



A Nonpartisan Summary of Issue 75: Columbus City Schools' 2008 Combined Levy and Bond Issue

Autumn 2008

Summary:

Due to the state's formula for education funding, the Columbus City School District depends on local funding for 54% of its revenue. On the fall ballot the district is asking voters to approve Issue 75, an 8.98-mill ballot issue combining a 7.85-mill operating levy and a 1.13-mill bond issue. If Issue 75 passes, it will provide \$77 million a year in new operating funds and \$164 million in bond proceeds. The cost to homeowners would be \$275 per \$100,000 in home valuation—\$240 for the levy and \$35 for the bond. For businesses, the cost would be about \$314 per \$100,000 in valuation.

Facts about Columbus City Schools:

Enrollment has declined by 10,695, but students have greater needs.

Although the district's enrollment has fallen from 63,589 in 2000 to 52,894 in 2008, it is the largest in Ohio. 73% of the district's students are economically disadvantaged, up from 57%; 16% of its students have special education needs, up from 12%; and 9% have limited English proficiency, an increase from 3%. Although the district has fewer students to fund, studies show that students with greater needs require more resources.

District has improved academically despite rising poverty & special needs.

Between school years 1999-2000 and 2007-2008, the district:

- Improved its overall state report card grade from Academic Emergency, "F," to Continuous Improvement, "C," and
- Increased its graduation rate from 60% to 71%.¹

The district also met the state's new standard for making one year's worth of academic progress in 2007-2008.

In 2008, 33 of the district's schools were rated "A" or "B," up from 24 in 2007, and 41 schools were rated "C," down from 62. Yet challenges remain. For example, 50 schools were rated "D" or "F" in 2008, up from 40 the year before.

How does Columbus compare with other Franklin County and urban school districts?*			
Measure	Columbus City Schools	Rank among the 16 Franklin County School Districts	Rank among Ohio's 8 Large Urban School Districts**
Average Teacher Salary	\$62,474	8th Highest	3rd Highest
Expenditures per Pupil	\$12,653	4th Highest	3rd Highest
RESIDENTIAL School Taxes per \$100,000 of Real Property Valuation	\$992	5th Lowest	4th Lowest
BUSINESS School Taxes per \$100,000 of Real Property Valuation	\$1,611	8th Lowest	4th Highest

*Please see "A Nonpartisan Guide to Issue 75: Columbus City Schools' 2008 Combined Levy and Bond Issue" at www.KidsOhio.org to learn more.

**Ohio's eight large urban school districts include: Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown.

¹Most recent graduation rate is from the 2006-2007 school year.

Facts about the proposed 7.85-mill operating levy:

Ohio school districts need to periodically seek voter support to increase operating funds.

Under Ohio law, local property tax levies do not grow if existing property values increase. In addition, the district does not expect its state funding to increase in the next four years. As a result, the district is proposing a levy to seek additional operating funds.

78% of the new levy funds would pay for increases in the cost of current operations through June 2013. The remaining 22% would pay for new initiatives staffed by 302 additional educators.

The 302 educators to be hired include:

- 164 educators to restore the 40 minutes of daily instruction that was previously cut from the school day;
- 73 science teachers and counselors to implement the more demanding Ohio Core Curriculum;
- 12 educators to open 4 college-prep regional theme schools; and
- 53 teachers to reduce average class size from 28:1 to 25:1 in grades 1-3.

The district will also add 15 security staff.

Over the next four years, the district's operating budget is projected to grow by an average of 4.1% annually from \$695 million to \$815 million. The district will need to return to the ballot in 2012.

District pledges to be accountable, promising not to return to ballot until 2012.

In 2002 and 2004, the district made and has since kept accountability pledges. The 2008 accountability pledge includes: continuing independent financial oversight, issuing quarterly financial report cards and reporting annual academic progress. For a copy, please visit www.KidsOhio.org.

The district pledges to make the following reductions:

- Closing 6 schools;
- Making \$76 million in additional reductions through June 2013; and
- Eliminating 300 staff positions if enrollment declines as projected.

Facts about the proposed 1.13-mill bond issue:

\$123 million of the \$164 million bond issue would replace or renovate 10 to 12 more schools.

In 2001, state inspectors determined that every Columbus school needed to be modernized. In 2002, voters passed a \$392 million bond issue for which the state provided 30% matching funds. To date, 23 schools have been replaced or renovated and 11 more are scheduled for completion in 2009. The new bond issue would provide \$123 million to replace or renovate 10 to 12 more schools. The state will again provide an additional 30% in matching funds.

\$41 million of the proposed bond issue would pay for new buses, textbooks, and computers.

The district proposes to purchase these goods with bonds instead of operating funds so that more of these items can be bought at an earlier date. If Issue 75 passes, the district will spend:

- \$22 million to replace nearly half of the district's buses, targeting those over 15 years old;
- \$11 million to purchase new textbooks, including social studies books for grades K-11 and science books for grades 6-12; and
- \$8 million to replace outdated desktop and laptop computers.

Voting is open from September 30th to November 4th. Polls are open daily at Veterans Memorial. Call 614.462.3100 or visit www.vote.franklincountyohio.gov for more information.