

# NEWS

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For Immediate Release

## **Board votes to renovate schools, replace Wilson Elementary with bond issue**

During their July 21 meeting, the Forest Hills Board of Education approved placing a 4.45 mill bond issue on the Nov. 4 ballot to extensively renovate eight of the district's neighborhood schools and replace Wilson Elementary, a school on Little Dry Run Road that serves students in kindergarten through sixth-grade. The issue, which would also include .5 mills to create a permanent improvement fund to provide revenue for future building maintenance, would cost taxpayers \$14.44 a month per \$100,000 of their home's market value.

For many years, there has been discussion regarding the effective use of district funds to address the facility needs within the district. In August, the district began working with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, an independent state organization that provides free, in-depth evaluations of Ohio's public school buildings, to determine the condition of district facilities including the educational environment, building structure, mechanical systems, technology, handicap-accessibility and building safety and security.

What the OFCC found was that 17 of 23 mechanical or structural systems at Wilson Elementary are beyond a state of repair and need to be completely replaced including the plumbing, roofing, heating system and ventilation. An additional four systems need to be repaired. Originally built in 1959, with additions in 1962, 1970 and 1993, 60 percent of Wilson Elementary is more than 52-years-old, making it the oldest building in the district.

The OFCC report also revealed that the majority of mechanical or structural systems at Anderson High School, Turpin High School, Ayer Elementary, Mercer Elementary, Maddux Elementary, Sherwood Elementary and Summit Elementary need to be replaced or repaired. At the 15-year-old Nagel Middle School, 16 systems need to be repaired and two need to be replaced.

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“There are legitimate facilities concerns at every school in the district. While we are not going to be frivolous, we also are not going to ignore these concerns,” explained Dallas Jackson, Ed.D., superintendent. “We will address the needs in a manner that keeps us fiscally accountable, protects the community’s investment in our schools and, most importantly, creates the best educational environment for our students.”

After analyzing the OFCC report, as well as internal facility evaluations, educational benefits, community input, energy efficiency, industry standards, historical data, enrollment projections, state mandates, building longevity, financial data and community input, the Board determined the best solution was a \$103 million plan that would build a new Wilson Elementary on the school’s current property and incorporate improved learning environments, more secure entrances, building-wide handicap-accessibility, improved technology and climate-control at every district neighborhood school. Maddux and Summit elementaries, Anderson High School and the new Wilson would also have building-wide air conditioning systems installed, while the current AC system at Turpin would be expanded through the entire school. The plan would also provide additional and flexible learning spaces for innovative learning, address traffic flow concerns, relocate the transportation facility from the Anderson High School campus on Forest Road for safety reasons, provide the opportunity for the district to consider the gradual implementation of all-day kindergarten and create a permanent improvement fund to address future facility needs in all district buildings.

“By replacing Wilson and significantly renovating schools now, we can take advantage of historically low interest rates and current low construction costs to provide schools for current and future generations of students,” explained Rick Toepfer, district treasurer.

Individuals who want more information on the upcoming bond issue and the proposed districtwide facilities plan are encouraged to visit the district’s website, [www.foresthills.edu](http://www.foresthills.edu), or attend Board of Education meetings to learn more. Future Board meetings will be held at 7 p.m. on August 25, Sept. 22 and Oct. 27 in the Administration Building, 7550 Forest Road.