

Q&A on Replacement Levy

Q: Why is the school district putting a Replacement Educational Maintenance and Operations Levy on the ballot?

A: The four-year renewal levy replaces the one that was passed by Mercer Island voters in 2014 and expires in 2018. This levy would replace the one that is expiring and would continue local levy funding for Mercer Island schools through 2022.

Q: Isn't the state required to invest more money in public education because of a state Supreme Court ruling?

A: Yes, that decision is called the McCleary ruling and requires that the state legislature must fully fund "basic education" by September 1, 2018. But the current state budget will not pay the full cost of special education or many Mercer Island school programs, including the seven-period day at the high school, music, art, PE and Spanish in the elementary schools, or expanded electives at the high school and middle school.

School funding is still a work in progress. The additional funding from the state is intended to close the gap between what the state pays teachers and what local districts pay teachers. It is not intended to add more capacity for additional teachers or programs. Most districts, including Mercer Island, require additional staffing to meet student needs and reduce class sizes. The additional funding from the state must be spent in very specific ways. On Mercer Island, local levy dollars are used to provide educational experiences beyond the state definition of basic education.

Q: Isn't the state supposed to pay for basic education?

A: Yes. In response to the state Supreme Court decision, the state will increase its share of funding for basic education and the school district's share will go down. But the school district will continue to pay for programs and activities that are not funded by the state, including special education programs, even though special education is a part of basic education. This is what the levy covers.

Q: How much can the District collect from the levy?

A: The District may collect only up to the amount approved by voters regardless of assessed valuation changes. Senior citizens or disabled persons may qualify for tax exemptions. Contact the King County Assessor's Office for information, 206.296.3920.

**Please remember to vote by
February 13, 2018**

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**Replacement Educational
Maintenance and Operations
Levy**

FACTS



**Please remember to vote
by February 13, 2018**

Replacement Educational Maintenance and Operations Levy

The Mercer Island School Board has unanimously approved an educational maintenance and operations levy proposition to be put to voters on the February 13, 2018 special election ballot. The four-year levy replaces the one that was passed by Mercer Island voters in 2014. **This is not a new tax.**



If approved with a simple majority, the replacement levy would collect between \$11.75 million and \$12.75 million per year from 2019 to 2022 for educational programs and services beyond the state's definition of basic education. It will continue to fund **20 percent** of the Mercer Island School District general fund, including **38 percent** of special education funding.



Under a new law passed by the Legislature in 2017, use of local levy dollars are limited to enrichments - those programs, activities and staffing beyond the basic state apportionment that are funded through local efforts, which includes the levy, Foundation, PTA, and other grants, donations and contributions. With local funds, the District has accomplished much to enrich the student experience on Mercer Island, including:

- ✓ Establishing a seven-period day at the high school, which allows students to meet the 24-credit graduation requirement and take electives as well;



- ✓ Elementary K-5 Music, Art, PE and Spanish;

- ✓ Expanded electives at Mercer Island High School and Islander Middle School, including advanced science and fine arts courses beyond the traditional one-year sequences and classes not normally available to students, including the award-winning radio station at the high school;

- ✓ Smaller class sizes for focused sections for struggling students or in specific areas;

- ✓ Ongoing professional development opportunities for staff;

- ✓ Stipends for staff to offer additional opportunities for students, including after-school clubs and activities at all grade levels;
- ✓ Enhanced library collections;
- ✓ Online learning programs;
- ✓ Paraprofessional support in classrooms with overloads, additional special education students or English Language Learners, as well as student supervision and safety.

For more information on the Educational Maintenance and Operations Levy, contact Ty Bergstrom, executive director of finance, e-mail tyrell.bergstrom@mercerislandschools.org.

Voting Information

Ballots will be mailed on January 24 and must be postmarked by February 13, 2018. There will be a ballot drop box located at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center, 8236 S.E. 24th St., open until 8 p.m. on February 13.

If you are a new voter to the state of Washington, you may register in person at the King County Elections offices in Seattle or Renton up to eight days before the election. Call 206-296-VOTE (8683) or visit kingcounty.gov for more information.

