



*Opportunities, for Every Child, Every Day.  
"It's the Tiger Way!"*



**Gillett School District**

208 West Main Street P.O. Box 227 Gillett, WI 54124-0227

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Dear Gillett School District Community,

Our school district is currently navigating a period of significant fiscal challenge. With a projected budget deficit of well over one million dollars for the upcoming school year, the School Board is committed to being transparent with you about our current reality, the difficult choices we face, and our path forward.

We are working diligently to maintain the quality of education our students deserve while ensuring the district remains fiscally viable. To that end, we would like to share the following updates and invite your feedback.

#### Early Childhood Programs (3K and 4K)

The Board is currently evaluating our 3K and 4K programming. As a reminder, the State of Wisconsin does not fund 3K programs, and 4K students are only counted as 60% of a full-time equivalent student for state reimbursement. Because these programs fall outside the standard state funding formula, the district currently covers these costs locally. The board will be reviewing what other districts do and will consider charging tuition to help cover costs.

We are seeking community input on this issue. We invite you to attend our May board meeting on March 27 at 6:30 p.m. to share your perspective. As a point of reference, the cost of the 3K program is approximately seventeen dollars per year for a home with one hundred thousand dollars in assessed property value. Cutting this programming or charging tuition does not impact our budget deficit, as it is not funded through state aid at all, it simply would be a taxpayer savings.

#### Academic Offerings: Dual Credit Courses

Next year, our high school will see a reduction in available courses eligible for college credit. This is largely due to new requirements from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which dictate that instructors of dual-credit courses must hold the same academic qualifications as faculty teaching at the postsecondary level.

Despite our best efforts to support staff in meeting these new certifications or to purchase course offerings from area technical colleges, the district cannot absorb these additional costs for the 2026-2027 school year. We regret that we can no longer guarantee the same breadth of college-credit opportunities and are prioritizing required curriculum needs.



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## Operational and Maintenance Updates

To reduce expenses, we are making the following operational adjustments:

- **Staffing:** We will not be filling a part-time custodial position and will reduce the number of summer help positions.
- **Maintenance:** We will need to defer major, currently non-vital maintenance projects.

We recognize the pride our community takes in the appearance of our schools and grounds. While we will continue to prioritize safety and essential upkeep, please be aware that non-critical maintenance will take longer to address. We ask for your patience as we manage these limited resources.

## Health Insurance and Staff Retention

We have spent the last 18 months reviewing our staff health insurance coverage. To provide a more sustainable solution for both the district and our employees, we will transition from a traditional "flex" plan to a Health Savings Account (HSA) model next year.

Staff retention remains a critical challenge. We are facing a competitive labor market where regional districts are able to offer significantly higher compensation. We are acutely aware that we remain the lowest-paying district in our region. We are aware that other school districts have specifically recruited our teachers and have already started to do so again. We know that many staff members have taken eight thousand to twenty thousand dollar salary increases to go somewhere else. If you or someone you know is interested in pursuing certification to join the education profession, we encourage you to contact us. We are eager to work with prospective teachers to help them obtain their licenses, as our goal is to maintain robust programming and manageable class sizes for our students.

## Planning for the Future: Listening Session

The Board is examining every possible measure to ensure our district's long-term viability without compromising the quality of education we provide. The cost reductions the board are enacting are projected to cut approximately two hundred thousand dollars. This will still leave us with nearly a one million dollar projected deficit in our budget, without changing our struggle to be competitive in our hiring.

We are reviewing plans to hold a community listening session to discuss potential budget reductions and the long-term outlook for our district. Our goal is to ensure we gain your feedback



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on what you believe the district can and cannot reduce. We will share the details of this meeting with you as soon as they are finalized.

Gillett is a place of resilience

Our district has navigated difficult times before, and our commitment to our students remains unwavering. We have an incredible community, and we believe that by working together, we can find a way to navigate these challenges. We appreciate your partnership and your continued dedication to the success of every child in Gillett.

Thank you,

Dr. Nathan Hanson and the Gillett School Board