



## QUALITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE COMMUNITY REPORT

The School District 27J Quality Schools Initiative committee was formed in December 2013.

These parents, students, senior community members, elected officials and business community members were brought together to create a recommendation to improve academic achievement by addressing the district's construction and operational needs.

- **Growing Enrollment:** School District 27J enrollment has grown from 5,643 students in 2000 to 16,194 students in 2013. It is projected to grow to 16,796 students by the start of the 2014-15 school year and surpass 20,000 students by the 2018-19 school year.
- **Seat Shortage:** 27J is expected to be 306 seats short at the elementary, middle and high school level for the 2014-2015 school year. 27J will be 3,242 seats short across all grade levels by the 2018-19 school year. These shortages also mean a growing number of high school students, including freshmen and sophomore students, are unable to carry full schedules.
- **Space Needs:** To accommodate this growth, the district needs to construct a third high school, two additional elementary schools and add additional middle school space either through new construction and/or the expansion and renovation of existing middle school space.
- **Budget Cuts:** Since the 2009-2010 school year, School District 27J has lost \$66 million in state education funding as a result of the implementation of a state budget negative factor. The district eliminated 81 teacher jobs, support center staff, a district gifted and talented coordinator, and an English as a second language coordinator. These cuts also caused a 50 percent reduction in supply budgets and a 25 percent reduction in building supply budgets, reduced transportation and technology, and the creation of new athletic, academic and transportation fees.
- **Impact of Cuts:** Impacts have included larger class sizes, lack of advanced classes, fewer school counselors, lack of gifted and talented programs, lack of curriculum for social and physical sciences, and limited music and arts opportunities.

The work of the Quality Schools Initiative committee is based off the strong belief that all community stakeholders, regardless of a personal interest or connection to their local schools, reap the short-term and long-term benefits of having great schools. Based off group consensus, they have formed the following recommendation for a potential school district bond and mill levy.

# BOND RECOMMENDATION

In forming a bond recommendation, the priorities of Quality Schools Initiative members were to help the district address its anticipated seat shortage and to create a proposal that would not only include new construction but upgrades to all existing district schools.

## What is a school district bond?

A bond is a loan to the school district that is used for capital purposes (new schools, building renovations, repairs, etc) Colorado law requires that school districts seek voter approval to pass a bond issue and the law also limits the amount of bonds that school districts can issue. School bonds normally last for 20 years with the ability to be paid off early or refinanced at a cost savings to taxpayers.

### **Construction of a third high school -**

***136th Avenue and Yosemite Street (Thornton) \$77.25M***

### **Construction of a new elementary school -**

***110th Avenue and Landmark Drive (Commerce City) \$16.5M***

### **Construction of a new elementary school -**

***Longs Peak Street and Oxbow Drive or***

***Longs Peak Street and Golden Eagle Parkway (Northeast Brighton) \$17.5M***

**Construction of second phase of Brantner Elementary \$6.7M**

**Additional modular classrooms at Prairie View and Stuart Middle \$1.8M**

**Expansion of Overland Trail Middle School \$7.7M**

**Renovation of Vikan Middle School \$6.5M**

**Additions and improvements at all other district schools \$15.9M**

See a complete list of potential bond projects at [www.sd27j.org](http://www.sd27j.org)

**Total: \$150M**

*Estimated taxpayer impact: A \$150 million bond would cost about \$65 per year for every \$100,000 worth of home value. The cost for an average typical single family home in School District 27J is \$217,000 so the bond would cost about \$141 per year for an average homeowner.*

# MILL LEVY RECOMMENDATION

## What is a mill levy override property tax increase?

A mill levy override is money generated from property taxes to support local services, including school districts. The amount of money depends on the value of the property. This money supports additional operational funding for the district.

School District 27J has passed one successful mill levy override in its history. This was in 2000 and was for \$750,000. A mill levy override creates an annual, recurring source of revenue that a school district can use for operational needs. Quality Schools Initiative members were presented information from district academic leaders on current funding challenges facing the district and then asked to rank their priorities for the use of additional funding. The group reached consensus on a recommendation for a \$7.5M mill levy request focused on the following priorities:

### **Improve teacher quality**

*(additional deans, assistant principals and instructional coaches)*

### **Support for students at high risk of educational failure**

*(additional counselors, interventionists at each school)*

### **Overhead funding for opening of new schools**

### **Provide increased academic challenges for all students**

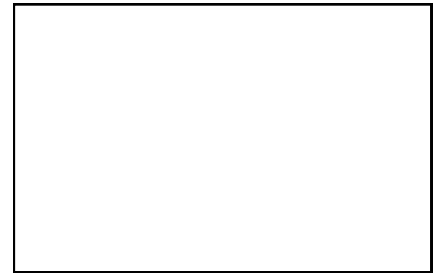
### **Increase access to mobile learning devices**

### **Provide additional learning materials**

### **Attract, hire and retain quality teachers**

### **Reduction in class sizes**

*Estimated taxpayer impact: A \$7.5 million mill levy override would cost about \$70 per year for every \$100,000 worth of home value. The cost for an average typical single family home in School District 27J is \$217,000 so the mill levy override would cost about \$152 per year for an average homeowner.*



**School District 27J**  
**18551 E. 160th Ave.**  
**Brighton, CO 80601**

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

You have been provided this report so you can play an active role in School District 27J's planning for a potential bond and/or mill levy override request in November 2014. In the next two weeks, you may be contacted to take part in a brief phone survey that will seek your opinions about the data shared in this report. Please take the time to answer these questions thoughtfully as this will help guide School District 27J in its planning process.

Following the collection of survey data:

- 27J Superintendent receives completed QSI recommendation - **May 2014**
- 27J Superintendent makes recommendation on bond/mill levy override to the 27J Board of Education - **June 2014**
- 27J Board of Education makes final decision on whether district will pursue bond/mill levy override - **August 2014**

## Quality Schools Initiative Members

Flora Aguirre-Diaz	Meredith Berman	Johanna Brown
Kate Brown	Janell Collins	Christy Dowling
Valerie Escatel	Barb Fasbender	Chris Fiedler
Lynne Fox	Nate Golich	Virginia Guzman
Stephanie Happ	Melissa Hoelting	Natalia Ledezma-Rollins
Jason McEldowney	Dick McLean	Paul Natale
Ben Ploeger	Brian Pritchard	Rodger Quist
Melanie Sheehan	Christine Shock	Chaz Tedesco
Howard Thomas	Karen Vaughn	Chris Wahrle
Amy Werpy	Troy Whitmore	Isaiah Wilson
Michelle Witham	Sean Woytek	Marla Wynn