



EAST MARSHALL
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Statement from the East Marshall CSD School Board

The residents of our communities will consider a \$13.5 million bond referendum that would provide the funds necessary to move forward with improvements at our schools in Laurel and Le Grand. As part of this proposal, the district would close the middle school in Gilman as early as the fall of 2026.

As a school board, we understand that potentially closing one of our schools is difficult, especially for residents of Gilman. This is not a decision that was made lightly or without thorough planning and careful consideration of alternative solutions. This is also not something unique to East Marshall CSD, as other districts statewide are forced to make similar choices.

The reality is that of the three schools we maintain today, the middle school presents the largest number of facility challenges and costly repairs. Continuing to invest the district's limited resources into the middle school is no longer practical or cost effective.

Transitioning East Marshall CSD to a two-school model, which we believe is the right size considering our limited financial picture and enrollment trends over the past 20 years, will save the district money over the long term and allow those resources to be directed toward learning opportunities for our students, retaining staff and attracting new hires. Investing in Laurel and Le Grand can also help bring in new families and students — whether they are relocating to our communities or considering our schools through open enrollment.

Our board has a long history of respecting the needs of our property taxpayers and making prudent decisions that balance those needs with the needs of our students and staff.

Today, our overall property tax levy rate is the second lowest in the North Iowa Cedar League at \$10.88 per \$1,000 of taxable property value. If the referendum is approved in November, the new rate of \$13.58 would still rank behind seven other districts.

Another example of the district's fiscal responsibility was the handling of \$5.38 million of voter-approved general obligation bonds used to finance renovations at the high school in 2005. In the subsequent years, our board reduced the property taxes needed to repay that debt by leveraging sales tax revenue to abate the levy. The bonds were refinanced to reduce the property taxes necessary for repayment. And, the district prepaid principal on the bonds to reduce the property tax burden.

Everyone who resides in our communities has the same goal at heart: Finding solutions that provide our children with more resources and opportunities for success, and ensuring East Marshall CSD is on stable footing so that it can serve future generations. Although the November referendum is not perfect, we believe it is the best option when it comes to meeting those goals.