



# South Pasadena Unified School District

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How are South Pasadena schools performing?**

Established in 1886, South Pasadena Unified School District serves approximately 4,800 students in local elementary, middle and high schools and consistently ranks among the best in the state. In recent testing, South Pasadena students ranked in the top 10 out of hundreds of unified school districts in California. Over 90% of our graduates go on to college or other postsecondary training. South Pasadena's great schools improve the quality of life in our community and protect the value of our homes.

### **How does the State budget impact South Pasadena schools?**

State funding for schools is allocated according to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a state law that allocates more money to school districts with higher percentages of foster youth, low income families and English language learners. SPUSD ranks in the bottom 10% of funding statewide under the LCFF formula.

### **How does local education funding support student success in SPUSD schools?**

The state funding that our schools receive per student is among the lowest in LA County and the state. Because we cannot rely on state funding alone, SPUSD counts on various sources of local funding. These include our voter-approved local education funding measures and contributions to the South Pasadena Education Foundation (SPEF), PTAs and the booster club. Funding from Measure S, which was passed in 2009 and renewed in 2013, supports teachers and instructional programs that help set South Pasadena schools apart from other school districts that rely entirely on state funding. If SPUSD's local education parcel tax expires, SPUSD will lose approximately \$2.3 million in locally controlled school funding each year.

### **What is SPUSD's plan for renewing parcel tax funding?**

In order to protect approximately \$2.3 million in annual school funding, maintain high-quality education for students and limit our District's reliance on unstable state funding, the SPUSD Board of Education recently voted unanimously to place a local education parcel tax renewal measure on the February 27, 2018 all-mail ballot. If approved by 66.7% of local voters, this measure would renew existing funding at the current rate of \$386 per parcel for 7 years, with annual adjustments for inflation.

### **Specifically, how are parcel tax funds utilized?**

SPUSD currently utilizes parcel tax proceeds to fund nearly 30 teachers and school staff to support academic programs and reduced class sizes. At the elementary school level, parcel tax funds support art and music teachers, school counselors, computer aides and library services for students. At the middle school level, parcel tax funds support art, music and science instruction as well as school library services and smaller class sizes. At the high school level, parcel tax proceeds are used to support smaller class sizes in ninth grade English as well as teachers for elective courses and specialized instruction. Without this funding, many teachers and school staff will be laid off, leading to larger class sizes and cuts to instructional programs.

### **If the parcel tax is renewed, how will funds be used?**

If parcel tax funding is renewed, funds will continue to be used to support current teaching positions and academic programs. By law, funds from the parcel tax may only be used in the following program areas:

- Supporting advanced programs in science, technology, engineering and math
- Attracting and retaining highly-qualified teachers
- Maintaining advanced programs in music, visual and performing arts
- Maintaining manageable class sizes



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### **What protections help ensure parcel tax funds are spent as promised?**

Ever since local voters first passed SPUSD's parcel tax funding nearly a decade ago, an independent Citizens' Oversight Committee has reviewed the use of funds each year and consistently confirmed that SPUSD has used all funds for the purposes and priorities described in the measure. The parcel tax renewal measure would continue strict fiscal accountability requirements, including:

- By law, all funds must stay locally to support SPUSD schools and students
- No funding could ever be taken away by the State or used for other purposes
- An optional exemption from the cost would continue to be available to property owners aged 65 or older
- An independent Citizens' Oversight Committee and annual audits would continue to ensure funds are used as promised

### **Could funds from the renewal measure be taken away by the State?**

No. By law, all funds generated by renewing local education funding would stay in South Pasadena Unified School District. The State could not take away a single penny.

### **Would any exemptions continue to be available?**

Yes, all exemptions currently available would carry forward in the renewal measure. Homeowners aged 65 and older and low income homeowners with disabilities that qualify for SSI and SSDI benefits would continue to be eligible for an exemption from the cost of the measure. For more information about applying for an exemption, please contact SPUSD at (626) 441-5810 ext. 1110 or [www.SPUSD.net](http://www.SPUSD.net).

### **Why is the Board of Education including annual inflation adjustments in the measure?**

The Board of Education is including annual inflation adjustments in the proposed parcel tax renewal measure to ensure the funding is sufficient to continue supporting teachers and instructional programs for our students as costs increase over the life of the measure. While the specific terms of the inflation adjustment are still being determined, the annual percentage increase will be limited to no more than 2-3%.

### **What happens if this measure is not approved by voters?**

If SPUSD's parcel tax renewal is not approved by 66.7% of local voters, Measure S funding will automatically expire in 2018 and SPUSD will lose \$2.3 million in annual revenue. In anticipation of potentially losing funding of this magnitude, SPUSD is evaluating the cuts to teaching and educational programs that would be required. While the Board of Education would have to approve specific cuts through the budgeting process, teachers could be laid off, class sizes could increase and specialized academic programs could be eliminated. These teaching positions and academic programs are currently supported by parcel tax funding.

### **Wasn't the parcel tax supposed to be temporary?**

While originally approved by voters during the depths of the state budget crisis nearly a decade ago, the underlying state funding problem that prompted SPUSD to pursue locally controlled parcel tax funding in the first place has not been rectified. Parcel tax funding accounts for approximately 5% of the school district budget and supports teachers and academic programs that support outstanding student achievement.

### **What level of support would the parcel tax renewal measure need to pass?**

To pass, the parcel tax measure must be approved by 66.7% of those who vote on the measure.



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### **Didn't we just vote on a measure for our schools?**

In November 2016, local voters approved Measure SP to fund upgrades to classrooms and other educational facilities in South Pasadena schools. By law, these funds may only be used for improvements to local school facilities and may not be used to support teaching and academic programs. In 2013, 72.8% of South Pasadena voters approved Measure S, the current local education parcel tax measure that is now set to expire next year unless renewed by voters.

### **What's the difference between parcel taxes and bond measures?**

By law, funds from bond measures and parcel tax measures must be used for different purposes. Bond measures can only fund facility upgrades and improvements, and cannot be used for operating costs or programs. Parcel taxes, on the other hand, may be used for teachers and instructional programs.

### **How does the parcel tax impact those who rent their homes?**

The local school parcel tax appears on property tax bills and is paid by property owners. Thus, renters do not directly pay the cost of the measure, but this cost may be factored into the cost of rent by property owners.

### **Didn't we pass a state initiative last year to restore school funding?**

In 2016, California voters approved Prop 55, extending state school funding that was about to expire. However, these funds are used to prevent additional cuts and do not restore funding that was cut during and following the Great Recession. In fact, state funding for SPUSD remains below pre-recession levels.

### **What about funding from the South Pasadena Education Foundation (SPEF)?**

SPUSD relies on many sources of funding to protect outstanding education for our students. Local contributions to our schools through SPEF, PTAs, booster clubs and volunteer time in the classroom are just some of what separates our excellent schools from others that are dependent on what they receive from the State. SPUSD is already maximizing donations from these sources and it is unrealistic to expect an additional \$2.3 million to be raised from local donors annually to replace current parcel tax funding that is set to expire.

### **Do residents in other local school districts pay parcel taxes?**

Yes, the other high-performing school districts in our area like San Marino, Arcadia, La Cañada, Palos Verdes, Santa Monica and Malibu all have voter-approved local parcel taxes to insulate their schools from fluctuations in state support and keep their schools top-notch.

### **How may I learn more about local education funding and South Pasadena schools?**

We welcome your feedback as we consider our options for supporting student success in SPUSD. For more information please visit [www.SPUSD.net](http://www.SPUSD.net) or call (626) 441-5810.

### **How can I learn more about voting?**

To learn more about voting or to register to vote, please visit [registertovote.ca.gov](http://registertovote.ca.gov) or call the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters at (800) 815-2666.