



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: *Wednesday, August 18, 2010*

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School Board approves ballot question for November operating levy

(Mendota Heights, Minn.) --- The District 197 School Board has approved an operating levy to be placed on this November's ballot. The one question referendum will renew for an additional ten years an existing levy that is slated to expire in 2012, as well as increase the district's levy authority to the state maximum.

"Given the projected deficits facing Minnesota school districts and several years of flat state funding, we believe this is our best option for preserving our ability to offer a comprehensive educational experience while also allowing us to make investments in programs that will best prepare our students for the world that awaits them," says Superintendent Jay Haugen.

If approved, the new operating levy will generate an additional \$347 per pupil, which equates to approximately \$1.6 million additional dollars for the district. Homeowners would see an increase on their property taxes of \$32 per \$100,000 of home value.

In addition to helping the district retain its variety of educational program offerings, the new levy allows for instructional technology enhancements as well as strategic investments that both increase efficiencies and best prepare students and families for life after high school.

"We know that deliberate planning for life after graduation is essential in today's competitive and rapidly changing world," Haugen says. "While it is important that we allow time for our students to explore and grow, we also need to help students and families think about the future. We need to ensure that not only are our students academically prepared for 'the real world,' but they also need to have access to resources and have experiences that give them the tools they need to be successful."

Haugen cited online learning, flexible scheduling, and increased mentorship opportunities as strategic investment examples that can help students map a pathway for success. "We want to be able to provide individual graduation plans for every student in the district that go beyond the number of credits required to graduate from high school. To invest in such options ensures that our students are college and career ready."

Additional information about the levy referendum will be mailed to voters this fall and district officials said they will be continually updating their website (www.isd197.org) as well as sending out messages via their Facebook and Twitter accounts with levy facts and figures.

"With all of the political noise out there already in the races for Governor, Congress, and the Legislature, it is important for us to get information to our community in a clear and concise manner," said Haugen. "We are committed to using every communication tool we have available to us to be sure our voters have the information they need on Election Day."

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