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## Quality of schools impacts quality of life

By Matt Grose

Sep 9, 2023

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How important do you believe the quality of schools is to the quality of life in this community?

A recent survey tells us that 95% of residents in ISD #318 believe that school quality is important to life quality.

Anytime you can get a majority of people to agree today, let alone 95%, it's time to take notice.

As Superintendent of ISD #318, I'm proud to see the value our schools bring to the community. I can't tell you how many people I talk to who have moved back here because of the experiences they had growing up, and many times we hear families say, "We moved here for the schools."

That's because residents understand the positive impact our schools have on their quality of life.

Each year, Grand Rapids High School and Bigfork High School graduate hundreds of students who are prepared for life after high school, whether that is the workforce, the military, vocational school, or college. Many of these graduates return or remain in our community, contributing to the quality of life we all enjoy.



Clearly, the success of our schools and our communities are deeply connected. So how can we ensure our schools continuously improve so our quality of life also improves?

To invest in our students, staff and community, ISD #318 is proposing three levies for district voters to consider this November. Here's why we're making this request:

### Financial Stability

- Over the past decade, we have faced significant financial challenges as state funding has not kept pace with the rising costs of education.
- In response, we have cut \$7.4 million from our budget over the past four years. These cuts have included programs as well as teachers, principals, district-level staff, and support staff.
- Our district does not have a voter-approved levy. Yet more than 70% of school districts in Minnesota rely on these voter-approved operating levies. That means we spend hundreds of dollars less per student than similar school districts.

Additional funding would help stabilize our finances, maintain our operations and avoid deeper cuts that impact students in the future.

### Restore Programming

- Years of cutting staff and programming have impacted the education and services we are able to provide.

Additional funding would bring back class offerings, high school electives and programming that our students have lost due to budget cuts, and attract and retain quality staff. The funds would also be used to invest in technology, buses and school safety.



## Advance Excellence

- Ensuring students have access to quality staff, learning opportunities, and technology is essential for increasing engagement and improving academic outcomes.

Decisions have been made in the past that have set ISD #318 apart, from early foreign language to International Baccalaureate programs. We need to be able to innovate again so our students are prepared for their future, and new ideas require additional funding. Additional funding would enhance career and technical education, opportunities for advanced learning and update and expand curriculum and programming.

The future quality of our schools will impact the future quality of life for every resident in our school district, so I encourage you to learn more about our proposal. Visit [WeAre318.org](http://WeAre318.org) – or contact me at [mgrose@isd318.org](mailto:mgrose@isd318.org) or 218-327-5704.

Matt Grose is the Superintendent of Independent School District #318.

