

PERSONAL | PASSIONATE | PROGRESSIVE



# FOR CHANGE

Your Tax Dollars at Work for Student Success



## 1/2 CENT SALES TAX ANNUAL REPORT



JUNE 2020 - JUNE 2023



# FOR CHANGE

Your Tax Dollars at Work for Student Success



## ▶ FROM YOUR INDEPENDENT SALES SURTAX OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

It's hard to believe it has been five years since the voters of this county approved the ½ cent sales tax for use by The School District of Lee County (SDLC). When looking at all of the projects that these dollars have funded and plans that lie ahead, it is evident that these funds have made necessary improvements for the benefit of our students, staff, and the community at large.

The community approved the ½ cent sales tax in November of 2018 to request for residents and visitors to contribute a small amount of change when making purchases in Lee County. The referendum authorizes the funds collected to be used exclusively for capital improvements in the areas of construction, maintenance, technology, safety and security.

The funds are necessary to accommodate the continuous and rapid growth in our community. Hundreds of additional student seats are needed every year and capital funding has not been available to build schools to meet this need. Additionally, some of the District's school facilities are aging and in need of upgrades.

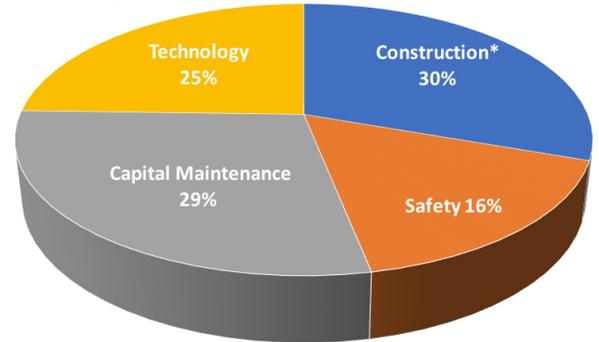
SDLC serves approximately 100,000 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through high school, in traditional and charter schools. The District is the 8th largest out of 67 in the state. SDLC is one of only six districts in Florida that continues to experience growth. The District operates 82 Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade campuses and six technical colleges and vocational/professional training locations that are home to nine special centers. In addition, the District offers adult education programs that serve 5,800 adults annually offering General Education Development, Language Learning, and Careers.

The District is one of the largest employers in Lee County, with over 11,000 employees, including more than 5,400 educators, 4,500 non-instructional employees, and 400 school and central office administrators. Significantly, this means that 1 of every 3 residents of Lee County is directly impacted by the District through education and employment.

### TOTAL SALES TAX ACTUALS

**\$286,546,803**

by Sales Tax Category as of 06/30/23



■ Construction\* ■ Safety ■ Capital Maintenance ■ Technology  
 \*Construction includes debt service for new schools

The process to select a sales tax supported project begins with District staff who take needs and wants to the Capital Planning Committee. The Capital Planning Committee prioritizes those suggestions and approves projects to be funded and recommends those projects to the Superintendent. The Superintendent then takes his recommendations to the School Board for approval. At the same time, the Construction Advisory Committee, comprised of community members focused on District capital projects, provides input to the School Board about potential projects. The Independent Sales Surtax Oversight Committee oversees the use of sales tax revenue to ensure it is spent in accordance with the 2018 referendum.

In this report, we will highlight major projects in all four areas of the referendum authorized categories of spending. Sales tax funds will continue to be collected through the next five years. The dollars are crucial for accommodating future growth. Additional information on revenue, expenses, projects and more is available on the Change for Change website.

Thank you for your continued support,  
 The members of ISSOC

# ► CONSTRUCTION

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### AMANE CER ELEMENTARY

**Amanecer Elementary School** welcomed nearly 950 students at the start of the 2023-2024 school year. The ½ cent sales tax supported the \$56,568,109 total project cost. Construction started in March of 2022 and the community helped choose the name Amanecer which means sunrise in Spanish. Amanecer Elementary is the District's first Cambridge Primary Center and uses the Cambridge Curriculum in every class.



# ► CONSTRUCTION

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### LEMUEL TEAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

The ½ cent sales tax paid for the entire \$18.6 million renovation costs to modernize and improve the original Lehigh Acres Middle School campus to re-open for students under a new name in 2023. The project created new classrooms and added a science and computer lab. The dance, art and music rooms were improved while the cafeteria and media center were both upgraded. The school is named for **Lemuel Teal** who taught math to middle school students for more than 30 years in our District.



# ► CONSTRUCTION

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### LEHIGH ACRES MIDDLE SCHOOL

The new **Lehigh Acres Middle School** first welcomed students in August of 2022 and immediately needed more space. The ½ cent sales tax helped support the \$7.9 million addition which opened to students in August of 2023. The 200 new seats added classrooms, science labs and storage. The school was originally designed with future expansion in mind so the new construction ties directly into the existing structure.



## ▶ MAINTENANCE PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### North Fort Myers Academy for the Arts FLOORING UPGRADES



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

#### ▶ PREVIOUS CONDITIONS

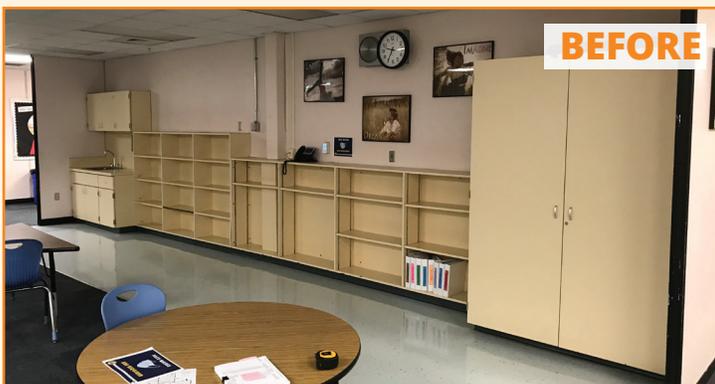
- Aged carpet had stains, tears and lifting
- Aged VCT flooring had chips, stains, and lifting
- Flooring had tears that were a trip hazard
- Aged flooring detracted from the aesthetics of the classroom

#### ▶ NEW CONDITIONS

- Updated Eco-Flex carpet squares have sustainable features such as a breathable backing which allows better moisture control
- Eco-Flex products divert 28 bottles from landfills for every square yard of product
- Updating from VCT flooring to LVT flooring improves durability of floors and reduces maintenance costs because LVT does not need to be stripped and resurfaced every year, which saves in labor and chemical costs

## ▶ MAINTENANCE PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### San Carlos Park Elementary School CABINET REPLACEMENTS



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

#### ▶ PREVIOUS CONDITIONS

- Cabinet color scheme was damaged and dated
- Previous cabinet color scheme made it difficult to repair one cabinet and still be able to match the existing cabinets
- Aged cabinets had chips on the surfaces
- Hardware issues made it difficult to close cabinets completely which led to items falling out of cabinets and students bumping against open doors

#### ▶ NEW CONDITIONS

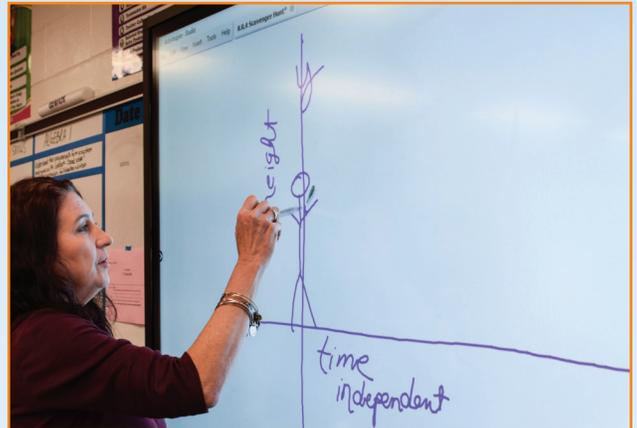
- Updated cabinets have a fresh, bright look for the campus
- Updated, standard color makes it easier to replace one cabinet as opposed to replacing the entire area if there is an unforeseen water leak
- Countertops are made with a durable starboard material which is more resistant to water to prevent warping

## ► TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

The District has spent more than \$123 million in instructional technology projects, including the provision of Chromebooks to students during the pandemic. We are in the top 1% of school districts in the U.S. that have provided a computer to each student or household, helping to keep students engaged and learning.

Interactive display monitors have replaced SMARTboards in nearly every classroom with an expected full completion by the end of 2023. While SMARTboards are enlarged displays of a computer, Interactive Whiteboards allow the user to interact with the technology with just a touch without using a computer.

Broadcast carts have been implemented in all traditional K-12 schools allowing students to utilize broadcast technologies outside of the daily TV news. Teachers and students may now produce creative video-based projects in their classrooms. Students are now creating videos to teach curriculum to other students. An additional 392 unspecified security technology upgrade projects have been implemented at the majority of school locations.



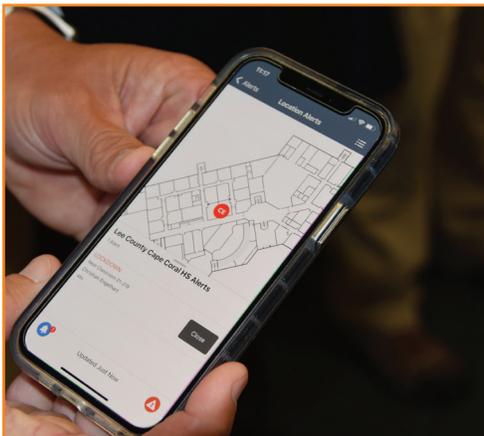
# ▶ SAFETY AND SECURITY TECHNOLOGIES



The safety and security of all students and staff are always a top priority to the District. We have completed Safety and Security improvements and projects at every school in the District. A high priority is increased collaboration with local Law Enforcement agencies which is being accomplished with the bot technology integration, and collaborative training exercises with multiple agencies. Additional physical security measures that have been funded with sales tax include the installation of additional access control systems that limit public access; perimeter fencing; surveillance cameras; and other campus improvements. Below are major highlights of sales tax funded Safety and Security projects.

## OPENGATE

District schools will all have the weapons detection system OPENGATE installed at their sites. OPENGATE is designed for the automatic screening of people with backpacks and bags for threat detection. It also identifies other contraband items that are not allowed on school property. All students and visitors are subject to search as they enter campus. The system was installed at 16 schools at the start of this school year and will be at every school by the end of the 2023-24 academic year.



## CENTEGIX

Centegix CrisisAlert system is a wearable badge with a panic button. The badge has a single button that when pushed will send alerts for help. The notification is immediate and provides the exact location of the employee in need without the use of wi-fi or cell signal. Alerts communicate emergency information using colored strobe lights, desktop alerts, and intercom integration. With a single notification, an entire school can go into immediate lockdown. Every employee of the District is assigned a badge and is trained on how to properly use it.

# ► FUTURE PROJECTS

Due to our growth in the student population, more schools and student seats are needed. Also, nearly half of the District's schools are more than 40 years old. Renovation and rebuilding work is underway at several SDLC schools. One of the original promises of the ½ penny sales tax was to rebuild Franklin Park Elementary School. Demolition of the old campus started in April 2023 and the new buildings are expected to open in August 2024, following through on another campaign promise.

Work began in June 2023 at Riverdale High School to add a new science wing to the school, replace the smallest District high school gym with a new one, and improve the parking lot. A second phase of the project will renovate the original classroom space making it more modern and functional.

Cypress Lake Middle School, built in 1961, is 62 years old and plans for renovations are currently underway.

A total of 6,000 new or renovated student stations will be in use by the start of school in August 2025 because of the sales tax. The District is proud to report that 100% of our schools have realized benefits from the sales tax.

## FRANKLIN PARK



## RIVERDALE



# ▶ FUTURE PROJECT | CYPRESS LAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL



## SUPERINTENDENT

**Dr. Christopher Bernier**, Ed.D.

## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

**Armor Persons**, District 5 (Chair)

**Samuel Fisher**, District 1 (Vice Chair)

**Melisa W. Giovannelli**, District 2

**Chris N. Patricca**, District 3

**Debbie Jordan**, District 4

**Jada Langford Fleming**, District 6

**Cathleen O'Daniel Morgan**, District 7

## SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEY AND GENERAL COUNSEL

**Kathy Dupuy-Bruno**, Esq.



# ▶ FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.leeschools.net/changeforchange](http://www.leeschools.net/changeforchange)



2855 Colonial Boulevard  
Fort Myers, FL 3396  
Phone: 239.334.1102  
[leeschools.net](http://leeschools.net)