



# Long Range Financial Plan

## 2017

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*Prepared: January 2017*

## SUMMARY

At the August 11, 2015 School Board meeting, the Board unanimously approved the Fargo Public Schools Long Range Financial Plan. The plan includes an annual review to be held in January of each year and modified if necessary. This document has been updated to include actual revenue and expenditures for the 2015-16 fiscal year and the adapted budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. In updating this plan, administration has created a 2016-17 general fund budget and five year projections while implementing the local revenue property tax freeze that went into effect for taxable years following December 31, 2015.

As the LRFinP is a planning document, the LRFinP contains financial history information and financial projections. For the 2017 update, administration reduced the financial history to a 5-year lookback. Further, the review includes a progress report on the *Items for Future Consideration* and additional considerations necessary as we proceed with planning. The LRFinP carries financial projections through 2022. Projections are based on the information known to the district at the time of the review, which includes frozen property revenue and anticipated minimal increases in state revenue though the foundation aid formula due to the current financial condition of the state. On the expense side, projections are based on scenarios for salary adjustments as the district is just entering a negotiating cycle and formula based forecasting from prior year actual expenditures.

The result of this forecasting activity sees the district's revenue growth over the next 5 years ranging from a -1.0% to .09%, while expenditure growth over the same period range from 1.7% to 2.8%. The result of which sees the district projecting a deficit general fund budget in the first year that ranges from **\$(830,413)** to **\$(3,947,140)**. This deficit grows each year culminating in 2022 with operating deficits ranging from **\$(278,335)** to **\$(14,741,769)**.

Fargo Public Schools employs a zero based budgeting philosophy with contributions in budget development coming from various levels throughout the district. The district has established a financial position that is fiscally sound, evidence by the maintenance of our fund balance and a consistent Aa3 bond rating through Moody's Rating Agency. As we prepare for next year and beyond, appropriate planning must ensure the maintenance of this financial position as we strive to meet the needs of the district while carrying out the Long Range Facilities Plan and the Strategic Plan.

## HISTORICAL DATA

Education funding is often described in terms of a three-legged stool, meaning revenues are derived from three major sources: state aid, local revenue (property tax), and federal funds. This document will provide a brief history of revenue from these sources and also provide some historical perspective of operating expense growth.

### *Revenue*

**State Foundation Aid:** The State of North Dakota once strived to provide 70% of education funding statewide through the foundation aid formula. In recent years, the state has significantly increased the contribution of state funds to education, at one point striving for 80% statewide funding. During the 2013 Legislative Session, the state substantially changed the funding formula to account for a much larger portion of education funding and transitioning to a truly student driven model. This commitment to education was sustained by the 2015 legislature as the state's overall investment in K-12 education reached \$2 billion. As we forecast revenue into 2022, the district is very aware of the financial challenges facing the state. In fiscal year 2015-16, the state funded 64.6% of the general fund operating budget for Fargo Public Schools (FPS). During 2015-16, K-12 education relied on a transfer from the Foundation Aid Stabilization Fund to avoid revenue reductions. As the 2017 legislative session unfolds, indications are that state revenue for K-12 will be fortunate to remain flat. This means the only new state revenue would come from enrollment growth. FPS projects student growth to remain between 100-150 students per year.

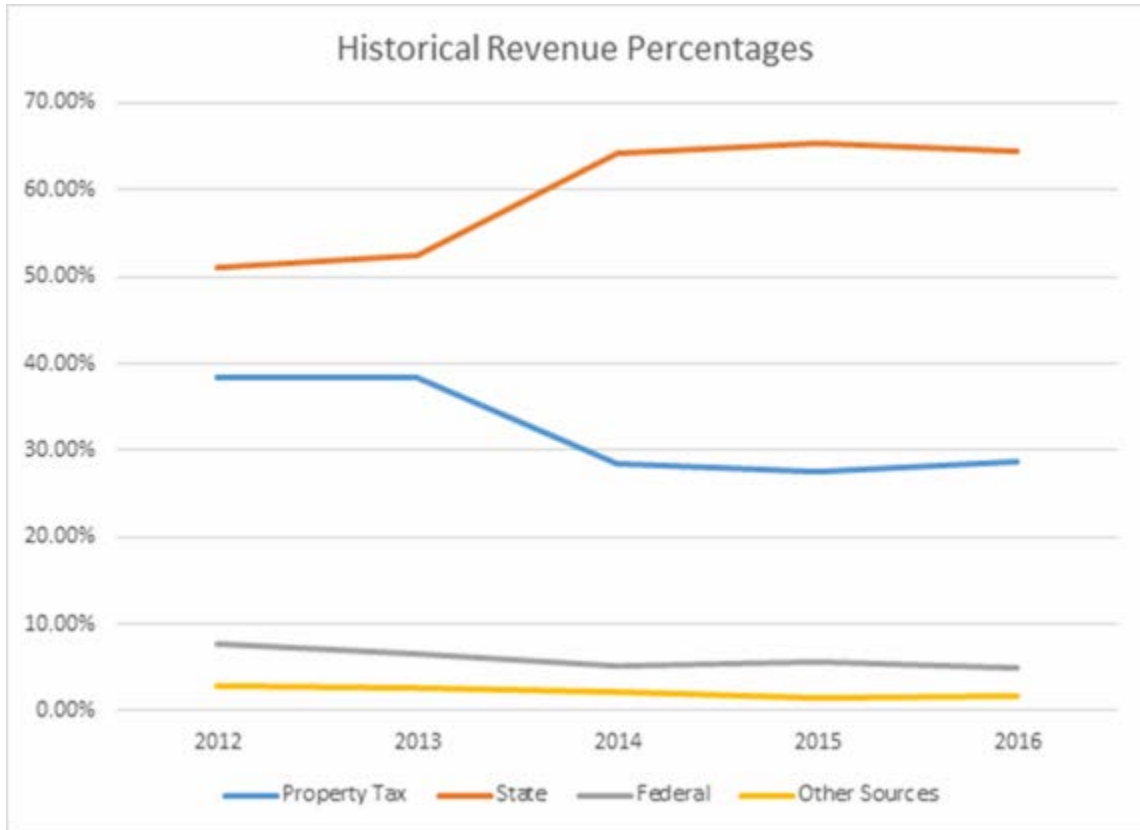
**Property Tax:** Up to July 1, 2001, Fargo Public Schools was an "unlimited" levy district, which means the Board of Education had unlimited authority to levy mills for the purpose of operating the school district. By majority approval in an election in 2001, Fargo citizens imposed a cap on Fargo Public Schools levy authority of 295.46 mills, absent state required levy reductions. The State cap at this time was 185 mills.

In 2009, the North Dakota Legislature passed a Mill Levy Reduction Grant Program that allowed districts to reduce its current mill levy by 75 mills, which would be funded by the state, thus providing property tax relief to local tax payers. During the 2009 session, the legislature also required any school district which had levy authority above the 185 mills to secure voter approval of an excess levy by December 31, 2015. In the 2013 legislative session, the state called for an additional 50 mill reduction at the local level, setting the state cap at 60 mills with some flexibility needing school board action to increase an additional 10 mills. At that time, they also eliminated the mill levy reduction grant program and significantly changed the funding formula as indicated above. Additionally, during this same session, the Savings & Loan (S&L) tax was restructured, eliminating local school districts from receiving this tax beginning in the 2013-14 fiscal year. The S&L collection for FPS was \$1.9 million in the previous fiscal year of 2012-13.

**Federal Funds:** The final significant funding mechanism for education is federally funded programs. Federal funds remain relatively flat year-to-year. The high point of federal funds was 7.69% of the general fund operating revenue in 2011-12 and the low point was 5.25% in fiscal year 2012-13. The decline in federal funding from 2011-12 to 2012-13 was the result of federal sequestration, which totaled \$900,000 in lost revenue for the 2013-14 general fund budget.

**Note:** Making up the balance to total 100% of general fund revenue are "Other Funds". These include items such as other state funds like transportation and state child placement, also other local revenue such as rental and tuition collections.

The graph below illustrates the general fund budget as a percentage of each funding source:



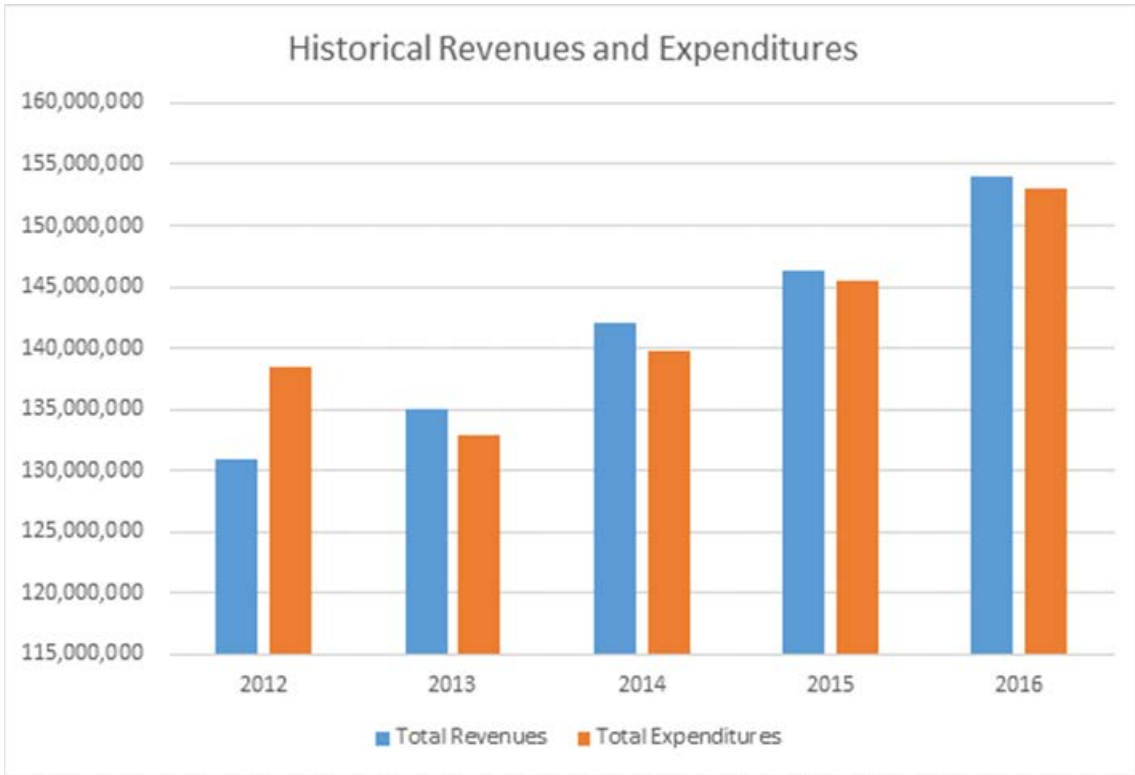
### **Expense**

In the period between 2012-current, the overall general fund expenditures have ranged from \$128.7 million to \$149.2 million. The major component of expenditures remains human resources, as salary and benefits comprise 78.5% of the overall general fund expenses. Operating expenses over this period have run slightly under budget overall and below operating revenues, providing a slight increase in the districts ending fund balance.

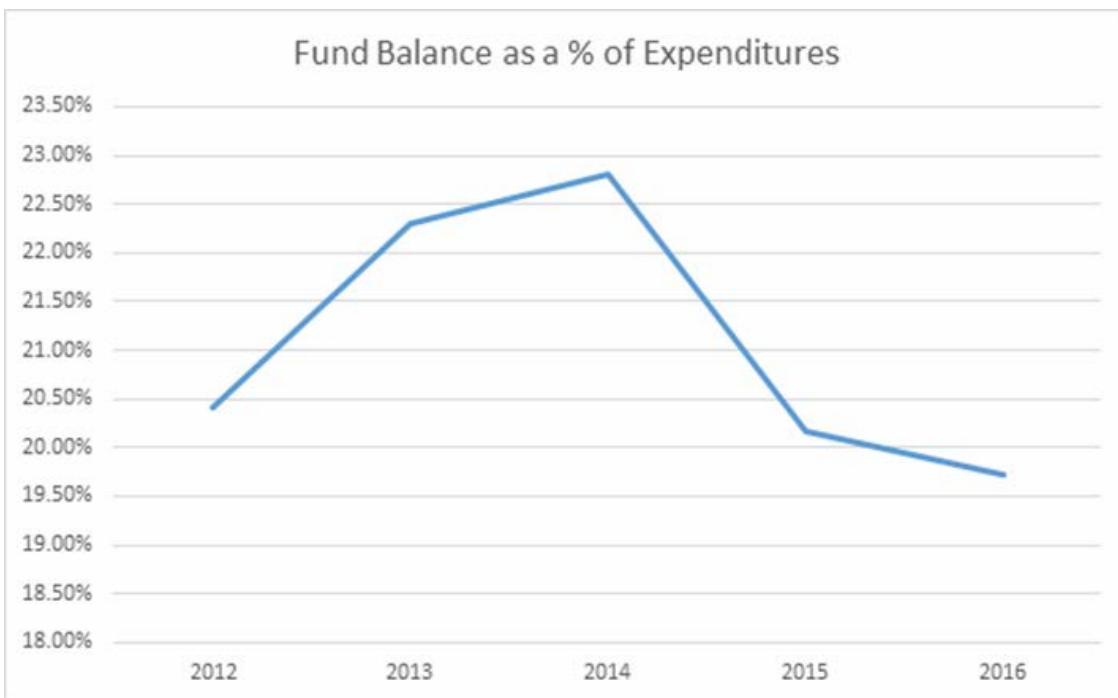
The Board of Education established a 10% fund balance goal several years ago to help with financial stability. The goal was then modified to 15% of general fund expenditures; the goal was surpassed in 2002. There are two primary ways to accomplish this goal, either increase revenues or decrease expenditures.

Since 2012, the ending fund balance of the district has ranged from \$26.7 million (18.64%) to its current level of \$30.1 million (20.34%). Pending the outcome of the mill levy vote scheduled for March 7, 2017, there will be ongoing discussion regarding appropriate fund balance level for the district.

The graph below shows the relationship of total revenue to total expenses during the period of 2012 - 2016:



The graph below show the fund balance as a percent of general fund expenditures and value during the period of 2012 – 2016:



## BUDGETING PHILOSOPHY

Fargo Public Schools employs a zero base budget philosophy. In doing so, administration strives annually to present the Board with a balanced budget consistent with policy EL-7: Budgeting and Financial Planning. Since fiscal year 2013-14, the Business Manager and budget team in the district have redesigned the budget development process to include broader input district-wide for budgetary needs. Also, the district implemented an online budget system through GP Dynamics in fiscal year 2014-15 for the creation of annual budgets going forward.

In developing annual revenue projections during budget development, the district utilizes many resources including: the state funding formula, consultation with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the City of Fargo Assessment Office annual report for property valuation determination, and the Cass County Auditor's office for property tax valuation of property outside the city of Fargo. The remaining revenue lines and the operating expenses, other than salary, are projected annually using a three-year average and adjusting for any one time anomalies. The district also focuses on prior year actual expenses to determine future year requests, rather than requesting funds based on budgeted amount the previous year.

These efforts played a significant role in the district not experiencing a deficit budget as projected in the previous LRFInP, which would have resulted in a significant reduction in the fund balance. It is important to note that in the 10-year forecasting included in this plan, the operating expenses have continued to increase annually based on the forecasting assumptions.

In 2016-17, FPS reduced budget requests by \$3.6 million in order to present a balanced budget for approval and certification. These reductions came specifically in the following areas:

- 1.) Supplies.** Although there were requests for increases in some supply categories, the overall supply budget for the district was held flat compared to actual expenditures the prior year. No increases were granted.
- 2.) Natural Gas.** The past two winters have been unseasonable warm compared to a five-- year average. The district utilized the two-year average for natural gas and hopes to see another mild winter.
- 3.) Operational Maintenance.** FPS has a Long Range Facilities Plan, which contains a 10-year schedule for ongoing maintenance of existing facilities. This plan was reviewed and annual expenses in this line were reduced by \$800,000, which leads to the 10-year plan stretching out further.
- 4.) Equipment.** Replacement cycles on certain equipment lines, such as vehicles and maintenance equipment, were extended, reducing the equipment line by \$480,000.
- 5.) Technology Equipment.** Options became available to pre-buy some technology equipment from saving in the prior year budget and replacement cycles were reviewed in this area as well, allowing for a reducing in \$250,000.
- 6.) Bond Repayment.** The district's Building Authority has a final bond payment due in 2016-17, of which \$300,000 comes from the general fund as a transfer to the Building Authority. It was determined to pre-pay this bond out of the prior fiscal year, thus reducing the general fund obligation in 2016-17 by \$300,000.

The Future Considerations section of the LRFInP provides items that may need to be considered for continuing to provide a balanced general fund operating budget.

## **DEBT STRUCTURE**

The district continues to respond to changes in the market and seeks debt refunding options when available. In the past two fiscal years, the district has refunded several bond issues and maintained debt structure that fits within the current revenue collected in both the Building Fund and Special Levy Fund. Further, Fargo Public Schools has maintained a favorable bond rating through the years. (Appendix on page 14 details the outstanding bond issues and amortization schedules)

## **FORECASTING ASSUMPTIONS**

In the process of creating a LRFInP, assumptions are made for purposes of forecasting. These assumptions are made by using historical trends and standards that guide the district philosophically in obtaining our mission of *Educating and Empowering all Students to Succeed*. This LRFInP also takes into account the need to fulfill the Long Range Facilities Plan and the Strategic Plan for the district. The LRFInP provides a five-year forecast for the district general fund, beginning with the current 2016-17 fiscal year and forecasting revenue and expenditures through 2022.

Below are assumptions that have been used for forecasting:

1. Property tax revenues have been frozen at the projected collection during the 2015-16 fiscal year as a result of the legislative action taken in 2009 to require renewed voter approval of a specified levy.
2. Maintain current staffing levels, specifically related to maintenance of class size. Preference is for class size of 21 or fewer in primary, 22 or fewer in intermediate, and 26 or fewer in secondary core academic classes.
3. Staff salary projections were run using 2 separate models:
  - a. Model 1: a 3 % increase in overall staff salaries for contracted lines, which does not include any “additional pay codes”
  - b. Model 2: frozen salaries across all salary lines in the budget.
4. Preference is for students to travel less than 1 mile to or from elementary school for a maximum of 30 minutes on a bus; less than 1.5 miles to or from secondary school or a maximum of 30 minutes on a bus.

5. State per Pupil Aid is projected to increase .5 % per year over the five-year projection. Although there is a five-year average of a 12.53% increase in state aid, this average is skewed by the 2013 legislative action to change the funding formula.
  - a. This increase also accounts for a modest enrollment increase annually of 100-150 students. Enrollment increase projections assume there are no significant downturns in the local and state economy, and a resolution to the Fargo flood mitigation concerns.
6. Sustained implementation of the Long Range Facilities Plan, with a modification to the 10-year operational maintenance line. In an effort to reduce the overall operating deficit in the general fund, this line was reduced by \$800,000 in 2016-17 and held flat through 2022.
7. Ongoing implementation of the [Technology Plan](#), which has an annual estimated budget of \$2,750,000 to include the continuance of the Glass Paper Project estimated at \$1,085,000. In an effort to reduce the overall operating deficit in the general fund, the technology equipment line was reduced by \$570,000 in 2016-17, reduced by an additional \$192,000 in 2017-18, and held flat through 2022.
8. Equipment lines were reduced district-wide by \$300,000 in 2016-17, reduced an additional \$480,000 in 2017-18, and held flat through 2022.
9. Implementation of the [Strategic Plan](#), specifically the financial implications of ensuring efforts to recruit and retain the highest qualified employees, which means maintaining competitive salary and benefit packages.

## **SPECIFIED LEVY IMPACT**

As we realize the property tax freeze in fiscal year 2016-17, it is important to know the impact of this freeze on revenue that would have been collected. Property tax revenues will be frozen at the level of actual collection for fiscal year 2015-16 and will remain frozen until such a time that the value of 70 mills equals the dollars currently collected.

For purposes of projecting the unrealized revenue of the mill levy freeze, this plan assumes an 8% growth in valuation for 2017 and 2018, followed by a 5% valuation increase from 2019-2028. The financial impact of unrealized revenue from this exercise ranges from \$4.5 million in the current fiscal year 2016-17 to a high of \$40.1 million in 2028, which is the year the district would be unfrozen using these assumptions. (Appendix on page 12 details the projections above)



## ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

In future years, the following will need to be considered: (listed in no particular order)

1. **Salary Expense:** Employee salaries have and will continue to comprise between 56% - 60% of the overall operational expense in the district. This is not uncommon among organizations. There are two ways in which to reduce the salary expense: 1) either future compensation packages will need to be considered to increase at a slower pace, or 2) efforts need to be made to reduce the number of total staff within the district. This could be achieved with an analysis of staffing in a standard of effort study.
2. **Employee Benefits Expense:** This expense will remain between 16% - 22% of the overall operational expense. Coupled with salary, personnel expenditures will comprise 72% - 82% of the overall general fund expenses in the district.
3. **Transportation and Travel:** In fiscal year 2016-17, Fargo Public Schools budgeted \$5.1 million for student transportation and anticipates receiving \$1.1 million from the state as an offset to this expense. In future years, the district may need to consider the sustainability of this practice. Options include reducing regular routes or charging patrons for transportation costs. Further, the district budgeted \$370,500 for employee travel in 2016-17.
4. **Class Size:** As detailed in the projection assumptions, the preference for class size in the district is a driving factor in the ongoing personnel costs of the district.
5. **Programmatic Changes:** The fund transfer section of the operation budget includes items such as general fund transfers for Trollwood, Student Activities, and Residential programs. These areas make up more than half of the currently budgeted fund transfer expenses of \$7.3 million. The remainder is dedicated to Building Authority debt serviced by the general fund. These and other programmatic areas may need to be analyzed for sustainability or efficiency.
6. **Specified Levy Approval:** Fargo Public Schools is holding a special election on March 7, 2017 to request approval of a specified mill of 127 mills. This is the exact number of mills currently being levied in the general fund for fiscal year 2016-17 and does not represent a tax increase. Approval of the specified levy would remove the freeze currently in place and allow FPS to receive additional revenue from property valuation increases only, which are set by the City of Fargo Assessors Office.
7. **Additional Taxation:** In accordance with state statute, the district could levy 12 mills for miscellaneous purposes and three mills for a special reserve fund to increase revenue.

In summary, the financial condition of Fargo Public Schools is currently very strong. Ongoing efforts by administration to comply with policy EL-7: Budgeting and Financial Planning have provided balanced budgeting each year and maintained appropriate fund balances while meeting the strategic vision and needs of the district. The newly adopted Strategic Plan and Long Range Facilities Plan, which were developed with a great deal of community engagement, provide a roadmap to the future, setting expectations and guiding decision making.

The future presents challenges as the district is faced with the current property tax freeze in fiscal year 2016-17. This will require the district to make decisions regarding the future direction of either securing a positive vote from the public regarding approval of a specified levy, or re-evaluate the strategic direction of the education offering for Fargo Public Schools District #1. Securing future revenue in and of itself is not enough to sustain the district long-term. The current condition of the state's revenue looms as a major hurdle working through the 2017 legislative session and beyond. There will need to be continued efforts to create operational efficiencies in providing the quality education that has become the benchmark of Fargo Public Schools.

The LRFinP shall have annual review in January each year to assure appropriate timeframe for fiscal year budgeting.

# APPENDIX

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Analysis on mill reductions if X% in property valuations with District at frozen amount

	BASELINE FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028
Estimated % Increase in Valuation	<b>10.1155%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Current Mills Levied	139.00												
Current Value of one mill	\$ 317,913												
Current General Fund Dollars Levied*	\$ 44,189,930	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103	\$ 44,479,103
Estimated value of mill @ valuation increase		\$ 350,229	\$ 378,247	\$ 408,507	\$ 428,932	\$ 450,379	\$ 472,898	\$ 496,543	\$ 521,370	\$ 547,439	\$ 574,811	\$ 603,551	\$ 633,729
Mills Levied		127.00	117.59	108.88	103.70	98.76	94.06	89.58	85.31	81.25	77.38	73.70	70.19
Reduction in Mills Levied		(12.00)	(9.41)	(8.71)	(5.18)	(4.94)	(4.70)	(4.48)	(4.27)	(4.06)	(3.87)	(3.68)	(3.51)
Unrealized Revenue		\$ 4,491,901	\$ 7,662,437	\$ 11,505,430	\$ 14,099,450	\$ 16,823,171	\$ 19,683,078	\$ 22,685,981	\$ 25,839,029	\$ 29,149,729	\$ 32,625,964	\$ 36,276,011	\$ 40,108,559.65





431-Repair of Instructional Equipment	52,831	62,945	62,036	62,327	50,414	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	
432-Repair of Non-Instructional Equipment	17,298	45,144	30,823	63,444	73,665	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	0%
433-Alarm System Maintenance	25,663	6,938	31,409	16,035	27,026	797	773	749	725	929		Forecast
434-Fire Extinguisher Maintenance	1,215	5,012	9,160	1,039	1,232	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	0%
437-Maintenance Contracts	143,141	210,168	207,456	463,130	662,235	64,375	65,192	66,009	66,826	69,512		Forecast
						68,162	73,308	78,455	83,601	91,238		Forecast
						28,823	30,051	31,279	32,507	35,177		Forecast
						3,490	3,227	2,964	2,701	2,465		Forecast
						609,013	652,445	695,878	739,310	800,184		Forecast





Fargo Public School District  
10 YEAR HISTORICAL P/L GENERAL FUND (No Grants)

**MILLS @ Estimated Valuation Increase**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
						139.00	127.00	117.59	108.88	103.70	98.76	94.06
							<b>REVISED BUDGET</b>					
920-Transfers	8,154,899	8,919,396	6,606,783	7,274,597	7,028,069	8,181,168	7,377,988	7,589,363	7,846,623	8,112,265	5,415,756	5,412,006
Subtotal Fund Transfers	8,388,899	8,919,396	6,606,783	7,274,597	7,028,069	8,181,168	7,377,988	7,589,363	7,846,623	8,112,265	5,415,756	5,412,006
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>109,926,788</b>	<b>128,794,564</b>	<b>126,165,590</b>	<b>132,343,912</b>	<b>136,691,471</b>	<b>144,277,419</b>	<b>149,668,378</b>	<b>149,041,220</b>	<b>150,167,976</b>	<b>151,198,448</b>	<b>149,402,509</b>	<b>150,365,903</b>
Excess Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	5,151,606	(8,320,334)	(324,083)	1,798,301	928,434	840,665	0	(830,413)	(1,333,643)	(2,247,030)	150,203	(278,335)

[See Debt Schedule](#)







644-Book Binding	727							-	-	-	-	-		
645-Workbooks	109,417	208,025	220,493	225,389	198,207	279,818	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000	0%
650-Periodicals	27,615	25,335	23,496	22,741	20,196	16,812	17,600	17,600	17,600	17,600	17,600	17,600	17,600	0%
662-Food	3,217		4,850	3,772	10,391	10,912	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	0%
<b>Subtotal Supplies &amp; Materials</b>	<b>5,085,314</b>	<b>6,385,718</b>	<b>6,308,994</b>	<b>6,904,097</b>	<b>6,583,312</b>	<b>6,406,298</b>	<b>7,479,679</b>	<b>7,370,076</b>	<b>7,434,875</b>	<b>7,500,967</b>	<b>7,568,376</b>	<b>7,637,131</b>		
<b>Equipment</b>														
733-Other Equipment	530,783	545,274	722,160	1,175,469	1,139,107	1,787,381	1,479,095	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	0%
735-Techology Equipment	505,908	760,063	1,455,558	1,576,247	1,405,737	1,512,123	942,958	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	0%
<b>Subtotal Equipment</b>	<b>1,036,691</b>	<b>1,305,337</b>	<b>2,177,718</b>	<b>2,751,716</b>	<b>2,544,844</b>	<b>3,299,504</b>	<b>2,422,053</b>	<b>1,750,000</b>	<b>1,750,000</b>	<b>1,750,000</b>	<b>1,750,000</b>	<b>1,750,000</b>	<b>1,750,000</b>	
<b>Other Expenditures</b>														
810-Dues/Fees/Registrations	89,535	132,023	121,259	137,812	173,943	183,709	211,795	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	0%
830-Interest	8,892						-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
860-Bad Debt	1,830	2,839,636	1,434	6,135	3,684		5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	
870-InKind Donation Expense					5,000	1,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
890-Misc Objects	164,181	185,696	197,486	146,044	85,727	149,241	143,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	0%
<b>Subtotal Other Expenditures</b>	<b>264,438</b>	<b>3,157,355</b>	<b>320,179</b>	<b>289,991</b>	<b>268,354</b>	<b>334,450</b>	<b>359,795</b>	<b>255,000</b>	<b>255,000</b>	<b>255,000</b>	<b>255,000</b>	<b>255,000</b>	<b>255,000</b>	
<b>Fund Transfers</b>														
910-Principal	234,000													
920-Transfers	8,154,899	8,919,396	6,606,783	7,274,597	7,028,069	8,181,168	7,377,988	7,589,363	7,846,623	8,112,265	5,415,756	5,412,006	5,412,006	<a href="#">See Debt Schedule</a>
<b>Subtotal Fund Transfers</b>	<b>8,388,899</b>	<b>8,919,396</b>	<b>6,606,783</b>	<b>7,274,597</b>	<b>7,028,069</b>	<b>8,181,168</b>	<b>7,377,988</b>	<b>7,589,363</b>	<b>7,846,623</b>	<b>8,112,265</b>	<b>5,415,756</b>	<b>5,412,006</b>	<b>5,412,006</b>	
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>109,926,788</b>	<b>128,794,564</b>	<b>126,165,590</b>	<b>132,343,912</b>	<b>136,691,471</b>	<b>144,277,419</b>	<b>149,668,378</b>	<b>152,157,947</b>	<b>156,524,931</b>	<b>160,892,839</b>	<b>162,534,459</b>	<b>167,038,538</b>		
Excess Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	5,151,606	(8,320,334)	(324,083)	1,798,301	928,434	840,665	0	(3,947,140)	(7,690,598)	(11,941,422)	(12,981,747)	(16,950,970)		



Long Range Financial Projections