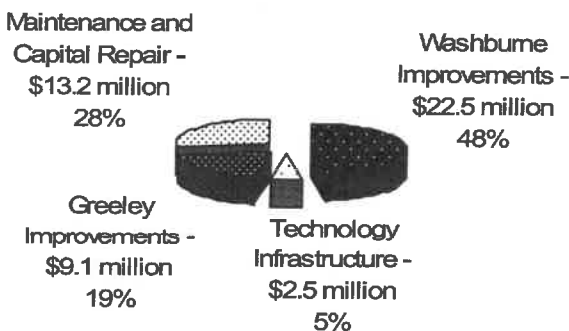


**SPECIAL REFERENDUM ISSUE**

The Board of Winnetka Public Schools unani- mously voted to place a bond referendum before the District 36 residents at the April 17, 2007 election. This decision was the culmination of years of study, eight months of community dialogue, and careful consideration by the Board of how to ad- dress imperative building needs in a fiscally respon- sible manner.

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?**

**Total: \$47.3 million  
in Facilities Investment**



**WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND THE NUMBERS?**

Behind these numbers lies Winnetka’s commitment to educating the whole child, helping the student to develop mentally, physically and emotionally. Quality education not only depends on excellent teachers and thoughtful curriculum, but also proper spaces for the educational program. We don’t believe in requesting “bells and whistles,” but we do believe in providing safe and functional learning environments.

**Enrollment Trends**

Over the last 45 year period, enrollments have ebbed and flowed, even though the number of homes has remained fairly stable. The enrollment



peaked in 1970, with 2,364 students; the ebb was in 1988 with 1,237 students. *Currently, our schools have 2,060 children – a number not seen since the mid-1970s.* After seeing rapid growth through the 1990s that repeatedly exceeded demographic expectations, enrollment seems to be stabilizing.

The current 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes at all elemen- tary schools are particularly large. When these grades come together at Skokie and Washburne middle schools, at least two more academic sections will need to be added as they move through the sys- tem.

Overall, the District will inevitably have fluctua- tions in enrollment, but as our community and its schools continue to attract families, the schools will sustain a relatively high population over time.

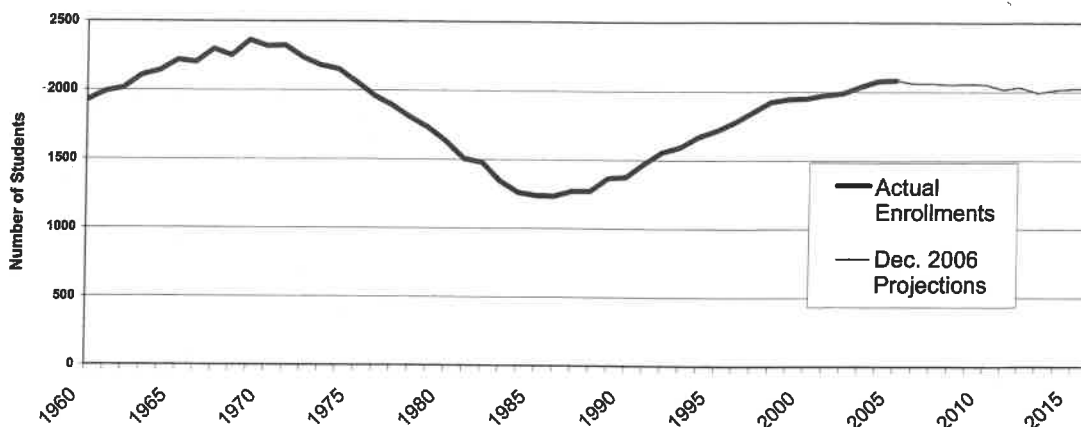
**Changing Educational Practices**

***What has changed since the last peak en- rollment? Why don’t the buildings provide enough space now?***

*Our schools were built between 1913 and 1969. A lot has changed in what we know about how chil- dren learn and how to teach, even in the 38 years since Washburne was built.*

**1.) Educational experience and research have supported the District’s time-honored philosophy of experiential, child-centered learning.** This means the classroom has become increasingly ori- ented towards projects and cooperative learning, hands-on and interactive experiences.

District 36 Enrollment 1960-2016



What does this mean in practice?

- Elementary classrooms don't have desks in rows anymore; they have several learning stations, a reading area, and desks clustered in groups.
- Science curriculum involves more actual experiences. In the elementary years, this involves hatching insects and growing plants; in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, it means dissections and chemistry experiments.
- All subject areas use a variety of materials and media for students to explore and present information. Group projects are frequently used as another approach to learning and to promoting social-emotional development.

**2.) Special Education has expanded significantly over the last 40 years.** The District's mission has always included meeting the needs of all of its students, but federal legislation beginning in 1972 mandated specific regulations for services to children with special needs. In addition, improved understanding of brain development has significantly affected the diagnosis of learning disabilities. The number of students receiving special education services has increased from 4% of the District enroll-

ment in 1969 to nearly 20% today. Winnetka's experience is very similar to that of other districts on the North Shore.

These students work in small groups or one-on-one with a teacher; the time spent in a resource classroom may range from one period to most of the day. As the need for student support services has risen at the same time as the District population has increased, every nook and cranny in each school building has been converted to offices and small group teaching spaces. The result is that children who are the most distractible in the school population must work in some of the most cramped spaces.

**3.) As technology is now integral to managing information in our world, it is integral to our education system as well.** Technology provides tools to improve teaching, expand learning opportunities, and facilitate information management. Our District has been careful about how it invests in technology: equipment and software are researched, tested, and piloted with curriculum.

**4.) Globalization makes understanding other cultures and languages increasingly important.**

What we know about language acquisition and brain development compelled Winnetka Public Schools to extend its Spanish program into the elementary schools over ten years ago. Student participation in foreign language study in middle school has also risen.

**5.) Traditional “Physical Education” has become “Kinetic Wellness,” marking a change to a curriculum that better meets the need of the whole child.** Life-long fitness and health are taught as well as sport skills; mental wellness is included in middle school. Research underscores what educators knew about the connection between exercise and learning: children need physical activity so they can better concentrate in class. State law recognizes this as well, requiring PE/KW five days per week.

**6.) Creating community at the classroom and the building level is very important** to making students feel supported in their school experience, a critical foundation to their social-emotional and academic development. All-school activities and classroom relationships are important for the adolescent student and the young child.

#### **Other changes affecting the demands on our buildings:**

- **Most elementary children now stay for lunch at school**, in contrast to 30 years ago. Students bring their lunch; a user fee covers the cost for supervisory staff. None of the elementary schools has a dedicated cafeteria; multi-purpose spaces are used.
- The arts are integral to development of the whole child; **many students now participate in the instrumental music program** across the District, but there are few spaces for instruction and practice.
- Since 1959, Winnetka Public Schools has participated in a cooperative with 18 other area districts to provide educational services to children with serious, low-incidence special needs. Northern

Suburban Special Education District (NSSSED) does not have its own facility; it uses rooms in member schools for its program. Based on the number of participating students, **our District should be contributing 4 rooms to NSSSED; but due to space constraints, we only have one**, at Hubbard Woods School.

- **Building security** has become an important priority. Critical elements include a monitored main entryway and secured exits.

#### **What do these changes mean for our schools?**

**In a word....SPACE...**

**We need bigger classrooms for project-based curriculum, and more spaces for the critical elements of today’s educational program.**

These changes in educational practice have created space pressures incrementally, but at the same time as a dramatic resurgence in student population. Since 2003-04, Winnetka Public Schools’ enrollment has topped 2000 students for the first time since the mid-1970s, and the full impact of the need for space is being felt in all the schools.

The District examined the space needs in all five buildings, and discussed the priorities with the Board. The conclusion was that *although space is tight everywhere, the educational programs at Greeley and Washburne are being significantly constrained by the lack of space.*

#### **Maintenance and Capital Repair Critical to keeping our schools in good condition**

Like any buildings, our schools need proper maintenance, repairs and updates. To address its maintenance list, the Board committed to appropriate \$500,000 annually on maintenance in the 2000 referendum, and added \$100,000 per year in the 2003 referendum. These funds have completed many of the identified repairs, but aren’t sufficient

to address major projects, such as reconstructing the Skokie School roof. In addition, the District is mandated by state law to conduct life-safety building inspections every ten years and complete required repairs and upgrades.

## WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

### District-Wide Maintenance and Capital Repair Needs

#### ISSUES:

Three year study of all schools identified need for:

- Improvements to meet current life-safety and building codes
- Repair and replacement of deteriorating building elements
- Upgrade of aging plumbing, mechanical and ventilation systems

#### PLAN:

\$13.2 million investment, including repairs and upgrades for:

- Crow Island – \$1.6 million: temperature control system, bathrooms and sinks, heat and ventilation, lockers, classroom fans
- Greeley – \$1.3 million: bathrooms, flooring, emergency lighting, energy-saving lighting, boiler room exhaust fan and classroom fans
- Hubbard Woods – \$1.6 million: roof and gutters, classroom ventilation, temperature control, staff and student bathrooms, hall paneling, emergency lighting and classroom fans
- Skokie School – \$7.8 million: roof and gutters; classroom, gym, auditorium ventilation; windows, bathrooms, upgrade emergency lighting
- Washburne – \$900,000: concrete and brick, windows, plumbing, emergency lighting

### Technology Infrastructure

**ISSUES:** The District's computer system is reliant on a central server housed in Skokie School's basement, plus network equipment located in each school. The effectiveness and reliability of the District's network depends upon proper upkeep of this equipment.

**PLAN:** \$2.5 million in capital spending on wiring, cooling, electrical supply systems and core equipment replacement.

### Greeley School – constructed in 1913

#### ISSUES:

- Basement lunch area shared with Spanish  
—Too small for demand; 1<sup>st</sup> graders eat in classrooms  
—Can't use as multi-purpose room without disturbing Spanish
- Some significantly undersized classrooms
- Special Education classrooms particularly cramped
- 1950's entryway too small for security monitor/waiting area
- Not ADA (handicapped) accessible due to multiple levels within building
- Auditorium has become classroom space: last year for the music class, this year for special education. Limits how and when auditorium can be used.

#### PLAN:

- Remove the 1960's Resource Center one-story addition and replace with a two-story addition, closely matching the 1913 architectural style. The structure would not encroach into the playground, and would retain the "Willoughby Woods" courtyard. Addition would include:
  - Multipurpose/Kinetic Wellness/lunchroom space
  - Spanish classroom
  - Special Education classroom
  - Music classroom
  - NSSD classroom

- Restore the original corner entryway, transforming very undersized classrooms into administrative office space.
- ADA accessibility throughout building.
- Convert current office and teachers' work room to appropriately-sized classrooms.
- Move teachers' work room to former lunch/Spanish room in basement.

### **Washburne School – constructed in 1969**

#### **ISSUES:**

- School entryway is at far side of raised courtyard in interior of school complex, creating significant security and ADA accessibility problems.
- Significantly undersized science classrooms for current lab-based curriculum.
- Increased demand for foreign language instruction. Two classrooms in 1969 plan; now need four.
- Gyms are about half the recommended size, posing safety and program issues. Need one more gym space and classroom to meet enrollment demand, curriculum needs, state regulations.
- Shortage of Special Education classrooms. Washburne had one small room to house its one Special Education teacher in 1969. Today there are 18 Special Education staff members.
- Orchestra and band, in which almost one quarter of the student body participates, has limited access to shared spaces. Practice rooms have been taken for other uses; instrument storage crowds the cafeteria.
- Little Theatre seats 350; Washburne has 479 students and 71 staff members, restricting opportunities for important all-school activities, speakers and performances.
- Conference rooms and storage space have been converted to offices and Special Education rooms. Shower rooms, stairwells, hallways, lunchroom are routinely used for storage.
- The enrollment bulge in current 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes will force a space crisis.

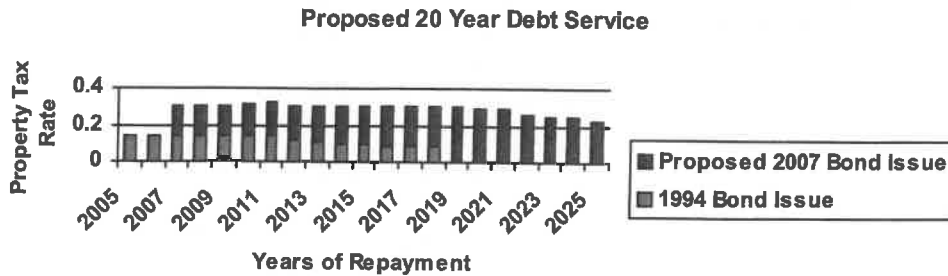
#### **PLAN:**

- Construct addition on the east side, extending approximately as far as the outdoor basketball courts. The addition would include:
  - Multipurpose gymnasium that accommodates all-school gatherings and is divisible into three separate areas, each the size of a basketball court. Soundproof dividers, portable stands and moveable stage make the space extremely flexible.
  - Boys and Girls locker rooms
  - Two academic classrooms
  - Cardio room
  - NSSSED classroom
  - The gymnasium and locker rooms for sports programs would be accessible during non-school hours from north parking lot.
- Construct new entry and office area over existing plaza, providing critical building security and accessibility for disabled students and visitors.
- Renovate existing gyms, creating Band and Orchestra rooms, and four full-size science labs
- Renovate current science rooms for Special Education and other subjects
- Convert current locker rooms to practice rooms, storage and office spaces.

This space plan is flexible enough to accommodate the coming enrollment bulge: kinetic wellness, foreign language and elective classrooms can be used for core curriculum when the student population spikes.

## HOW WILL THIS MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION PLAN BE FINANCED?

If approved by voters on April 17<sup>th</sup>, Winnetka Public Schools will sell \$47.3 million in 20-year bonds. The Board approved a bond structure that keeps the repayment schedule for the taxpayer fairly level over time.



The impact on a homeowner of the \$0.16 increase in the Bond and Interest tax rate in the 2007 property tax levy would be \$246 per \$10,000 in taxes.

## What is the District's overall financial picture?

Almost 4 years after the passage of the April, 2003 operating referendum, District fund balances for the year ending June, 2007 are projected to be very strong. According to the 2006 audit report, "The health of the District's finances can be credited to both a strong real estate tax base and budgetary controls put in place by the Board of Education."

Current long range plan estimates do not project ending fund balances dipping below 30% until at least 2010; however, the Board closely monitors changes in economic factors that affect the District's finances.

Winnetka Public Schools' strong financial position has earned an Aa1 bond rating from Moody's for general obligation bonds; one of the highest in the state. The high rating means lower cost for debt issue and reduced expense to the taxpayer.

**For additional information on any of these subjects, please visit [www.winnetka36.org](http://www.winnetka36.org) and click "Referendum/Facilities Review" or call the District Office at 847/446-9400**



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**UPDATE**

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