

# OAK HARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# LEVY RENEWAL



#ONEOAKHARBOR  
VOTES

**OHPS February 2025**

**Levy Renewal**

**Informational Campaign**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DRIVES  
RECORD-SETTING  
LEVY RENEWAL SUCCESS**

**NSPRA GOLD MEDALLION AWARD ENTRY  
BOND/FINANCE CAMPAIGN**

**SARAH FOY, APR  
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**

**LISA JONES  
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**

**KATEY ANDREWS  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT/COMMUNICATIONS  
SPECIALST**

ART, MUSIC & LIBRARIES



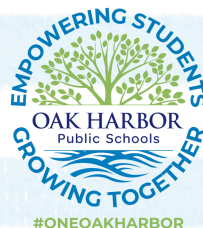
ACADEMIC SUPPORT



HEALTH SERVICES



STUDENT ACTIVITIES





# OVERVIEW

On October 14, 2024, the Oak Harbor Public Schools Board of Directors unanimously adopted a resolution to renew the Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) levy, placing it on the Special Election ballot for February 11, 2025.

## FUNDING & POLITICAL CHALLENGES

This critical funding measure came at a pivotal time for the district, following two years of budget reductions, inconsistent state funding, and uncertainty surrounding future federal support. The shifting political climate at the state, regional, and national levels added complexity to levy communications, requiring a more strategic and thoughtful approach to effectively inform and engage the community.

## VOTER TURN OUT CHALLENGES

We knew a key challenge for this election was going to be voter turnout, particularly among Oak Harbor's military-connected families. With approximately 40% of students coming from active-duty households, transient military families often feel disconnected from local elections or are hesitant to register to vote in a new state. Historically, this has led to lower engagement from our families in special elections.

## ELECTION MESSAGING CHALLENGES

Additionally, a heightened enforcement of Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) regulations placed new restrictions on how school districts could communicate about ballot measures. Recent PDC actions penalized districts for language perceived as persuasive rather than purely informational, adding another layer of complexity to outreach efforts. This required a carefully crafted, compliant messaging approach to ensure transparency while effectively conveying the levy's significance to students, staff, and families.

Despite these challenges, our three-person communication team implemented a strategic, research-based communication plan that resulted in record-breaking approval rates and unprecedented voter participation. This campaign not only secured essential funding for student programs but also strengthened community engagement and trust in the district's commitment to fiscal responsibility and educational excellence.



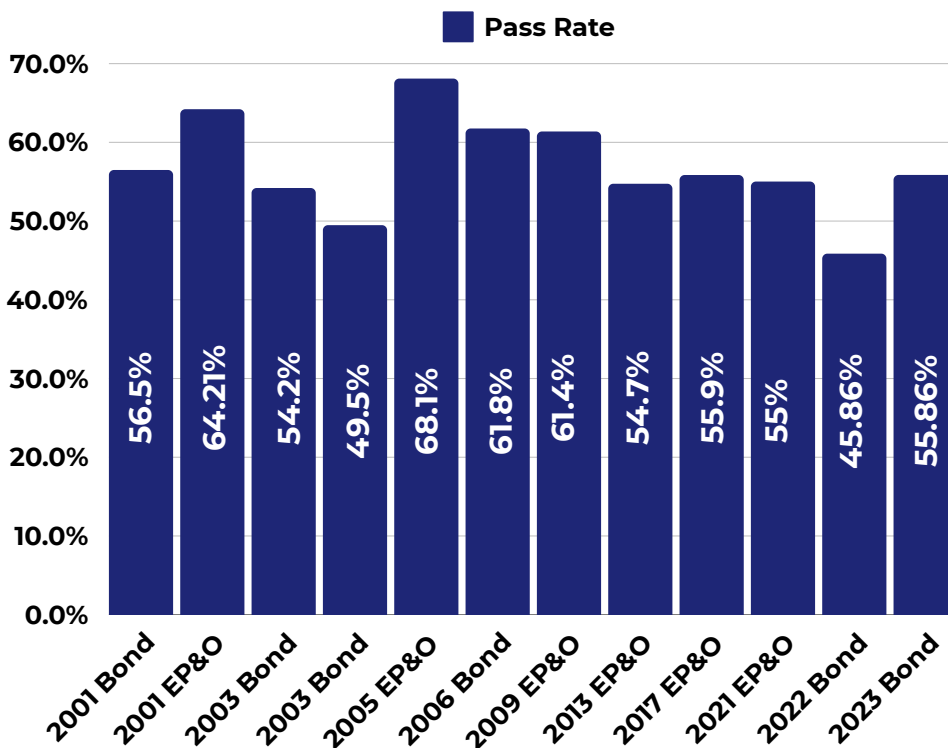
# RESEARCH

The development of our strategic communication plan was guided by a comprehensive approach to data collection, incorporating informal insights from community members, along with primary and secondary research. Historical data, combined with newly gathered information before and during the levy campaign, played a critical role in shaping key messages, strategies, tactics, objectives, and goals. This data-driven approach ensured a well-informed communication plan, which was presented to cabinet leadership in October for alignment and implementation.

## RESEARCH: ELECTION DATA

Historical election data was analyzed to identify trends and measure progress toward our goals. Additionally, regional data was assessed to gauge the broader outlook on levy support across the county and state. These insights played a crucial role in shaping the campaign’s objectives and strategic direction.

### OAK HARBOR ELECTION HISTORY



### ANALYSIS

- Oak Harbor has a good track record of levies passing the simple majority threshold in recent years.
- Oak Harbor has had less success of passing bonds, which require a supermajority or 60% approval.
- Overall approval rates have declined over the last ten years.

### REGIONAL DATA

According to the latest data from OSPI at the time, levy measures statewide saw strong support in 2024, with more than 94% passing by a simple majority. However, some communities faced challenges, as 10 levies failed to secure approval that year, including several within our region.



# RESEARCH

## RESEARCH: VOTER TURNOUT DATA

We analyzed voter turnout data from the two previous election cycles (the 2021 Levy Renewal and the 2023 Bond) by collecting Washington Secretary of State Matchback results. These results, which indicate voter registration and ballot submission, were cross-referenced with data from our Student Information System on staff and parent/guardians. This analysis helped us determine the following:

- 2021 Levy Renewal: 78% of registered staff voted, 39% of registered parents/guardians voted
- 2023 Bond Election: 74% of registered staff voted, 38% of registered parents/guardians voted

Recognizing that the outcome of the levy would most directly impact staff, students, and families, this data provided us with a valuable opportunity to focus our campaign on emphasizing the importance of voter participation in this crucial election.

## RESEARCH: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Long-term community engagement was integral to the success of the levy campaign. Over the past two years, we conducted a variety of research and strategic planning efforts, including the development of a new Strategic Plan with input from the community, the formation of a Capital Facilities Advisory Committee, and the reimagining of our District Parent Advisory Committee. These collaborative efforts provided valuable insights through multiple types of research:

- **Strategic Planning:** Through surveys, focus groups, and public forums, we gathered direct feedback from stakeholders to ensure our messaging aligned with community values and priorities. The development of our new Strategic Plan involved analyzing community data, school needs, and stakeholder input, guiding the creation of key messages centered on shared goals.
- **Committee Work:** By engaging with advisory committees, we collected expert insights on facilities, educational needs, and the district's strategic direction, helping shape our communication strategy.

Based on this research, we crafted communication materials with clear, consistent messaging, which included:

- Simplifying complex topics like school funding and taxes
- Highlighting the critical role of levy funding in supporting community priorities as outlined in our Strategic Planning process, which included health and safety, special education services, academic excellence, student programs and technology.
- Ensuring consistency across all materials to maintain trust and clarity
- Emphasizing why voting in local elections matter for all of our schools



# PLANNING

Based on the collected data, the communications department developed the following high-level communication plan and tactic-driven plan to execute our levy renewal information campaign.

## KEY MESSAGES

Through the Strategic Planning process and committee work, we identified the following key messages and priorities for the campaign, which were directly informed by community input:

- **Inclusion & Pride in Diversity** – Supporting Special Education and inclusive practices
- **School Health & Safety** – Funding school nurses, mental health counselors, deans, school resource officers, and safety infrastructure improvements
- **Technology & Academic Excellence** – Providing funding for Chromebooks, classroom technology, and curriculum updates
- **Student Programs** – Supporting extracurricular activities for all students

In addition, leveraging insights from voter turnout data, we emphasized the importance of participating in local elections, using the hashtag #OneOakHarborVotes to encourage community engagement and drive voter participation.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- **Goal 1: Increase Awareness about what the Levy Supports and how it aligns with community priorities**
  - **Measurable Objective:** Reach 60% approval rating. *While only a simple majority is needed to pass, we wanted to see if we had the ability to reach a supermajority approval because it could indicate future success of a bond measure, which does require 60% approval.*
- **Goal 2: Educate Voters about what will be on the ballot and the impact it will have on their taxes and local schools**
  - **Measurable Objective:** Increase voter turnout of parents/guardians and staff. *This was a major objective for us with our main target audiences being parents/guardians and staff who will be the most impacted by the levy passing or failing.*



# IMPLEMENTATION

With our small but dedicated team, we worked collaboratively to develop a detailed project management plan that clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This plan outlined the strategies and tactics needed to effectively achieve our campaign's goals and objectives, ensuring a cohesive and efficient approach to implementation.

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manager - Cabinet Leadership
- Owner - Sarah Foy, Communications Officer
- Consulted - Cabinet, committee members, Board, Administrators, & Union leadership
- Helpers - Katey Andrews & Lisa Jones
- Approver - Cabinet Leadership

## STRATEGIES

- Create ambassadors to share messaging across platforms and combat misinformation. *Building on the community engagement work already established, We equipped committee members from our various committees and backgrounds (union leadership, military, special needs parents, senior citizens) with factual information so they could respond on social media and in social groups with key messages.*
- Reach key audiences seven different times, seven different ways. We also focused on reaching people where they already were instead of asking them to engage with us. *One example would be at a sporting event or at an existing meeting for a community group.*
- Simple and consistent key messages throughout all materials
- Adapt messaging and tactics based on feedback from community members

## TACTICS

- Levy webpage with key facts & consistently updated FAQs
- Branding package for Levy Renewal materials
- School & Community Presentation (14 community meetings, 12 school meetings)
- Levy one-pager for events and front offices
- Levy signage in all school front offices and key areas of town
- Social media graphics with key messages
- School and district messaging reminders
- Communication toolkit for admin, ambassadors, and schools (scripts for extracurriculars, custom social media graphics and principal messaging)
- Community mailer
- Social media videos with key community influencers
- Buttons for staff and ambassadors to wear (Ask me about the levy button & #OneOakHarborVotes Button)



# EVALUATION

## HOW DID WE DO?

### ELECTION RESULTS

The 2025 Levy Renewal passed with over 62% approval, marking the highest approval rating for any election measure in Oak Harbor Public Schools in nearly a decade. This success was particularly significant because it demonstrated the community's ability to support a measure at this level when messaging was consistent and factual information was communicated through a variety of channels. While precinct-level data is not yet available at the time of this submission, we plan to evaluate it once it is, specifically looking for any increase in voter turnout in precincts with a high concentration of military housing.

OAK HARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**LEVY RENEWAL**

THANK YOU,  
**#ONEOAKHARBOR**

[WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY](http://WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY)

### ELECTION TURNOUT RESULTS

In addition to the record approval rating, we saw a notable increase in turnout among both parents/guardians and staff for this election:

- Overall turnout: 36%
- Registered Staff turnout: 83% (a 5% increase from 2023)
  - 100% of administrators voted
  - 95% of teachers voted
  - 72% of classified staff voted
- Registered Parent/Guardian turnout: 42% (a 4% increase from 2023)

The turnout from both families and staff surpassed the overall turnout, which played a key role in the successful passage of the levy.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

In conclusion, the success of the campaign was not due to any single tactic, but rather the collective effort of our entire community. The #OneOakHarbor spirit, which we cultivated over the past two years through committee work, union collaboration, and community relations, played a pivotal role in creating strong ambassadors across our community.

These ambassadors were essential in spreading our message both online and offline. As the campaign progressed, we invited these ambassadors to participate in our community presentations. After our presentations, they shared their personal stories, offering unique perspectives on how the programs and resources funded by the levy positively impacted students. Additionally, our partnership with union leadership was instrumental. They worked alongside us to analyze voter turnout data and used targeted messaging to emphasize the importance of the election, reinforcing our key messages.

Ultimately, we found that voters responded more positively to messages delivered by their peers, neighbors, and colleagues than those from district administration. Recognizing this, we focused on enlisting trusted community influencers and creating content with them throughout the campaign. Building these key partnerships was crucial to our success, and we look forward to leveraging this momentum for future campaigns.



# APPENDIX

## BRANDING PACKAGE

In addition to consistent messaging, it was important to create a visual identity for the levy campaign to create brand awareness with all of our materials.



The rectangular logo for the levy campaign was used for all print and graphic elements.

We also created a circular stamp that was able to be added to all social media posts about activities funded by the levy.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

We used social media to share informational material and perspectives from key influencers in our community. We also created new social media graphics based on frequently asked questions that came up during the campaign. Additionally, to personalize messaging, we developed school-specific social media graphics to show the school programs that are directly funded by the levy.

**LEVY RENEWAL**  
DON'T FORGET TO VOTE  
FEBRUARY 11!

**EXAMPLES OF LEVY IMPACT AT CHE**

- STUDENT PROGRAMS - ART & MUSIC
- STUDENT SUPPORT - DEAN, PARAEDUCATORS & SMALLER CLASS SIZES
- HEALTH & SAFETY - SCHOOL NURSE & BUILDING SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS

**LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR LEVY-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS!**  
[WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY](http://WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY)

Oak Harbor Public Schools  
Published by ClassIntercom  
January 28

Did you receive your ballot yet? On February 11 Oak Harbor voters will consider renewing our local levy. Our educational programs and operations levy provides programs like mental health support, special education services, and extracurricular activities - all of which help our kids thrive. Learn more at [www.ohsd.net/levy](http://www.ohsd.net/levy).

**LEVY SUPPORTED** → **PERSPECTIVES**

Thanks to the levy, we're able to provide essential programs - which help our kids thrive!

Paula Seaman, Principal  
Hillcrest Elementary

[WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY](http://WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY)





# APPENDIX

## VIDEOS

We created several short videos for our social media and webpages that emphasize the importance of the levy renewal on community priorities outlined in our strategic plan. We had to be careful in how we used students in the videos because of potential PDC violations so instead we focused on key community influencers. The videos focused on key messages and priorities that were identified through our strategic planning surveys and focus groups. *Click to play each video in full.*

**PAULA SEAMAN**  
Hillcrest Elementary Principal  
the Oak Harbor school levy. 0:51

Levy Renewal for 2026-2029 | Community Priorities

**JOYCELIN VESTER**  
North Whidbey Middle School Counselor  
Oak Harbor Public Schools levy. 1:11

Levy Renewal for 2026-2029 | Health & Safety

**JAY TURNER**  
OHPS Athletic Coordinator  
Oak Harbor Public Schools is asking voters to consider renewing. 1:08

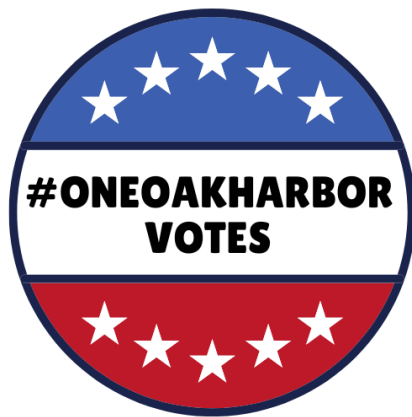
Levy Renewal for 2026-2029 | Arts Music & Athletics



# APPENDIX

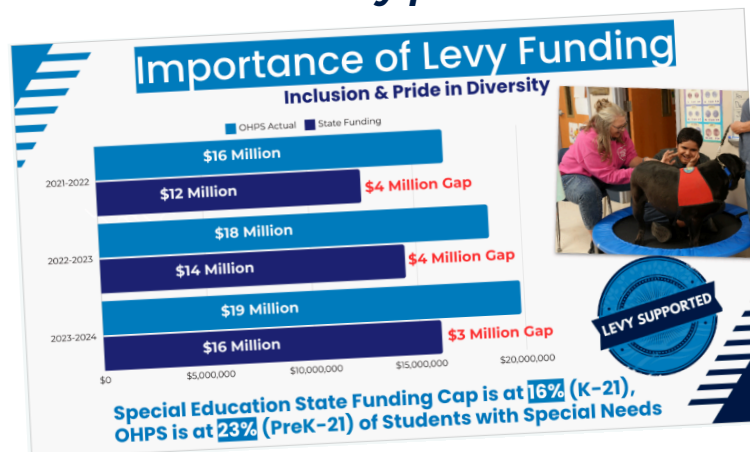
## AMBASSADOR & SCHOOL TOOLKITS

Achieving success in this campaign was a collective effort fueled by the #OneOakHarbor spirit. We amplified our message by enlisting ambassadors who helped share key information and quickly address any misinformation that appeared on social media. To ensure consistent messaging, we provided school administrators, teachers, committee members, and board members with a toolkit containing important information and talking points. Additionally, we created "Ask me about the levy" buttons for them to wear at events, sparking conversations about the levy's importance in public spaces. Once ballots were sent out, we encouraged our ambassadors to wear #OneOakHarbor Votes buttons as a reminder for the community to vote before the deadline.



## PRESENTATIONS

Community presentations were centered around strategic plan community priorities, clearly linking them to the levy funding to highlight its critical role in supporting vital programs. We illustrated the funding gaps for each community priority and emphasized how the levy helps bridge the gap left by state and federal funding, ensuring the sustainability of key programs. *Click the image to see the full community presentation.*





# APPENDIX

## PRINT MATERIALS

We developed various print materials to distribute across our community. Click each image to see the material in full.

**OAK HARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**LEVY RENEWAL**

**DON'T FORGET TO VOTE! FEBRUARY 11**

**LEVY SUPPORTED**

Oak Harbor Public Schools is asking voters to consider renewing a local levy to provide funding for student programs and services not covered under "Basic Education" or underfunded by the State.

The current OHPS levy expires at the end of 2025 and will need to be approved by a simple majority to maintain programs.

The local levy provides funding for every school, including the following:

- Health & Safety**  
School nurses, mental health counselors & school safety enhancements
- Academic Support**  
Special education, paraeducators, academic counselors & smaller class sizes
- Student Programs**  
Athletics, intramurals, visual & performing arts
- Technology**  
Chromebooks, classroom technology & curriculum software

**#ONEOAKHARBOR**

**Levy Collection**

Year	Amount	Est. Rate/ \$1000
2026	\$16,990,000	\$2.28
2027	\$17,680,000	\$2.28
2028	\$18,387,000	\$2.28
2029	\$19,122,000	\$2.28

**Levy Key Facts**

- The renewal levy is not a new tax. It replaces the current levy that expires at the end of 2025. The estimated tax rate (\$2.28) per \$1000 is the same estimated tax rate amount during the last levy renewal in 2021.
- Separate from the State Schools Tax, the OHPS Educational Programs & Operations levy is locally controlled and goes directly to our schools based on community priorities outlined in our new Strategic Plan.
- Voters approve a set amount, not a tax rate. Property growth, not assessment values, impact the tax rate. Historically, housing growth has led to decreases in the school levy tax rates.
- The levy makes up approximately 12 percent of our overall budget and provides funding to maintain operations and essential student programs not funded or fully funded by the State of Washington.
- School funding has not kept pace with the increase in student needs or cost of supplies and services. The renewal of the local levy will go directly towards filling budget gaps and meeting community priorities.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR RENEWAL LEVY [WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY](http://WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY)

One-Pager in English & Spanish

**OAK HARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**2024-2025 COMMUNITY REPORT**

**A MESSAGE TO OUR #ONEOAKHARBOR COMMUNITY**

As the Superintendent of Oak Harbor Public Schools, I am proud to present to you our 2024-2025 Annual Report of our district's achievements and ongoing growth. This report highlights our successes and the progress we have made in our mission to empower every student to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

In our commitment to student success, we have adopted a new Strategic Plan that outlines both short-term and long-term goals to guide our efforts. To continue advancing these objectives, we respectfully ask our community to consider renewing our current levy.

We take great pride in our longstanding record of excellence and our recent state award for exemplary fiscal management of public funds. These accomplishments underscore our dedication to responsible budgeting and the effective use of resources to benefit our students and community.

Further details about the upcoming levy and how it will support our strategic initiatives can be found in the rest of this publication. Thank you for your continued trust and support as we work together to ensure a bright future for all our students.

**LEVY RENEWAL**  
**DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FEBRUARY 11, 2025!**

**LEVY SUPPORTED**

**SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

LYNN GOEBEL BOARD PRESIDENT  
JOSH MACLEAN VICE PRESIDENT  
JESSICA AWS BOARD DIRECTOR  
NICOLE TESCH BOARD DIRECTOR  
SHARON JENSEN BOARD DIRECTOR

Annual Report Community Mailer

**#ONEOAKHARBOR**

**LEVY SUPPORTED**

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR LEVY-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS [WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY](http://WWW.OHSD.NET/LEVY)

Sandwich Board Sign and Banner at Each School

## LEVY WEBPAGE & FAQ

As we developed new materials for the campaign or received new questions from the community, we were updating our levy webpage that housed basic information and frequently asked questions.

- [Levy Webpage](#)
- [Levy FAQ Webpage](#)

## OAK HARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEVY RENEWAL

