

# Passing School Levies – The Right Approach

*A toolkit for Ohio public school  
districts from Wyoming City Schools*



# Community Culture

- Suburban pop. serving 1900 students K-12.
- 20 minutes outside of Cincinnati.
- 5 neighborhood schools (3 primary K-4, 5-8 and 9-12).
- Highly residential district, dependent upon property taxes.
- 65% of population are empty nesters.



# An Expectation for Success

- 40 years of levy success.
- A city of less than 9000.
- What's the secret to success with levies?
  - Quantitative and qualitative research
  - Communication
  - Community involvement
  - Resident support for the school district



# Timing is Everything

- What's the right time? Surveys and levies
- Plan ahead! 5-year financial forecast.
- Presidential elections - a challenge.
- Consider external economic factors.
- When was the last levy?
- Bond vs. operating levies. Be prepared to describe!



# Surveying the Community

- Quantitative and qualitative studies determine the pulse of the community.
- Objectives:
  - Inform
  - Determine ballot readiness
  - Estimate passage rate
  - Determine timing
  - Determine awareness
  - Start early



# Testing the Market

- Just like consumer research, test the product.
- Sample size can be small – still an indicator.
- Finding out issues, prompting the voters and raising awareness about school finances.



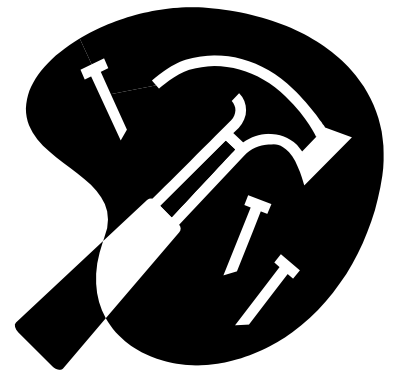
# Research in Wyoming

- Began in 1998 – ready for an all-new high school?
- Telephone survey
- Results available prior to ballot commitment date.
- 1998 study indicated **62%** were in favor of the plan.
- Vote passed with **60%** in favor.
- 2002/2005 research and levies had similar results.



# 2009 Wyoming Middle School Research

- Renovate or build?
- Bond issue for a historic building.
- All stakeholders invited.
- Quantitative research - only a **43%** favorable response.
- *Bond issue tabled.*





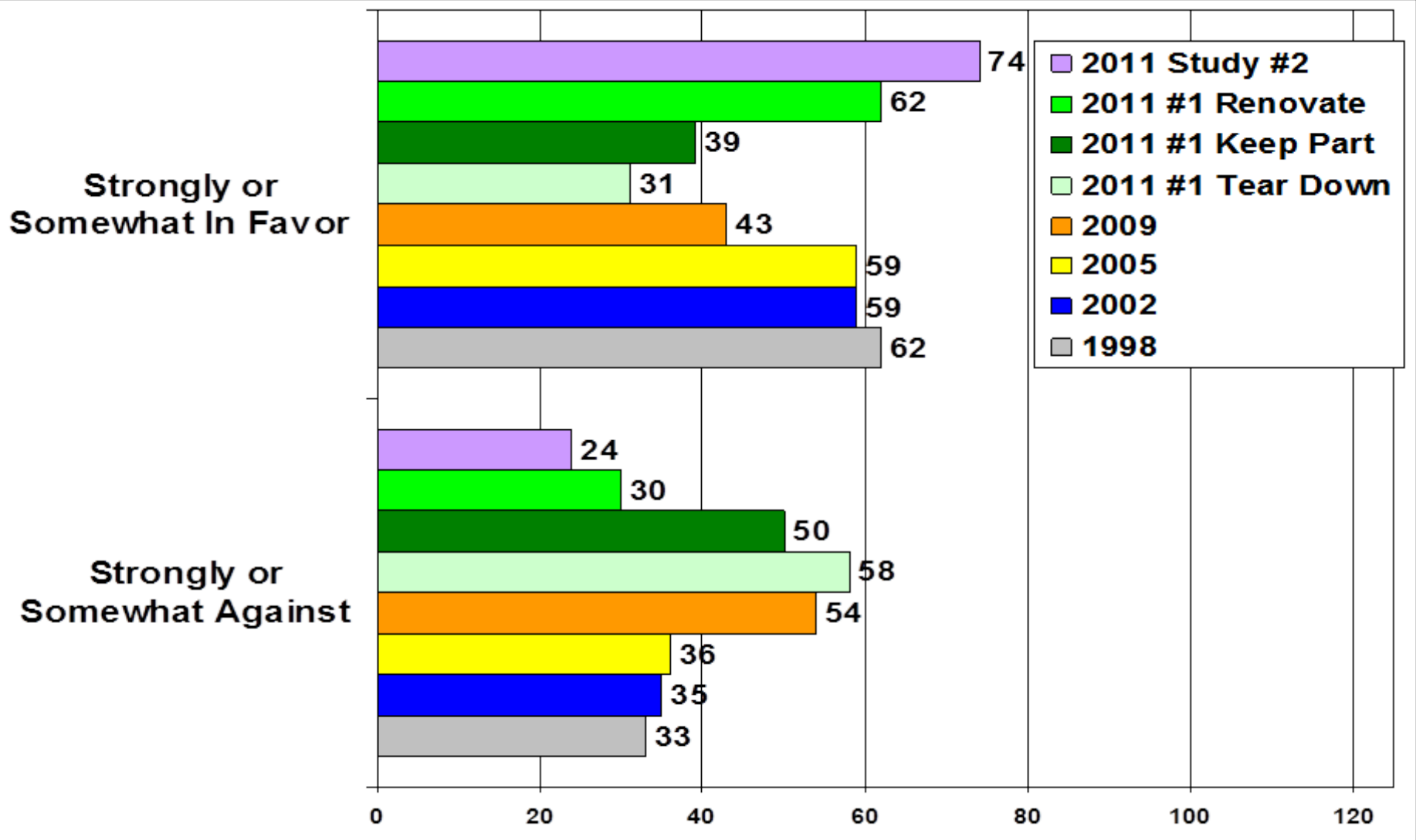
# 2011 Wyoming Middle School Research Study #2

- Study tested one plan.
- Community forums held.
- **74%** indicated they would vote in favor of plan.
- Bond issue was added to March 2012 ballot.
- A \$25 million bond issue – **passed at 73%.**

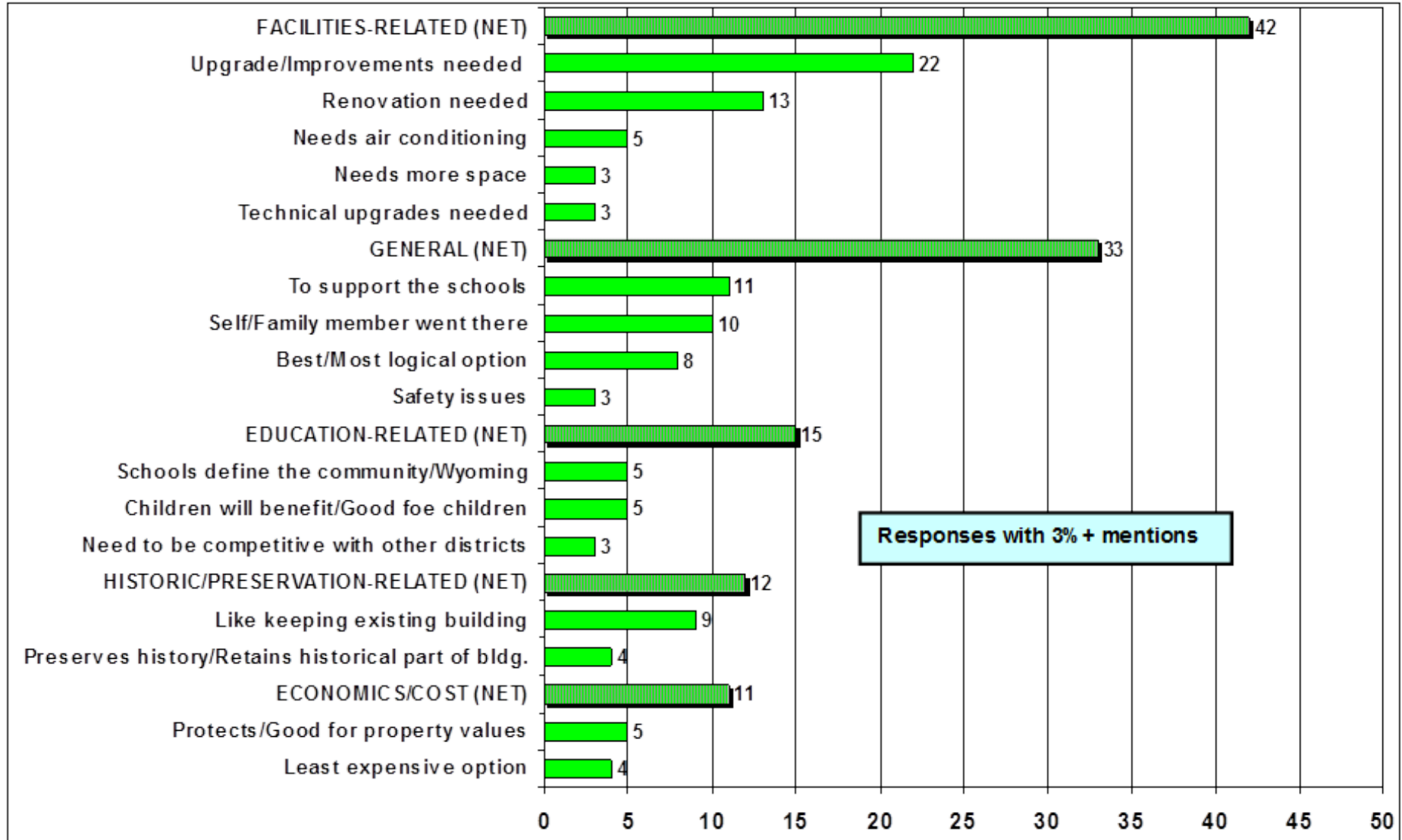


# Historical Perspective

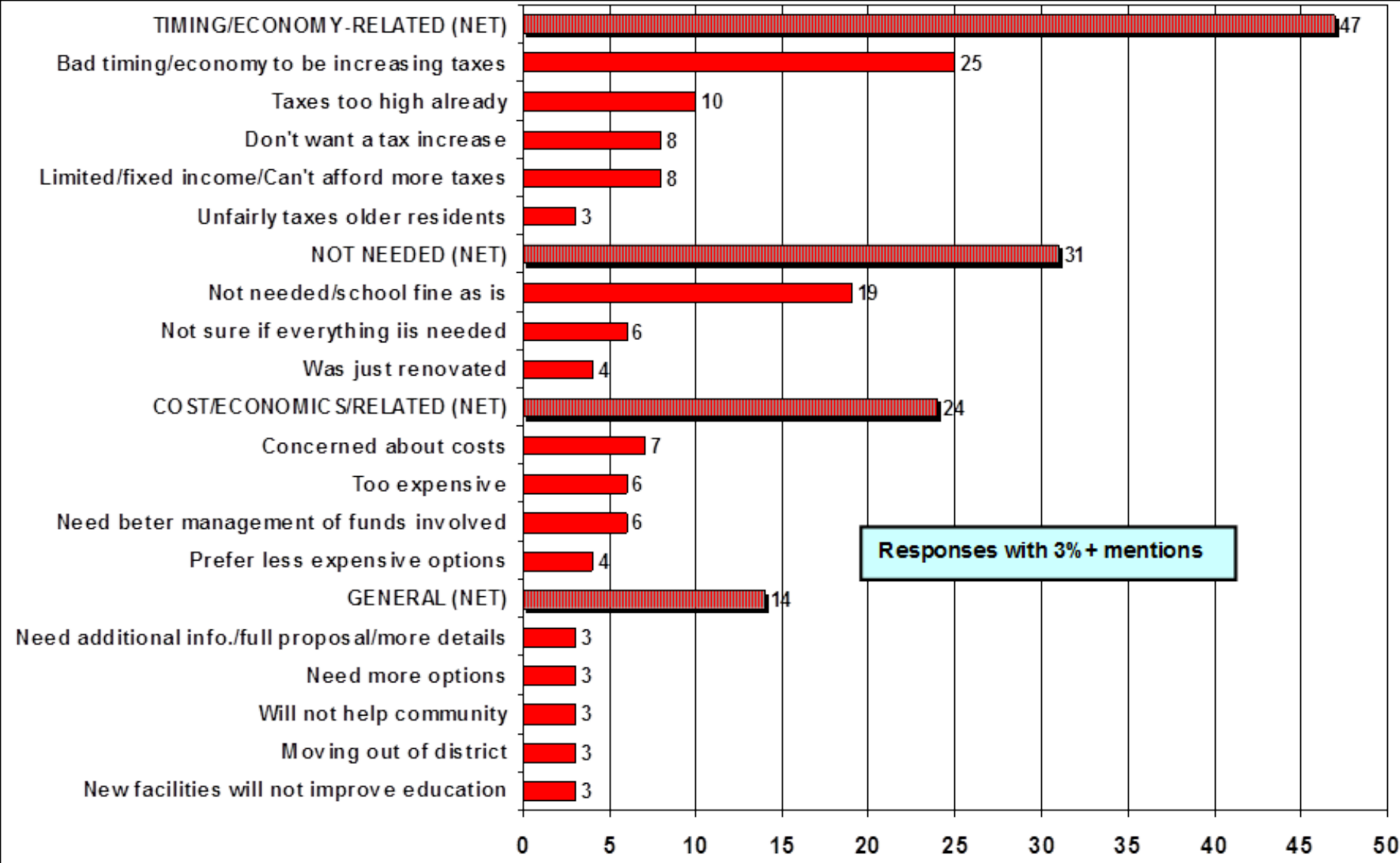
(This question and these specific Strongly + Somewhat In Favor figures predicted the 1998, 2002 and 2005 vote and provided caution in 2009 leading to that year's Middle School bond issue being withdrawn).



# Reasons for Positive Support



# Reasons for Negative Support



# Communication is Key

- Wyoming shares ongoing and open communication with all residents.
  - Some examples:
    - Community and parent newsletters
    - Annual Report
    - Web site
    - Board highlights and agendas
    - Blogs
    - Active Parent Association, parent meetings
    - Active support organizations
- Ongoing communication with city officials.



# Levy Campaigns – *A Team Approach*

**Involve Many = Many Yes Votes!**



# **Yes for Wyoming – *Getting People Involved***



**BOE Subcommittee &  
Levy Steering Committee**

**Fundraising and Finance**

**Video and Theme**

**Social Media**

**Key Communciators**

**Presentations/Coffees**

**Absentee Voters**

**Building tours**

**Yard Sign Distribution**

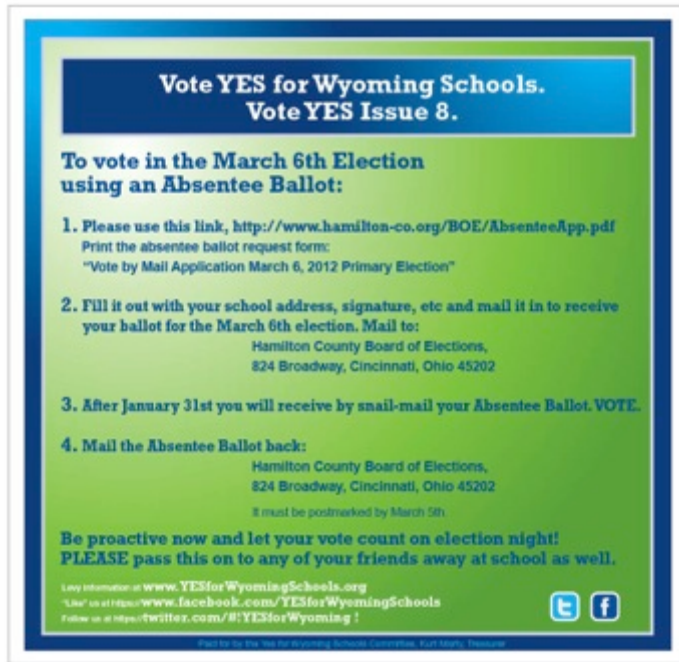
**Get Out the Yes Vote**

**Election Day Activities**

**Thank You Party**

# Branding and Promotions

- Develop a brand.
- Reach many people through communication tools.
- Use key communicators to spread the message.



**Vote YES for Wyoming Schools.  
Vote YES Issue 8.**

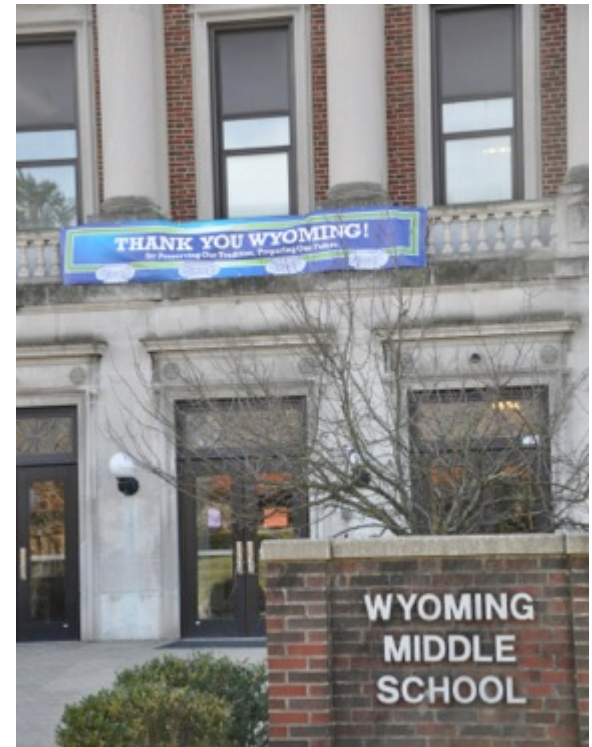
**To vote in the March 6th Election  
using an Absentee Ballot:**

1. Please use this link, <http://www.hamilton-co.org/BOE/AbsenteeApp.pdf>  
Print the absentee ballot request form:  
"Vote by Mail Application March 6, 2012 Primary Election"
2. Fill it out with your school address, signature, etc and mail it in to receive  
your ballot for the March 6th election. Mail to:  
Hamilton County Board of Elections,  
824 Broadway, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
3. After January 31st you will receive by snail-mail your Absentee Ballot. VOTE.
4. Mail the Absentee Ballot back:  
Hamilton County Board of Elections,  
824 Broadway, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202  
It must be postmarked by March 5th.

**Be proactive now and let your vote count on election night!  
PLEASE pass this on to any of your friends away at school as well.**

Key information at [www.YESforWyomingSchools.org](http://www.YESforWyomingSchools.org)  
"Like" us at <https://www.facebook.com/YESforWyomingSchools>  
Follow us at <https://twitter.com/YESforWyoming>!

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# March 2012 Levy: *By the Numbers*

- \$11,600 raised
- 400 to 500 volunteers who ran a grassroots effort.
  - 500 yard signs
  - 250 note cards and envelopes
    - 1,000 stickers
    - 200 buttons
  - 125 car magnets
  - 85 key communicators
    - 48 t-shirts
  - 16 coffees and events in 30 days
    - 1 levy video
    - 1 levy web site
    - 1 levy twitter feed
    - 1 levy Facebook page
  - 1 teacher letter-writing campaign
    - 1 thank you party



Preserve Our  
Tradition  
Preserve Our  
Future  
Vote YES ISSUE 8  
March 6th

# Results: March 2012

- 2,974 voters – 46% of registered voters
- 2,114 voted in support of bond levy (73%)




# Bond vs. Operating Levies

- Messaging is very different.
- Can't afford to lose an operating levy – first priority is the classroom.
- Value of a home is built on the school district.



# Key Lessons

- Involve and inform more  more yes votes.
- Expand committees – include advocates and worker bees.
- March or May ballots can help avoid voter confusion.
- Get to the Yes voters.



# Key Lessons (continued)

- Continually communicate to as many community members as possible.
- Share info about school finances. Demonstrate judicious use of resources.
- Demonstrate value. Great schools = great home values.



# Questions?



# For More Information

For more information about Wyoming City Schools,  
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