



Why Does the District Need Proposition Learn?

District revenue growth has not kept pace with increases in our expenditures. To address this issue, the District made significant reductions in budget allocations over several years. The result is that we balanced our budget but are no longer able to provide all of the programs and services necessary to ensure our students continue to receive a high quality education that best prepares them for college or career.

The District spent the past several months carefully studying its operations as part of developing a new Strategic Plan. Through that process, we learned that the FHSD community places a very high value on Francis Howell continuing to be an educational leader, in St. Charles County and the state.

The Strategic Plan teams, with input from the greater community, determined several areas where the District needs to focus its efforts. First, the District needs to invest in updating and increasing its instructional technology resources. Whether students leave FHSD for college or a career, strong technology skills are necessary for their continued success. Prop Learn funds would help us lower the average age of our devices and provide additional devices to lower the student to device ratio. Freezing of the computer refresh cycle for two years as part of the efforts to balance the budget placed the District behind in this area at the same time as our neighboring districts are increasing their investment in instructional technology.

The District is experiencing a notable increase in the number of students who have social/emotional needs that impact their ability to achieve success. After numerous reductions in support services to help balance the budget, this year the District invested in additional Education Support Counselors for our elementary students. The need remains to provide a similar level of support for our secondary students, particularly at middle school. Funds from Prop Learn will provide funding for essential support positions to help our struggling students engage in the instructional process and achieve academic success.

The District cut back on spending for curriculum resources for several years. Prop Learn funds will allow the District to invest in new textbooks and/or electronic resources to ensure our students have access to current, high quality instructional materials. We also need to offer our students courses that have a career-readiness focus. This means greater access to STEM (Science, technology, engineering, math) courses for our middle and elementary students and expansion of STEM courses for our high school students. These classes help our students develop the higher order thinking skills that will be necessary for their success after high school graduation.

The average age of District buildings is 30 years. In addition to the issues with building structures, there is a need to invest in reequipping our schools with desks, chairs, white boards, choir risers, etc. Spending on these furniture, fixtures and equipment items was one of the first areas reduced as the District worked to balance its budget. The need to replace aging and broken equipment has not gone away, however. Prop Learn funds will allow the District to develop a replacement cycle for those often forgotten items that are essential to maintaining a productive learning environment.

Prop Learn is focused on funding the items that are essential to moving the District forward. Many of the priority items were identified by the community during the strategic planning process. Prop Learn will position Francis Howell to remain a premier school district and help ensure that our students graduate well prepared to face the challenges of the next phase of their life, be it college or a career.