

Bedford Schools' bond proposal well researched, benefits students

I am 100 percent in support of Bedford Public Schools' \$70 million bond project. I initially had questions that since have been addressed through attending meetings, building tours and visiting the BPS Web site. I encourage my fellow township residents to educate themselves on the bond.

I have watched our school district struggle through difficult cuts to funding, especially in the 2011-12 school year when \$470 a pupil was cut. The board and administration had to make decisions such as closing buildings and negotiating concessions with employee groups. The district is projecting coming out of deficit this year — three years early.

Before presenting the community with a bond, the district contracted a facility study through Plant Moran Cressa. The study identified that Douglas and Jackman Road elementary schools needed considerable investment. Combined, they need approximately \$17.1 million to keep them in usable condition for a maximum of 20 additional years. Building a new elementary school for \$18 million that will last 50-plus years is a better investment of taxpayer dollars. I find it reassuring that experts were brought to assess the facilities before the board of education asked for bond dollars.

This bond project is about increased safety of our students; it is not about building more schools for growth. The bond application was built on and approved by the State of Michigan based on a five-year projected decrease in students. It is not a "build it and they will come" proposal. After renovations, each building will have room for growth, though not excessive.

The bond will allow the district to invest in the classroom by not having to use general-fund dollars to invest into its aging buildings and bus fleet.

New and renovated facilities will provide a much improved learning environment for students. Research has shown that the condition of school facilities has a direct impact on student learning. These proposed upgrades will provide 21st-century classrooms and up-graded technological and electrical infrastructure to support access to digital learning while also improving air quality, temperature controls and lighting. In addition, the schools will save money by being more energy efficient and reducing repair and maintenance costs.

This is about investing in our schools, in our community and in our children's futures.

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