



Our Schools. Our Community. Our Future.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do improved school buildings contribute to student achievement?

Quality school buildings have been found to contribute to student achievement in several ways:

- They provide light, acoustics, and air quality that directly impact learning.
- They offer inviting spaces that emanate a sense of warmth and community that enhances student self-belief and desire to be in school.
- They provide technology that optimizes instruction and prepares students for today's workplace.
- They communicate to children that their community values education.
- They are built to maximize student security and safety in today's unpredictable world. When students know they are in a safe space, they can better focus on learning.

Why should I support this tax, especially if I don't have children or grandchildren attending public schools?

Public education impacts everyone. It results in higher incomes, better jobs, rising property values and a healthy economy. Today's students are your doctors, nurses, engineers, and technicians of tomorrow. Our parents, grandparents, and neighbors paid for education for each of us. Investing in the next generation is a time-honored American value. Specifically, new and improved school buildings will:

- make neighborhoods more desirable for current and future residents,
- have a positive impact on property values,
- send a positive message to future businesses that Jacksonville values education (education and workforce preparation are among the most important variables in attracting new jobs), and
- provide neighborhoods with better shelters during hurricanes and other emergencies.

How will I know if the school district is doing what it says it will do with the money?

A Citizen Oversight Committee will review the spending, progress and completion of all projects. They will have access to and regularly review all records to make sure money is spent as promised. The members of the committee cannot be employed by our district or benefit financially from the projects.

How much will this tax cost me?

A typical family in Duval County would pay about \$67 a year or about \$6 per month. The amount is based on IRS sales tax tables for a typical household with the county's median annual income.

Will this tax last forever?

No, the tax would expire in 15 years unless residents voted to renew the tax.

Does any of this money go to School Board or administrative salaries?

Absolutely not. By law, money from this initiative can only be spent on school security upgrades, technology infrastructure, school renovations, new schools and large maintenance needs.

Why not use impact fees to meet the district's needs?

Impact fees can only be used in schools where future development would have an impact on expected school enrollment. That means impact fees would not be very helpful for two reasons: First, many of the schools that need the most attention are not located in areas where development is occurring. Second, much the long-term development in Jacksonville has already been approved through city processes. Impact fees could not be assigned to those projects retroactively.

What about the money from the Florida Lottery, doesn't that fund schools?

Our school district does receive some money from the lottery. It's a relatively small portion of our total budget, and the State of Florida mandates that almost all of it be used for specific programs. That means it is not available for maintenance, renovation or construction of schools. With thousands of teachers and more than 160 schools, the amount of funding the district receives from the lottery would only fund the district for about one school day.

Can't the district borrow money by issuing bonds?

The district issued bonds and continues to pay that debt for schools such as Atlantic Coast High School and Waterleaf Elementary School, which were built many years ago. To take on debt through bonds, the bonds must be backed with a predictable source of revenue. Because state funding sources have decreased so significantly, there is not enough predictable funding to back a bond issue. If the voluntary half-penny tax is successful, that predictable revenue will enable the district to issue bonds and accelerate work on the highest priority school projects.

What's the difference between capital and operational money?

Capital dollars are for buildings, maintenance, technology, security, and repaying money borrowed to make capital improvements in the past. Revenue from a half-penny sales tax can only be used on capital expenses. Operational money is largely for salaries, along with overhead expenses, such as utilities, materials, and classroom supplies.

How does support for Duval County Public Schools compare to other districts?

Tampa (Hillsborough County) was the latest county to invest in its students and schools through a local tax referendum. Orlando (Orange County) voters approved this voluntary tax a few years ago. Locally, St. Johns County is also supporting its schools with this optional half-penny, and Clay County Schools benefit from a similar, though slightly different tax. Many other smaller districts in Florida are choosing to invest in schools to better prepare their students and to compete for future jobs.

What would happen if voters do not approve the half-penny sales tax for education?

Failure to get new funding through the sales surtax would mean our students would face a future in aging, rapidly deteriorating schools and would likely result in school closures and expanded use of portables. The cost to maintain current buildings, which are often more than 50 years old, is quickly growing beyond the funding the district receives for maintenance. Life safety systems, such as fire alarms and sprinklers, will always be a priority. But as air conditioning systems, roofing, electrical and other systems fail, the district will be forced to close schools it can't afford to repair or replace.

In areas of Jacksonville where population is growing, needs for new schools or school expansions will be met with portables and other strategies as resources allow. Needed maintenance and renovations on existing buildings would continue to be deferred due to lack of revenue, eventually costing more money in the future due to building and equipment failures.

How would the additional funds raised through a sales tax be used?

100 percent of the funds would be used to cover the cost of projects in the district's master facilities plan. The plan identifies safety and security facilities upgrades at every school, major renovations or full school replacements at some schools, and consolidation of schools into more efficient facilities, all constructed to enhance learning and the student experience. The master plan remains in development. It will be completed this summer so that voters can see how each school will benefit with the new revenue. A citizen oversight committee will monitor expenditures of the new revenue to ensure those funds are properly spent on the priorities identified in the master plan.

What question will voters see on the ballot regarding the half-penny sales tax for education?

**OFFICIAL BALLOT
School District of Duval County, Florida
Special Election – November 5, 2019
School Capital Outlay Sales Surtax to Improve
Safety and the Learning Environment**

To upgrade aging schools through repairs and modernization, to keep schools safe and to continue to promote a conducive learning environment, to improve technology, and to replace existing or build new schools, shall the Duval County School Board be authorized to levy a 15-year half-cent sales surtax, with expenditures based upon the Surtax Capital Outlay Plan, and monitored by an independent citizens committee?

- For the Half-Cent Tax
- Against the Half-Cent Tax