

## Issue 121: Moving Westlake Forward

Westlake City School District is on the Nov. 8 ballot with Issue 121, a bond issue and permanent improvement levy that won't raise taxes.

### What is Issue 121?

The 1.3-mill bond issue and 0.8-mill permanent improvement levy will fund a new, integrated PK-4 elementary school to replace the district's four aging elementary schools. It will also create a separate maintenance fund for capital expenses to help protect the public's investment in the facilities.

This is the final phase of our building plan to align our schools with the future of education and to move forward by making fiscally responsible and educationally sound decisions.

Investing in our youngest learners means:

- Creating positive learning environments, which means happier kids;
- Providing functional and safe learning environments for all;
- 21st century learning environments that include design elements that promote personalized and project-based learning with a shared educational community center;
- Investing in updated technology, buses and resources v. buying refurbished equipment and making patchwork repairs.

Our schools are part of what makes Westlake a great place to live. Families want to live in communities that invest in their schools.

The school district and the City of Westlake are continuing negotiations on a land swap to ensure the best location for our new elementary school. The deal has not yet come to fruition. We will continue to work with the city to ensure we do what is best for our students and community.

Westlake's sense of family and small neighborhood schools are an important part of the design process with the architects. We are concluding the architect selection process and will work with them to provide a vision of the project to the community that protects and honors the cherished values and traditions of Westlake.



**Equipment failures led to flooding and ceiling damage at Bassett Elementary School.**

We retained the history of our schools with the Red Brick Community Room at Westlake High School, and we will incorporate components from each of our four elementary buildings into the new building.

This can all be done **without raising taxes!** Refinancing and sound financial practices have resulted in the expiration of 2.43 mills of the district's current debt. This unique scenario allows the district to pursue a 2.1-mill combined issue to complete the final phase of its building plan, and not raise taxes. The plan also saves the district more than \$1 million in operating costs annually.

For more information visit us online at [www.wlake.org](http://www.wlake.org).



## Frequently Asked Questions About Issue 121

### What Is Issue 121?

The combined 1.3-mill bond and 0.8-mill permanent improvement levy will raise funds to build one new elementary school to replace the four current elementary schools. The bond will raise \$33.6 million for construction, and the permanent improvement levy will generate \$1.14 million that will be used in maintaining all of the district's facilities and protecting the public's investment in those facilities.

### Why is this on the ballot?

#### What's wrong with our current schools?

After years of study, a committee led by members of the community representing parents, seniors, business leaders, elected officials, volunteers, teachers, staff and students concluded that the current elementary facilities are not suited for today's educational standards. The four elementary schools have antiquated boilers, failing electrical systems that cannot handle modern technology needs, and inefficient and crumbling windows, doors and brick exteriors. The buildings also lack modern safety and security mechanisms – and they are too old to be retrofitted. Further, all of our schools currently use trailers to accommodate students, and classrooms are smaller than the state's *MINIMUM* class space standards.

#### Will this issue raise taxes?

No. Because there are 2.43 mills that will be dropping off at the end of this year, this 2.1-mill combined issue **will not raise taxes**. Residents will continue to pay the same amount they already pay.

#### How will this save us money?

By reducing the number of elementary schools from four to one, the district will save \$1.2 million annually in operating costs. This figure takes into account anticipated cost increases like busing.

#### How many positions will be eliminated going from 4 buildings to 1?

By consolidating four elementary schools into one building, we will save over \$1.2 million in staffing costs alone. At the elementary level, we will be reduced from 104 to 96 teaching positions, 74 to 58 classified/support positions, and down to 3 administrative positions. Almost

all of these positions will be eliminated through retirements. By the time the project is complete, 72 classified employees and 47 certified employees will be eligible for retirement. We anticipate we can achieve these reductions with no or minimal layoffs.

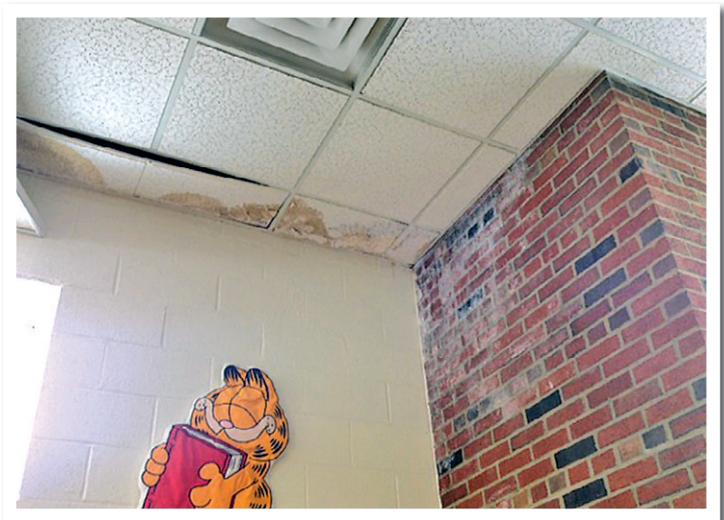
#### Do other school districts have PI levies?

About 80% of school districts in Cuyahoga County have permanent improvement (PI) 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 of Education.

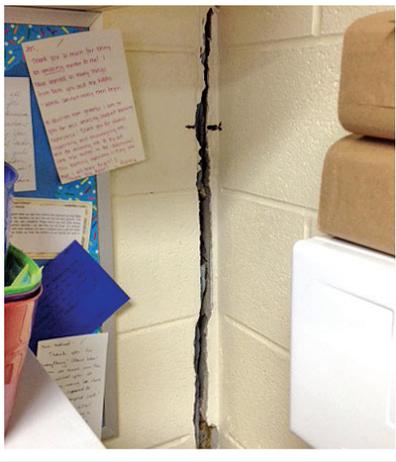
#### What measures are in place to ensure high quality construction of this new elementary school building?

The high school construction project provided learning opportunities for our facilities team. While the project was on time and on budget, the resolution of two incidents with contractors required legal intervention. The issues with the flooring and the rotunda are now resolved without spending additional funds. Since then, we have adopted

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Roof leaks are an issue at all of our elementary buildings.



Aging equipment is failing and cracks along walls are a common site in our elementary buildings.

## FAQs from page 4

a “Construction Manager At-Risk” process that protects us from any errors made by building contractors and guarantees a maximum price for the district. Should issues arise, it will be the responsibility of the vendors to absorb additional costs to fix any problems.

### Where will the new elementary school be located?

The school district and the City of Westlake are continuing negotiations on a land swap to ensure the best location for our new elementary school. The deal has not yet come to fruition. We will continue to work with the city to ensure we do what is best for our students and community.

### How many students will be housed in the new school?

The entire building will house about 1,200 PK-4 students.

### How will this impact education?

The decision to move from four elementary school buildings to one will strengthen education by ensuring that all Westlake students receive the same curriculum. Teachers will be able to better coordinate and collaborate with their peers, and students will have access to support services like counseling, therapy and technology/media every day. Our community expects our youngest learners to have the same opportunities already available to our intermediate through high school students.

### What will happen to closed buildings?

The school district is looking at creating green

space at those sites. We are not seeking to liquidate our assets. Selling property means a one-time influx of dollars that cannot make up a looming \$8 million budget deficit in 2020.

### Will the elementary schedules remain the same?

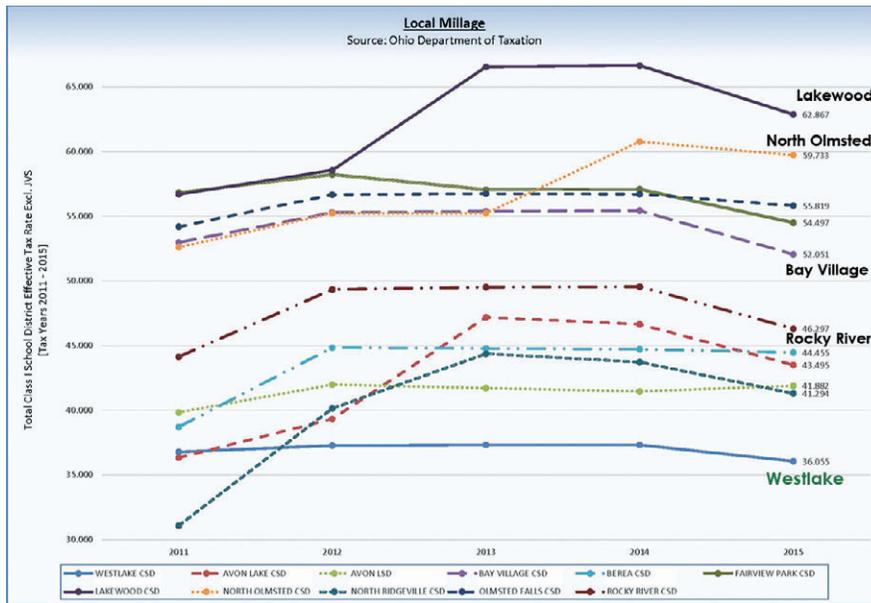
More detailed discussions on staff and scheduling will occur after Election Day. We will invite our parents and community to be part of those discussions and will keep everyone informed on the process in advance of any decisions.

### I don't have any children attending Westlake Schools. Why does this matter to me?

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. Designating a separate funding source for capital needs and annual maintenance is the best way to ensure safe and reliable facilities, and to protect taxpayers' investment.

### Isn't this the same issue that was on the ballot before?

No. There has **never** been a bond issue on the ballot to fund a new elementary school. Previous operating issues and a permanent improvement levy attempt were not successful, so the district made budget reductions and retooled operations. Now, we have an opportunity to seek a “**no new millage**” bond issue to build a new elementary school to replace our four aging, inefficient elementary school buildings.



Westlake City Schools' local millage continues to be the lowest among our neighboring school districts in Cuyahoga County.

## The Plan to Protect Our Schools & Taxpayers

After years of study, a committee led by members of the community representing parents, seniors, business leaders, elected officials, volunteers, teachers, staff, and students concluded that our current elementary facilities are not suited for today's educational standards.

The four elementary schools have antiquated boilers, failing electrical systems that cannot handle modern technology needs, and inefficient and crumbling windows, doors and brick exteriors. The buildings also lack modern safety and security mechanisms – and they are too old to be retrofitted. All of our schools currently use trailers to accommodate students, and the classrooms are smaller than the state's minimum class space standards.

The 1.3 bond issue will:

- Raise \$33.6 million to build one new elementary school to replace the four current aging buildings.
- Save \$1.2 million annually by reducing the number of elementary schools from four to one. Most of these costs savings will be realized through attrition, as teachers and staff retire.

The 0.8-mill permanent improvement (PI) levy will generate \$1.14 million annually to address 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. 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 and access systems, etc.
- *Site Development:* asphalt, concrete, landscaping, drainage, field repairs and upkeep, security fencing, lighting etc.
- *Technology Improvements:* computers, wireless access, switches, printers, projectors, servers, etc.
- *Mechanical Equipment:* heating, ventilation and air conditioning, boilers, vehicles, etc.

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 – maximizing the impact on teaching and learning.

We can do all of this **without raising taxes**. At the end of this year, 2.43 mills of current debt will be dropping off. The 2.1-mill combined issue will not raise taxes. Residents will continue to pay the same amount they already pay.

Regardless of the outcome of the ballot issue, the district will not be able to continue to financially sustain four elementary school buildings – an elementary consolidation plan will likely result in the closing of one or more schools.

## The Westlake Story

The Westlake community expects excellence in every aspect of community life. But our elementary public school buildings have been classified as outdated and in dire need of updating. From the outside, the walls of our schools may look fine, but what's behind those walls is inadequate in terms of safety and space.

The problems are well documented:

- Our building systems – electrical, roofs, windows, doors, brick exteriors, HVAC, security – are below adequate.
- Students are taught in trailers, converted bathrooms, hallways, closets and cafeterias. Classrooms are smaller than the state minimum standards.
- Access for disabled and special needs students fails today's standards.
- A stop gap plan to patch only the worst emergencies takes critical dollars away from education, while not even addressing the core problems.
- We have buses in our fleet that are eligible for historic plates.



- While other school districts are upgrading technology, we have been purchasing refurbished hardware in many cases that has a greatly reduced or limited lifespan.

Problems and costs will only compound if we continue taking a patchwork approach to repairs. It's time for the Westlake Schools to have a growth and replacement plan rather than being reactionary when problems occur.

## Voter Information

**Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 8, 6:30am to 7:30pm**

### Voting Early By Mail

All Ohio voters are eligible to vote early by mail by requesting an absentee ballot. The Secretary of State mailed absentee ballot request forms to ALL registered voters. All you need to do is fill it out, sign it, and return it to:

**CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS  
ATTN: ABSENTEE DEPARTMENT  
PO BOX 89448  
CLEVELAND, OH 44101-6448**

Or to access a ballot request form, visit <http://boe.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/vote-by-mail.aspx>

- Once you receive your ballot in the mail, fill it out, sign it, and return it as soon as possible.
- Make sure to put the correct amount of postage on the envelope!
- If you return your ballot by mail, it must be postmarked no later than Nov. 7, the day before Election Day, and received by the Board of Elections no later than 10 days after the election.

- If you return your ballot in person to the Board of Elections, or if a near relative delivers it for you, it must be received no later than the close of polls – 7:30pm – on Election Day.
- Absentee ballots cannot be returned to your regular polling location on Election Day.

Once you send in your ballot, you can sign up for **VoterNotify** to track your ballot at <http://boe.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/track-my-ballot.aspx>.

### Vote Early In Person

You can walk in and vote in person at the **Cuyahoga County Board of Elections**  
**2925 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44115.**

Check the website for voting hours.

If you prefer to vote in person on Election Day and you're not sure of your polling location, visit the **Secretary of State's website** at [myohiovote.com](http://myohiovote.com).

**REMEMBER TO VOTE NOV. 8!**

## 2016 Ohio School Report Card

On Sept. 15, the Ohio Department of Education released the 2015-2016 Ohio School Report Cards that for the first time gave school districts an overall A-F grade for six components – Achievement, Gap Closing, K-3 Literacy, Progress, Graduation Rate and Prepared for Success.

Many high achieving school districts, including Westlake, are seeing much lower grades on this year's report card than in years past. It's important to know that the report card is just one snapshot into a school district and does not accurately represent the quality learning and teaching going on in our schools.

The district did improve in two components – Graduation Rate and Prepared for Success. And while most school districts across the state dropped in their Performance Index measure – how well students performed overall on state tests – Westlake scored in the top 15 percent of schools.

Westlake, like other school districts, has been working to adjust to an increase in the number of state tests given each year, higher cut scores, three different tests in three years, online testing issues and a lower than the required 95% participation rate on state tests.

The Westlake City School District feels these factors may combine to paint an inaccurate picture of school performance. While the district supports the idea of helping all students achieve, this report card is a misrepresentation of the learning and achievement taking place in our classrooms. It's important to know that the Westlake Schools are committed to the success of every student.

Below is a snapshot of the Westlake City School District 2015-2016 Ohio School Report Card.

### **Achievement = B**

The Achievement component represents whether student performance on state tests met established thresholds and how well students performed on tests overall.

### **Prepared for Success = B**

The Prepared for Success component looks at

how well prepared Ohio's students are for all future opportunities. The grade is based on how well students performed on six measures – college entrance exam, honors diploma, industry-recognized credentials, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate tests and College Credit Plus.

### **Graduation Rate = A**

The Graduation Rate component looks at the percent of students who are successfully finishing high school with a diploma in four or five years.

### **Gap Closing = C**

The Gap Closing component shows how well schools are meeting the performance expectations for students in English language arts, math and graduation. It compares the academic performance of nine student groups – American Indian/Alaskan native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/non-Hispanic, Hispanic, multiracial, white/non-Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and limited English proficiency – against the performance of all students.

### **K-3 Literacy = D**

The K-3 Literacy component looks at how successful the school is at getting struggling readers on track to proficiency in third grade and beyond.

### **Progress = F**

The Progress component looks at the growth all students are making based on their past performances. This year the Progress measures include data from state tests that were not measured on previous report cards. This grade differs drastically from previous years for Westlake and follows a grade of 'A' on the last report card, the state Momentum Award for exceeding student growth expectations and Lee Burneson Middle School's Battelle for Kids SOAR 2015 Award for High Progress Schools in recognition of exceptional academic growth in multiple grades and subjects.

The administrative team and staff members will analyze the data to determine if the lower letter

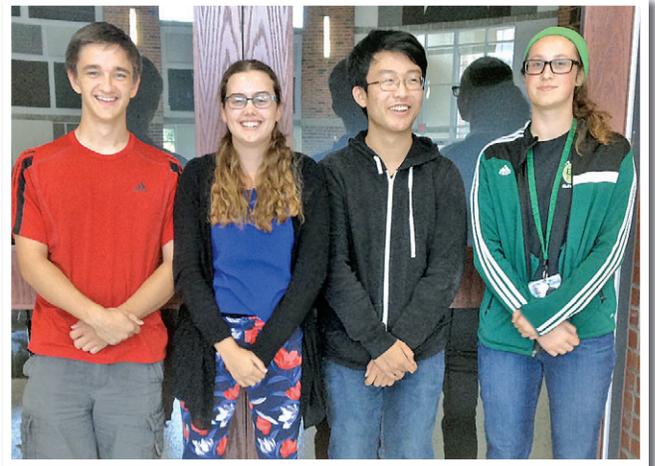
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## WHS Seniors Named National Merit Semifinalists

**Westlake High School has four students named in the 2016 National Merit Program.**

Seniors Anna Craven, Alexander Lathem, Hong Liang and Emily Schordock were named 2016 National Merit Semifinalists and will move on to compete for about 8,300 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$34 million.

They are among 1.5 million students from 22,000 high schools across the country who took the PSAT in their junior year. Less than 1 percent of high school seniors make it to the semifinal round. About 15,000 students are expected to move on to become National Merit Finalists, which should be announced in February.



WHS National Merit Semifinalists Alexander Lathem, Emily Schordock, Hong Liang and Anna Craven

## Pinwheels For Peace

Sept. 21 marked the United Nations International Day of Peace. Our elementary schools took action to raise awareness, knowledge and enthusiasm for peace in the world by placing their pinwheels in front of their buildings. Students decorated their pinwheels in art classes to represent their hopes for peace in the world.



### Report Card from page 6

grade is an error in reporting or a change in student growth.

There are many variables that go into testing and formulas for results. While the district does not agree with all of the state's methods, it is important to

know that the schools are analyzing the information and will reflect on ways to improve. The Westlake Schools are committed to Educating for Excellence and will use the information contained in the report card to celebrate our strengths and evaluate our weaknesses.

**Westlake City School District**  
**24525 Hilliard Blvd.**  
**Westlake, OH 44145**

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Superintendent: Scott Goggin  
Treasurer: Todd Hopkins

## **Westlake High School**

Principal: Timothy Freeman  
27830 Hilliard Blvd.  
Westlake, OH 44145  
440.835.6352

## **Lee Burneson Middle School**

Principal: Paul Wilson  
2260 Dover Center Road  
440.835.6340

## **Dover Intermediate School**

Principal: Alex Fleming  
2240 Dover Center Road  
440.835.5494

## **Bassett Elementary School**

Principal: Jim Sanfilippo  
2155 Bassett Road  
440.835.6330

## **Dover Elementary School**

Principal: Tim Barrett  
2300 Dover Center Road  
440.835.6322

## **Hilliard Elementary School**

Principal: Kim Tucker  
24356 Hilliard Blvd.  
440.835.6343

## **Holly Lane Elementary School**

Principal: Mimi Verdone  
3057 Holly Lane  
440.835.6332

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Westlake Schools visit  
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