

# It Takes A Millage

Ann Arbor  
Citizens Millage Committee  
**a2cmc.org**



## To Educate A Child

### Q & A

#### 1) Didn't we just pass a millage like this last year?

**A:** This is a new millage, and it is coming at a critical time for our schools. The measures generously renewed by voters in 2008 were part of our schools' required operational funding. That funding is essential to our schools, but isn't enough to prevent serious deficits.

**Details:** The millages we renewed in 2008 were the basic operating millages required to keep our schools open. They form our local contribution, which is about half of the AAPS budget. By law, we cannot increase these. The state gives us the remainder based on what they say we can have.

The problem is that the amount from the state has been inadequate, falling behind inflation. And now because of the economy, there will be large cuts in state funding over the next two years. The Michigan Association of School Boards is projecting cuts of \$500-\$800 per pupil, which when added to other shortfalls, means cuts up to \$15 million for 2010-11.

This school millage is a chance for us to head off this train wreck. By law, our only option is to do this with all the districts of the WISD. With this millage, we can just barely hold our own; without it, we will start dismantling what has been a great school system.

#### 2) This is a bad time to be asking us to pay higher taxes. Many people have lost their jobs or are worried about being laid off.

**A:** We realize this is an especially difficult time to ask our neighbors to make an extra sacrifice. But the damage that will be done if we dismantle our schools will be so great, and take so long to fix, that the cost of doing nothing is even greater. Fully half of all homeowners in AAPS will pay less than \$200 a year under this proposal, or less than \$4 a week. The cost is even smaller once you take state and federal tax credits into account.

**Details:** How much you pay depends on the taxable value of your property. Half of AAPS taxpayers will see their tax bill increase by less than \$205 a year under this proposal; one fifth of all households will pay less than \$140 a year. Once you take into account the state property tax credit, and/or deductions on your federal tax return, 60% of AAPS homeowners will end up paying under \$175, and 40% are likely to pay less than \$100 a year. Renters do not pay this tax directly at all.



**Vote Yes on November 3.**

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### 3) Why doesn't the Ann Arbor Public Schools make cuts in the budget rather than ask voters for more money?

**A:** AAPS has been cutting budgets for years, trying to save money and cut services that don't hurt classroom teaching too much. We've cut the fat, and a lot of the muscle, and we're getting close to bone. But state funding for schools is continuing to slide. This proposal is the only chance we have to take our children's future back into our own hands.

**Details:** The amount the state legislature allows AAPS to spend per student has fallen by 9% since 1994, once you take inflation into account. At the same time, many costs of running a school system have been going up even faster. We've cut \$14 million from the budget in the past three years, and passed a budget in June that would cut another \$5 million.

### 4) Ann Arbor teachers make a lot of money with great benefits. Why don't you cut wages and benefits?

**A:** We want our kids to have the best teachers possible, and that means offering a competitive pay package. But teachers have seen their income fall behind inflation, and they share in the cost of their own health coverage. Everyone at AAPS knows we need to be reasonable, especially in these times. Teachers are right now considering a draft contract that freezes wages for at least the next year.

**Details:** Pay for teachers and other staff has not kept up with inflation, and all employees, including teachers, must share the mushrooming cost of healthcare. AAPS has capped what it will contribute toward teachers' health insurance, and limited how much that will go up each year, even though actual costs are rising much faster. So all school employees are paying a substantial and growing share of their healthcare costs. Retirement costs are also increasing, though that is determined by the Legislature, which runs the pension fund.

### 5) I don't have students in local schools. Why should I vote yes?

**A:** Good schools make for a better community. They attract and retain people and businesses to our region, bringing jobs and increasing property values. And better educated children mean a more prosperous community and a nicer place to live.

**Details:** One of the first things people and companies do, when considering relocating to a new city, is to check out the quality of the local schools. A school system that is eroding, and making headlines about budget cuts each year, will scare people and employers off much faster than a small increase in property taxes. Good schools attract the companies that create jobs, and they attract the people who want to live here. Good schools also help our community to be a safer and more prosperous place to live.

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