

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a levy?

A levy is the rate property within a school district is taxed each year and serves as a primary source for operation expenses, such as pay for teachers, staff, and other operating expenses.

Voters within Grain Valley Schools will vote on a new Operating Levy ceiling on April 2, 2024, primarily to improve pay and benefits for our teachers and other district employees, and to add another school resource officer. The result would be an estimated overall levy increase of 25 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

The district utilizes three levies: General Fund, Teacher Fund, and Debt Service Levy. The General Fund and Teacher Fund are collectively referred to as the “Operating Levy.”

What is the difference between an Operating Levy and a Debt Service Levy?

The Debt Service Levy pays for the principal and interest on bonds or other debt owed to fund brick-and-mortar capital improvement projects, such as new construction.

The Operating Levy funds day-to-day district operating expenses including educating students, paying staff, providing transportation, paying for utilities, and maintaining the district’s buildings and grounds. In this year’s budget, 83% of our operating budget goes to pay and benefits for teachers and other district employees.

Why is the school district asking for this April 2 Levy Ballot Measure?

We are asking for an increase of 25 cents to our Overall Levy to improve pay for our teachers and staff, and to add another school resource officer. We also expect to add a Parents As Teachers educator and more paraprofessionals for our special education programs, but the primary goal is to be more competitive with pay to attract and retain high-quality people.

Our teachers and staff understand we won’t be first in the metro area for pay, but we need to keep pace to compete.

Sadly, our pay has fallen behind in recent years and we are seeing a sharp decline in the number of applicants for teacher and other openings.

Improved pay should also help us fill hard-to-staff positions, such as special education paraprofessionals.

What is our current Overall Levy, and how do we compare to other school districts? How would it compare in 2024?

Our 2023 Overall Levy rate is 4.4882, the lowest school district levy in Jackson County. With the passage of our Levy Ballot Measure on April 2, our Overall Levy is expected to be 4.7382 for 2024 and we would expect to continue to have one of the lowest school district levy rates in Jackson County.

Who will vote on this April 2 Levy Ballot Measure?

Registered voters living within the 38 square miles of the Grain Valley School District are eligible to vote on the Levy Ballot Measure.

How do I register to vote on the April 2 Levy Ballot Measure?

The deadline to register for the April 2, 2024 election is March 6, 2024. Here is the Jackson County Election Board website with voter registration instructions:

<https://jcebmo.org/voter-information/registration/>. Information on casting an absentee ballot, Military and Overseas Voting, and ID Requirements for voting are also found on the Jackson County Election Board website.

[Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov) is another online voter registration source.

Why can't the district use bond money to improve pay?

Bonds only fund one-time capital costs, such as new construction. Bond money cannot be used to pay staff.

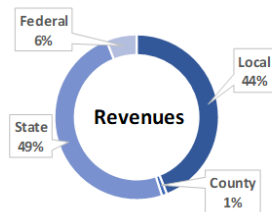
Our levy is the locally-controlled funding source that generates revenue to pay staff and address other operating expenses. The last time our community weighed in on the levy was in 2004.

Didn't the district receive a windfall from the increased local property assessments in 2023?

No. When assessed valuation within our school district increased by 23% in 2023, the district was required by law to reduce the operating levy to prevent a windfall. Our levy was reduced by 43.89 cents.

School districts can capture some gains up to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 5%, whichever is lower. In 2023, new local revenue resulting from the 5% inflation cap was applied towards improving pay for teachers and staff but did little to make pay more competitive.

Local funding makes up 44% of our overall operating revenue. State funding accounts for 49% of our operating revenue.



Why would we compare ourselves to larger districts?

There are two important reasons to compare ourselves to other KC area school districts. First, families have come to expect the educational and extra-curricular opportunities of a larger suburban district while living in our smaller community. Second, these area school districts are who we compete with for high-quality teachers and staff. Our teachers and staff understand we won't be first in pay, but we need to keep pace to compete.

When the district reduces the 2024 Debt Service Levy by 40 cents with the passage of this ballot measure, what prevents the district from increasing the Debt Service Levy again in 2025?

With the passage of this Levy Ballot Measure, the district will reduce the Debt Service Levy by 40 cents. A review by our bond counsel shows we can make good on our current bond obligations with this reduced rate and issue bonds for other facility needs within the next two years if needed, without increasing the debt service levy, so there should be no need to raise the Debt Service Levy again in 2025.

A reduced Debt Service Levy will mean our bonding capacity is lower for the next few years. Enrollment growth has slowed and we feel reducing the Debt Service Levy at this time can help us improve pay while minimizing the financial impact on taxpayers in our school district.

If the Levy Ballot Measure is approved, how will the funds be used?

Voters within Grain Valley Schools will vote on a new operating levy ceiling on April 2, 2024, primarily to improve pay and benefits for our teachers and other district employees, and to add another school resource officer. We could add more paraprofessional support for our special education program and another educator to our Parents as Teachers program, but the primary goal is to be more competitive with pay to attract and retain high-quality people.