

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

To: Media Outlets

From: Monroe County Community School Corporation

Date: June 27, 2023

RE: MCCSC Board of School Trustees Regular Meeting:



(Bloomington, IN.) – Tonight, at the regular meeting of the Board of School Trustees, the Monroe County Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees voted unanimously Tuesday to place an operating referendum on the November 7 ballot. The referendum is designed to finance unfunded needs identified and supported by consensus through surveys and community engagement.

The ballot question seeks voters' approval for raising MCCSC's current referendum tax rate by 8.5 cents. If approved, the referendum will finance expanded services, primarily early childhood education. Currently, fewer than half of 3- and 4-year-olds in the MCCSC community are enrolled in preschool programs throughout the community, with cost and a shortage of available slots being the primary impediments to higher enrollment. In addition, this revenue would cover, for all families, the cost of textbooks, instructional materials, classroom supplies, student technology and Advanced Placement (AP) and Career and Technical Education fees.

"These are school expenses that disproportionately burden lower-income families, in some cases negatively impacting educational opportunities," said Board President Brandon Shurr. "The value of this initiative relative to its cost is extraordinarily high. While it would cost \$50 per year on a \$250,000 home, many families will save several thousand dollars a year."

While the technical rate increase would be 8.5 cents, the actual impact would be closer to 3.5 cents, due to tax caps imposed by state legislation on levy funds and in consideration of property value growth in Monroe County, said MCCSC Chief Financial Officer John Kenny.

In November of 2022, residents approved the extension of a 2016 operating referendum that otherwise would have expired. Voter approval of the 18.5-cent operating referendum allowed the school corporation to maintain programs and increase teacher salaries and staff wages to more competitive levels.

The Board considered this November 2023 referendum after MCCSC's administration heard from families and local employers about remaining unfunded needs. Indiana is among relatively few states that do not fully fund early childhood education.

"The research on benefits of early childhood education is clear and consistent," said Laura Stickels, MCCSC's Early Learning Program Manager. "Children's brains are developing so quickly at this age, and quality education accelerates their language and math readiness and provides lasting social and overall health benefits."

In addition to educational benefits, statistics show that parents with access to quality early childhood education are more likely to participate in the labor market, a plus for families and local employers alike.

A scientific phone survey of community members and feedback from a community advisory committee indicated support for a referendum at 8.5 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. MCCSC is in the lowest 10 percent of taxing rates among Indiana school districts and would remain among the lowest even with approval of the November referendum.

MCCSC is launching a new website July 1. More about the referendum will be available then at <https://www.mccsc.edu>

In other business, the board introduced new maps for consideration of Board district reorganization, which will be available July 7, 2023. The board invites public input prior to the next monthly meeting by emailing comments@mccsc.edu before July 21, 2023.

The next regular meeting of the MCCSC Board of School Trustees is 6:00 p.m. on July 25, 2023 at the Co-Lab located at 553 E Miller Dr, Bloomington, IN 47401. A recording of tonight's meeting of the Board of School Trustees can be accessed through the district's website at www.mccsc.edu.

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The Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) serves nearly 11,000 students from diverse populations in 23 schools in Monroe County, Indiana. MCCSC is a leader in STEM and EARTH curricula, encompasses a Performing Arts Academy, International Baccalaureate schools, Dual Immersion programs, multiple Career Pathways, a Career Center, as well as numerous College Credit opportunities to prepare students towards college and career readiness. Our commitment, as we educate tomorrow's leaders, is to Engage, Empower, and Educate all students in a world-class learning environment empowering them to maximize their educational success in becoming productive, responsible global citizens.

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