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By RHONDA CROWDER
Staff Reporter

Issue 107, the 15-mill school levy placed on the ballot in last week's election, passed. Now, Mayor Frank G. Jackson and Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO Eric Gordon can move forward with the sweeping reform known as The Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools.

"We are thrilled with the success of Issue 107, which we have always believed can change the face of our city from the inside out by giving more children in the district the kind of education

many of us take for granted," said Greater Cleveland Partnership President and CEO Joe Roman. "This was an historical win."

And historic it is, as it's been 16 years sinceClevelandresidents voted to pass a school levy. It is expected to generate $64 to $67 million at the current tax rate, $87 million if all taxes are collected.

Passage of Issue 107 provides a greater sense of optimism for David Quolke, president of Cleveland Teachers Union. He believes this win allows the district to finally do things differently.

"It opens up a load of opportunities," said Quolke. "I think teachers are really working to move forward with the district on improving the programs. A lot of that means added resources [and] added resources often means more staff. I think what it means is we're going to see changes come January."

Based upon Gordon's mentioning of restoring shortened school days, Quolke expects more teachers, who were laid off, to be recalled. He anticipated bringing back approximately two teachers per building.

But, most importantly, he thinks it will be significant to students with the most academic need.

"As we take a look at the Cleveland Plan as investing in low performing schools… we said this all along… it's really an investment in schools," said Quolke. "We have not seen that for years."

"At the end of the day, the most important aspect of the Cleveland Plan – the one that we'll all be remembered by if it's successful – is really around how we invest in our schools that are low performing and need intervention."

Quolke said, while canvassing for support of the levy, the message translated to the residents that this is an also an investment in the community. It will help improve the city.

At the same time, obstacles do remain.

“There are a lot challenges. The law changes that talks about seniority and teacher lay-offs put incredible emphasis… actually it de-emphasizes seniority, it doesn’t eliminate it… but it put a big focus on the quality of the evaluation,” said Quolke.

He said CTU have worked for three years on an evaluation and still needs to fine tune it.

Another challenge will be engaging parents and expanding the partnerships within the community.

On the other hand, Quolke thinks the district’s willingness to partner with high performing charter schools, and eliminating low performing ones, is long overdue.

And, according to Quolke, the district has provided no indication of restoring paraprofessionals, nurses, or parent liaisons. “These services are so critical,” he said.