent, creating a level playing field for all students. Due to recent legislation, the state's contribution figure would drop down to 15 percent for Maize for future projects.

What about future growth? How is the district planning for that?

Student enrollment has increased by 600 students (9 percent) in the past five school years. It is projected that the bond is a solution that will provide adequate space for students for a minimum of seven years, depending on enrollment trends.

When would new buildings open?

The district could open two new school buildings in time for the 2021-22 school year.

What would the school day schedule be for intermediate centers?

Maize USD 266 operates school buildings and related functions, including transportation, on two tiers. Currently, grades six through twelve are on tier one, starting earlier in the morning. Pre-K through fifth grades are on tier two, started later in the morning.

The district would operate intermediate centers to have all grades within those schools starting at the same time, which likely would mean moving fifth grade to tier one and starting earlier in the day with grade six.

Why is enrollment increasing?

Maize USD 266 has seen a rapid increase in student enrollment in the past five years. The district, as well as the cities of Maize and Wichita, are desirable for families and businesses. Maize USD 266 is an outstanding district with award-winning students, teachers, employees, programs, and schools recognized on the state and national level. Students are high-achieving and successful and have access to innovative programs from preschool to Career and Technical Education.

The City of Maize reports that it remains one of the fastest-growing communities in the state in terms of housing, commercial, and industrial growth. Its leaders anticipate that growth will continue. The City of Maize has averaged 51 new homes annually in the past decade and is aware of additional developments of single- and multi-family dwellings planned in the coming

one to five years within the school district boundaries. The City of Maize plans to maintain utilities and roads, which further supports residential growth.

This year alone, the City of Maize has 16 new single-family homes and eight new duplexes. A new apartment complex under construction will add 300 new units to the community. Other new developments in the works total more than 100 new homes, though they have not all been platted yet. The City of Maize also has been contacted regarding a potential development that would bring 168 new lots to the community.

This growth and development does not include any planned in the City of Wichita, where a majority of current students and their families live.

Are class sizes going up?

Due to a recent state legislative commitment to funding schools at an appropriate level, the district is working to address larger class sizes by hiring additional teachers. However, without the classroom space being sought in this bond issue, one solution would be to begin increasing the number of students in each classroom.

What happens if a bond issue doesn't pass?

The district would consider what options it would have with the resources available without a bond issue, including money in the Capital Outlay budget. Options would be far from ideal, potentially with students in temporary, portable structures, which pose safety and security concerns and risks. Such solutions would only be temporary and would not be a fiscally responsible investment in the future of the district, as they would need to be replaced at some point as growth continues.

Using only Capital Outlay funding to meet these current needs would create serious limitations for the district. The district would determine the top priorities to only meet the most pressing needs. It would be financially unable to fund all of the needs identified by the district and Facilities Committee. Funding to meet those needs would in turn require a long-term commitment of Capital Outlay funds typically used to address annual preventative maintenance. These funding items also are vital to the responsible and seamless operation of the entire district and include the replacement of aging buses, HVAC units, roofs, classroom furniture, band uniforms and instruments, etc. This option would put the district in a long-term cycle of managing deteriorating needs and delaying necessary repairs and upgrades, likely costing the district and taxpayers much more in the long term.

How does this relate to the district's strategic plan?

There has been much work with the district's OneMa1ze, OneVision strategic plan since the Maize Board of Education approved it in November 2018. The chairpersons of 16 focus teams

have been meeting with members who represent various buildings, departments, and perspectives to identify goals and action steps in following four key areas:

- World-Class Academic Preparation
- Professional, Civic, and Social Development of Students
- High-Quality Employees
- Responsible Operations

Facilities growth certainly relates to the Responsible Operations area, as well as preparing students for their future in all ways, including academically. [Please click here to learn more about OneMa1ze, OneVision.](#) The four focus goals in the operations area are:

- Implement practices and continually improve employee and student safety.
- Maintain a physical environment conducive to teaching and learning.
- Practice fiscal responsibility.
- Operate with vision.

Regarding safety, a bond issue would allow Maize USD 266 to focus on its No. 1 priority, the safety of its students and employees, by upgrading safety equipment to better protect students and employees from school crisis-related risks. The plan includes replacing an employee FOB system that is antiquated, constricting, and runs on a DOS system and 1990s technology. It does not allow the district to control building access as it needs to do. Bond funding also would allow Maize USD 266 to construct a storm shelter for Complete High School Maize, the district's nationally award-winning alternative high school and the only school that does not have its own storm shelter.

The bond plan allows Maize USD 266 to maintain and improve the learning environment for students in a way that provides education for a well-rounded student. Two new intermediate schools would relieve crowding in elementary and middle schools in a way that meets students' developmental learning needs, by pairing together fifth and sixth grades, which currently are separated in elementary and middle schools.

Proposed upgrades and additions to the district's high schools, its largest school buildings, provides needed improvements to a 23-year-old building to meet educational needs and ongoing maintenance at Maize High School. At Maize South High School, bond funding would meet the needs for the building's capacity and student learning opportunities with the addition of classrooms to accommodate art, orchestra, and Career and Technical Education.

Additionally, a bond issue could be a piece to the puzzle for Maize USD 266 and special education. Certainly, providing an excellent education for students of all abilities is of utmost importance to the district and its goals.

Will the district need more employees to support these new spaces?

Maize USD 266 already has hired an additional 27 teachers for the 2019-20 school year to accommodate growth. Some teachers, including fifth- and sixth-grade teachers, would be relocated to intermediate schools. The district would hire a few new teachers and support staff members to work in the new schools to provide similar support as is found in all Maize USD 266 schools (food service, nursing, administration, etc.).

How will the district pay for the additional employees?

In past years, when districts added new schools, the state supported the additional staffing and other operation cost increases with a two-year increase in funding. This allowed a buffer for the district to ease into the transition without impacting other programs or needs. Unfortunately, the state cut this funding recently, making it detrimental to growing school districts like Maize. We will be planning and saving during the next two years in order to manage the increased costs. We also are confident that the funding for additional student enrollment and planned increases in state funding will mitigate some of the financial challenges with the opening of new schools.

How many classrooms does the district need to add?

Between two new intermediate schools and the additions at Maize South High School, the district will add approximately 85 classrooms.

Why can't students who live in Northwest Wichita attend USD 259?

Eighty one percent of students who attend Maize USD 266 live within a Wichita zip code. The Maize USD 266 boundaries were drawn decades ago (in the early 1960s) and include home addresses and land in the cities of Maize and Wichita, as well as Goddard, Colwich, and unincorporated areas of Sedgwick County. School district boundaries do not mirror municipal boundaries. Property taxes paid by residents and business owners are aligned with their school district regardless of the city in which they reside.

Didn't the district consider a pool before?

In June 2015, Maize USD 266 voters considered and rejected a \$12.85 million plan for an indoor swimming pool that could be set up either with nine 50-meter lanes or 18 25-yard lanes. The plan was in part to be a destination location for large-scale school and club swim competitions. The facility plan included elevated spectator seating for 750 people, lobby and concession space, and locker rooms.

At that time, school funding was uncertain, and not as many area schools had indoor swimming pools. Community feedback following the election was that the project vision was too big and grand.

While the natatorium proposition failed in June 2015, it still garnered 38 percent of voters' support, with 3,087 voters supporting the plan.

In the years since, the district continues to hear feedback that interest remains in a pool for team sports, life-saving swimming instruction, special education, and wellness curriculum. Wichita USD 259 and Haysville USD 261 are among area school districts that have added indoor swimming pools to their districts, making a pool in Maize USD 266 seem more desirable, feasible, and needed for students and the community. In short, many parents and community members want the same amenities and opportunities for children in Maize USD 266.

Maize USD 266's new vision includes an indoor pool on a much smaller scale, with eight 25-yard lanes, a 55 percent decrease in size than the previous natatorium facility plan. It would include 300 seats, less than half that proposed in June 2015.

The district's proposal also includes a new element of economic responsibility by including an indoor pool in a shared facility with an auditorium. This means that the dollars spent on parking, outdoor lighting, lobby space, restrooms, utilities, etc. can be used for multiple purposes, a cost savings to the community.

What would a pool bring to Maize USD 266?

With a new indoor pool, students with special needs will have access to a new learning environment that accommodates them. Currently, seven special education programs use the Greater Wichita YMCA's indoor pool. They visit as often as twice a week for uses including physical therapy and meeting sensory needs.

For the first time in district history, a pool would allow for a place to incorporate swimming into curriculum, specifically for kindergarten through second-grade physical education. Currently, life-saving swimming lessons are not available to Maize USD 266 students via the district. Students for the first time would have access to Maize USD 266 instruction about water safety and swimming, including life-saving skills and enhanced wellness lessons.

A pool would keep the community and district on target. Many area school districts offer a swimming pool for students and programming, providing students and the community with an opportunity and edge Maize USD 266 students currently do not have.

All high school swimmers will have better access to flexible practice times, as well as the ability for the first time in district history to host home meets on campus. Swimmers also are not able to compete fully, as they do not have a diving well to practice. Teams currently practice at the

Greater Wichita YMCA. While the YMCA is a great partner, the teams do have limited access to the pool and also share practice spaces, as well as restrooms and locker rooms, with the YMCA's membership. This does not provide the safety and security Maize USD 266 desires for all of its students.

Why does the district need a new auditorium?

Maize USD 266's high school auditoriums are used frequently for performances by all students and schools. Middle school cafeteriums are not ideal performance spaces. A new space is needed for fine arts for all students. This year, due to scheduling challenges, at least one school performance took place during a weekend.

Where would the new schools, pool, and auditorium be built?

The district does have options, and this is a decision the Maize Board of Education and district leaders would further consider pending approval by voters in the community.

Why is special education a consideration related to this bond?

Member districts of the Sedgwick County Area Educational Services Interlocal Cooperative are considering a new organization of three separate cooperatives to address the growing diversity between the six smaller districts and the three largest and growing districts in the current system.

Under this plan, Maize USD 266 would partner with Renwick USD 267 to form a cooperative. The process has several steps it must clear first, including majority approval by the special education board, which consists of a board of education member from each of the Interlocal's nine member schools. The addition of such special education program responsibilities and the related need for program and instructional space may prompt the construction of a new alternative high school, using its current facility for special education programs.

What elementary school improvements does the district want to make?

The district is planning to use space in each of the current elementary schools to create a new type of learning environment, currently being piloted at Vermillion Elementary School. They use a space that includes materials and supplies teachers and staff members utilize for expanded learning opportunities, specifically in the area of science, technology, engineering, art, and math. This vision includes the addition of staff who can support this initiative in each school as funding allows.

What playground improvements does the district want to make?

The bond would allow Maize USD 266 to replace gravel, sand, and mulch playgrounds with rubber pellets and irrigated grass. This would provide comparable environments at each of the

five schools. Currently, the playground ground material leads to dirty shoes, messy schools, and less than ideal playgrounds. Students complain of sand in their eyes, rocks in their shoes, and discomfort when they play or land on the ground.

For more information

If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, please e-mail facilityplanning@usd266.com.