

# Making A Difference for ALL

May 3, 2011 Special Education Millage Renewal

## Questions and Answers

### 1. What is the issue?

On May 3, 2011, Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) is seeking a special education millage renewal for seven years, from 2011 to 2017. If approved, the proposal would renew a 0.985 mill special education millage, first approved by voters in 2004, which expired with the 2010 tax levy. This renewal request is not a tax increase. It is actually slightly less than the 1 mill voters approved in 2004.

### 2. Why is special education important?

Local schools are required to provide special education services for students with physical, mental or emotional disabilities up to age 26. Spending money on special education services saves money in the long run because it prepares many students with special needs for real world jobs and careers so they can support themselves, become productive citizens in our community and not have to rely on tax-funded social service programs.

### 3. How many students receive special education services?

For more than 35 years, special education has been making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities, especially young children. Today, nearly 7,000 students, or about 1-in-7, receive some kind of special education service, with most receiving help overcoming learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, and some having to cope with more severe physical, mental or emotional problems.

### 4. Where do these students attend school?

Most of them are enrolled in public school districts or public school academies (also known as charter schools). Others attend WISD programs. Some attend parochial schools and a few are registered home school students.

### 5. Why are these renewal funds needed?

State and federal funding has not kept pace with increased costs, which means that special education funding must come from a voter-approved millage, or local school district general fund budgets, thereby reducing funding available for general education programs for all students. This renewal would help maintain programs for students with special needs, leaving more funds in the schools' general operating budgets to provide services for **all** students.

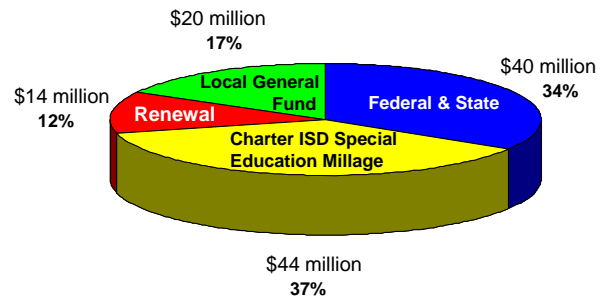
### 6. How will the funds be distributed?

The millage dollars are shared by all school systems and public school academies in Washtenaw County using a cost-reimbursement basis. So, if you live in the district of Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Lincoln, Manchester, Milan, Saline, Whitmore Lake, Willow Run or Ypsilanti, your schools benefit from this funding.

### 7. Why ask for a renewal now?

Until the 2010 tax year when part of the overall special education millage expired, WISD levied this 0.985 mill tax to help fund special education programs. While state and federal laws **require** these programs, state and federal funding only covers about 34% of the cost. Charter special education millage provides 37% of the cost. The renewal in this proposal has been covering 12% of the cost. And, local public school districts also spend about 17% of the cost from general fund money to pay for unfunded special education costs.

## How do local school districts pay for special education services?



### 8. What will happen if it isn't renewed?

If the special education millage is not renewed, an additional \$14 million per year will have to come from the general fund budgets of local public schools, bringing the total funding up to \$34 million that would have to come from the funding for general education programs for all students.

### 9. When is the election?

The election is Tuesday, May 3, 2011.

### 10. Who can vote on the renewal?

All registered voters who live within the **school districts** of Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Lincoln, Manchester, Milan, Saline, Whitmore Lake, Willow Run and Ypsilanti can vote.

### 11. Where do I vote?

Vote at the same precinct where you vote in all regular elections. Polls will be open from 7 a.m.-8 p.m. If you are unable to vote in person, absentee ballot applications are available at township, city or county clerk offices or online at: <http://www.michigan.gov/sos>.

### 12. Where can I get more information?

Contact your local school district or go to: <http://www.wash.k12.mi.us>.