

## Kenston Local Schools to pare staff, seek November PI levy

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Kenston Local Schools plans to eliminate nine positions next year, including one administrative position, five teaching positions, and three support staff positions.

The school district also plans to put a permanent improvement levy on the November ballot.

The personnel cuts are estimated to reduce projected expenditures next year by about \$1 million.

“We’re trying to operate more efficiently,” Superintendent Steven Sayers said.

But because the changes are coming without layoffs or reductions-in-force, he is not using the word “cuts.”

“We don’t like that word,” he said.

The district will also eliminate a purchase service contract with the Educational Service Center of the Western Reserve, and will begin providing this service with Kenston staff, he said.

Mr. Sayers said that the district has its staffing plan in place for next school year, and the administrative team has been having conversations this year “about how we can operate more efficiently as a district without compromising the quality of our educational program.”

The changes will be incorporated into the district’s five-year forecast, which will be presented at the board of education meeting in May.

Also in May, the board will vote on the first resolution to place a permanent improvement (PI) levy on the ballot in November. Upon approval, the board will vote on a second resolution in June.

"We talk a lot about needs and wants. A PI levy is truly a need for our district," Mr. Sayers said. "Only about 13% of the districts in Ohio do not have a PI levy on the books and we are one of those districts. This is very important to the long-term stability of our district."

Revenue from a permanent improvement levy cannot be used for salaries, benefits or day-to-day operating expenses in the district.

A permanent improvement levy is used for items that have a lifespan of five years or more, which includes buses, books, roofs, technology, parking lots and more, he said.

Over the last three years, the district has set aside an average of about \$575,000 from its general fund to address permanent improvement needs, he said.

"Unfortunately, it's not anywhere close to keeping up with the needs that we have," Mr. Sayers said.

As an example, Mr. Sayers said that an annual replacement plan for the district's fleet of buses may cost about \$300,000 to \$400,000, depending on the type of bus.

A replacement cycle of 10 to 12 years for the district's bus fleet of 35 buses requires three bus purchases every year. This does not include the district's nine or 10 vans.

Mr. Sayers also used boilers as an example, which cost about \$325,000 to replace.

"You can see where the \$575,000 that we're currently setting aside from the general fund just isn't going to keep up," he said.

He said that the district should have a final strategic plan ready for presentation at the May 15 board meeting at 7 p.m. at Kenston High School's Auburn Bainbridge Room.