



Growing **HAND in HAND**

PIERZ SCHOOL REFERENDUM '18



RIGHT TIME // RIGHT STUFF // RIGHT SIZE // RIGHT PRICE



2018 School Bond
REFERENDUM GUIDE
VOTE APRIL 10

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE STRONG, COMMUNITIES THRIVE

In Pierz, our schools are the heart and soul of our community. People choose to live here in large part because of our schools. And our little rural community – including our businesses, real estate values, etc. – is thriving because of that desire. It's important for the health of our community that our schools stay competitive. Our schools are your schools – **their future is in your hands.**

Pierz Schools are a Good Return on Your Investment

Sound fiscal management

- Balanced budgets, positive fund balance quadrupled since 2002, A1 credit rating
- Lowest school property taxes in the region
- Past referendum kept taxes flat – same dollar amount now as in 1991
- Stable student enrollment

Competitive test scores

- Pierz consistently outperforms the State Average on the MCA Math and Reading Tests
- Kindergarten Readiness – 84% of preschoolers met the standard
- Strong preschool program preparing children for kindergarten

Strong graduation rates – 94.68% class of 2017 vs 86.38% state average

Dedicated teachers – 100% licensed teaching staff

Robust technology – Broadband, ITV classes, and One-to-One Chromebooks for grades 2-12

Wide selection of student learning options

- Gifted Services – ASPIRE, CNA certification, access to a complete A.A. degree on-site, Career and College Readiness, College in the Schools – 27 courses with 79 college credits offered, and PSEO

Top-ranking, championship-caliber activity and athletic programs

- From theater to football, robotics to FFA

“ We have consistently outpaced the state by a wide margin, last year by more than 10%, and that is our goal, to continuously outpace the state by 10% or more. **”**

Tom Otte,
Pioneer Elementary principal

GET THE FACTS AND MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION

Dear Neighbors,

Pierz Schools has always done a lot with “just enough.” In fact, we’ve excelled where some neighboring districts have failed – we have a proud tradition of offering our students a first-rate education program – while still keeping our taxes the lowest of all our neighboring districts.

OUR CHALLENGE

Some of our facilities have become outdated and inadequate. A few shared facilities are unsafe, too small or not up-to-code including our parking lot, band room, elementary gym, and kitchen/cafeteria. And we’ve outgrown our classroom space. We’ve been pressed to use poor instructional settings: classes in conference rooms, storage rooms, hallways, and even portable classrooms for some of our youngest students.

GROWING HAND IN HAND

Our schools are at the heart of our community. We are proud to see Pierz thriving and growing despite some of the hardships that face rural Minnesota. We know there are struggles, but we also know that when we work hand in hand we can keep our community strong and create an educational environment that provides what our children and grandchildren need for a successful future – whether for a career or continuing on to pursue a college education.

THE RIGHT TIME. THE RIGHT SIZE. THE RIGHT STUFF. THE RIGHT PRICE.

In a recent community survey, you told us your priorities for our schools and what you are willing to support for our students. We listened. You wanted us to refine the plan and address our needs as soon as possible. From your responses, we know you wanted a plan that wouldn’t overburden you. The new plan is less than \$10 million or about **half the cost of the last referendum** (\$8.8 million LESS). It does not include an auditorium and is less square footage. If the bond passes, the property tax increase will amount to less than \$12 per month on an average-priced home in the district. The School Board is also in the process of capping open enrollment so we won’t outgrow our facilities.

We want all Pierz voters to get the facts in order to make an informed decision when voting. Please use this brochure, our website at www.pierz.k12.mn.us, or contact any School Board member or Superintendent George Weber with questions.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
The Pierz School Board

Colleen Seelen, Chair, Steve Boser, Clerk, Rick Sczublewski, Treasurer, Dean Virnig,
Joanne Broschofsky, Patricia Stangl, Superintendent George Weber



||||| COMMUNITY DRIVEN

We Asked for Your Feedback.

A professional survey of community members was conducted in 2017. More than 700 people covering a variety of age groups and demographics responded including 40% who owned Ag land and 59% who did not have school-age children. The response rate was among the highest the survey consultants had seen. The district designed a new plan to align with the facilities needs the community supported most – elementary classrooms, band room, kitchen, parking lot, and elementary gym – along with the community's request to refine the plan and address these needs in a timely fashion.



You
Responded.
We
Listened.

SURVEY SAYS

67%

Refine the plan based on feedback and ask for voter support

72%

Address facility needs as soon as possible or within 1-5 years

62-71%

Very or somewhat likely to support elementary gym space, band room, parking lot, and kitchen/cafeteria improvements

80%

Very likely or somewhat likely to support additional elementary classrooms

A Community Process.

This fall and winter, three meetings were held to help the school district shape solutions to facilities challenges. After a Community Engagement meeting with a wide cross section of community members, the district helped form a Facilities Committee to further assess these facility needs. More than two dozen community members, staff, and School Board members met in December and January. The committee was tasked with defining needs, reviewing options, and recommending an option to the School Board for a possible April bond referendum.

Participation was excellent and a number of issues and recommendations were evaluated. The Facilities Committee determined that it made sense for the School Board to move forward with the referendum request and show the community both the value and the need.

Just Enough.

Using the survey results, along with input from the Facilities Committee, the School Board was able to narrow down the plan to meet the community's top requests: focus on critical needs, act quickly, and cost-effectively address space designated for teaching and instruction.

||||| THE RIGHT TIME.

Some of our facilities are inadequate, and we are out of space for some students.

Safety and Code-Compliance are Issues

- Our parking lot is too small and the layout is unsafe. Buses, cars, and pedestrians all share the same spaces.
- The 1963 kitchen serving lines do not meet state codes for separate meal lines.

“Parents dropping kids off have to avoid high school students walking across the parking lot to school and at the same time dodge the buses. It’s unsafe.”
Loren Meyer, Pioneer Elementary custodian

Student Learning Space is Inadequate

- Teachers are sharing classrooms, and teaching in a storage room and small conference rooms.
- Students in modular classrooms lose instructional time when changing into winter gear to go to lunch, library, and physical education.
- 5th and 6th graders don't have access to a science room with standard equipment.

“There are safety concerns, I have a young child in the portables. I don't like that they are not behind the secured locked doors of the school building.”
Janel Betsinger, parent

Elementary Physical Education Space Falls Short

- With 675 children in eight grades (Pre K-6), two dedicated spaces are needed to accommodate two classes at one time.
- Preschool children cannot use the gym because it is filled with other grades the entire day. The custodial staff must convert the cafeteria as a small activity space daily.

“We’re making do but we lose lots of learning time because kids are transitioning back and forth. We lose instructional time every day.”
Tom Otte, Pioneer Elementary principal

Band Room Space is Jammed

- The 1963 band room does not meet state code for the 242 band students or noise level. (The band room is shared by grades 5-12, including Holy Trinity students.)
- The band room has no storage for instruments, resulting in lost instructional time.

“Every single chair is filled in that room and there is nowhere left for us to move in there. We are using the hallway outside the band room and storage closets. We are finding every nook and cranny we can possibly find.”
Joel Pohland, band teacher

THE RIGHT SIZE.

The Pierz motto of “**just enough**” played a big role in the planning of this referendum. The new proposal addresses critical needs. It does not include an auditorium and is less square footage than the previous plan. The referendum would address inadequate facilities and improve our instructional model for **about half of the 2017 request** at just under \$10 million in bonds.



“
This referendum is truly the bare bones of our needs.”

*Karrie Boser,
Healy High School principal*

THE RIGHT STUFF.

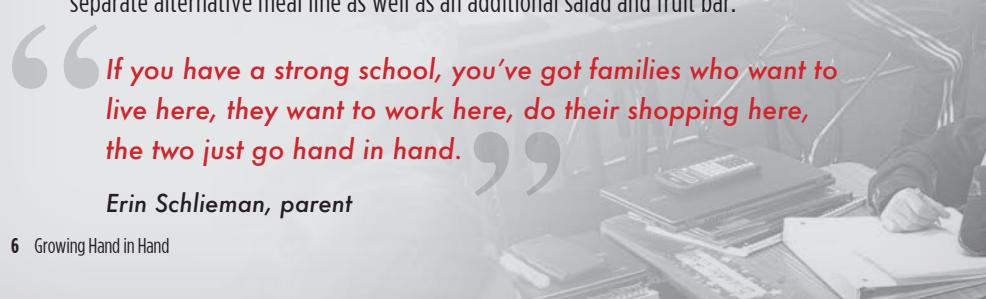
The plan addresses classroom space needs head on. We will build a new band room, elementary gym, and six additional elementary classrooms.

The plan provides an improved instructional model – grouping grade levels together, moving classrooms inside, and connecting the two schools.

- The four outdoor preschool classrooms will be brought inside.
- New fifth and sixth grade classrooms will be added next to the high school and grouped with a science lab to meet current science education standards.
- All elementary classes will be grouped by grade level to facilitate optimal learning and collaboration.
- Both schools will be connected so students don’t have to go outside, which will improve safety and efficiency.

The new plan updates facilities that are unsafe or not code-compliant.

- The new parking lot configuration will separate buses, parents, and students, reduce traffic congestion, and improve safety, as well as provide additional parking spaces.
- The 1963-era kitchen designed for 300 - not today’s 600 - students will be enlarged to accommodate new health and safety requirements so it meets state code. This includes a separate alternative meal line as well as an additional salad and fruit bar.



“
If you have a strong school, you’ve got families who want to live here, they want to work here, do their shopping here, the two just go hand in hand.”

Erin Schlieman, parent



“
We are providing a place for kids to go after hours. This keeps them from hanging around in the streets. It provides entertainment and activity to keep busy minds busy doing positive things. A strong school is a value to the community.”

Eric Hanneken, Pierz chief of police



DID YOU KNOW?

PIERZ HAS THE LOWEST TAXES OF ALL OUR NEIGHBORS.

Even if the referendum is approved, Pierz will still have among the lowest residential, agricultural, and commercial property taxes in the region.

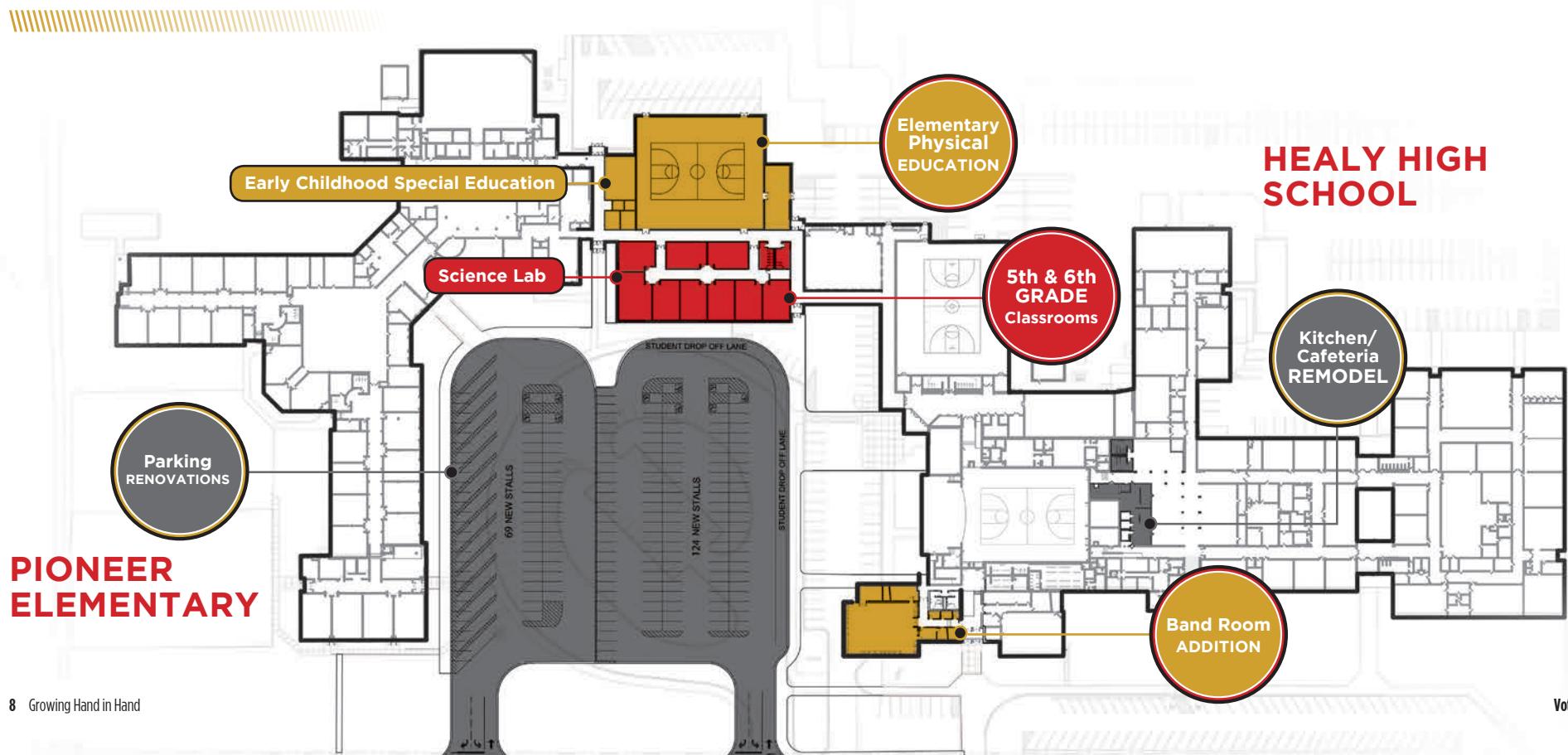
If the taxpayers want to see how their dollars are being spent, our facilities are always in use, day and night, every day of the week, the community is using our schools – from little kids to high school students to senior citizens – everyone enjoys our facilities.

J.D. Folger, Pioneer Elementary custodian

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX COMPARISON

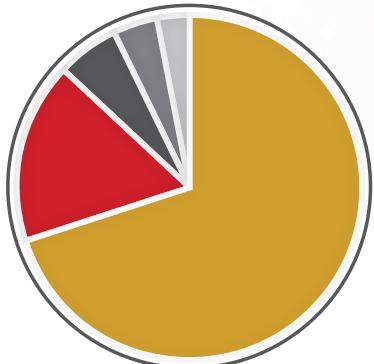


Total school property taxes, payable 2017, on a home with an estimated market value of \$132,000
Source: Pay 17 School Tax Report Provided by Ehlers



THE RIGHT PRICE.

How Will the Money be Spent?



What Will It Cost Me?

If the referendum is approved, the property tax increase on a Pierz School District average-valued home of \$132,000 would be \$140 per year or \$11.67 per month.

Want to learn more about your specific property?

Contact Ehler's, the school district's financial advisor, to help calculate your tax impact. Call 1-800-552-1171 or email MNSchools@ehlers-inc.com with your parcel information.

TAX IMPACT ON THREE HOME VALUES

HOME VALUE	ANNUAL	MONTHLY
\$100,000	\$94	\$7.83
\$132,000	\$140	\$11.67
\$175,000	\$201	\$16.75

You may be eligible for tax relief:

40% AG2School Credit for Farmers

The new School Building Bond Agricultural Credit (AG2School) means **40% of the cost of existing, proposed, and future construction bond issues on agricultural land will be paid for by the State of Minnesota**, with the balance of the cost to be assessed to property under the existing formula.



“ Since I am the Majority Leader, serve on the Tax Committee, and made this one of my top priorities, I have NO intention of letting it go away. ”

Senator Paul Gazelka (R)

“ We get a 40% cut on the referendum deal – that is going to help out in the Ag community quite a bit. ”

Tom Leidenfrost, parent and farmer

Other tax relief opportunities:

- Owners of homesteaded property with incomes under \$108,660 may be eligible for the MN Property Tax Refund or “Circuit Breaker”.
- The “Targeted Homeowners Property Tax Refund” can be applied to all homesteaded properties that experience a net property tax increase of 12 percent or \$100 over the prior year.
- Senior citizens may be able to defer a portion of your property taxes. Determine your eligibility at the Senior Citizen Property Tax Deferral Program on the Minnesota Department of Revenue site.

“ In the last 3-4 years the number of clients that want to move here has steadily increased in large part because of our schools. Continuation of our fiscally responsible school system that provides first class programs for all students is a major factor in new residents and businesses making a decision to locate in Pierz. ”

Todd Preimesberger, realtor and parent

////// JUST WONDERING...

Q: What if the referendum doesn't pass?

A: It is our duty to communicate the impact of your “yes” vote, as well as your “no” vote. If the referendum is not approved, we would most likely consider the following moves:

- We will use reserve dollars we have built up for emergencies and cash flow to build a band room.
- We would likely increase property taxes by raising the lease levy to pay the annual rental fees for several more modular elementary classrooms. This would cost at least \$150,000 per year in leases for classrooms that are a liability to us as we would never own them. It is important to note that **the 40% Ag2School farm tax credit would not apply to a lease levy.** That state credit only applies to payments on bonds for school construction.
- The kitchen would likely be addressed through some sort of financing. State Long Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) funds are an option, however using that money means it can't be used for other critical maintenance issues like repairs for the 7th-grade science room, which is still in the 1963 part of the school, and the roof at Pioneer Elementary School.
- None of these solutions fix the need for physical space for children at the elementary school. There is no short-term rental solution to that problem.

Q: Why does the district allow open-enrollment of students from other districts?

A: State law requires all school districts to receive students who open enroll from another district.

Q: Can open enrollment be capped?

A: Yes. The Pierz School Board adopted a resolution to cap open enrollment in accordance with state law governing the practice on Feb. 28, 2018. State law permits a school board to limit the enrollment of nonresident students based on the capacity of a program, class, or school building. Pierz Schools established a maximum number of students that can be enrolled in each grade. First grade has exceeded that number, and is closed to open enrollment immediately. **All existing open enrolled students are required by law to be able to stay in Pierz schools.**

Q: Do I pay a lot of school taxes?

A: No. Residents of the Pierz School District are **paying significantly less property taxes for schools** than residents of surrounding districts and less than the state average. On average, approximately \$2,664 per student in local property taxes are collected from Minnesota residents; \$928 per student is collected from Pierz District residents – **that's \$1,736 under the state average.**

Q: I don't have any students in the district. Why should I support this referendum?

A: Education is the first step to an effective workforce. What students learn today could fuel the community's economy tomorrow. Research shows that property values are higher near good schools. Residents and businesses use good schools as selection criteria when relocating. An increased commercial and residential tax base spreads the cost of public investments across more properties and can lessen tax impacts over time.

Q: Is the district financially responsible?

A: We believe we are. The district has worked hard to be a good steward of your tax money:

- The district has passed referendums in 2002, 2004 and again in 2014. All had clear and targeted purposes and all were designed to keep local taxes the lowest in the region.
- The special referendum in 2007 - instead of providing additional funding to the district – was specifically designed to **lower local taxes by more than half a million dollars** over a 5-year period in an effort to save money in our communities.

HOW THE DISTRICT SPENDS ITS MONEY



Visit the district website www.pierz.k12.mn.us for more Frequently Asked Questions.

WHEN AND WHERE DO I VOTE?

When: Tuesday, April 10, 2018

What Time: 12:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on April 10.

Unregistered voters may register to vote at the polling place on Election Day.

Early voting: Starting February 23, early and absentee voting is being held at the District Office. (As per state law, early voting must be at the location of the referendum).

If you would like to vote, but are not a registered voter, you can register online (you will need an email address and a driver's license); or via paper application.

If you need an absentee ballot, please contact Terri Krych at 320.468.6458 x1907 or Maureen VanKeuren x1901.

Where:

Pierz City Hall // 101 Main St. S // Pierz, MN 56364

This combined polling place serves all territory in ISD 484 located in the City of Pierz and the City of Genola; and Belle Prairie, Hillman, Little Falls, Mount Morris, and Pierz Townships, all in Morrison County, Minnesota.

Agram Town Hall // 12321 Lake Road // Pierz, MN 56364

This combined polling place serves all territory in ISD 484 located in the City of Buckman and Agram Township, Buckman and Morrill Townships in Morrison County, Minnesota; and Graham Township in Benton County, Minnesota.

Buh Town Hall // 17782 255th Ave // Pierz, MN 56364

This combined polling place serves all territory in ISD 484 located in the City of Lastrup, Buh Township and Granite Township in Morrison County, Minnesota.

Pulaski Town Hall // 24451 296th Ave // Pierz, MN 56364

This combined polling place serves all territory in ISD 484 located in the City of Harding, Pulaski Township and Platte Township in Morrison County, Minnesota and Daggett Brook and Platte Lake Townships in Crow Wing County, Minnesota.

Be an Informed Voter.

Need More Information?

VISIT: www.pierz.k12.mn.us // **FACEBOOK:** www.facebook.com/pierzschools

CONTACT: Any School Board member – phone numbers and email addresses are listed on the district website - or Superintendent George Weber **320-468-6458** gweber@pierz.k12.mn.us.

SAMPLE BALLOT

YES

NO

School District Question 1 Approval of School District Bond Issue

Shall the school board of Independent School District No. 484 (Pierz Public Schools) be authorized to issue its general obligation school building bonds in an amount not to exceed \$9,995,000 to provide funds for the acquisition and betterment of elementary classrooms and elementary physical education space; the construction of a band room and physical improvements to the high school, kitchen and cafeteria; and improvement of the elementary school parking lot?

BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

THE OWNER OF AN AVERAGE \$132,000 VALUED HOME WOULD PAY **\$11.67** PER MONTH.

OR **\$140/YEAR**

PIERZ SCHOOL PROPERTY TAXES
HAVE REMAINED FLAT AND
NOT INCREASED IN
25 YEARS

JUST THE FACTS

School districts are required by law to not advocate for or against ballot questions – we can only provide facts. If you hear something in the community that doesn't seem quite right, please turn to Pierz Schools for information. Our goal is for all voters to know the impact of a "yes" vote and a "no" vote, and to make an informed decision.

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112 Kammic St.
Pierz, Minnesota 56364

2018 School Bond
EVERY VOTE COUNTS!
VOTE APRIL 10

“ Academic excellence creates community
pride, which makes Pierz Schools a pillar
for our city and surrounding communities. ”

Mayor Toby Egan, City of Pierz