

EXCEL BOND REFERENDUM

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What exactly am I voting on?**

The community is being asked to vote on a \$33,100,000 bond referendum. One hundred percent (100%) of this amount will be paid with the combination of state aid and grant in aid, as well as the use of reserves: \$5,000,000 from the state's EXCEL aid program, \$21,600,000 in state building aid which includes principal and interest, and \$13,000,000 from reserves. The funds will be used to upgrade and enhance our facilities throughout the District. Without voter approval, we will not have the authority to accomplish any of the projects.

2. **What types of improvements, repairs, and enhancements will be done?**

Please see the Sachem website for the entire list of projects. You can access the list from the District home page.

3. **How will the referendum be financed?**

The referendum will be financed through a combination of New York State Building Aid, EXCEL Aid, and use of reserves. The specifics are detailed on the District's website.

4. **What is EXCEL funding?**

Last year, the New York State Legislature created a new one-time grant in aid called EXCEL (**EX**anding our **CH**ildren's **E**ducation and **L**earning). The new EXCEL grant was created by New York State to provide the school district with additional funding for specified types of school construction projects. Similar to all other capital improvement projects, school districts must comply with capital project requirements including, voter approval. The combination EXCEL Aid and Building Aid will allow us to complete these much needed projects at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

5. **What does EXCEL mean for Sachem?**

Since the funding is provided by New York State, the EXCEL allocation will allow us to address many capital needs throughout the District at no additional cost to the community. The New York State Legislature has allotted over \$5,000,000 in EXCEL Aid to Sachem Central School District. Again, when we combine EXCEL aid, regular state building aid, and reserves, we will be able to undertake a \$33,100,000 project at no additional cost per year to taxpayers.

6. **How much will it cost me?**

The combination of Building Aid, EXCEL Aid, and use of reserves will provide the funding of the bond issue. No additional taxes will be needed.

7. **Seems too good to be true.**

We should be thankful to our New York State Legislature. They have provided additional funding to allow for the improvement of our schools. The balance of money will come from the use of existing reserves.

8. **What role did residents have in shaping the projects?**

A building condition survey was completed during the 2005-06 school year. The District's engineering consultants then identified capital improvements that were priorities for the District. The list was shared with a committee of Sachem residents - Sachem Capital Projects Advisory Committee. This group met many times throughout the 2006-07 school year and assisted with the evaluation of projects and the selection of the Architect and Construction Manager for these projects. In addition, they shared their recommendations for capital improvements and enhancements with the Board of Education. Ultimately, the Board of Education approved the projects for the proposed referendum.

9. **I understand there were problems with the Reconfiguration projects. How did the District prepare differently for this set of projects compared to the Reconfiguration?**

The most significant difference between the Reconfiguration Projects and EXCEL Projects is that we have authorized the Architect and Construction Manager to develop the pre-bond scope of work. This allowed for a more in-depth evaluation of the pre-bond cost estimates.

10. **What will happen if the referendum is not approved by the community?**

If the project is not approved by the community, the Board of Education will recommend the most appropriate direction.

11. **If this proposition is not approved by the voters, will the District still receive the EXCEL Aid and state building aid?**

No. The community must approve this proposition to receive the EXCEL Aid and the regular building aid from New York State.

12. **I heard a rumor that voting "no" gets me a \$1,200 tax rebate?**

Sachem Central School District is not allowed by law to issue a tax rebate check.

13. **How much money does the District have in reserves?**

As of June 30, 2007, Sachem Central School District had \$18,800,000 in various reserves and the unappropriated fund balance

14. **How will the projects affect the reserves?**

We plan on utilizing \$13,000,000 of reserves as a funding source for the EXCEL Bond Project.

15. **How much money is allocated for playground enhancements?**

The Board of Education has allocated \$672,000 for district-wide playground improvements. Specifically, each school will receive at least \$25,000 for a piece(s) of playground equipment and some schools may receive more based on the condition of their playgrounds. In addition, all elementary schools will have their playground safety surfacing replaced.

16. **Are “turf” fields harmful to the environment?**

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the turf fields are not harmful to the environment.

17. **If there is no additional cost to the taxpayer, why is the District holding a referendum?**

New York State stipulates that the community must approve all capital projects. Guidelines established for districts to receive EXCEL aid, as well as building aid, also stipulate that the community must vote on, and approve, the capital projects that EXCEL aid and state aid will be used for, and authorize any related financing.