

This is one mockup of what a new Rochester High School could look like.



## Replacement EP&O Levy and

# BOND

Learn more about the bond and levy measures on the Special Election Ballot this February in this voter information guide. *Return your ballot by February 13, 2024.*

## OUR WHY

### Our district is growing.

Our high school is already 200 students over capacity. We need a building designed to accommodate current and future generations of students.

### Our students deserve safe learning spaces.

Our elementary, middle, and high school buildings need safety and security updates to keep our students safe.

### Our future begins here.

Students deserve access to high-quality career and technical education (CTE). A bond would fund classrooms designed to prepare students to become productive members of the Rochester community.

On February 13, 2024, voters will have the opportunity to vote on Proposition 2, a bond measure that would provide **\$89,190,000** in local funding for Rochester Schools. If approved by voters, the bond would provide funding to ensure all Warriors have access to high-quality academic and athletic facilities. The bond would fund:



#### New building

*for Rochester High School students*



#### Safety & security

*for all Rochester school campuses*



#### Covered play

*structures at both elementary schools*



#### Performing arts

*center for Rochester High School students*



#### CTE classrooms

*for Rochester High School students*



#### Athletic fields

*at Rochester Middle and High Schools*

[www.rochester.wednet.edu](http://www.rochester.wednet.edu)

# Building *our future* together

## Support from the Rochester community has created school spaces where our Rochester Warriors can thrive.

This winter, Rochester School District is asking voters to consider an **\$89,190,000 bond measure** to modernize Rochester schools for current and future generations of our Rochester Warriors. The projected rate is a maximum of **\$2.31 per \$1,000** of assessed property value.

Our staff are doing all they can to prepare our students for lifelong learning, rewarding careers, and productive citizenship — but aging facilities mean that our students don't always have access to the tools they need to thrive.

## PROPOSITION 2

### General Obligation Bonds

The Board of Directors of Rochester School District No. 401 adopted Resolution No. 23-16 approving a proposition for bonds.

This proposition would authorize the district to make structural updates to enhance safety and security in district schools, to update the water systems on high school and elementary campuses, to construct a new Rochester High School, including CTE instructional spaces and a performing arts center, to build outdoor play structures at Rochester Primary and Grand Mound Elementary Schools, to improve athletic fields/facilities at Rochester High and Rochester Middle Schools, and to undertake other capital infrastructure and technology improvements as deemed necessary by the Board to enable district facilities to meet program needs.

## WHY BOND 2024?

### Fast facts on Rochester School District

Both the Rochester and Grand Mound communities have grown steadily over the last 15 years. As our area grows, so too does our student body. And as our student body grows, so too should our schools.

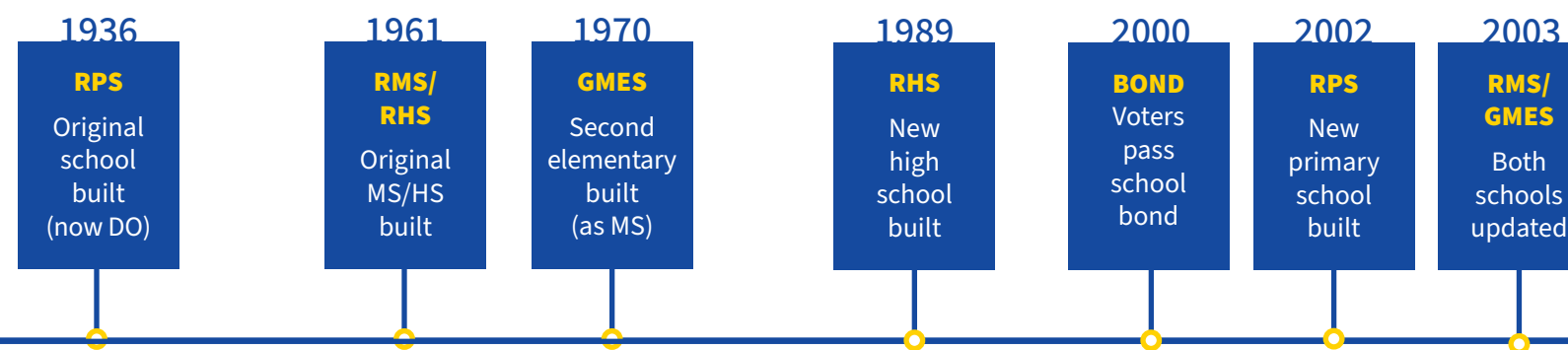
### Population Growth, 2010–2020

1 person icon = 500



## UNDER CONSTRUCTION

A brief history of Rochester School District's building and modernization projects, 1936–2003



## Ratepayer Costs

State funding, known as basic education funding, **does not fund** modernizing facilities or building new schools.

If the bond is not approved this year, Rochester may have to request more funding next time. When bonds don't pass, school construction plans are put on hold even as costs rise.

Rochester is asking voters to consider a rate of **\$2.31 per \$1,000** of assessed property value.



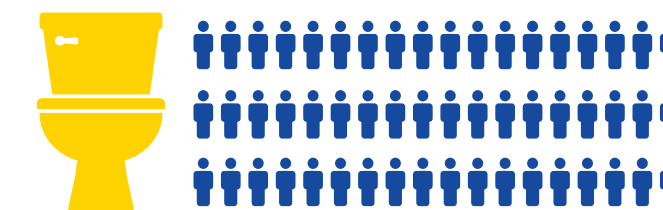
If both the 2024 bond and the 2024 replacement EP&O levy are approved by voters, our combined rate will be comparable to other voter-approved rates in Thurston County.

## Proposed Max. Combined Rates, 2025

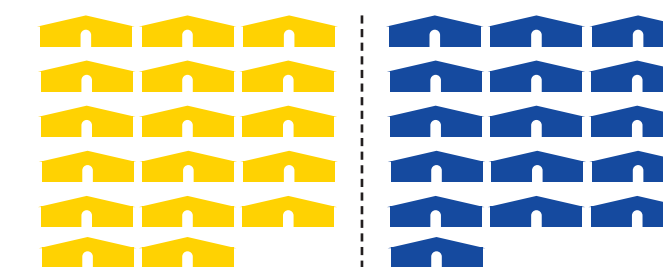


## Rochester High School

Rochester High School (RHS) was built in 1989 for a student body of between 400 and 450 students. Today, **more than 600 students** learn at RHS. Severe overcrowding means that our person-toilet ratio at RHS is, well, in the toilet:



Overcrowding means **54 students and staff** share each stall at RHS. It also means that at any given time, up to half of our high school students are learning in portables rather than in the main RHS building.



RHS has **17 classrooms** in the building and **16 portable classrooms** to serve its 611 students. Portables are a temporary solution to a long-term need.





 **Rochester High School**  
Building a future-ready school

**Pictured:** The failing 35-year-old roof at RHS, which regularly causes leaks inside the school

Funds from the bond would support the **construction of a new Rochester High School** to support current and future generations of our Warriors on their journey to graduation.

**Local Bond:** \$78,106,685 **> Total:** \$95,527,401  
**State Match:** \$17,420,716

**What?**

If the bond is approved, Rochester School District plans to construct a 125,000 ft<sup>2</sup> building designed for 800 students. The new school would include:

- Purpose-built academic and program spaces
- An expanded commons and 300-seat performing arts center
- A gym and auxiliary gym for student fitness and indoor athletics

**Where?**

The new school would be built on school grounds southwest of the existing RHS building.

**When?**

The construction process could begin as early as 2024. The new school could be completed as early as 2026.

**Why?**

Our high school is currently 200 students over capacity, and our district is projected to **grow steadily over the next decade**. If the bond doesn't pass, we'll need to make costly repairs to a building that no longer adequately serves our student body.



 **Career & Technical Education**  
Fostering future leaders

**Pictured:** Students engaging in RHS robotics coursework

Funds from the bond would support the **creation of dedicated classroom spaces** for future-focused career and technical education (CTE) classes. CTE is included in the \$95.5 million Rochester High School project.

**What?**

If the bond is approved, Rochester School District plans to create state-of-the-art spaces designed to meet current and future program needs for:

- Robotics
- Engineering
- Wood Shop
- Material Science
- Welding
- Medical Sciences
- Agriculture

**When?**

The construction process could begin as early as 2024. The new CTE labs could be completed as early as 2026.

**Why?**

CTE improvements would help ensure our high school CTE programs mirror industry equipment and facilities. Modern equipment and facilities would better prepare our students for positions in high-demand technical careers across our region.



 **Athletic & Play Spaces**  
Supporting outdoor activities

**Pictured:** The Girls' Soccer Team faces off against Eatonville

Funds from the bond would support **improvements to fields at all schools** for athletics and outdoor learning.

**Local Bond:** \$8,481,268\*

\*This total also includes safety and security updates

**What?**

If the bond is approved, Rochester School District plans to update outdoor learning and athletics spaces, including:

- New covered play structures and synthetic play fields at the elementary schools
- Synthetic football and soccer turf, as well as renovated baseball and fastpitch fields at the middle and high schools

**When?**

Field updates and covered play structures would be finished by 2025.

**Why?**

Outdoor education, athletics, and play would help our students keep active, stay healthy, and build lasting connections with one another.

**Juntos construimos nuestro futuro.**

Las comunidades deciden si quieren aprobar los bonos escolares para financiar la construcción, mantenimiento o renovación de las escuelas. Este invierno, Rochester School District pide a los votantes que consideren **un bono de \$89,190,000** para modernizar todas las escuelas del distrito.

Los fondos que reciben los distritos del estado de Washington para la «educación básica» de los estudiantes no costean la construcción ni el mantenimiento de las escuelas. Los votantes locales deben decidir si quieren aprobar los bonos escolares para este propósito.

Si se aprueba la propuesta del bono, la tasa sería de aproximadamente **\$2.31 por cada \$1,000** de valor de la propiedad.

**¿Para qué necesitamos un bono escolar?**

Queremos que todos y cada uno de nuestros estudiantes **puedan prosperar**. Si los votantes deciden aprobar el bono, nos ayudaría a:

- **Construir** una nueva Rochester High School, puesto que la población estudiantil ya sobrepasó hace tiempo la capacidad de sus instalaciones.  
*Actualmente, la mitad de nuestras clases se dan en salones de clase portátiles.*
- **Aumentar** la seguridad de los estudiantes en todas nuestras escuelas.
- **Renovar** los patios de recreo de las escuelas primarias y los campos deportivos de Rochester Middle y Rochester High School



**En el corazón de la comunidad.**

Aprende más sobre el bono en nuestro sitio web.

**Ready to learn more about all of our bond initiatives?**

We're providing additional information on bond-funded security updates and more at [www.rochester.wednet.edu/](http://www.rochester.wednet.edu/).

[www.rochester.wednet.edu](http://www.rochester.wednet.edu)

# An investment in *learning*

## School levies are an investment in the future of our students, schools, and community.

In Rochester School District, we promote and protect the community's investment in resources that optimize student achievement.

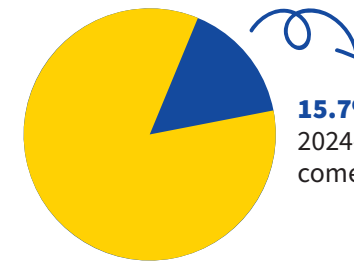
This year, Rochester is asking voters to consider a four-year **replacement EP&O levy** to continue to fund key student programs and staffing.

Voter-approved educational programs and operations (EP&O) levies have helped us create engaging learning experiences based on caring relationships, high academic standards, and relevance to the changing world.

Over the past four years, the **community-approved levy** has helped us update curriculum, maintain technology, and sustain day-to-day operating costs.

## The funding gap State funding vs. school needs

Rochester School District receives funding from federal, state, and local sources to support student learning.



**15.7% of our funding** in the 2024–25 school year would come from the local levy.

The State funds only about **75% of the day-to-day costs** of operating a school district and providing the programs and staff our students need to succeed.

Voters can decide whether they'd like to approve the replacement levy to close the funding gap and sustain high-quality educational opportunities for Rochester students.

## What would the replacement levy cost? Levy costs and revenue

From 2025 to 2028, the levy would raise nearly **\$27.5 million in funding** for Rochester School District, including approximately \$24 million in funding from local ratepayers.

Rochester is asking voters to consider a rate of **\$2.50 per \$1,000** of assessed property value.

This is the **same rate that was approved by voters in 2020**.



Districts with few commercial or high-value properties can access special funding through the state, but only when voters pass a levy measure.

If the levy passes, Rochester is eligible for almost \$3.5 million in local effort assistance from 2025 to 2028, which will go directly to supporting student programming and operations.

## What exactly does the levy fund? Key programs and staffing

The prototypical funding model often leaves small districts without the funds to staff administrative, specialist, and therapist positions. The levy provides **funding for both core and specialist staff**, including:

- Classroom teachers and educational assistants
- Nurses, counselors, and behavior specialists
- Athletic coaches and club advisors
- Maintenance and custodial staff
- Highly capable and multilingual program staff
- School resource officers

Levy funding helps us recruit and retain high-quality educators and school staff. Without levy funding, we might not be able to sustain programs that help our students thrive, especially as our student body grows.

Levy funding also supports evidence-based programs, curriculum, and educator professional development.

## PROPOSITION 1

### Educational Programs and Operations Replacement Levy

The Board of Directors of Rochester School District No. 401 adopted Resolution No. 23-15 authorizing a replacement levy to continue support for educational programs.

This proposition would authorize the district to levy taxes, to replace an expiring levy on all taxable property within the district to maintain current educational programs and operation expenses not fully funded by the state (including special education, nurses, counselors, graduation readiness, technology, athletics, and extracurricular activities).

### Levy-funded student programs

The 2024 replacement levy would also fund:

-  **Art and music education**  
Levy-funded art and music education help students create and innovate.
-  **Special education**  
Special education is not fully funded by the state. The levy would help close the gap.
-  **Athletics and clubs**  
Levy-funded athletics and clubs help students grow community.

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Replacement LEVY

## ROCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** What is the replacement levy?

**A:** A replacement **educational programs & operations** (EP&O) levy is on the February ballot. The proposed maximum rate of \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value remains the same as the voter-approved 2020 EP&O levy.

**Q:** Why is Rochester School District asking voters to consider a bond?

**A:** Public schools in Washington do not receive state funding to **build or modernize schools**. Bond funds would help Rochester School District build a new high school, update athletics and play structures at the elementary and middle schools, and modernize safety and security features districtwide.

**Q:** Where do bond and levy dollars go?

**A:** Bonds are for building, and levies are for learning. All funds raised from voter-approved measures **stay in our district** to support generations of Warriors.

**Q:** Who is eligible to vote?

**A:** All **registered voters** residing within Rochester School District are eligible to vote on both measures. Visit [thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/auditor/elections](http://thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/auditor/elections) to learn how you can register to vote.

**Q:** Do I qualify for an exemption?

**A:** Seniors and people with disabilities **may be exempt** from all or part of levies and bonds. Visit the Thurston County Assessor's Office online at [thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/auditor/](http://thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/auditor/) or in person to learn more or fill out an application.



## At the heart of the community

*Please remember to vote by February 13, 2024.*

Want to learn more about the 2024 bond? Call the District Office at 360-273-5536 or send your questions to our superintendent at [jbethman@rochester.wednet.edu](mailto:jbethman@rochester.wednet.edu).