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March 2019

INSIDE CLAYTON

claytonschools.net

Proposition E: Maintaining Excellence in Clayton Schools

On April 2, 2019, the School District of Clayton will be asking the community to vote on **Proposition E**, an operating levy increase of 56 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation and an eight-cent waiver of Proposition C sales tax revenues. The net effect of both measures will provide the District with an additional 64 cents of operating revenue. The additional revenue will be used to maintain and strengthen the District's academic excellence and fiscal stability by eliminating the gap between revenues and expenses, addressing facility and maintenance needs and rebuilding reserves.

Throughout this issue of *Inside Clayton*, readers will find information that will help them make an informed decision about Prop. E when they go to the polls on April 2. Let's start at the beginning.

Why did the District's Board of Education vote to place Proposition E on the ballot?

The Board of Education and District administration closely monitor the fiscal health and academic performance of the District. Working with the District's Long-Term Financial Planning Committee over the past two years helped confirm that the District would need to seek a revenue increase soon. The District has been prudently using its reserves to maintain academic excellence and offset the gap between its revenues and expenses, which, absent an operating levy increase, is projected to be \$4.8 million in Fiscal Year 2020. The Board also reviewed feedback provided by participants in the FOCUS community engagement program, information from staff and the results of a District-wide community engagement survey in making the decision to place Prop. E on the April 2 ballot.

Why is the School District of Clayton in need of additional financial support?

The District's last voter-approved operating levy increase was in April 2003 and was projected to

last for three years. It has lasted for more than 15. School districts do not have the means to increase



Proposition E will be used to maintain and strengthen the District's academic excellence and fiscal stability by eliminating the gap between revenues and expenses, addressing facility and maintenance needs and rebuilding reserves.

revenue at a rate sufficient to meet rising costs because of a state law (the Hancock Amendment, see Page 3) that limits the growth of tax revenue. Despite sound fiscal management, the District has seen expenses grow at a considerably faster rate than revenues over the last 15 years, with operating tax revenue growing an average of 0.78 percent per year while holding expenses to an average

annual increase of 2.29 percent.

The controlled growth in expenses still resulted in annual budget shortfalls beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. In addition to working to reduce the increase in expenses, the District has been prudently using its reserves to maintain academic excellence and close the gap between revenues and expenses for the past three years. While the new construction around Clayton has created some additional new revenue for the District, it will not be enough to close the revenue/expenditure gap.

How will the funds generated from Proposition E be spent?

Prop. E will generate approximately \$7.3 million of new revenue for the District each year, which is projected to be used as follows:

- \$5.3 million to address the projected gap between revenues and expenses for the next five years
- \$1.3 million to restore reserves (and maintain an 18 percent fund balance, see Page 3)
- \$700,000 for facility and maintenance needs

Please continue exploring this edition of *Inside Clayton* for additional information about Prop. E. •

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Inside Clayton is published by the Office of Communications for School District of Clayton residents, businesses and families. Its purpose is to foster open communication, build understanding and promote accountability between the District and our stakeholders. Please submit comments, letters and questions to:

Office of Communications
School District of Clayton
#2 Mark Twain Circle
Clayton, MO 63105
314.854.6038
robinfultz@claytonschoools.net

- **Robin Fultz**,
Communications Coordinator
- **Elizabeth Macanujo**,
Community Relations Specialist

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DR. SEAN DOHERTY
SUPERINTENDENTFrom the District's
Lead Learner...

Dear Clayton Community,

Every school district has its story filled with highlights and successes, as well as challenges. The School District of Clayton has a story centered on excellence, student-centered decisions and setting the standard for educational practices. We are known for our outstanding teachers, small class sizes, comprehensive programs, high academic achievement and a commitment to educate, inspire and empower every student who walks through our doors.

This April, our community will have the opportunity to vote on Proposition E. If approved, Prop. E will ensure our District has the funding necessary to continue its story of excellence. In recent years, we have been faced with the challenge of our expenditures rising at a greater rate than our essentially flat revenue stream. We have worked to control costs and have limited the increase in our expenses over the past 15 years to an average of just 2.3 percent annually. We have prudently used our reserves to maintain academic excellence and bridge the gap between revenues and expenses, and we have reduced expenditures by more than \$2.8 million with minimal impact on our classrooms. However, we feel that we have reached the point in our story where further reductions would impact teachers, class sizes and, most importantly, our high quality of education.

Absent an operating levy increase, the gap between the District's revenues and expenses is projected to be \$4.8 million for the 2019-2020 school year. One of the biggest factors contributing to this gap is a state law, the Hancock Amendment (see Page 3), that limits our ability to keep revenues on pace with expenses. As

a result, our local property tax revenue (which amounts to about 71 percent of our revenue budget) has increased an average of 0.78 percent annually since our last voter-approved operating levy increase in 2003.

We have reached a critical time in the story of Clayton. On April 2, the District will ask voters to consider Prop. E, an operating levy increase of 56 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation and an eight-cent waiver of Proposition C sales tax revenues. The Board of Education and District administration went through a comprehensive process over the past nine months listening to key stakeholders, engaging our community through our FOCUS Open Houses and working with advisory groups who challenged our assumptions and acted as strategic thinking partners.

The residents of this District and, most importantly, the students who walk through our doors each day have high expectations for their public schools. If approved, Prop. E will provide the funds to ensure the District's academic excellence and future financial stability by eliminating the gap between revenues and expenses, addressing facility and maintenance needs and rebuilding our reserves. I encourage you to read through the information provided in this newsletter and visit claytonschoools.net/PropE to learn more about Prop. E.

Thank you for making your voice heard at the polls on April 2.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
CLAYTON
P R O P O S I T I O N **E**
APRIL 2

Learn more about
Proposition E at
claytonschoools.net/PropE.

School Finance and the State Law Limiting Revenue Growth

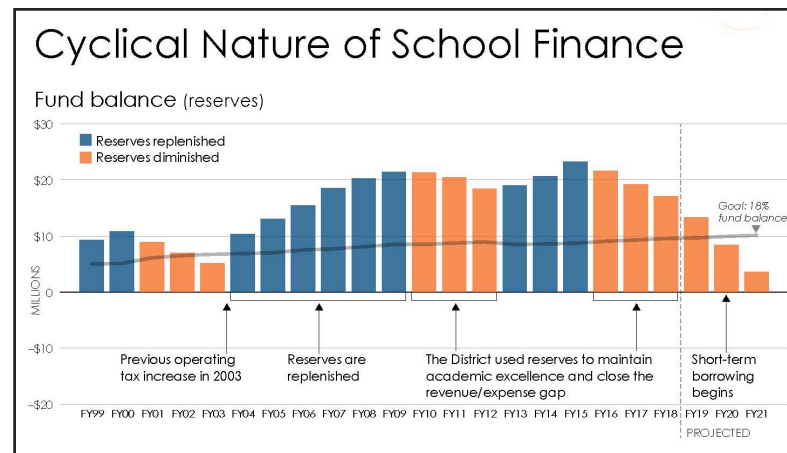
The School District of Clayton is asking voters to consider Proposition E, an operating levy increase of 56 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation and an eight-cent waiver of Proposition C sales tax revenues, in the April 2 election. While the District has taken numerous steps to control costs (see Page 5), factors such as the state law known as the Hancock Amendment will continue to keep the District's revenues from staying on pace with its expenditures.

School finance follows a cyclical pattern. A school district's reserve, or fund balance, is the amount of money that is left in the bank at the end of a fiscal year. The reserve is used to ensure adequate cash flow for operations throughout the fiscal year and to offset expenditures in years when expenses outpace revenues. A school district builds its reserves in the years when revenues exceed expenditures, usually following a voter-approved levy increase, which, for the School District of Clayton, was in 2003. Districts then spend down their reserves as operating expenses begin to catch up with and then exceed operating revenues.

School districts like Clayton, which are funded primarily by local property taxes, receive most of their tax revenue in December and January of each year. As

a result, Clayton must keep enough of its budget – at least 18 percent – in reserve to ensure it will have adequate cash flow to fund operations without borrowing money throughout the course of the year. For the 2018-2019 school year, the District currently has a reserve of 25 percent. Each year that reserves are used to offset expenditures erodes the District's fund

safeguard from having their property taxes raised due to increases in assessments higher than increases in the cost of living. As assessed value of property within the District goes up, the Hancock Amendment requires the District to roll back (reduce) its tax rate so that revenues from existing property can only increase at the lesser of the following three scenarios:



- Five percent
- Consumer Price Index (just 1.36 percent annually on average for the past five years)
- The change in assessed valuation, which, if negative, causes the District's revenue to be flat due to the fact that the Hancock Amendment protects school districts from collecting less tax revenue than they did the year before, regardless of a decrease in assessed valuations.

Consequently, the District's operating tax revenue has remained relatively flat since the last voter-approved increase in 2003. This is a problem for many St. Louis County school districts, but especially for districts like Clayton that rely primarily on local taxes for revenue. •

balance. Absent any budget reductions or revenue increases, the District's reserves will fall below its 18 percent goal in the 2019-2020 school year.

One of the main factors that limits growth of the District's tax revenue is the Hancock Amendment, a state law that provides property owners with a

What is a Proposition C Waiver?

The School District of Clayton's April 2 ballot issue, Proposition E, is comprised of an operating levy increase of 56 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation and an eight-cent waiver of Proposition C sales tax revenues. The net effect of both measures would provide the District with an additional 64 cents of operating revenue.

Proposition C, adopted in 1982 and known as the Missouri School and Highway Tax Proposition, is a statewide one-cent sales tax primarily used to fund education. The tax is collected throughout the state and distributed to districts based on their average daily attendance. In the 2018-2019 school year, every public school in the state received approximately \$960 per student.

Under the law, school districts with a tax rate higher than \$2.75 must reduce their tax rate to account for half of their Proposition C funds. As a result, the School District of Clayton would have to decrease its operating levy by eight cents, meaning the District would get the financial benefit of only a 48-cent increase from the 56-cent levy.

Proposition C is a statewide one-cent sales tax primarily used to fund education. Under the law, school districts with a tax rate higher than \$2.75 must reduce their tax rate to account for half of their Proposition C funds.



The alternative to asking for voter support of a Proposition C waiver would be to seek a 72-cent increase in the operating levy to end up with the same net of 64 cents. However, like most districts in Missouri, the District believes that simply "waiving" Proposition C is a more straightforward approach. Voters in 459 of the 518 school districts in Missouri have approved Proposition C waivers. •

Proposition E: Maintaining E

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF CLAYTON PROPOSITION E APRIL 2

On April 2, 2019, the School District of Clayton will be asking the community to vote on Proposition E, an operating levy increase of 56 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation and an eight-cent waiver of Proposition C sales tax revenues. The net effect of both measures will provide the District with an additional 64 cents of operating revenue. The additional revenue will be used to maintain and strengthen the District's academic excellence and fiscal stability by eliminating the gap between revenues and expenses, addressing facility and maintenance needs and rebuilding reserves.

Why is the District bringing Proposition E to voters now?

The District is asking voters to consider an operating levy increase in April 2019 because the Board of Education and District administration believe they have limited spending as much as possible without negatively impacting the quality of education students receive. The District is always reviewing its financial situation. As early as 2012, the District became aware of potential budget shortfalls and took a variety of cost-controlling measures to address the shortfalls, reducing expenses that year by a total of \$2.8 million. The District continued to analyze its budget for further efficiencies. Even with the reductions, the District has had to prudently use its reserves to maintain academic excellence and close the gap between revenues and expenses for the past three years.

How was the amount of the requested increase determined?

The amount of the requested increase was developed after nine months of listening to the community and gathering critical feedback, including conducting input sessions last March, hosting FOCUS Open Houses in November and meeting with advisory groups in December. It was determined based on the need to close the gap between projected revenues and expenses, rebuild reserves and provide funds to address maintenance and facility needs while also maintaining academic excellence and programming and continuing to meet community expectations for our schools. The proposal for a 56-cent operating levy increase and eight-cent Proposition C waiver will provide funding to maintain programs and facilities while ensuring the District's fiscal health for at least the next five years.



The additional revenue from Proposition E would be used to maintain and strengthen the District's academic excellence and fiscal stability.

Official Ballot Language for Proposition E on April 2, 2019:

"For the purpose of providing competitive salaries, maintaining class sizes, avoiding cuts in educational programs, improving building safety, and funding other District needs, shall the Board of Education of the School District of Clayton, St. Louis County, Missouri be authorized to eliminate fully the sales tax reduction in its operating tax levy for school purposes as provided under Section 164.013 RSMo, and increase the operating tax levy ceiling of the District to \$3.6773 for residential real property, \$4.2276 for commercial real property and \$4.0076 for personal property per \$100 of assessed valuation? If this proposition is approved, the operating levy ceiling of the District is estimated to increase by \$0.56 per \$100 of assessed valuation for residential real property, commercial real property, and personal property."

Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on April 2. Absentee ballots may be obtained from the St. Louis County Board of Elections (725 Northwest Plaza Drive • 314.615.1833) and must be submitted by 5 p.m. on March 26.

xcellence in Clayton Schools

How much will my taxes increase if Proposition E passes?

For every \$100,000 of appraised value*, a homeowner will pay an additional \$121.60 a year.

Appraised Value*	Monthly	Annually
\$600K	\$61	\$730
\$900K	\$91	\$1,094
\$1.2M	\$122	\$1,460

**This table illustrates the proposed increase in property taxes based on a home's appraised value, which is the approximate market value of a home. Assessed value for residential property is calculated at 19 percent of appraised value.*

What steps has the District taken to control its expenses?

The District's expenses have only increased an average of 2.29 percent over the last 15 years. The District controls expenses by taking the following steps:

- Reducing staffing expenses
- Restructuring health benefits
- Re-bidding vendor contracts
- Reducing utility costs through energy conservation strategies that include utility rebate incentives for energy efficient lighting, building automation systems and the use of solar photovoltaic arrays

When was the last time the District asked for an operating levy increase?

The last operating levy increase was approved by voters in 2003. That 65-cent increase was projected to provide sufficient operating funds for the District for the next three years; however, that increase has lasted for more than 15 years because of sound fiscal management by the District. To put this timeline in perspective, students in the current Clayton High School senior class would have been two years old or younger when the last operating levy increase was passed.

How does the District benefit from new construction?

The District receives additional tax revenues from new construction (e.g., new office buildings and additions to our homes). New construction in Clayton, though appearing to be substantial, has added an average of only \$285,000 of additional annual revenue over the past 10 years. Current development in downtown Clayton can be deceiving. Even though there are a number of "cranes in the air" in the Central Business District, new developments are only projected to provide the following additional revenue over the next four years, which is not enough to close the projected \$4.8 million gap between revenues and expenditures:

- 2019 - \$470,000
- 2020 - \$635,000
- 2021 - \$738,600
- 2022 - \$417,000



The District's last operating levy increase was approved by voters in 2003 and was expected to last for three years. Due to sound fiscal management, it has lasted for more than 15.

Visit claytonschools.net/PropE to learn more.

PTO Council Voters' Guide

for the April 2, 2019, Board of Education Election

The School District of Clayton's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) Council has prepared this Voters' Guide for the April 2 Board of Education election. We believe that a concise, nonpartisan publication of the candidates' views on pressing issues will help you evaluate the candidates, seek additional information and head to the polls better informed.

The District's six PTOs have developed questions based on the top issues facing Clayton schools over the next three-to-five years.

Three (3) candidates have filed for the two (2) available seats on the Board of Education. This guide presents the candidates' responses, limited to 175 words, to 10 key questions. The responses are listed in the order the candidates will appear on the ballot.

You will have an additional opportunity to explore these and other issues at the Meet the Candidates Forum on March 26 at 7 p.m. at Clayton High School.

The election will be held on April 2, 2019. The polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., and you will be able to vote for up to two candidates.



Joe Miller

44 Broadview Drive 314.398.5052 jrmemc@gmail.com

Website: joemiller4claytonschools.com

Education: Master of Public Administration, Saint Louis University; B.A. Sociology, Northwestern University

Employment: Senior Vice President, Partnerships, Wyman Center; as a for-profit and nonprofit executive, I have worked for over 25 years to improve the performance of schools and government systems.

Civic Memberships: Clayton School Board – treasurer, Long-Term Financial Planning Committee, Legislative Advocacy Committee; Clayton Recreation, Sports and Wellness Commission (Center of Clayton Board) – secretary; City of Clayton Strategic Relations Action Team; St. Louis County School Board Professional Learning Committee – founder/lead organizer; Show-Me School Based Health Alliance Board - program chair; Annie E. Casey Children and Families Fellow; Leadership St. Louis Advisory Committee; Leadership Clayton (past); Glenridge PTO – VP, Pancake Breakfast chair, grade chair (past); Clayton Parks and Recreation – Volunteer Coach - 66 Clayton youth teams in 15 years (past); Greyhounds Basketball Club – Volunteer Coach – 4 teams (past); Captain/Glenridge Cub Scouts - den leader, cubmaster (past); Moorlands Neighborhood Association – president (past); Claverach Park Neighborhood Organization – treasurer (past); City of Clayton Strategic Plan (C the Future)(past)

Family: My wife, Rashda "Sonny" Buttar, and I moved back to Clayton 18 years ago because of the wonderful educational experience my siblings and I had in the District. All of our children – Anis (19)(2017 graduate); Casimir (17)(12th grade); Shabir (14)(9th grade) have attended Clayton Schools from the Family Center to Clayton High School.



Stacy Siwak

37 Brentmoor Park 314.614.9494 stacy4claytonschools@gmail.com

Website: stacy4claytonschools.com

Education: Master of Education, School Counseling, University of Missouri-St. Louis; B.S., Secondary Education and Spanish, Indiana University

Employment: Rockwood School District (past); Washington University (past)

Civic Memberships: Clayton Schools Focus Advisory Group; Clayton Schools Adzick Field Committee Chair; Clayton Schools Calendar Committee; Clayton Education Foundation Andy Cohen Gala Committee; Clayton High School De-Stress Day Co-Chair; Wydown Middle School Character and Community Committee; Wydown Middle School Principal Interview Team; Wydown Middle School Welcome Wagon Chair; Glenridge PTO Secretary; Glenridge Fifth Grade Fundraising Chair; Glenridge School Pictures Chair; Jewish Community Center Executive Committee and Board Member; Jewish Federation of St. Louis Women's Philanthropy Board Member; Jewish Federations of North America National Young Leadership Cabinet; Central Reform Congregation Education Committee Chair; Central Reform Congregation Rabbinical Interview Team and Onboarding Committee

Family: My husband Greg and I have been married for 18 years and have three children. Sam is a sophomore at Clayton High School, and Ben is in eighth grade and Molly in sixth grade both at Wydown Middle School. All three of our children previously attended Glenridge Elementary and the Family Center.



Brad Bernstein

500 South Meramec Avenue 314.625.2950 brad4board@mail.com

Website: brad4board.com

Education: Clayton High School, 1975; B.A., Chemistry(w/honors), Washington University in St. Louis, 1980; M.D., Saint Louis University School of Medicine, 1984; Anesthesiology Residency, Washington University School of Medicine, 1986-87

Employment: United States Navy Active Duty 1987-92, 2003. Reserves, 1993 –Present; Washington University School of Medicine, 1993-2007; Specialists in Anesthesia, P.C., 1998- Present, President; St. Louis University School of Medicine, 2012 – Present

Civic Memberships: Clayton School Board, School District PTO Council, Athletic Advisory Council, Special School District Governing Council, Long Term Financial Planning Committee. City of Clayton Parks and Recreation, Economic Development/Strategic Planning, Sustainability Committees. Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation, Boy Scouts of America (Eagle Scout), United States Navy Reserves.

Family: Married to Moira Jablon-Bernstein (B.A. Drexel University; M.A. Rowan University (Counseling and Student Services), Career Counselor and Fitness Instructor. Simone – CHS 2010, B.A. St Bonaventure University (Social Entrepreneurship), Fulbright Scholar, 4th yr GW Med School, Ensign US NAVY. Jake – CHS 2012, B.S. UNC-Chapel Hill (Computer Science), Morehead Cain Scholar, Assistant Product Manager Google. Sophie- CHS 2018, 1st year UMKC School of Medicine 6 yr Program.

1. Apart from any Board of Education experience, specify why you feel qualified to represent the Clayton community on the Board of Education? What skill set or level of expertise would you bring to the Board and the school district?

Joe Miller

As a child, I attended Clayton schools and, as an adult, I have served the Clayton community as a sports coach (70 youth teams), Cub Scout leader, neighborhood association leader, robotics coach, PTO officer, and on numerous city committees. I am a current parent of children in the District (9th and 12th grade). All three of my children began at the Family Center and went through to Clayton High School (my eldest graduated in 2017).

However, it is my professional experience that offers a unique set of skills to the Clayton School Board. As a for-profit and nonprofit executive, I have worked for over 25 years to improve the performance of schools and government systems. I currently advise local and national school leaders on topics such as curriculum, professional development, building leadership, strategic planning, and board effectiveness. Because I understand educational leadership and policy setting, I am frequently asked to offer my expertise to school leaders outside Clayton, including to the Missouri School Board Association and as a TEDx speaker.

Stacy Siwak

My experience as a public school teacher uniquely qualifies me to serve on the board. As an educator, I understand that kids learn and succeed in different ways, and that each needs individualized support. Outside the classroom, I broadened my relationship with students as a coach and club sponsor, deepening my understanding that meeting students' social and emotional needs contributes to their academic success. Recognizing the importance of interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging to student success spurred me to earn a master's degree in school counseling. Beyond my career in education, I've served on numerous nonprofit boards in our community, where I saw that working with fellow board members in a cooperative and respectful way led to good results. All these experiences will be an asset to the board.

Brad Bernstein

I am a proud lifetime Clayton School District resident (Clayton and Richmond Heights). I attended Glenridge, Wydown, CHS; lived in all three elementary zones. My commitments and energy have always been focused on our community and all children. As a parent (3 CHS graduates), physician and entrepreneur, I look for creative solutions to difficult problems and ask the hard questions. A unique educational and work history, aka, a checkered past, I went fulltime to Forest Park, UMSL, graduated from Washington University and SLU school of medicine. Clayton public works department in high school. Spent college summers working. Summers at Webster and SEMO. Joined the Navy; active duty 5 years, two aircraft carriers and continue in the reserves. Many civic organizations. Work in academic medicine, an educator, private practice in "underserved" St Louis and East St Louis.

We have a number of talented board members and I believe that we also need those with diverse experiences and an intense knowledge of the workings of the district, the needs of students and parents. Without balance we lose history.

2. Identify your top two funding priorities and suggest how you would fund them.

Joe Miller

The Clayton School District is recognized for its academic excellence and rigor. Research suggests that teachers are the number one school-controlled factor related to student success. Our top priority must continue the community's long-standing investment in hiring and retaining quality teachers and administrators, which represents 80% of the operating budget.

As a public school system, it is our mission to provide academic excellence and life skills for all students. Currently, we have made some progress. However, there still remain equity challenges for some students. The State of Missouri divides public school data into various subgroups, e.g. Race; Individualized Education Plan; Free-Reduced Lunch. In Clayton, our subgroups underperform their peers by 30% - 50% on standardized tests.

There are federal, state and private grants, which aim to address the achievement gap, and I would work with the administration to pursue them. However, I also think it is our challenge to meet our student achievement goals within our existing operating budget.

Stacy Siwak

Most of our budget rightfully goes toward teacher salaries and benefits, and reflects Clayton's emphasis on hiring experienced educators with advanced degrees. We need to continue supporting our teachers with adequate compensation to ensure our students' continued success. As a member of the district focus advisory group, I've recently listened to and studied our community priorities through surveys and open houses, and I've seen wide agreement that academic success is our first priority. However, as part of achieving that goal, there is growing concern that we better serve the social and emotional needs of our students. This may include added teacher training, and when appropriate, hiring qualified support staff and/or creating safe spaces for our kids. As a public school district, we must maintain support from taxpayers to fund these priorities, and I am committed to being a careful steward of their money.

Brad Bernstein

Our priorities are (1) to give our students the tools to succeed. This includes our outstanding facilities, access to technology, academics, athletics, the arts, etc. We have to invest in the whole child. This includes character and physical education and or course academic excellence. Whether a student goes on to a career in education, medicine, law, business, military or a stay at home parent; life long learning and being a good citizen is the end game.

Our most valuable resource is (2) our faculty. We need to continue to offer a competitive compensation package and to make sure our educators feel appreciated. This must include an evaluation plan that is student centered.

To fund this, we must look beyond the tax base. There are numerous other opportunities for revenue growth. At this time I do not support an increase in our tax levy. There are grants and volunteer opportunities that we can and must take advantage. We need a more robust educational foundation to approach alums, grandparents, corporations and other stakeholders for funding support.

3. What makes our “whole child” mission meaningful to you?

Joe Miller

Schools have expanded beyond academic to include broader areas, such as social and emotional learning (SEL). They call this focus the “whole child.” The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is recognized as a national leader in SEL. They define SEL as “the tools kids need to be resilient; to be problem solvers; to be good people.” SEL is important to me, because national studies show that SEL promotes increased academic achievement and improves behavior.

For my entire professional career (25 years), I have utilized SEL skills with students and adults to improve public systems. Currently, I work with superintendents, principals, and school boards as a nonprofit executive. My team facilitates improved student performance and life success, as we strengthen school systems in St. Louis and nationally by providing a nationally recognized SEL curriculum and a school system-wide approach. Our work improves adult-student relationships and student SEL skills and well-being. Over the past 13 years, my team’s SEL approach has positively impacted students and school districts in 35 states and in Washington D.C.

Stacy Siwak

It is essential that each child in Clayton is healthy, safe, engaged, challenged, and supported. As a teacher, considering the whole child was a priority, and led me to earn a master’s degree in school counseling. That training enabled me to better support the social and emotional needs of students in my classroom, athletes on my teams, and kids in the clubs I sponsored. Supporting the whole child also means encouraging and celebrating achievement beyond core classes. Success should include fine and practical arts, sports, and other extracurricular activities. I want our students to be successful in school and in life. Looking at students as individuals, supporting their mental health, and celebrating their accomplishments in all areas can fulfill our “whole child” mission.

Brad Bernstein

The whole child approach results in not only educated but ethical adults who can contribute to society. Because of this approach, I was successful in the navy, as a physician, as a husband and a dad. I will never forget in sixth grade, at Glenridge School when my home room teacher, Ms. Jackson (Glenridge had teams for fifth and sixth grade), gave me an extra five-point card for my ability to read maps. As an average student, this made me feel like king of the hill. When I teach nursing students, medical students and residents, I try to remember how much praise matters.

Our measure is not just what “college” our students matriculate; but eventually be good citizens with a happy and successful life. I started my post-Clayton career at a community college, our daughter also joined the US Navy, is in medical school, soon to be an active duty Navy Medical Corps officer. I owe my success and to the Clayton School District and putting the “whole child” as imperative in helping students grow.

4. What will you do to address the issue of declining educational funding as schools are also faced with the expanding expense of larger enrollment, increased demand for differentiated and individualized learning, and changing technology requirements?

Joe Miller

Clayton School District gets over 95% of its revenue from local sources, mostly property taxes. Based on the Hancock Amendment, our annual operating revenue adjustment is significantly limited (0.9% annual average increase since 2003). We can also increase our revenue from new construction (1.0% annual average increase since 2003).

Even though we have experienced large new construction projects in Clayton and our property taxes have increased significantly, the District’s revenue is capped. The Hancock Amendment does not allow us to fully benefit from these increases. Annual average expenses increased 2.3%, compared to 1.9% for revenue. After 16 years, the School District is asking the community to approve an increased tax levy this April. I support this effort.

On the expense side, we saved over \$2,000,000 in the past six years by utilizing strategies, such as teaching interns and energy savings. Thankfully, we have amazing PTOs and community members, who privately pay a portion of our upgraded playgrounds, libraries, and fields. Similar to other Boards, we must also consider innovative thinking and other types of revenue.

Stacy Siwak

Our community has high expectations for quality education. The administration, the board, and a financial-planning committee of community members agree the district needs a revenue increase, and decided to ask that we vote on a tax levy. As a member of the district focus advisory group, I’ve seen that our community values small class sizes, individualized support, experienced educators, and updated technology. If our school district is to maintain its excellence, we need to pass the tax levy.

We must be responsible and innovative in how we allocate our funds. Perhaps creating a partnership with local universities or businesses could provide opportunities for non-traditional, small group learning. Alternative funding sources might help with changing technology, such as donations through the Clayton Education Foundation.

Brad Bernstein

We have a great opportunity with the educational foundation using planned giving (allocating funds for charity in one’s estate plan). An average planned gift yields 200x an annual gift, and we are not even asking. Private schools, secondary and post-secondary, have been asking alums for money for many years, which is why they have such enormous endowments. For instance, Washington University has 360 staff in their development office. We have less. Their recent campaign netted over 3.3 billion dollars. Our educational foundation is in its infancy with incredible opportunities.

We must objectively review and adjust our expenses to be consistent where our resources are most needed and not allocated effectively. The district must continue to search for additional sources of revenue. They do exist. Again, I do not support a tax levy this year, as a former Long Term Financial Planning committee member, the district must undertake an objective comprehensive evaluation to review our expenditures and passionately explore alternate revenue sources. I am putting the education foundation in my will and hope others will as well.

5. What would you do to improve the educational experience for children who are average performers?

Joe Miller

Approximately 60% of Clayton students are at grade level, or “average performers.” About 20% fall in the gifted range and another 20% are not at grade level. As schools evolve, we place increasing responsibility on our teachers and staff to create differentiated learning experiences for all students and to support student social and emotional well-being. Our challenge becomes to best support teachers so that all of our students can academically thrive.

I believe the best way to improve the educational experience for average performing students is to fully support our Clayton staff with small classes, effective training, and additional resources. A further explanation of these strategies follows:

- I. Small Classes: maintain small class room sizes and low student to staff ratios.
- II. Effective Training: provide effective professional learning, so that staff can meet the increasing expectations for teachers and administrators.
- III. Additional resources: support our students and staff with resources such as social workers (hired two in 2017) and home visits to strengthen the home-school connection.

Stacy Siwak

Average performance does not necessarily indicate a student is of average ability. As a classroom teacher, I saw different reasons for average performance, including that some students are not intrinsically motivated. Our educators must find creative and interesting ways to motivate students so that they reach their highest potential. Educators need to find which teaching style will encourage students to succeed. Other children may not have adequate resources or support at school or at home. We need to ensure each student benefits from intervention when needed, making communication essential among teacher, counselor, and parent.

I also caution us against judging a student's performance based on academic performance alone. Some students may be average performers in core classes, but above-average in electives or extracurricular activities, which are valuable as well. Wherever children perform at their best, they gain confidence that benefits them in and out of school.

Brad Bernstein

There will always be average performers. You can't have a bell-shaped curve with no middle. I was one of those kids. If we continue to have high expectations and good support, our children will thrive in future endeavors.

However, I believe that I didn't get as much attention as the high and low performers. Therefore, we need resources for the middle of the curve. This can be anything from after school programming, in classroom support, and recognizing attributes other than academic performance. There needs to be flexibility in how we view our middle students. If you start out in the gifted or low performance sector you often stay there. We need mobility for all students. A math genius might be a creative writing disaster. Likewise, a track star might not be terrific in art class. We must look at the whole child.

Voting for Brad Bernstein is voting for all students.

6. What specific steps would you take as a school board member to improve transparency and make school district information more widely available?

Joe Miller

School districts across the region are utilizing technology to assist with transparency and to make school district information more widely available. Currently, we audio tape our monthly Clayton School Board “Business” meetings, but not our “Work Sessions.” We host community meetings, regularly send out electronic and written information, utilize social media, and canvass for specific issues. The Board would welcome greater parental attendance at meetings and, similar to some local boards, I would propose live video streaming our meetings to increase transparency.

Even with access to technology, the reality is that it is still important to host regular community meetings, open forums, and listening sessions. Given busy schedules, and low turn-out to community meetings and Board meetings, it also very effective to knock on doors to inform Clayton School District stakeholders.

The strategy of going door to door is important in terms of listening and information sharing, particularly when the School District is not advocating for anything. Our superintendent and I piloted this strategy 18 months ago, and people were very appreciative.

Stacy Siwak

Rapid advances in technology offer opportunities to improve communication, such as with social media. As a board member, I would suggest we stream each of our meetings so anyone can view them live. We also should encourage community members, with or without kids in the schools, to download the district's mobile app to easily access school news. But of course, we can't rely entirely on technology. We could reach more constituents by hosting informal meetings, or question-and-answer sessions, in some of the high-rise condominium buildings in Clayton. Many residents there are not parents of students, but are valued taxpayers and have a vested interest in the success of our schools. In addition, we should engage former school board members in special meetings so they can stay connected, give experienced feedback, and spread the word about issues facing the district. It is essential that we, in any way we can, continue to make information accessible, timely, and transparent.

Brad Bernstein

Our meetings are open to all and the meeting minutes are available on audio tape. A real time or video feed would be great; and if archived, will provide the parent and non parent community with greater transparency of the issues the board is addressing. This is in addition to audio tapes where it is impossible to view charts presented and difficult to identify the board member or staff speaking. But I doubt that this would ever be made into a prime-time movie. We should continue to share summaries in the board brief.

We must be transparent when it comes to the numbers. Numbers can be easily manipulated. If we share how we come to specific conclusions, more people will understand how the conclusion was reached. For instance, a friend was joining a nonprofit board and asked what the average board member donated. The answer was \$45,000. One person donated \$1,000,000/year which skewed the numbers. We have similar occurrences.

7. How do we continue to improve equity among our students? How would that improvement be measured?

Joe Miller

The Board created an Equity and Excellence Committee to improve equity for all our Clayton students. The Committee made good progress by creating and addressing dimensions, such as hiring practices, data collection, and professional learning. They also supported recent community conversations to understand the history of equity in our community and to discuss this important issue.

In my equity work with other school districts, the following strategies are important for success:

- I. Ensure a shared definition of equity. Are we focusing on a particular group or all students?
- II. Clarify roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders (staff, Board, community, parents, students).
- III. Clearly communicate and publish metrics for equity. These metrics should have stakeholder consensus, public transparency, and public review quarterly.
- IV. Deploy best practices from other school districts. Clayton performs well, but, in this area, some school districts perform better.
- V. Diversify our workforce. (e.g. Research suggests that students of color perform better when they have a teacher, who looks like them.)
- VI. Perform an equity audit of all District policies and practices.

Stacy Siwak

I'm impressed with efforts already underway in Clayton schools to ensure each of our students is treated fairly and given the same opportunities to succeed. An example is how schools offer financial assistance for field trips and other extra costs when a family is struggling financially. Some of our schools have recently opened food pantries so students and their families don't go hungry over weekends. Each academic department now includes culturally responsible and inclusive curriculum. Of course, there is always room for improvement. I support the work of the district's Equity Committee that studies how to enhance equity in our schools, including through professional development for our educators. We also can better understand how to improve equity through analysis of data on academic performance and participation in activities, as well as through surveys and interviews.

Brad Bernstein

We provide support for all students. Those include those with special needs such as ESL, gifted programming, learning disability services, etc. So every student has an equal chance at success. These services cannot be parceled out based on gender, race, religion or other factors. Inclusivity must be the culture of our community. Our district has enormous financial resources; with a per pupil expenditure far above any district in the region and an outstanding faculty prepared to both identify and meet those student's needs.

We need to measure progress and educational success. The dyslexic child who scores well on standardized tests has obviously received appropriate support. We can measure progress in segmented groups.

Meet the Candidates Forum
Tuesday, March 26 • 7 p.m. • Clayton High School Auditorium

8. Tell how you would build consensus and support in the Clayton community around the work of the district.

Joe Miller

Broad stakeholder engagement promotes community consensus and support. The Clayton community is fortunate to have so many committed and talented citizens, who volunteer their time and expertise on behalf of Clayton Schools. I would access this wealth of knowledge, experience, and commitment and engage diverse stakeholders (parents, community members without children in the District, former elected officials, students). The conversations would revolve around student and community needs with corresponding solutions, linked to the work of the District.

I would propose more extensive student engagement. Clayton has talented and impressive students. Students should be at the center of all our decisions and they could significantly improve community consensus and support. Let's face it. Our students are often more compelling than the adults. A number of other local school boards have a student member on their school board. To more deeply engage students, Clayton should add a student to our Clayton School Board. Engagement should be partnered with public progress monitoring and reporting/transparency (video-tape the Board Meetings, community meetings, electronic and paper communication, social media posts, canvassing).

Stacy Siwak

District families and all taxpayers deserve to be informed, and encouraged to share their input. Recently, I served on the district focus advisory group charged with identifying our community's priorities. Our open houses drew feedback on the district's current work and ideas for the future. Community members appreciated the opportunity to be heard, and I would like this kind of outreach to continue.

The most up-to-date information can be found at school board meetings, which I'd like to explore streaming live. Technology is helpful for keeping us connected, which also includes social media, the district's mobile app, websites, email blasts, and the district E-News. I'd like us to better use those and other tools in reaching the entire community and not just those with ties to the school district. We might also, as a school board and administration, host town hall meetings or question-and-answer sessions at the growing number of large condominium buildings in Clayton. We also should continue encouraging residents to serve as volunteers in our schools and on district committees.

Brad Bernstein

I believe consensus is often overrated. What is needed is an understanding of other's beliefs, thoughts and feelings. Worshipping a different god, voting for a different party or having different values needs to be supported. Unanimously rubber stamping a recommendation does not always lead to better outcomes.

We can come to consensus that we agree to disagree on certain topics, both educational and in the broader world. This is accomplished by having forums for respectful active listening. The job of the board is to engage in active listening, ask hard questions and then set the vision for our community. These are some of my strengths. We have to do this respectfully, passionately and diligently. The board and administration need to partner together to create this vision.

The PTO Council is responsible for the content of this publication. The School District of Clayton paid for the printing and distribution of this nonpartisan, informational publication. The candidates' responses have been printed as submitted.

9. What steps do you believe the district should take to retain and support staff and teacher talent outside of salary and benefits?

Joe Miller

Research is clear that competent, caring, and consistent adults are the most important success factor for students. Clayton School District is fortunate to have dedicated and talented staff. Although salary and benefits are an important component of staff retention, there are other noteworthy factors.

The education field continues to evolve and professional learning is extremely important to energize and teach staff, as they provide academic excellence and life skills for all students.

The role of principals also contributes to staff retention. Each principal needs to create a supportive school culture, which recognizes both professional and personal growth.

A third retention factor is our Board Grant program, where staff, who work for Clayton Schools, can enroll their children in the District, even if they live outside of our school boundaries.

Finally, the role of the Board of Education is critical to retain staff. The Board needs to create a supportive space, where staff are encouraged to offer their insights at Board Meetings. The Board should ask tough, thought-provoking questions, but should always maintain respect for staff.

Stacy Siwak

Supporting our educators is crucial. As a former public school teacher, I know the value of their ideas, feedback, and suggestions. In that spirit, the administration should listen to our teachers, trust them in leadership roles, and get them involved in big decisions. Educators also draw strength and ideas from each other – teachers need to feel connected to their colleagues, something the district can foster through opportunities for classroom collaboration. Finally, public and private recognition is important, whether awards at a district-wide assembly or a compliment in a private meeting. Let's communicate gratitude to our educators, and keep them engaged, motivated, and connected.

Brad Bernstein

While educating students, we need to provide on-going education for our faculty that is specific to their needs. This needs to occur beyond the classroom day. The district's monetary and non monetary support; not limited to the compensation plan, including all benefits, dwarf every other regional school district.

Thus, whether equitable opportunities for our staff to grow within our district or educational options. For instance, new approaches not limited to math, English or counseling. A French teacher might not need generic professional development or go to a conference aimed at a physical education teacher, yet it would be of great value to the French teacher. This is where the education foundation, once again, can meet these needs by offering scholarships.

My experience as board treasurer, leading a business and a medical group; I am responsible for all budgeting and hiring. I have valuable experience in human resources. The key is that job satisfaction, recruitment and retention, incorporates a complete compensation plan with both monetary and non monetary factors.

10. State the most important goal you will accomplish during your term, and specify how the community can measure your success.

Joe Miller

Academic excellence and life success for all Clayton students is clearly my first priority. It takes adult skill, will, and well-being to promote this student achievement. It is critical that all adults in our District (staff and Board) consistently support what's best for our students.

Increasingly, research suggests that student physical, social and emotional well-being is a critical aspect for student academic and life success. We must better train and support our staff with this type of framework to facilitate students excelling in the classroom and realizing their full life potential.

Board members must work collaboratively with administration, the community, and their fellow board members. An elected school board member cannot effectively function alone. As a member of a governing Board, he/she must convince enough peers regarding a viewpoint and reach consensus in order to best serve our students.

The community can measure my success by monitoring how I support and respectfully challenge administration and reach consensus with my fellow board members to continue progress, especially academic excellence and life success for all Clayton students.

Stacy Siwak

My priority is implementing procedures and policies that ensure students' social and emotional wellbeing. Students succeed academically only if their social and emotional health is supported. As a teacher, this was a constant concern of mine, which is why I earned a master's degree in school counseling. I received training to identify and support my students who struggled with issues at school or at home. The community also has indicated this as a growing concern. I want to be sure our teachers and staff are trained so that they can identify and respond to students who are dealing with traumatic or stressful experiences. I'd like our students to get training, too, in mindfulness and other healthy coping mechanisms. I will encourage our administration to utilize our social workers and outside resources to help with student and teacher training, and I want to continue to include it in staff professional development as well. We can measure success through teacher and student interviews and questionnaires, and with other instruments designed to assess social and emotional wellbeing.

Brad Bernstein

I will advocate for every child. We test regularly for academics and quantify that success. We can measure a child's self esteem by using other testing instruments. When looking at the whole child, it is like the classic story of the blind men describing an elephant. One point of measurement does not tell the whole story. A "C" grade for one child may indicate success. A "C" for another may indicate a problem; possibly family, social or too much drinking or partying. But by continuing to have smaller classes, we have the ability to celebrate a "C" or look for counseling.

As I mentioned, I was not an academic super-star and yet, thanks to the rigor, excellence and opportunities of Clayton Schools I went to college, navy, university faculty at Washington Univ, SLU, Mizzou, SIU-E School of Nursing, re-elected BOE member and president of our medical practice.

The community can measure my success when the parents of gifted, middle and challenge students all can say that the Clayton School District is meeting their children's needs.

Important Dates

More information on School District of Clayton events is available at claytonschoools.net.

March	
18-22	No School: Spring Break
26	BOE Candidate Forum, 7 p.m.
April	
2	Election Day, 6 a.m. - 7 p.m.
3	Parent Speaker Series: The Genius of Play, 7 p.m.
5	Early Release Day: Professional Development
10	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
19	No School: April Break
24	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
May	
3	Early Release Day: Professional Development
8	BOE Meeting 7 p.m.
22	BOE Meeting, 7 p.m.
27	District Closed: Memorial Day
28-30	CHS Finals
28	WMS Eighth-Grade Promotion, 5 p.m.
30	PK-12 Last Day of Classes/ Early Dismissal
30	CHS Graduation, 7 p.m.
31	Grading Day for Teachers
KEY	
BOE – Board of Education	
CHS – Clayton High School	
CPT – Captain Elementary	
FC – Family Center	
GLN – Glenridge Elementary	
MER – Meramec Elementary	
WMS – Wydown Middle School	

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PROPOSITION E • APRIL 2, 2019

This edition of *Inside Clayton* explores Proposition E, a ballot measure that would provide additional revenue to help the District maintain its academic excellence and fiscal stability.



INSIDE CLAYTON

March 2019



Educate. Inspire. Empower.

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