

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ONE LESS MOVE REFERENDUM

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need to expand and renovate our schools?

Enrollment projections and approved Township building permits show that we will have over 700 more students within five years. In addition, the District needs to eliminate the use of trailers which, means we must return over 400 students currently housed in trailers to permanent classrooms. Our buildings are aging and some are in need of much repair. Without necessary upgrade and renovations, the classrooms may fail to conform to State standards. Finally, the 2% cap on property tax increases makes it impossible to expand and renovate our schools within the confines of the annual operating budget.

2. How do we know that over 700 more students are coming?

This number is based upon enrollment projections and the approved Township building permits for residential developments such as Summerfields, Avalon at Somerset, Parkside, Leewood and Somerset at Douglas.

3. How do we know that those 700+ students are not from out of the district?

When the parents/guardians of a new student come to the registration office they must show proof of residency. Documents submitted as proof of residency are carefully scrutinized. Any suspect documents are questioned and followed up by an investigation including a home visit by an Attendance Officer. All registration packets include a signed acknowledgement that any false statements may result in prosecution and/or civil liability for tuition.

Our Attendance Officers also conduct residency verification investigations based upon information from bus drivers and other staff members; information left on our Residency Verification Hotline or via a District web site link and by comparing lists of vacant apartments and registered student addresses.

4. What is in it for my child at his/her elementary school?

Your child will get to remain in his or her "home" school through 5th grade, resulting in one less move and, just as importantly, will remain in an elementary school culture/environment that research has shown to be beneficial to a student's social, emotional, and intellectual development. In addition, specialized classes, such as science, music and art, will once again have dedicated classrooms and no longer be on carts. Class size will return to more desirable levels, thereby reducing the overcrowding we are currently experiencing in many of our classrooms and schools throughout the District. There will be facility improvements at all the elementary schools. Detailed information for the additions and/or renovations planned for each school is available at the individual school and also at www.franklinboe.org. All of the planned improvements contribute to the safety and security of our students.

5. Will the District need to reconfigure elementary school attendance areas?

Part of the plan is to build a new elementary school (Pre K-5) on the Claremont Road property which is already owned by the Board of Education. After the Referendum is approved by the public,

construction will begin on that school. It is anticipated that the new school will be completed in time for the 2018-2019 school year. During the construction period, the District's attendance zones will be revised. School attendance zones will be reconfigured based on the additional classroom space.

6 Why build a new school with the same grade schools so close to each other?

The school on Claremont Road is being built on property that the Board of Education purchased in 2004. Additionally, the Claremont location was selected because a significant number of our students are living in that area. Students in a section of that area are now being bused to Elizabeth Avenue School. After the referendum those students will be returned to a school closer to where they live. Once it is opened, the Claremont Road school will service students in grades Pre-K – 5. Further information on the referendum can be found on our district website.

7. Which students will attend the new Claremont Road School?

Transportation efficiency is the primary factor in determining where a student attends school. Other factors such as racial balance, utilization of facilities, and effective delivery of educational programs and services are also considered. While we do not know which specific students will be affected by the reconfiguration, it is anticipated that students who live in the Franklin Park area currently zoned for attendance at the Elizabeth Ave School will attend either Franklin Park School or the new Claremont Road School.

8. Why does the District need to eliminate the trailers?

The District currently utilizes 24 trailer classrooms, which are not connected to the main school buildings. Utilizing the trailers forces students to go outside when they need to change classes. Trailers are recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) as temporary classrooms. They are non-conforming classrooms and require annual approval by the DOE. The DOE requires the District to assemble and implement a plan to permanently remove trailers from use as classrooms within a short period of time. One Less Move is our plan.

Trailers are a costly, short term solution that draws funding from the classroom. Each trailer costs \$332,693 and is funded by the operating budget, drawing funds away from the classroom. The District is committed to spending almost \$4,000,000 which will come from the annual operating budget, thereby reducing resources for instruction, teachers, and technology. Without a successful referendum, it is highly likely that the District will need to purchase additional trailer classrooms, drawing even more money away from the instructional and co-curricular programs. With a successful referendum providing an additional school building and classroom additions, students will be able to stay in their schools and money will no longer be spent on trailers.

9. Who developed this referendum plan?

The Referendum Plan is the culmination of recommendations made by the following: the Operational Performance Review of Franklin Township Public School District – also known as the MGT Report (2009); the Long Range Facilities Plan; the Strategic Plan (2012) and the Long Range Facilities Plan Advisory Task Force comprised of community members, civic leaders, school board members, teachers, administrators, architects and engineers.

10. What if the referendum fails?

The District expects more than 700 additional students enrolling in our existing schools, resulting in severe overcrowding at the elementary level. The District will have no choice but to increase class

size and/or continue to eliminate classrooms dedicated to specials, such as science, music and art. Alternatively, the District may have to consider staggered or split sessions. The over 400 students who currently utilize the trailers will continue to do so, and more students may need to use these non-conforming classrooms.

The District will have to purchase additional trailers, thereby increasing the number of students in trailers, which results in a less than optimal learning environment. Trailers are not connected to the main school building, forcing our students to be outside when changing classes or going to lunch. Trailers are a costly, short term solution that draws financial resources from the classroom. Each trailer costs \$332,693 and is funded through the operating budget. The District is committed to spending almost \$4,000,000 on trailers that must be replaced with permanent classrooms. The \$4,000,000 spent on trailers could have been used to maintain and/or reduce class size, instructional materials and technology for our students. While trailers are recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education as temporary classrooms, they require State approval every year. Approval is not guaranteed and is dependent upon the district having a plan to eliminate their use.

By acting now, the District has the ability to take advantage of state grants and other potential debt service aid which exceeds \$18.6 million. We are also experiencing near record low interest rates and lower construction costs. If we miss this opportunity, we may be faced with higher costs later. Finally, the 700+ new students coming to Franklin Township Public Schools will still need our facilities. Without the additional instructional space and necessary repairs, the quality of our facilities will deteriorate. Our academic programs may also suffer because of overcrowding at our elementary schools; additional specialized classes on rolling carts, instead of in a classroom; and more students utilizing trailers as classrooms. While we take pride in the education that we provide our students now, overcrowding will detract from that quality of education and could lower the overall quality of our school district. It is a well-known fact that the quality of the school district is an important consideration for young families looking for a home. If the quality of our schools decreases, property values may also decrease.

11. What is our back up plan if referendum does not pass?

The District will increase class size and continue to eliminate classrooms dedicated to specials, such as science, music and art. Alternatively, the District may have to consider staggered or split sessions. The 400 plus students currently housed in trailers will continue to do so, and more students will be housed in trailers.

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12. What is the average number of students per classroom in the township?

Class size varies by school and grade level and may fluctuate, often on a daily basis, as students transfer into the district. Currently, with the use of 24 trailer classrooms and without the 700 plus students that will enrolling in our district, we exceed the class size established by Regulation 6151 in grades K, 1, and 2 and are almost exceeding the class size established in our regulation.

13. Assuming there will be an increase of 700 in student population during the next 5 years what effect it will have in the average # of students per class/school?

700 plus additional students will result in severe overcrowding and significantly exceed the class size established in Regulation 6151. The District will have to increase class size and continue to eliminate classrooms dedicated to specials, such as science, music and art. The District may have to consider staggered or split sessions.

14. Considering that we have many students who are not meeting the Common Core standards and students also have to pass PARCC is it best to spend money to train teachers/provide the proper material to teachers during the next couple of years so grades improve?

Because of our current overcrowding, the district is spending \$4,000,000 for trailers using money that could have gone to reduce class size, purchase materials, computers and resource materials for our students. If the referendum passes, we can use the money we are now spending on trailers to reduce class size and provide our students with the materials they need to meet and exceed State standards.

15. Will the Referendum affect the Pre K Program?

The addition of the Claremont Road School will provide 5 additional classroom (2 for our general education pre-school program and 3 for our special education pre-school program) allowing the district to service up to 180 more pre-school students.

16. Given the instability of the Central Administration of the District why should I vote for the Referendum now?

Our Interim Superintendent has over 20 years of experience as a Superintendent of Schools and has experience with successful referendums and planning for new construction. Dr. Seitz has overseen successful referendum projects at Hunterdon Central Regional High School District and in Parsippany-Troy Hills School District plus a myriad of construction projects in Woodbridge Township.

Additionally, recognizing the need for stability as the District seeks to fill senior leadership positions, Dr. Seitz has committed to stay for two years if requested by the Board of Education and the Board is currently moving to extend Dr. Seitz's contract at the December 11, 2014 Board of Education meeting.

Finally, once the Referendum is approved it will take approximately 3 years to complete. During that time, a permanent Superintendent, as well as other key senior administrators will be in place and Dr. Seitz has committed to work closely with the Board of Education and the new, permanent senior administrators to insure a seamless transition and to assist as needed in the completion of the referendum.

ONE MIDDLE SCHOOL ON TWO CAMPUSES

1. What does One Middle School on Two Campuses mean for my child?

The Referendum Plan will create One Middle School (Grades 6, 7 and 8) with two campuses, the current Middle School and Sampson G. Smith School. Your child will remain in middle school for three years (grades 6 – 8) resulting in One Less Move (3 instead of 4 school moves), which benefits the student academically, emotionally, and socially.

There will be equality of programs at both of the schools and the opportunity for students at either school to participate in extracurricular and athletic activities. Both schools will have the same

curriculum, instruction and assessment and a shared vision of student achievement for grades 6-8. The use of two campuses will allow for optimal class size and a strong, broad based curricular and co-curricular middle school program. Each campus will have a dedicated teaching staff and administrative team lead by a principal.

2. The materials say one middle school, two campuses. Does this mean that there will be one middle school principal over both physical locations to ensure that it is truly one middle school?

Each campus will be of a sufficient size and have a large enough student population to require its own principal. There will be a Principal at the FMS campus and a Principal of the SGS campus. There will be equality of programs at both of the schools and the opportunity for students at either school to participate in extracurricular and athletic activities. The principals will work closely with each other and district administrators, to ensure consistency in the climate and culture of the new middle school program.

3. How are you determining which students get to go to which middle school? Do parents have any input?

Transportation efficiency will be a factor in determining the placement of students at either campus. Other factors such as racial balance, utilization of facilities, and effective delivery of educational programs and services will be considered in determining which campus a student attends. The District will not split families. Siblings will attend the same middle school campus.

4. Are you dividing neighborhoods?

Transportation efficiency will be a factor in determining the placement of students at either campus. It would follow that the students who attended the same elementary school would be placed at the same middle school campus. It is anticipated, however, that some of the attendance zones for our elementary schools will be realigned to insure racial balance, effective utilization of facilities, and effective delivery of educational programs and services.

5. How will the racial and economic distribution of students occur?

The racial and economic distribution of students will be one factor for consideration in the reconfiguration of the District's attendance zones. During the construction period, the District's attendance zones will be realigned and presented to the Board for approval. Factors which will be considered in realignment will include the number of students enrolled at each of the elementary schools at that time (including the number of 5th grade students who will remain in their elementary schools); the economic and racial distribution in the elementary schools; the number of classrooms in each of the buildings; and the ability to safely and efficiently transport students to school.

6. Are you determining Middle School students' schools based upon the ability to walk to school?

To some degree, the assignment of students will likely be based on the ability to walk. However, in order to insure racial balance, utilization of facilities, and effective delivery of educational programs and services students, some students who currently walk to FMS may be bused to SGS. Due to all walking routes to SGS having been identified as hazardous, we will continue our policy of busing students to SGS.

7. Will it be the exact same bell schedule?

Once the attendance zones have been approved, safe and efficient bus routes can be finalized. It may be determined that slightly different arrival and dismissal times at each of the Franklin Middle School campuses may create more efficient bus routes. However, both schools will have the same type of schedule with the same number and length of classroom periods.

8. What happens to the CARE program for the 6th grade students?

It is expected that the CARE program will continue for all 6th grade students at Franklin Middle School regardless of which campus they attend.

9. Will Franklin have two middle school teams for sports? How will the sports program work with regard to location of practices, tryouts and staffing? If there are two teams, will they play each other? Will there be any reduction in the number of teams regarding is what is being offered now?

There will be one Middle School sports program which includes interested students from both campuses. There will be one team representing the "Middle School" with students from the SGS and FMS campuses. While specific information regarding the number of teams, practice locations, tryouts and staffing has not been finalized, it is anticipated that particular sports will practice and play where the existing facilities are located. For example, football at the existing Franklin Middle School and soccer at the existing Sampson G. Smith fields. Once again, students at both campuses will be allowed to try out for any sport.

10. Will all of the existing clubs and activities be offered separately at each school or will some of the clubs be combined? What about competitive clubs like robotics? Or the band for the Dorney Park annual event? Will each school have its own plays?

Each campus will offer after school clubs and activities. There could be the same club running at each campus depending on student interest. For example, under our plan Robotics will be offered at each school. The band will compete at Dorney Park. Both schools will have a band to perform at their campus. Common music will be practice for the larger Dorney Park Competition where the students would come together as one.

11. What will happen to the instrumental music and choral programs in the elementary schools? Will there still be a 5th grade music program? Will you reinstate the 4th grade music program?

When the referendum is passed the elementary music programs will continue as they are, but in a classroom, not in a trailer or on a cart. There will be a 5th grade music program as it currently exists.

FUNDING QUESTIONS

1. How much is this really going to cost me?

The projected cost for the average home assessed at \$306,058 is \$166.46 per year or 46 cents per day.

Visit our presentation on line at page 29 to see a tax calculator so that you may see how much you would pay based on the value of your home.

2. Why should we act now?

The District has the ability to take advantage of state grants and other potential debt service aid totaling more than \$18.6 million by acting now.

Now is a time of near record low interest rates. If we miss this opportunity, we will face higher costs later.

The 700+ new students coming to Franklin Township Public Schools will still need our facilities. Without the additional instructional space and necessary repairs, the quality of our facilities will deteriorate. Our academic programs may also suffer because of overcrowding at our elementary schools; additional specialized classes on rolling carts, instead of in a classroom; and more students utilizing trailers as classrooms. While we take pride in the education that we provide our students now, overcrowding will detract from that quality of education and could lower the overall quality of our school district.

Finally, it is a well-known fact that the quality of the school district is an important consideration for young families looking for a home. If the quality of our schools decreases, property values will likely decrease thereby increasing the tax levy for everyone. For example, if Franklin Township residential and commercial property values decrease. The tax levy for residential and commercial property will have to be increased to maintain the current funding level for our schools.

3. What do you mean by historically low interest rates?

The Federal Reserve has kept the federal funds rate low for several years. Predictions for the first quarter of 2015 are anticipating interest rates to rise. When the referendum passes this December, we anticipate going out to bid to lock in a low rate and also ask that the bonds be callable so that if interest rates go lower, we would be able to refinance.

4. How will the referendum affect the annual, yearly budget? How do we pay for the additional teachers and energy to staff the new school and classrooms?

All referendum associated staffing, resources, transportation, and energy costs will be handled within the annual operating budget, which is restricted by a 2% tax increase. This has been the case with all enrollment increases over the past ten years - the associated costs of staffing, transportation, and resources have been included in the annual, operating budget. This will continue to be done.

The referendum will allow the District to return 24 teachers plus support personnel (such as aides) to new, permanent classrooms at no additional cost to the District.

In addition, the District is embarking on a comprehensive energy saving retro fit program called [ESIP](#). ESIP allows the District to replace old, inefficient controls, motors, lights, doors and windows (at no out of pocket cost to the District), thereby reducing our energy consumption. The new school and renovations will be energy efficient, thereby reducing our energy consumption compared to what we are currently spending on the trailers.

5. How much the cost of operating will increase following building/expanding the facilities? How many more staff we will need to hire? Where will the money come from? Are we going to ask tax payers for more money?

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annual operating budget. This has been the case with all enrollment increases over the past ten years.

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In addition, the District is embarking on a comprehensive energy saving retro fit program called ESIP. ESIP allows the District to replace old, inefficient controls, motors, lights, doors and windows (at no out of pocket cost to the District), thereby reducing our energy consumption. The new school and renovations will be energy efficient, thereby reducing our energy consumption compared to what we are currently spending on the trailers.

Recently we learned that the interest rate on the bonds submitted for ESIP came in at 2.747% rather than the expected 3.5%. This will result in additional savings to the district over a 20 year period of \$582,694 in addition to the previously projected savings of \$800,000.

The ESIP program promises to upgrade the heat, lighting, controls, boilers, and other energy saving devices at no cost to our community while saving the District approximately \$1,300,000.

More information regarding the Referendum is available on the district website @ franklinboe.org Additional questions can be sent to onelessmove@franklinboe.org