

Know the Facts on Issue 5

The Westlake Board of Education placed a 1-mill permanent improvement (PI) levy on the May 5 ballot to invest in the short- and long-term capital needs of the district.

What Is a Permanent Improvement Levy?

A PI levy can only be used for capital items with an anticipated lifespan of at least 5 years, such as safety and security, technology, building repairs, transportation needs and other equipment purchases. PI dollars cannot be spent on salaries or benefits.

How Will Dollars From a PI Levy be Used?

Issue 5 would generate \$1.36 million annually for the district and would allow Westlake Schools to address capital needs now and in the long term without sacrificing programming. Specifically, PI dollars can be spent on the following capital expenditure categories:

- Buildings & Furnishings-Fixed Equipment: roofs, windows, masonry, plumbing, electrical, furniture, interior finishes, security cameras, security & access systems, etc.
- Site Development: asphalt, concrete, landscaping, drainage, field repairs & upkeep, security fencing, lighting, etc.
- Technology Improvements: computers, wireless access, switches, printers, projectors, servers, etc.
- Mechanical Equipment: heating, ventilation & air conditioning, boilers, vehicles, etc.

Why Do the Westlake Schools Need a Permanent Improvement Levy?

The purpose of a PI levy is to address ongoing costs in maintaining and protecting the community's investment in the district facilities without sacrificing programming – minimizing the impact on teaching and learning.

A PI levy addresses both short- and long-term needs, including:

- Maintaining existing facilities (including the new high school and middle school)
- Transportation fleet
- Technology
- Building systems – plumbing, heating, water lines, etc.

For example, while parts of Dover Intermediate School were renovated, the district is facing \$30,000 to \$50,000 in unanticipated plumbing repairs this year. A PI is a dedicated stream of dollars to address ongoing costs associated with running and maintaining physical buildings.

How Do I Know the Westlake Schools are Making the Most of Their Dollars?

- Westlake Schools rank 3rd lowest on school taxes in Cuyahoga County and would remain there even with passage of this issue.
- In his recent State of the City Address, Mayor Dennis Clough listed "Excellent Schools" as a top reason to live and work in Westlake. Mayor Clough also said "*Designating a separate funding source for capital needs and annual maintenance is the best way to assure safe and reliable facilities.*"
- Westlake Schools are recognized as one of the top school districts in Ohio for sharing services to increase cost efficiency.
- The district earned numerous awards from the Auditor of State for its clean audits and disclosures in reporting.

What Will Issue 5 Cost Taxpayers?

The PI levy will cost \$35 annually for the owner of a \$100,000 home valuation. In Westlake, most households will pay around \$80 per year.

Frequently Asked Questions About Issue 5

Do the Westlake Schools have a fund that keeps emergency dollars available for major issues, like boiler or pipe replacement/repair?

A. No. That is the purpose of a permanent improvement levy – a dedicated stream of funding to address the district's infrastructure without sacrificing programming. Historically, dollars to cover capital expenditures came solely from the district's general operating fund, forcing district leaders to choose between addressing building maintenance or preserving instructional programming. As state funding declined in recent years – the district lost \$14.9 million in state funding since 2005 – the amount spent on capital improvements declined to preserve programs that directly impact students in the classroom.

What are the district's future plans to update its bus fleet?

A. While the district has been replacing buses, the average age of a bus in the Westlake Schools is more than 11 years. Westlake has a fleet of about 60 buses. Ideally, we would like to buy 4 to 5 buses per year; but with the average cost of a new, full-size bus approaching \$100,000, that has not been possible in recent years. Instead, the district has relied on the purchase of used buses to stretch our limited dollars. Our mechanics constantly monitor and maintain our buses to ensure every bus on the road provides safe transport for our students. Buses also undergo an annual safety inspection by the Ohio State Highway Patrol, which also performs spot inspections throughout the school year.

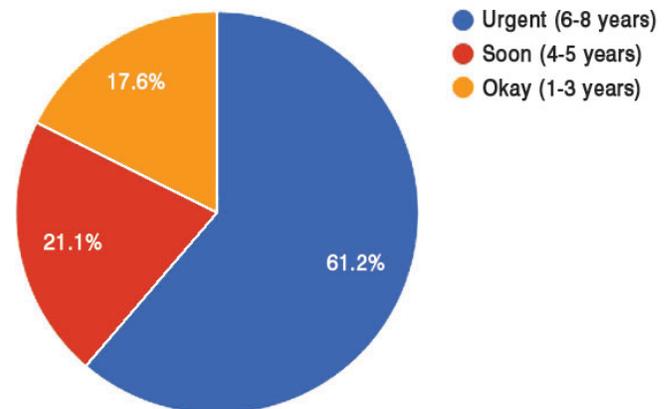
What types of safety and security measures will the PI levy cover?

A. The safety and security of our students, staff and visitors is of paramount importance. Some of the safety and security items to be addressed through PI funds include adding a walkway from Bassett Road to the buildings on the Dover campus, and improving security both inside and outside our buildings. This includes additional security cameras, updating building entry systems and visitor identification, adding security features to classrooms, etc.

Is the district considering a 1:1 technology initiative? What kind of technical support do you use?

A. The district does not have immediate plans to implement a 1:1 technology initiative – which provides computers, laptops or tablets for each student. Decisions on technology updates result from discussions with key stakeholders and guidance from the district's Continuous Improvement Plan. Technology updates could include anything from a traditional desktop computer replacement to a variety of mobile computing options. Just like with school buses, we have been buying used computers for many years as a way to stretch our budget. The average age of our computers is 4.8 years, with more than half the district's computers at 6 to 8 years old. The typical useful life of a computer in a school is around 5 years.

WCSD Computer Replacement



Westlake frequently uses a variety of companies to augment the district's technology staff. Vendor expertise is used on technology projects including phone systems, interactive whiteboard installation, wiring, software applications and network support. These services are often provided by local businesses.

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Capital Spending Plan

The overall purpose of a permanent improvement levy is to maintain and protect district facilities without sacrificing programming – minimizing the impact on teaching and learning.

The Westlake Schools are adopting a best practice model in preparing a capital spending plan to ensure taxpayer dollars are effectively and efficiently managed. Westlake's capital spending plan is aligned with the district's Continuous Improvement Plan and is based on needs, priorities and financing strategies.

Placing Issue 5 – a 1-mill permanent improvement levy – on the May 5 ballot and creating a capital spending plan for those dollars also addresses a recommendation from the 20/20 Vision Committee that called for a permanent improvement levy during Phase I of the Master Facilities Plan.

Prior to placing Issue 5 on the May 5 ballot, a Board of Education Finance Subcommittee examined historical spending in the district and identified projected capital needs for the next 10 years under the following categories:

- Building & Furnishings-Fixed Equipment = roofs, windows, masonry, plumbing, electrical, furniture, interior finishes, security cameras, security & access systems.
- Site Development = asphalt, concrete, landscaping, drainage, field repairs & upkeep, security fencing, lighting.
- Technology Improvements = computers, wireless access, switches, printers, projectors, servers.
- Mechanical Equipment = heating, ventilation & air conditioning, boilers, vehicles.

Historically, dollars to cover capital expenditures came solely from the district's general operating fund at a rate of \$1.3 to \$1.5 million annually. As state funding declined in recent years – the district lost almost \$15 million since 2005 – the amount spent on capital improvements declined to preserve instructional programming. This year alone, the amount was exhausted to just cover roof and parking lot repairs at various district buildings.

The 1-mill permanent improvement levy will be used to address the district's infrastructure – critical capital needs – without impacting the programming side of the district's budget.

FAQs from previous page

Do other school districts have PI levies?

A. About 80% - or 24 out of 30 school districts in Cuyahoga County – have Permanent Improvement Levies to fund capital improvements, according to the Cuyahoga County Auditor's Office. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, which guides capital projects for Ohio's public K-12 schools, considers a permanent improvement levy and a maintenance plan as a best practice when schools seek a bond issue for new school construction. Our own 20/20 Vision Committee included a recommendation for a PI levy in its Phase I Master Facilities Plan recommendations to the Board. It was always the district's intention to pursue a PI levy.

I don't have any children attending Westlake Schools. Why does the PI levy matter to me?

A. Westlake Schools are an integral part of the quality of life enjoyed in Westlake. Excellent schools are directly tied to maintaining property values and making Westlake a desirable place to live. In his recent State of the City address, Mayor Dennis Clough listed "Excellent Schools" as a top reason to live and work in Westlake. Mayor Clough also said "Designating a separate funding source for capital needs and annual maintenance is the best way to assure safe and reliable facilities." Westlake City Schools belong to the community, and excellent education matters.



Holly Lane students show off colorful flags

Holly Lane a Hall of Fame School

The Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators (OAESA) announced that Holly Lane Elementary School is a 2015 Hall of Fame School. Principal Mimi Verdone and her staff will receive the award, including \$1,000 to be used at the principal's discretion, during an Awards Luncheon in June in Columbus.

The Hall of Fame School award recognizes schools that go above and beyond the call of duty to excite students, teachers and community members about education. The school staff submitted an extensive application documenting the quality of their educational program in the following areas: instructional system, student achievement, student development, personnel, administration, school management and stakeholders.

Hall of Fame Schools were chosen by 2 committees of OAESA members who read and

scored the applications and conducted on-site evaluations of qualifying schools.

"Holly Lane Elementary is an International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program (PYP) school. The IB PYP is based upon and stresses a method of inquiry within the learning process. At Holly Lane, inquiry is not merely stated in the mission and vision, but is lived out in practice, as students are encouraged to learn through exploration," committee members wrote. "The staff was friendly and upbeat, their enthusiasm for the profession evident. Students are provided a safe learning environment where standards are high, differences are celebrated and respect is expected by staff and students."

The OAESA serves Ohio's pre-K, elementary, middle level and central office administrators by providing professional development, legal consultation, professional publications and networking opportunities.

#NowYouKnow

- Westlake Schools made energy efficient improvements to Dover Intermediate School through HB264, the state Energy Conservation Program.
- The district saved taxpayers more than \$2 million in future interest costs in a recent debt refunding.
- Westlake Schools' bond rating ranks the district in the top 10% of Ohio schools by Moody's and Standards & Poor's.
- About 91% of teachers have master's degrees. The district's faculty has an average of 16 years of teaching experience, compared to the statewide average of 14 years (as of FY2014).
- The district offers adult community education programming with participation of about 100 individuals.



Student inventors will compete in the regional competition to earn cash prizes and technology packages.

Westlake selects top inventors to advance to regional competition

Fifteen Westlake Schools' elementary students will compete in the next level of competition after winning the top spots in the Westlake City School District Invention Convention.

- Ryan Skowronski, Holly Lane, The E-Go Watch
- Frankie Ricaurte, LBMS, ImobilStim
- Katie Willi, LBMS, The Auto Stop

The following students will compete in the May 2 Northeast Ohio Regional Invention Convention at Cleveland State University:

- Jake Fix, Bassett Elementary, Realeve Sleeve
- Lorenzo Nivellini, Dover Elementary, Inflatable Bike Helmet
- Dhiraviya Rajubettan, Dover Elementary, Sign Language Dictionary
- Ben Miller, Bassett, The Super Scooter Stander
- Nwaka Nwokeji, Bassett, Facts
- Macy Brennan, Bassett, The Incredaliff
- Stephanie Chang, Bassett, The Chill Band
- Sadie De Angelo, Bassett, Sip No Drop
- Jacob Lentz, Dover Elementary, Natural Fire Roll Up
- Michelle Ho, Dover Elementary, The Smart Monitor
- Robbie Huber, Hilliard Elementary, Hydration Helmet
- Frankie Jacono, Holly Lane Elementary, The Lego Sorter

The students showed off their inventions at the Invention Convention Fair on March 21 at Dover Intermediate School. Local judges selected the top student inventors to advance to the regional competition to compete for the \$2,500 grand prize, while the winning students' teacher earns a technology package and other prizes for the classroom.

Invention Convention inspires students in grades K-8 to create and problem solve while developing their inventions. Over 1 million Ohio students to date have participated in Invention Convention since 1993, creating useful, sometimes crazy, and always interesting inventions.

Three students also were awarded Ohio Choice Inventor's Awards. Michelle Ho, a Dover Elementary 4th grader, won for The Smart Monitor; Dhiraviya Rajubettan, Dover Elementary 3rd grade, Sign Language Dictionary; and Robbie Huber, Hilliard Elementary 4th grade, Hydration Helmet.



LBMS Letters About Literature semi-finalists (left to right) Ameen Zayed (finalist), Meghana Tandon, Sami Brizes, Isabella DiGiulio, Brian Knott, Rachel Wagner, Akhilesh Reddy, Camille Feorene, Amelia Martens, Language Arts teacher Deb Schrembeck



DIS Letters About Literature semi-finalists Madelin Shaver, Julia Bongers, Lila Williams, Alex Daoud, Gigi Redinger, Zachary Regas, Chloe Howlett, Angela Yu and Matthew Sadd

LBMS letter named among top in Library of Congress writing contest

A Lee Burneson Middle School student's letter was named among the top 20% in Ohio and a finalist in the Library of Congress' Letters About Literature 2015 Contest.

Ameen Zayad, an 8th grader at LBMS, had his letter chosen from among 165 semi-finalist letters from across the state as a finalist in the Letters About Literature Contest. In December, Deb Schrembeck's 8th grade Language Arts students, and Katie Beachler and Jessica Dye's 6th grade classes at Dover Intermediate School, entered the writing contest, which asks students in grades 4 to 12 to read a book, poem or speech and write to the author about how the book affected them personally. In Ohio, 1,784 letters were received. The top 20% were selected as state finalists. Nationally, about 8,000 letters make it to state-level judging.

LBMS state semi-finalists are Sami Brizes, Isabella DiGiulio, Camille Feorene, Brian Knott, Amelia Martens, Akhilesh Reddy, Meghana Tandon, Rachel Wagner and Ameen Zayad. DIS semi-finalists are Maddie Shaver, Julia Bongers, Zach Regas, Chloe Howlett, Alex Daoud, Gigi Redinger, Matthew Sadd, Lila Williams and Angela Yu.

Judges include authors, publishers, librarians and educators from all 50 states. All of the state finalist letters will be forwarded to living authors in hopes of a personal reply. Tens of thousands of students from across the country enter the Letters About Literature contest each year. National winners will be recognized at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in May.

#NowYouKnow

- Westlake High School offers 21 Advanced Placement courses and 27 honors courses in a variety of disciplines.
- Westlake High School students performed above state averages on the SAT and ACT examinations.
- The district operates a before- and after-school care program – Project Link – along with a recently expanded enrichment program that serves 579 K-8 students, or 37% of Westlake students in K-4



Westlake High School Symphonic Band received Straight Superior ratings at the OMEA Large Group District Event Feb. 27.

WHS instrumental, vocal groups rate Superior

Westlake High Schools' instrumental and vocal groups competed in Ohio Music Education Association events, earning top honors and a chance to compete at the state level.

The Westlake String Orchestra received Superior ratings from every judge at the Feb. 27 OMEA State Orchestra Adjudicated Event. The group competed in the most difficult class for orchestra – Class A.

At the March 13-14 OMEA Large Group District Event, the Symphonic Band competed in the most difficult Class AA and received Straight Superior ratings. The Concert Band received a Superior rating in Class C. Both bands will

compete at the state level contest in May at North Royalton High School.

The 5 choirs that performed at the Large Group District Event – Chorale, Women's Ensemble, Men's Chorus, Symphonic Choir and Freshmen Women's choirs – all received Superior ratings and will advance to state competition as well. Chorale – which competed in the most difficult Class AA – Women's Ensemble and Men's Chorus all received Superior ratings, which is the highest possible combination of scores. No other vocal department in District 4 brought 5 choirs to competition, let alone have all of them advance to state competition.

Rotary Speech Contest

Four Westlake High School seniors placed in the Rotary Club of Westlake/Bay Village 4-Way Test Speech Competition.

Aswin Bikkani earned 1st place and represented Westlake at the Rotary District #6630 competition earlier this month at Aurora High School. Laura McDiarmid, Julia Button and Caroline Hazapis placed 2nd, 3rd and 4th, respectively. Prizes were sponsored by First Federal of Lakewood and presented by Marie Marrali.

Judges for the event were Cuyahoga Community College Westshore Campus President Dr. Terri Pope, Westlake Porter Public Library Director Andrew Mangels and Jenny Galati, Career Development and Transition

Specialist at Tri-C Corporate College in Westlake.

Aswin also was chosen to be a member of the World Debate team from the North Coast District. Aswin will join students from Brecksville-Broadview Heights, Gilmour and Solon high schools in attending the National Speech & Debate Tournament in Dallas, Texas, in June.



Aswin Bikkani, Julia Button and Caroline Hazapis. Not pictured: Laura McDiarmid.

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Dover Intermediate School

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Dover Elementary School

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Hilliard Elementary School

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Holly Lane Elementary School

Principal: Mimi Verdone
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Your Questions Answered

We're hearing questions and comments about Westlake City Schools in the community and we want to be certain everyone has the facts. Check out the Westlake Schools website – www.wlake.org – for a “Your Questions Answered” button. You can ask a question, check out what’s already been asked and sign up for periodic email updates.