



## Kindergarten Registration Date Set



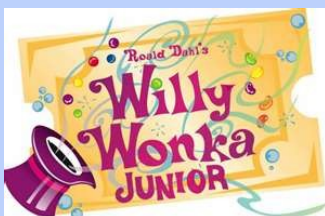
**Kindergarten Orientation**  
Wednesday, March 16  
7:00 p.m.

**Kindergarten Registration**  
Wednesday, March 23  
2:30–6:00 p.m.

@ **Willow School**  
1804 Willow Road

(708) 798-3720  
for more information

## James Hart School to Present Willy Wonka Jr.



Everyone's chocolate dreams will come true as the drama and music students of James Hart present Roald Dahl's WILLY WONKA Jr.

See the magic of the greatest Candy Man of all time as he tempts Charlie Bucket and the other Golden Ticket winners with their childhood wishes! But, as is true in fables, better be careful what you wish for—you just might get it!

March 18th & 19th  
7:30 p.m.  
Hart/Millennium Gym  
Tickets \$5.

## School District Seeks First Tax Referendum in 19 Years

Homewood School District 153 will place a referendum before voters on the April 5<sup>th</sup> ballot. For the first time in 19 years, we will be asking our community to approve a property tax increase to pay for a \$7.5 million bond issue.

District 153 is known for its outstanding student academic achievement, committed staff, low class sizes, and full menu of activities to enrich students' minds and bodies.

Unfortunately, we cannot continue to support the same level of high quality staff and programs as we have in the past with the revenues available to us. Adequate resources are needed to both maintain the programming that has been so successful for students while at the same time offering competitive salaries for the staff that make it all happen.

For many years now, we have managed to avoid deficit spending due to stringent budgeting and careful monitoring of spending. However, a budget shortfall of \$600,000 is projected this year with significant deficits into the foreseeable future.

The State of Illinois currently owes our school district about \$800,000 in unpaid bills. Despite the recently-passed state income tax increase, the State is only planning on paying a small fraction of its outstanding debts to schools this year and the next few years. In addition, the State has cut allocations considerably for such vital services as transportation.

An increase in local tax revenues combined with continued spending reductions is part of a financial plan to ensure District 153's continued financial stability and high academic standards.

For more, see pages 3 and 4.

### Question on the April 5th Ballot:

*Shall the Board of Education of Homewood School District Number 153, Cook County, Illinois, be authorized to issue \$7,500,000 bonds for a working cash fund as provided for by Article 20 of the School Code?*

## Superintendent Outlines Contingency Plans

Homewood School District 153 will be forced to eliminate 26 positions next year—including 16 certified teaching positions—should a proposed April 5<sup>th</sup> ballot referendum to approve the issue of \$7.5 million in working cash bonds fail.

Superintendent Dale Mitchell summarized the school district's contingency plans at the Board of Education meeting on Feb. 28. Mitchell says that district administrators and school board members have been working for weeks to develop budget reductions with the least impact on classrooms as possible.

“The fact remains that we'll have to cut \$1.2 million from the budget next year if the referendum is not successful. The only way to cut that much money is to look at the 85 percent of our annual budget that covers salaries and benefits. There's no way to soften the impact on classrooms when personnel are reduced,” said Mitchell.

Mitchell said that class sizes after the proposed reductions would increase about 20 percent to a range of 25 to 28 students per classroom.

Other programs slated for reductions include:

- Student support services including behavior management efforts like the Positive Behavior and Intervention System (PBIS) program, gifted education and media center programming
- Co-curricular offerings and fine arts
- Field trip experiences
- Administrative operations such as custodial and food services and residency enforcement

All together, the proposed actions will save the school district just over \$1.2 million.



## Quick Facts

### Superior Student Achievement

- ✓ Since 2006, about 85% of our students have met or exceeded state standards in reading math and science

### History of Fiscal Responsibility

- ✓ Last tax referendum in 1992
- ✓ SD 153's per pupil instructional expenditure is 19% less than state average
- ✓ Expenditures cut every year since 2002 to balance budgets
- ✓ Staff voted to freeze their own pay this year to help SD153 make ends meet
- ✓ Average administrator and teacher pay below state average

### Critical Need for Funding

- ✓ \$600,000 deficit project this year
- ✓ Future expenses are expected to increase at an average rate of 2.5 percent while revenue growth is projected to be flat—resulting in yearly deficits of about \$3 million.
- ✓ State of Illinois owes SD153 almost \$800,000 in unpaid bills

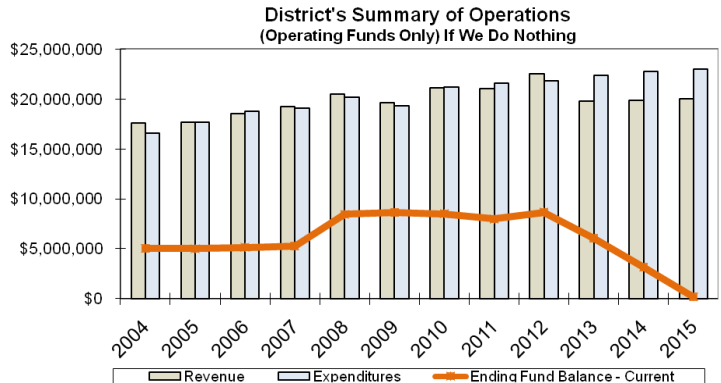
### Requesting Measured and Temporary Additional Revenues

- ✓ Homeowners would pay an additional \$100 for every \$100,000 of their home's property value starting in 2012
- ✓ Additional tax expires after 7 years

## Frequently Asked Questions about Proposed Referendum

### Why does the school district need a tax increase?

School District 153 is projecting a budget deficit of \$600,000 for this year with significant deficits into the foreseeable future.



District 153 is not the only school district facing severe financial challenges. Most districts throughout Illinois are being confronted by similar problems. Unlike many other school districts, District 153 has managed to avoid deficit spending, so far, due to conservative budgeting and close monitoring of spending.

### How big are these future deficits projected to be?

Beyond this year, long-term projections show the school district running deficits for the foreseeable future. Expenses are expected to increase at an average rate of 2.5 percent while revenue growth is projected to be flat. This would result in yearly deficits of about \$3 million.

### How much will this proposal cost individual property owners?

Similar to the way a car or home equity loan works, the proposal will allow the school district to take out what is essentially a one-time \$7.5 million loan. Taxpayers will make payments on the loan for the next seven years. The added assessment automatically expires when the loan is paid off.

Based on current tax bills, it is estimated that homeowners would pay an extra \$100 for every \$100,000 of their home's property value per year. The added expense would start in 2012 and remain essentially level from year-to-year unless there was some kind of

significant change in the business climate in the community, such as a big business or corporation re-locating to Homewood.

### I know the State hasn't been paying its bills. Is this why revenues are projected to be flat?

The State's financial situation is part of the school district's revenue problem.

The primary source of District 153's revenues comes from local property taxes. The state formula that defines the amount of revenue a school district may collect from local property taxes from year to year is tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI has experienced historically low rates for the past two years. In FY2011, for example, District 153 received only a \$11,000 increase in local revenues due to a CPI of only 0.1%.

The lack of State revenues exacerbates the problem. According to our state's constitution, "The State has the primary responsibility for financing the system of public education." Even in better economic times, Illinois has never fulfilled its responsibility. District 153, for example, gets about 35 percent of our overall budget from the state. This is a sizable portion, but nowhere near being the "primary" source of our education dollars. And for the past year, Illinois has been unable to live up to its funding commitments.

As of 12/31/2010, the State of Illinois

owes District 153 \$786,285. Most of these missing state reimbursements are for “categorical” programs like transportation, early childhood education and special education.

Even if all were well with the state’s finances and we received all of the state grants that are due to the school district, the school district would still have a budget deficit.

**Why doesn’t the school district cut spending in order to balance the budget?**

2010-11 Expenditure Cuts	
Salary Freeze/Reductions	\$782,933
Purchased Services	\$225,000
Departments	\$419,169
Professional Development	\$31,962
Education Program	\$92,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,551,124</b>

Every year since the 2002-03 school year, District 153 has cut expenditures to maintain a balanced budget. Until now, we have been able to trim expenses in ways that have a minimal amount of impact of the classroom.

This fiscal year, the school district has cut another \$1.5 million from the budget on top of about \$600,000 in cuts from the year before.

**Can’t more be cut?**

Salaries and benefits account for 85 percent of our operating budget. The school district has cut back as much as it can on the remaining 15 percent.

***We have reached the point where the budget cannot be cut further without cutting staff, increasing classroom sizes and reducing educational offerings.***

Cutting staff and services will tamper

with a proven track record of success. We are convinced that District 153 has established the right mix of staff and services needed to produce great results for our students and our taxpayers.

The data bear out this belief. About 85 percent of our students meet or exceed state standards according to the 2010 Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) above the state average. Classroom sizes are manageable. The time and attention that is devoted to student behavior and community service expectations have resulted in a miniscule number of serious discipline problems within the student body. The district provides multiple opportunities for students to shine whether it’s in the arts, sports, or other activities—opportunities that also act as crucial motivators for students to perform well academically.

***And District 153 is producing these excellent results while spending less than other districts and 19% less than the state average.***

School District	Per Pupil Instructional Expenditure
Evergreen Park 124	\$6,859
<b>State Average</b>	<b>\$6,483</b>
Worth 127	\$6,150
Flossmoor 161	\$5,977
Matteson 162	\$5,918
Brookwood 162	\$5,561
<b>Homewood 153</b>	<b>\$5,205</b>
Frankfort 157C	\$5,127
Summit Hill 161	\$4,598
Mokena 159	\$3,841

**The State just voted to raise our income taxes. Do we still need this local property tax increase, too?**

Based on the latest information from the state, the additional revenues generated by the increase in the state income tax are slated over the next four years to help the state catch up on its unpaid bills to its vendors.

For this year, school districts have been advised to plan on receiving only one of four scheduled payments for categorical programs which would short SD153 about \$1.4 million. School districts also were warned not to expect all of the General State Aid payments due to them.

The State says there will be additional funds available for education starting in 2015. But if we have learned anything over the past few years, it is that we can’t rely on Springfield to keep promises it makes regarding education funding. Illinois has never fulfilled its constitutional mandate to bear the primary responsibility for financing public education. Additional education dollars from the lottery and casinos never materialized.

With the passage of this referendum, our local tax dollars will stay right here in our community and serve as a buffer against the whims of Springfield lawmakers.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Mitchell said that all non-tenured teachers will be receiving non-renewal notices. In addition, all non-certified assistants in their first, second, and third years of service will receive reduction-in-force (RIF) notices. Notices will go out on March 22, affecting about 60 staff members.

“Obviously we hope that the referendum will pass, and School District 153 is able to maintain its long-held tradition of educational excellence,” said Mitchell.



## Homewood School District 153

Dr. Dale Mitchell, Superintendent  
John Gibson, Business Manager  
Gail Huizinga, Coordinator for Teaching, Learning  
and Accountability  
Sue Mecozzi, Director of Student Support  
Services  
Beth White, Director of Technology  
Shelley Peck, Communications Coordinator

### Board of Education

Steve Anderson  
Thomas Brabec, Vice President  
Gale Gallagher, Secretary  
Deb Havighorst  
Greg Lawrence  
Shelly Marks, President  
Jim Schmidt

District Administrative Office  
18205 Aberdeen Street  
Homewood, Illinois 60430  
708.799.5661

[www.hsd153.org](http://www.hsd153.org)

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U.S. Postage  
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Permit 106  
Homewood, IL

*Postal Patron*

### Willow School

1804 Willow Road  
708.798.3720  
Mary Ann Savage, Principal  
Melissa Lawson, Asst. Principal

### Churchill School

1300 West 190th Street  
708.798.3424  
Cece Coffey, Principal  
Joanne Obszanski, Asst. to the Principal

### Millennium School

18211 Aberdeen Street  
708.799.8697  
Shirley Watkins, Principal  
Mary Kay Gardiner, Asst. Principal  
David McAtee, Dean of Students

### James Hart School

18220 Morgan Street  
708.799.5544  
Michael Klein, Principal  
Laura Ugo, Asst. Principal  
John Ugo, Dean of Students

**Tickets on sale now at**  
[www.foundation153.org](http://www.foundation153.org)



**Foundation 153's 6th Annual Dinner and  
Auction to Benefit  
Homewood School District 153  
Saturday, April 9 6 p.m. Ravisloe Country Club**

**Proud to Be 153!**

**Community Open House  
and School Tours**

**Wednesday, March 23, 8 am—Noon**

Has it been years since you visited one of your local schools? Or maybe you've never visited!

Homewood School District #153 cordially invites you to breakfast and to see just some of the great things that are always happening at James Hart, Millennium, Churchill and Willow Schools.

**\* RSVP by Friday, March 18  
(708)647-2414**

## Willow School Loves the Homewood Public Library!

Willow School's 2nd-graders have hundreds of new and gently-used books thanks to the Homewood Public Library and its Friends of the Library organization.

The books were donated to fill classroom "book bins." The bins of books, sorted by topic and genre, are used during reading time to supplement science and social studies curriculum.

When a classroom is study-

ing plants, for example, teachers will ask their students to choose a book from the plant life bin when they have free time to read.

Over 500 used books were re-directed to the school from donations left at the library. The library then donated over \$700 for the school to purchase new titles needed to round out the collection.



Above, Representatives of Willow's 2nd-grade send a message of thanks to the Homewood Public Library and the Friends of the Homewood Library.