

Creating a Caledonia School District

Questions and Answers

Why do we need a new school district?

At the time Caledonia joined the district, its population was quite small and it made sense to consolidate. Nearly 50 years later Caledonia is now the 29th largest municipality in the state of Wisconsin, and a Caledonia School District would be one of the top 20% of all districts in the state according to student enrollment.

*Racine Unified is simply too large to address **all** the students' needs. In order for education in eastern Racine County to improve, smaller and more manageable school districts are needed. Local control over education dollars is necessary.*

How will this affect the Racine Unified School District?

Having a smaller student population will allow RUSD to better focus their resources where they are needed.

While it's true that RUSD will lose 24% of its tax base, having fewer students, teachers and buildings will also cut their expenses. In addition, RUSD will almost certainly receive more in state-aid for the students remaining in the district. The mill rate for RUSD taxpayers will stay relatively stable, barring any future tax referenda.

What happens to the school buildings located within Caledonia?

The new Caledonia school district would receive all the schools in Caledonia: Olympia Brown, North Park, Caddy Vista and Gifford School. In addition, a large parcel of land near 5 ½ and Charles would be included in the asset/liability split with RUSD.

How much will a new school district cost Caledonia residents?

According to the June 2008 WisTax study, the new Caledonia district would net approximately \$44M after the asset/liability split with RUSD. However, a new high school would be needed. The average cost of a new high school is \$65M; this amount can be paid over several years.

How will this affect my property taxes?

Most of the extra cost for Caledonia is the building of a new high school. New school districts also require start-up costs and are not fully funded by the state of Wisconsin until the 3rd year. The first year's mill rate will be established at more than if Caledonia had remained with RUSD. After that, the mill rates would decline.

Estimated School Tax for \$100,000 home with 2% property value growth if no new RUSD referendum

School Year	RUSD	Caledonia	Difference
2008-2009	\$722	\$834	\$112
2009-2010	\$761	\$830	\$69
2010-2011	\$755	\$819	\$64

I want my child to continue in RUSD? Is this possible?

Yes, Wisconsin is an Open Enrollment State. This means you can enroll your child in any school district you wish, as long as the district has space. 12th graders have the right to finish at the high school they attended regardless of space.

What are the boundaries of the new district?

The new district will encompass all of the Village of Caledonia. No other municipalities or any parts of them will be in the new district. However, other areas may at a later time organize their own petition drive to join Caledonia after the new district is formed.

Do we need to vote on a referendum?

Yes, a referendum will be the final hurdle to pass towards the creation of a new district. A referendum will occur in November of 2010 in the village of Caledonia. For the new district to pass a majority of voters must approve. A referendum may be held throughout RUSD, depending on the circumstances. That must also pass, if such a referendum is held.

Does signing the petition mean I'm committed to voting for the district in the referendum?

No, the petition is not binding; you can vote however you like. All the petition does is force the School Board to begin looking at the issue seriously. A public debate serves the interests of everyone, regardless of which side they are on this issue.

Can we decide on the policies of the new district before it is created?

No, only the new School Board can decide on which policies will be adopted. The new School Board will not be elected until the spring of 2011. The best way to influence policy is to stay involved and support a candidate you agree with, or even run for office yourself.

What happens to the teachers in RUSD that are laid off?

Any district employee displaced by the creation of the new school district has priority over other applicants for a new job with the new district. This priority lasts for three years after the district is created.

How many students will be in a Caledonia district?

The report presented to the village board projects total enrollment to start at 3,337 and then increase to 3,831 over the next few years.

What if RUSD passes more referendums?

*Any future referendums passed would increase the RUSD projected tax rate, but would **not** raise the projected Caledonia rate. The two rates were calculated separately and do not affect each other. If RUSD passes enough referendums the Caledonia tax right could even be lower than the RUSD rate.*

Where will the tax money for the Caledonia School District go?

All the tax money will stay right here in Caledonia, and it will be used to run the schools. Currently, less than half of the money Caledonia pays to RUSD is spent on Caledonia students.

Most of the start-up costs for Caledonia will be used to build a brand new high school and to make up for the state aid that doesn't arrive in full until the third year.

Who are you and where can I get more information?

We are a group of concerned citizens who would like to see Caledonia thrive and continue to attract new residents and businesses. In order for this to happen, we need strong schools and involved citizens that want ownership in their community schools.

*For more information, please visit our website:
<http://www.caledoniaschooldist.org/>*