

Frequently Asked Questions about the proposed BCSC Operating Referendum

1. Why does BCSC need to increase taxes?

Primarily because the State of Indiana does not provide the necessary funding for our school district to retain outstanding teachers and staff. We have replaced more than 10% of our teachers each of the past five years. We have replaced more than 600 teachers since 2012. We have not filled every bus driver position for more than 8 years. While BCSC is financially solvent, revenue growth has not allowed BCSC to impact employee salaries enough to retain teachers and staff.

Indiana restricts school corporation revenues. Even with small annual increases, funding to support our schools has been decreased by \$46M since 2009. The legislature has provided one way for districts to increase revenue: a local property tax referendum.

2. How will the referendum funding be used?

86.5% will be invested in salaries to retain and recruit more than 700 teachers and more than 900 permanent support staff. 13.5% will be invested in student safety: funding for existing school resource officers, mental health counselors in all buildings, and to update the bus fleet so that no buses are older than 12 years old.

3. What raises will BCSC employees receive?

Teachers: Retention increases for BCSC experience:
\$5K after year 5; \$10K after year 10; \$15K after year 15 (to maximum); Must be bargained
Bus Drivers: \$2/Hour
Support Staff: \$1/Hour

4. Will BCSC use these funds for other things, like administrator salaries?

No. BCSC reports revenues and expenditures in public School Board meetings each quarter. The referendum will be maintained as a separate fund and also included in public Board reports. The public will be able to confirm that the funds are invested in the ways that were advertised.

5. When would the employee pay increases begin?

While teacher increases are subject to collective bargaining, teachers and support staff would receive increases in January 2021.

6. If the referendum passes, how much will my taxes increase?

The cost for an average home will be \$7.79 per month. This tax impact calculator link is available for you to evaluate the impact of the referendum on your property taxes. Funding for the referendum is designed to support operations for 8 years, starting in 2021.

7. Aren't our property taxes already higher than most?

No. Thanks to efficient use of taxpayer funds, BCSC's property tax rate has been about \$0.20 less than the Indiana state average for the past 10 years. The 2019 tax rate (\$0.8512) is #76 out of nearly 300 districts - lower than Jennings County (\$1.1948), Flatrock-Hawcreek (\$1.2475), Center Grove (\$1.0238), and other surrounding and similar districts.

8. Have other districts in Indiana also passed operating referenda?

Yes, many area districts have passed operating referenda: Monroe County, Brown County, Franklin, and Clark-Pleasant (Whiteland). Many comparable districts with similar budget and assessed value to BCSC have also passed increases: Elkhart, Lake Central, Noblesville, Avon, and Westfield.

9. Does BCSC really get a 23% budget increase if the referendum passes?

No. Property taxes make up less than one third of BCSC's revenues. The state took over the majority of funding about 10 years ago. The annual increase of ~\$7.8M is an increase of less than 7% of BCSC's total budget of ~\$117M.

10. I don't have kids in BCSC schools, so why should I vote to increase my taxes?

Strong schools translate to strong property values. Families will often choose the location of their next home based on where their children will go to school. A report by the National Bureau of Economic Research titled "Using Market Valuation to Assess Public School Spending," found that for every dollar spent on public schools in a community, home values increased by \$20. Also, economic development officials will attest that quality schools are often one of their main evaluation determinations on whether to consider a community for job retention and/or expansion.

11. I see BCSC spending money on lots of other projects in the community. Why don't they spend more for teachers and staff and less on facilities?

The state restricts the ways that school districts can use funds. The funds used for facility maintenance and renovation can NOT be used to pay for salaries, benefits, or supplies. The legislature has provided one way for districts to increase revenue for employee salaries: a local property tax referendum.

12. When was the last BCSC referendum approved?

Thanks to voter approval of the construction referendum in 2009, we were able to renovate our two high schools in 2010.

13. What will I see on the ballot when I vote on May 5th?

The question on the ballot will read:

"For the eight (8) calendar years immediately following the holding of the referendum, shall Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation impose a property tax rate that does not exceed fifteen and six tenths cents (\$0.1560) on each one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed valuation and that is in addition to all other property taxes imposed by the School Corporation for the purpose of increasing compensation for teachers and support staff and maintaining student safety?"

14. What happens at the end of the eight years of the referendum?

The need to invest in local public school employee salaries will not go away at the end of the 8-year period. BCSC will likely ask to renew the referendum, as long as the state legislature still allows this one method for increasing local revenues. This is essentially a request to reset the base property tax rate.

15. What will happen if the referendum fails?

Although BCSC is financially solvent and will continue to provide high-quality educational options for all of our students, teacher turnover will likely continue at 10% or greater, even higher in some schools. Wages for support staff will lag behind other comparable positions. The bus fleet will continue to age, requiring increased investments in parts and service. Grant funding for mental health counselors will not be replaced.

Without referendum funds, BCSC will consider other steps in order to retain and recruit staff. These may include higher class sizes, increased student ride time on buses, increased expenses on building maintenance items, decrease in support staff, and decrease in mental health services provided.

16. Where can I go to get more information about BCSC and the referendum?

The links at www.bcsc.k12.in.us/referendum provide facts about the BCSC referendum.