



Groveport Madison Local Schools Win-Win Agreement Frequently-Asked Questions

Without question, the Win-Win Agreement is a complex and politically-charged topic. There is a great deal to consider, and regardless of which decision we make, the Groveport Madison School District's main objective is protecting the long-term educational and financial integrity of our school district.

Below are responses to the most frequently-asked questions we have received to date. If you do not see the answer to your question, below, please feel free to email us at gm.communications@gocruisers.org. We will get back to you as quickly as possible with a response to your question.

What is the Win-Win Agreement?

While there are many aspects of this complicated agreement, the Win-Win Agreement was primarily established as a means of resolving land transfer conflicts between eleven suburban school districts and Columbus City Schools (CCS). The agreement provided that territory annexed into the City of Columbus "Pre-1986" and not transferred to Columbus City Schools, would not be transferred to CCS. The agreement also identified "protected areas" of suburban school districts which were protected from transfer into Columbus City Schools regardless of whether the property was annexed into the City of Columbus. No areas in the township portion of Groveport Madison District are "protected areas". The agreement also specified that, after 1986, unincorporated portions of suburban school districts which were not in protected areas would be automatically transferred into Columbus City Schools when the lands were annexed into the City of Columbus. A copy of the agreement is available at www.gocruisers.org/win-win.aspx.

What has been the primary benefit to the agreement for central Ohio?

Proponents contend that in terms of protecting school district boundaries, the Win-Win agreement has essentially fulfilled its purpose across most of Franklin County. As such, much of Franklin County has continued to grow and prosper as a direct result of this agreement and the predictability it holds.

What has changed to cause Groveport Madison to reconsider renewal of the agreement?

The Win-Win Agreement has been in effect for nearly 30 years – and nearly 24 years without significant changes or modernization of the formula. At the same time, the Columbus metropolitan area has changed significantly over that same period:

- Since 1986, the Columbus Metro Area has added more than 722,000 residents.
- The State of Ohio has implemented and actively promoted a voucher and charter school program, incentivizing tens of thousands of families to leave their neighborhood schools.
- Districts, including Columbus City Schools and Reynoldsburg City Schools, have developed "Open Enrollment" programs which permit any area student to enroll in their school district regardless of where the student resides. (Groveport Madison cannot stop open enrollment out.)
- And during the same time period, the state has eliminated critical school funding sources which were baseline assumptions to the Win-Win revenue sharing agreement, such as deregulating Ohio's public utilities, eliminating personal-tangible property taxes, etc.

Over the past 30 years, annexations from Groveport Madison Schools' territory into the City of Columbus have resulted in a total loss of more than \$107 million in property valuation to the District. This equates to more than \$1.5 million annually in lost commercial and industrial tax revenue.

What areas of the District are currently protected from transfer into Columbus City Schools as a result of the Win-Win Agreement?

Within Groveport Madison Schools, "the protected areas" include the following neighborhoods:

- Abbey Trails
- Berwick
- Independence Village
- Three Rivers
- The Valley
- Winchester Crossing

Which areas of the District are vulnerable to annexation and therefore being automatically transferred into Columbus City Schools?

Blacklick Estates is vulnerable to annexation. Moreover, any unincorporated areas which are contiguous to another property in the City of Columbus may be annexed into the City of Columbus. Under the Win-Win Agreement, once a property in the Groveport Madison District is annexed into the City of Columbus, the land is automatically transferred to Columbus City Schools. The primary areas being targeted for annexation into the City of Columbus are commercial and industrial areas in the Rickenbacker International Airport corridor.

What are the BENEFITS OF RENEWING the Win-Win Agreement?

1. The Win-Win Agreement currently protects the Groveport Madison District from transfer of residential and commercial property of more than \$128 million in property valuation within Groveport Madison Schools. This protection is afforded to two distinct geographic areas in the extreme northeastern and northwestern portions of the District.
2. Legal challenges surrounding educational equity and segregation across area schools districts would be minimized.
3. Services and educational opportunities such as Mosaic, Kids Connect and Metro would remain available to our students and families.

What are the RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH RENEWING the Win-Win Agreement?

1. Properties that are in the unincorporated areas are unprotected (including five of our ten schools and the majority of Madison Township) and would be subject to annexation into the City of Columbus and then would automatically transfer into Columbus City Schools.
2. The loss of District wealth now exceeds \$37 million annually in taxable revenue, and this amount is increasing at a rapid pace.
3. The District would continue to see its commercial/industrial property targeted for annexation and then automatic transfers, and therefore, District residents will see a greater share of the tax burden in order for the District to maintain operations.
4. The District would be required to pay approximately \$854,000 in annual payments to Columbus City Schools.
5. Under the Win-Win Agreement, we have no ability to challenge land transfers at the State Board of Education level.

What are the BENEFITS of WITHDRAWING from the Win-Win Agreement?

1. Valuable commercial and industrial property will no longer automatically transfer into Columbus City Schools.
2. The District would no longer have to make annual payments of \$854,000 to Columbus City Schools for protection of the "Protected Area."
3. There would be a clear process for challenging any requests for land transfers to Columbus City Schools with the State Board of Education.
4. Residential property tax payers would not have to absorb additional financial burden to fund the schools as a result of transfers of commercial and industrial properties (and their subsequent taxes) to Columbus City Schools.

What are the RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH WITHDRAWING from the Win-Win Agreement?

1. Columbus City Schools could request a land transfer of properties located in the Pre-1986 areas. However, we would gain the right to challenge land transfers of school district territory at the State Board of Education level. The District could also consider open enrollment as a means of assuring residential property owners that they could remain in the Groveport Madison School District.
2. Columbus City could target additional Groveport Madison areas for annexation, beyond just the Rickenbacker Area.

If Groveport Madison remains in the agreement, is it true that five of the District's schools would be transferred to Columbus City Schools if land around them were to be annexed into the City of Columbus.

Yes, Asbury Elementary, Dunloe Elementary, Madison Elementary, Sedalia Elementary and Middle School North all sit on land that is unincorporated township territory. Those properties could be annexed into the City of Columbus and under the current Win-Win Agreement would therefore automatically transfer into Columbus City Schools.

If Groveport Madison withdraws from the agreement, would properties in the Pre-1986 area automatically transfer to Columbus City Schools?

No. There is nothing that would happen right away or automatically with respect to any land transfers. Columbus City Schools would still have to pursue a transfer of territory through the State Board of Education. This is a very lengthy process and offers no guarantee that Columbus City Schools would prevail. In the event they did, Groveport Madison Schools can appeal all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court. We have every intention of keeping all of the properties which are currently a part of the District, and we will pursue any possible actions to prevent a transfer of property to CCS.

If Groveport Madison withdraws from the agreement, how is it determined whether a property is transferred to Columbus City Schools?

The State of Ohio already has a process in place which determines how land is transferred between school districts. Ohio Revised Code Section 3309-89-02 et seq. outlines all of the factors and steps that are required in order to transfer territory between school districts. We have every intention of keeping all of the properties which are currently a part of the District, and we will pursue any possible actions to prevent a transfer of property to CCS.

What process would control the transfer of Groveport Madison School District territory if the Win-Win Agreement was not in effect?

Without the automatic transfer called for in the Win-Win Agreement, territory transfer petitions must go through a lengthy negotiation and administrative hearing process overseen by, and ultimately decided at the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education will assess any petition for territory transfer based on a comprehensive list of factors required by law. The two major factors the State Board considers are the impact of a proposed transfer on the losing district's tax base, and the potential changes to racial balance. In the past, Ohio courts have rejected transfer petitions as a "tax grab," meaning the change in territory from one District to another would enrich one District while significantly reducing the losing District's financial resources.

What is the potential for transfer of the Groveport Madison School District territory at Rickenbacker?

The school district territory in and around Rickenbacker provides significant value to the district due to economic development. If this property is subject to the State Board territory transfer process, given the fact that zero students are involved, the State Board and Ohio Courts may likely view it as a "tax grab" and such a factor would weigh heavily against a transfer.

Does the Win-Win Agreement prevent a neighborhood, street, or a smaller group of property owners from petitioning to transfer their neighborhoods, street or home to another school district?

No, the individual right of citizens to petition for school district territory transfer in even-numbered years, through the State Board process, is not covered by the Win-Win Agreement.

What is the District doing to try to resolve this issue?

We are in conversations with the suburban school districts and Columbus City Schools to come up with a negotiated agreement that will protect our residents and the District's commercial/industrial tax base. While there are no guarantees that we will be able to negotiate a favorable outcome, we are making our very best effort to resolve this issue before the May 31, 2016 renewal deadline.

Where can I find more information about the Win-Win Agreement?

We have set up a webpage that contains copies of several of the agreements, a list of frequently-asked questions, the history of the agreement, spreadsheets illustrating the impacts of the agreement, links to newspaper articles, etc. You can find this information at www.gocruiser.org/win-win.aspx.