AN ANALYSIS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES IN A

SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC SCHOOL BOND ELECTION

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The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of specific advisory committee activities during a school bond proposal and election process. The study began with an extensive review of the literature on the use of advisory committee activities in school districts for the purpose of promoting a school bond issue. This revealed that school officials maintaining a low profile, the presence of a diverse community task force, focusing on YES voters, involving the committee in early planning, focusing on disseminating information, and focusing on benefits to children and the community are all important in the passage of a school bond election.

A survey was developed and administered to committee members, school board members and school district administrators in a North Texas school district that had successfully completed a bond election. Survey respondents consistently supported the practices put into place by the studied school district, which closely mirrored the activities espoused in the research. Respondents believed the diversity of the task force and the roles of the committee members to be crucial to the passage of the bond. The only subcategory of questions that drew mixed reviews and positions of support was that of the need for the administration and board to maintain a low profile. Participants in the survey viewed having a diverse community task force, focusing on YES votes, involvement in early planning, focusing on disseminating information, and focusing on benefits to children and the community as being important to the successful passage of the school bond election, with clear dissemination of information being the most important activity of the committee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Statement

There are several forces that lead to the construction of new schools. Increasing

enrollment is the most obvious factor. The condition of existing school facilities is another

force. As schools become crowded and unable to handle the number of students they have, more

space is required. Overcrowding of school facilities presents a need for additional space that is

easily recognizable by those involved with the school system. As existing facilities become

outdated or fall into disrepair, they need to be remodeled or replaced altogether (Graves 1993,

13). The American Association for School Administrators reported in 1991 that close to five

million American students were attending school in classrooms that were inadequate to properly

prepare them for the future (Holt 1994, 33). Fully one fourth of public schools in America

needed "basic maintenance or repairs" (Graves 1993, 13). How best to manage these challenges

falls upon local school officials and architects.

As architects and school officials begin planning for a new school facility, there are many

considerations to be taken into account. They certainly want the basics of a comfortable,

functional building, and they want it to be an attractive part of the community. From there, one

of the major considerations to be taken into account is what instructional practices will be used,

including technological needs. Plans must be made for a facility that will be flexible enough to

allow future technology and innovations to be put into place as easily as possible (Castaldi 1994,

21). The building of new schools and the extensive renovation of existing schools often require

communities to develop, hold, and implement a school bond election.

School bond elections allow voters to determine whether taxes can be raised for the purpose of purchasing bonds to fund school buildings and other projects. Asking community members to raise their own taxes can be a daunting task. One method of working toward this goal of providing the best possible facility through public support is to utilize an advisory committee. The general public usually recognizes the need to provide superior education for the children in a community and frequently have strong opinions about how this should be accomplished. When community members work alongside staff members, much of the mistrust that can be created by a lack of communication often disappears. This sort of teamwork results in the creation of a common solution (Graves 1993, 185). The use of advisory committees may not be the most efficient way to handle a school bond proposal and election, but it is much more likely to garner support (Mathison 1998, 32). This sort of community participation often helps to bring to school administrators' attention concerns that they may have otherwise not addressed (Houston 1985, 34). This study involves the examination of the design elements of advisory committees and their activities having the largest impact in school bond elections.

Background of the Problem

Throughout history, school facilities have undergone a tremendous transformation. In the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, schools were not associated with buildings as they are today. Rather, they were associated with teachers. "School" was held wherever the teacher and his students sat down for their lessons, often on the steps of some public building or shade of a tree (Connell 1980, 10). It was not until the end of the Roman period that buildings began to be associated with schools. In the early days of education, with the exception of a gymnasium, none of the rooms in the school buildings were designed for any special purpose (Castaldi 1994, 8). Early American school buildings were often "Little Red Schoolhouses," although they were

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not usually red but rather the color of whatever material was available in the area (Gulliford 1984, 159).

It was not until the twentieth century that schools began to take the form with which we are familiar today. They became larger, more complex structures with the spread of the consolidation movement after World War I. They were, however, architecturally very plain until after World War II. As the Baby Boomers reached school age, schools had to be built throughout the country (Castaldi 1994, 14-16). Some areas, including North Texas, are again experiencing rapid growth and continue to face the challenge of providing sufficient housing for students. Most school districts do not have the reserves or the budget in place to fund such large expenditures. They must therefore turn to the public in a bond election to raise the funds necessary for construction.

Planning to meet the needs of a growing population can be a daunting task for a school district. Local school boards and administrative staffs are encouraged by the Texas Education Agency to enlist public participation in the early planning stages by establishing one or more planning committees. The makeup of a committee may vary widely depending on the particular community in which it is established, but it should be representative of all ethnic, social, and economic groups within the community (MacKenzie 1989, 8). Economic and social groups, however, are not the only groups that should be considered. All recognizable groups in a community should be represented on the advisory committee. This would include such groups as conservatives and progressives, business leaders, religious leaders, parents, retirees with no children, and other influential community members (Texas Education Agency n.d. b, 12).

Once organized, the first task of the advisory committee should be to determine the desires and needs of the community, as they relate to curriculum, other student activities, and

business needs. The participation of committee members should be aimed at gaining the understanding and support of the rest of the community and serving as advisors to school officials. As is true of all final decisions of a school district, those involving the construction of a new school building are the responsibility of the local school board (Houston 1985, 34). A valuable lesson to be learned here is that citizens have valuable contributions to make when given the proper setting and direction (Rushing 1960, 18).

In addition to gaining citizen input, Mathison (1998, 32) asserted that for an advisory committee to be effective it must be well organized and have a necessary task to address. Having effective leadership and well-established parameters are also essential. Four common areas of study for advisory committees are enrollment and population trends, the curriculum or school program, facility needs, and financial ability (Texas Education Agency n.d. b, 13).

Once the local school board has examined and approved these needs, as expressed by the community through the advisory committee, the professional staff has the duty to develop plans to implement the program of needs. The superintendent, administrators, teachers and others have the responsibility to carry this through (Texas Education Agency n.d. b, 5).

This study examines those committee design elements and activities positively impacting the outcome of a school bond issue. There are other possible evaluations that may need to be examined by future researchers.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The problem of this study is to determine the perceived effectiveness of specific advisory committee activities during a school bond proposal and election process.

Research Questions

The primary focus of the study was to determine the organizational design elements and activities having the largest impact on the success of the school bond election. The research questions were:

1. How were members of the committee selected?

2. Who determined the activities to be conducted by the committee?

3. Who had the primary responsibility of carrying out the committee activities?

4. How well did the committee represent the district?

5. How much value was placed on the input provided by committee members?

6. Which activities were deemed to be the most successful?

7. Which activities would not be duplicated in a subsequent election?

Definition of Terms

Activities: The actions conducted by a school bond advisory committee, including research, disseminating information, and campaigning.

Advisory committee: A group consisting of school district employees and community members established for the purpose of making a recommendation to the school board concerning how best to meet the needs of a school district. For the purposes of this study, advisory committee refers to those persons organized to address facility needs through a school bond election.

Bond election: An election held in a school district for the purpose of selling bonds to pay for new school facilities, technology, and/or infrastructure.

Bond program: The steps a school district and/or community conduct to promote a bond election for the purpose of gathering support necessary for it to pass the bond election.

Methodology

This study followed a school bond election that passed in a North Texas independent school district. The district is a growing suburban and rural district with an enrollment of approximately 7000 students spread out over an area of over 240 square miles. In the studied school district an advisory committee was formed and utilized throughout the election process. A questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the University of North Texas Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Analysis and sent to all committee members, school board members, and district administrators. The data from the returned surveys were then tallied and reported in this study.

Limitations of the Study

It is assumed that the persons completing the survey answered honestly. This study is limited to the activities that were used in a specific bond election. Additionally, this study is limited to the groups that were formed and used in the studied independent school district.

Significance of the Study

This study provides a resource for those school districts in need of building new schools or renovating existing ones. This study enables school officials to determine if and to what extent an advisory committee should be utilized as a part of the bond proposal and election process.

If educators are to become proficient in their use of advisory committees, they must know which activities can be expected to be successful and which cannot (Minor 1992, 27). Educators must be able to see the results of those actual strategies that have been put into place. They must also be able to connect these practices with a generalized framework (Minor 1992, 46). Minor (1992, 150) adds that for practicing educators to have access to the best possible information

about school bond planning and elections, it is imperative to conduct continual research and to publish the findings.

There are other reasons for utilizing a committee of citizens. A more educated, demanding public have demanded more accountability by school officials. Patrons who do not have children in schools sometimes have more difficulty accepting the need to spend their tax dollars on school facilities. Those voters who do have children in the schools often take more active roles in the education of their children and want to see their tax dollars spent wisely.

It is the underlying assumption of those who employ the use of an advisory committee that public support will be gained through this process. School districts that utilize community members in the decision-making process gain the trust of the community and are therefore in a better position to attain the goals of the district and the community.

A building plan should only be one part of the development of an overall clear educational plan (Holt 2002, 61). School districts in need of a new facility, however, often find themselves in a position of focusing intently on this need. If this becomes a necessity, the district should make an effort to expand the role of the community input after the election. To assist in the development of a district's public information program, focus groups and public opinion surveys can be employed (North Carolina 1998, 5).

While commentary and research exist in the study of school bond advisory committees, the research is far from complete. There is much about recommended activities, but none comparing the effectiveness of campaign strategies against each other. Minor (1992, 46) studied a community college election in California and concluded, "If practitioners are to profit by the experience of others, the actual campaign practices currently in use must be described in-depth and linked to a conceptual framework to facilitate generalized application." Minor adds,

"Obviously, further study is needed to identify those factors which lead to successful campaigns and those that do not."

Martin (1987, 109), in his survey of superintendents argued, "It is recommended that other studies be undertaken to compare the attitudes of other individuals on the scene at the time of the election." He further argues the need to "conduct research and issue periodic information concerning public school bond campaigns and elections" and recommends "periodic studies to reveal trends in successful and unsuccessful school bond elections in the United States" (Martin 1987, 109). Minor (1992, 150) contends that for school officials and researchers to continue to gain knowledge and expertise in conducting effective school bond election campaigns, research in that area must continue to be developed, implemented and published.

Summary

When school districts face the need to build a new facility, there are many factors that must be considered. District needs must be carefully determined, as must the best way to reach district goals. Citizen advisory committees can make positive contributions to school districts when they are effectively organized. The use of advisory committees in determining district needs and gaining public support for a school bond elections, in particular, can be effective for school districts when they are established properly.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature available concerning the use of advisory committees in school bond elections is slightly different from the research available in other areas. It is important to note that it falls into one of only two categories: commentary and empirical research. The commentary is provided by a number of authors that have some first-hand knowledge and/or experience in the field of school bond elections. Superintendents, school business managers, other school district administrators, architects, bond consultants, and community members active in the bond election process make this type of contribution to the literature.

The second category of literature available is that of empirical research. Researchers who have studied one or more bond elections provide this literature. Their measurements, observations and data are taken as evidence for one or more particular theoretical concepts. They then make generalizations about their findings that transfer to others who engage in the school bond election process.

It is interesting to note that this type of research is conducted by gathering data from those who have participated in the school bond election process. The primary difference between the commentary and the empirical data, therefore, is the number of sources utilized to provide the suggestions espoused by the authors. Commentary provided in journals is written from a single viewpoint or experience, while researchers who include doctoral students, book authors, and state education agencies, triangulate the empirical data they present. This means, in effect, that the ideas and suggestions in both categories of literature originate from information provided by those who have participated in the process, and results in a high level of symmetry

between suggestions and findings in both categories. A discussion of the findings in both categories of literature follows.

<div align="center">The Need For New School Buildings</div>

As previously stated, there are several forces that lead to the construction of new schools. The growth of the student population is the most obvious factor. As enrollment increases, more space is required. A state of disrepair can also create a need for construction, in the form of remodeling or replacement. Consolidation, too, may create a need for school expansion, as can outdated facilities. The need to build can be fostered by expensive maintenance costs, buildings that do not meet code, fire, flood, or storm damage, and buildings that have simply worn out. The educational program is another, though less obvious, factor. A new program being introduced into a district's curriculum may require additional space or the modification of existing facilities. Facilities needed for handicapped students, fine arts and physical education programs further the need for space (Conrod 2002, xiii and Henry 1987, 25).

This has not always been the case. According to Castaldi (1994, 2), "For centuries, very little attention was paid to the 'things of education.'" Schools were merely a backdrop for the process of education. In Athens, school was wherever a teacher could meet with his students. As one might expect, education was not the complex process we know today. Parents simply selected a teacher to instruct their sons. "Oftentimes the school was nothing more than a teacher and a few students meeting in the open stairs of an ancient temple" (Castaldi 1994, 2). This is clearly no longer the case. School buildings today are complex structures in design, as well as function. More than merely providing shelter from the elements, it is an integral part of the process of education in itself and enables the provision of a wide variety of educational opportunities and experiences (Castaldi 1994, 2).

It was not, in fact, until the twentieth century that the possibility of a connection between learning and the instructional setting began to be investigated. As educators now understand, the studies at this time began to indicate that the design of the school plant did have an impact on the activities that could occur in them (Castaldi 1994, 17). Graves (1993, 69) concurs, stating " . . . the buildings in which our children go to school can be important factors in the quality of their education." Ortiz (1994, 32) found that students in modern school facilities demonstrated higher performance in reading, listening, Language Arts, and math than students who attended school in old buildings. They also received less discipline, had better attendance rates, and better health.

As Holt (2002, 1) points out, public concern about "the safety and adequacy" of school buildings throughout the country has grown in recent years. Brimley argues that "Too many of America's schools are crumbling, crowded, and obsolete. It's a national problem requiring a national solution" (2002, 267).

Kindergarten through twelfth grade education is the largest public enterprise in the nation. There are 80,000 buildings in 15,000 school districts serving over 41 million students. Seventy percent of these buildings serve 21 million elementary students, 24% serve 13.8 million secondary students, and 6% serve both elementary and secondary students (USGAO 1995, 10). The average public school building in the United States is 42 years old (USGAO 2000, 41). The U.S. General Accounting Office found that "the nation's schools need 112 billion dollars to complete all repairs, renovations and modernizations required to restore facilities to good overall condition and to comply with federal mandates" (1995, 5). They further stated that about 2/3 of the nation's school facilities are in adequate or better condition, while the remaining 1/3 (25,000 schools serving 14 million students) need extensive repair or replacement (USGAO 2000, 9). More than 7 million students attend schools that fail to comply with life safety codes, such as

stairwells, exits and firewalls. More than 15 million students attend schools that lack adequate heating, ventilation and air conditioning and more than 11 million students attend schools in need of extensive roof repair (USGAO 2000, 10).

As pointed out by Anderson, a human weakness is to "judge the contents of a book by its cover" (n.d., introduction). He points out that the mere appearance of a school building can have an impact on a family's decision to purchase a home in a particular neighborhood or community because they often associate the quality of a facility with the quality of the education within it. He continues by arguing that if teachers and students are to be successful, " . . . then it is imperative that the community furnish school plant facilities adequate for the instruction program being offered" (Anderson n.d., introduction). School districts must, therefore, closely examine their educational goals and determine what facilities are needed to achieve those goals (Anderson n.d., 1).

When the need to build a school has been determined, funding for such a large project must also be determined. There is generally an understanding in the United States that education is primarily a state responsibility. This responsibility, typically, does not extend to the financing of school building construction. This remains largely a local school district responsibility (Brimley 2002, 268). Local school districts have essentially three construction funding options: Pay-as-you-go which consists of paying from current revenues and is typically possible only in large or very affluent districts, the use of building reserve funds which entails savings first and then building, and bonding which is the most common method (Holt 2002, 15). "A school bond referendum is a request by the school district board of education to borrow money for school improvement. Most states require a simple majority vote by the district's registered voters to approve a school bond referendum. Some states require a punishing 60 percent or two-thirds

margin for approval" (Conrod 2002, xv). It is therefore imperative that school district officials be very familiar with their own state's requirements.

In the past several years some states have recognized the need to improve school facilities, with all or part being paid for by the state, and have allocated funds for doing so. In 1998, Arizona passed a law that required school facility improvement and transferred the costs from local resources to the state level. A 2000 New Mexico law provided funds for districts in need of facilities. Also in 2000, New Jersey passed the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act that provided $12 billion for new school construction and renovations that were funded by state-issued bonds (Brimley 2002, 275). "The trend toward greater participation for financing facilities at the state level was heightened by the outcome of Pauley v. Bailey (1984) in West Virginia, which established that adequate facilities are a necessary part of a thorough and efficient education system" (Brimley 2002, 274).

Once the need to construct a new school has arisen, many school districts choose to utilize an advisory committee to address the issue.   Before an advisory committee can be formed, however, the parameters of its role and responsibility should be determined. Setting committee guidelines before the actual formation of the committee will help keep the group focused on the task at hand. For this, it is useful to gain an understanding of the current and historical use of advisory committees in American school systems.

Advisory Committee Purposes and Historical Perspective

"School administration is a complex responsibility that includes the planning and management of facilities. These tasks have become even more demanding due to the growing cost and expanding uses of school buildings" (Kowalski 1989, 7).

The first known study completed on the use of advisory committees in schools was finished in June 1949. Three hundred fifty-two letters were sent to key people throughout the United States in 1948. Responses provided evidence of only 44 lay committees that were working under school boards throughout the country. Late returns raised the number to 47 committees that "were scattered from coast to coast, and constitute pioneers who set the pattern" (Hull 1957, 47). These committees were organized for a variety of purposes, including school bond campaigns. This study found "that from coast to coast in cities of varying size and composition, the chief administrators point out rather distinct advantages [in gaining public participation and support] of the use of continuing as well as temporary Advisory Committees" (Hull 1957, 48). Clearly, this study uncovered the early stages of a trend that has ballooned into an expectation for public participation in the decision-making processes for schools.

Three years later Rushing remarked,

> Our time is marked by the increasing interest of people in their schools. Perhaps as never before, the citizen is seeking to know more about the educational system in his community. This interest with the resulting community participation in educational planning is potentially a highly desirable development (1960, 18).

Denny (1964, 21) points out that increased voter turnout in school bond elections is an indicator of increased public interest and participation.

This is clearly a pattern that has continued to develop and expand, with education regularly being included in political election agendas, often working its way to the top of political agendas from local levels to national levels. This political importance has followed public involvement in education. As early as 1957, Hull (1957, 49) argued that "Lack of understanding is still the greatest enemy of public education and good face-to-face communication is by far the best friend of public education. The people are learning this and so are school administrators." The importance of public information does not stop with a transfer of

information. Site-based decision-making has played a very important role in recent years. This

kind of input provided by those who are not school employees may be present in small decisions

or in larger decisions, such as decisions involving the construction of new schools. For bond

election success, in particular, there must be support not only from the school board, but also

from a citizens' committee and from the community as a whole (Conrod 2002, xv and Lifto

2000, 16).

> Kowalski stated,
>
> The days when schools were planned by a relatively small number of administrators and
> school board members are past in most school districts. Teacher empowerment, new
> theories about administration in public organizations, and changing community values
> are but three influences increasing the popularity of participatory planning (1989, 17).

Today, most building programs in public schools include public participation (Graves

1993, 198). "With few exceptions, successful programs result from community participation.

This user input is essential; even though it may well be that what the community thinks they

want is entirely wrong. If staff and community become part of the planning process, it is easier

to change that attitude and the solution becomes their solution and not that of the outsider"

(Graves 1993, 185).

School districts recognize the validity of this statement. Holt (1994, 35) found that

school districts successful in their efforts to pass a school bond election reported that the use of a

widely representative advisory committee that engaged in a number of activities to support the

bond election was the single-most important strategy employed by the district. The utilization of

committees is now widespread and is generally accepted among educators. "This generally takes

the form of subcommittees addressing specialized areas, such as athletic facilities, site selection,

curriculum, and so on" (Graves 1993, 199). This use of committees is spurred by the belief that

involving the public is the right thing to do and that it will ensure the passage of the bond

proposal. "In a growing number of communities, many individuals want to participate in the process of formulating the answers to their own questions" (Kowalski 1989, 60). Advisory committees can be utilized to educate the community about the need for improved facilities, to help the board gain a better understanding of community attitudes, and to gain advice for the projection of future building. As stated by Conrod (2002, xvii), "You will discover, to your surprise and delight, how a small group of determined people, if they are organized and focused, can make an enormous difference for the children and for the community."

These positive results of committee use do not, however, mean that this path is a simple path. There is nothing easy about the use of an advisory committee. Gathering a group of people who have an interest in education but no formal training in education can be a daunting task. The investment in time and effort on the part of educators is great. The benefits of an informed public, however, outweigh their sometimes-cumbersome nature. Kenard (1973, 11) agrees, "The community can bring to professional leaders and administrators a depth of understanding of personal and educational problems often overlooked by professionals." Advisory committees will not, in themselves, make everyone in the community happy with the school district, but they are an effective and important tool for school-community relations.

Hull (1957, 49) was very early to argue for community involvement, arguing that " . . . analysis will reveal that the [positive bond election] results were achieved because improved communications produced a broader base of understanding between schools and community which resulted in more co-operation and acceptance of common objectives." He continued by pointing out that even committees "organized with an ax to grind often muddle their way through to a better understanding of the schools" (Hull 1957, 49).

Others have confirmed the necessity of utilizing an advisory committee in the successful

passage of a school bond election. Holt (1994, 35), Denny (1964, 22), and Ross (1983, 25) agree

that the use of a citizen's advisory committee is the most important element in the successful

passage of school bond elections. Kennard (1973, 10) stated "There may be a better way to plan

a good school – a better way, that is, than community involvement. But if there is, I don't know

what that way is." The Texas Education Agency (n.d., 11) adds that the development of local

leadership and the provision of a short course on adult education are added benefits of the use of

a committee.

It is important to assure, however, that public participation is meaningful and not merely

a show of predetermined ideas. "As early as 1974, Dale Mann commented that the public has

generally been asked to support what has been decided and not help decide what is to be

supported" (Allen, 5). Graves (1993, 208) shares this same opinion that for school planning to

be effective, the input from the community must be substantive. For this to occur, the right

leadership must be in place. Voters look for leaders who possess a clear view of the direction an

organization is headed (Mathison 1998, 30). "Leaders who know where they are going and

know how to get there inspire citizens to invest their time and dollars for better educational

opportunities" (Mathison 1998, 30).

Support is clearly gained through this type of citizen participation. The public is better

able, after all, to support ideas and programs about which they have at least some understanding.

The participation of community members in the decision-making process yields some

traditionally held powers, but this is offset by the more broad support that is developed (Houston

1985, 34). " . . . Having contact with government institutions, such as the public school, appears

to make a difference in the fiscal support given to the institution's programs. We also suggest

that individuals who are disconnected from public institutions will be less likely to fund

programs of institutions in which they lack a positive stake" (Wigfall 1992, 3724). Connection

must clearly be an objective of advisory committees if school districts are to successfully pass

school bond elections. As Anderson (n.d., introduction) states, "Most citizens recognize that one

of the major concerns of their community is the educational program provided for their children

and that all children are entitled to an equal opportunity. Educators cannot do the job alone. The

entire community must take an active part in helping to solve the problems of their schools by

providing the necessary funds, and by cooperating with their elected school board members and

the superintendent in an effort to meet the ever-increasing demands on the educational program."

Utilizing a citizens' committee to develop a bond election proposal has two important

results. The first is that the package that is placed before the voters has passed initial scrutiny by

the public. The school board has some reassurance that the proposal already has some

community support. The second benefit is that the first wave of supporters has already been

assembled. The committee members' efforts have established their investment in the passage of

the bond issue. This results in the development of the campaign strategy before the proposal

even goes before the school board (Houston 1985, 35).

Committee Composition

MacKenzie provides the following list of potential advisory committee members:

(a) business leaders, (b) city planners, (c) local school personnel, (d) school principals, (e) recreation department personnel, (f) parents, (g) political leaders, (h) university educators, (i) religious leaders, (j) health services personnel, (k) ethnic/racial representatives, (l) youth groups such as Boy/Girl Scouts, (m) developers, (n) city or county commissioners, (o) elderly citizens, (p) architect[s], (q) students, (r) school board members, (s) social services personnel, (t) community service clubs, (u) construction personnel, (v) professional consultant[s] (1989, 9).

School officials need to be cognizant nevertheless, that merely having an advisory committee is insufficient for the successful passage of a school bond election. Who makes up the committee is another important decision to make. For example, if all the committee members are current campus volunteers, the committee will suffer from having a very limited perspective. This, in turn, may lead to other problems resulting from other constituents feeling left out of the process. Schools should carefully consider the selection process for their community.

There is no single advisory committee composition that is automatically accepted by all school districts. School districts, in the formation of advisory committees, should consider the function of the committee, as well as the number of members it should have and who should participate. There are, however, some general guidelines that can help districts with establishing such groups. Holt (2002, 21) suggests that members should be representative of the entire community if the committee is to be successful. MacKenzie affirms the need to have a committee that is representative of the community it serves, adding that this "will develop community ownership in the process and final product" (1989, 8-9). It is also an important factor in dealing with opposition from within the community because it gives more people a "personal stake" in the election's outcome (Holt 1994, 34).

When committee composition represents the district's diversity, the credibility of the group is greatly enhanced. As stated by Conrod, "Not only does this quell accusations of elitism, but a well-rounded, well-connected committee taps wide-ranging talent" (2002, 4).

One superintendent reported asking municipal governments to submit nominees, in addition to appointing "at-large" members who were selected to represent important groups within the community, such as the elderly that do not include parents (Houston 1985, 34).

Another school district administrator stated, "Looking back, I believe this committee was perhaps the most crucial element of our success," and added, "Only half of the members had children in school, and some of the participants were critical of school system operations. But we needed a group of leaders whose opinions would be respected in the community and all participants lived up to that criterion" (Ross 1983, 25).

Committee size must also be considered. The suggested size of the advisory committee is 38-50 members. Any and all necessary resources must be provided to the committee, and it is suggested that meeting places be rotated to make them more accessible.

Community size will impact the make-up of the committee. The board may seek input from any and all community members, or they "may select a small representative committee to select membership of the advisory committee" (Texas Education Agency n.d., 12). The board may also ask representative groups from the community to provide names of potential committee members. Inasmuch as is possible, representatives should be leaders in the community who will be able to serve impartially, objectively, and willingly. They should be able to weigh the many facets of effective public education as it relates to the community. The actual number of committee members will vary depending on the size and complexity of the community (Texas Education Agency n.d., 3).

Along with the determination of committee composition, the selection of a committee chair is also an important decision to consider. It may, in fact, be one of the district's most important decisions affecting the campaign. This selection requires much thought and should include input from a variety of people. The chair must be willing to put in a great deal of time, be well-organized and pay great attention to details. They must be able to balance a variety of tasks and keep track of all aspects of the campaign. The chair should be someone who

commands community respect and be well known for good judgment and thoughtful decisions (North Carolina 1998, 7).

Committee Role

It must be remembered that in every public school district the school board has the ultimate authority. This power is exerted over advisory committees by approving or disapproving committee recommendations at critical junctures, authorizing the superintendent to proceed and in calling the election (Mathison 1998, 32). The committee members must therefore realize that their function is to serve in an advisory capacity, addressing clear goals and that their assignment will terminate when the committee's work is done (Texas Education Agency n.d., 11). They must recognize that it is the moral and legal duty of the school board to make all final decisions (Texas Education Agency n.d., 13).

There are three stages in a school bond initiative to be managed. In the first stage, information must be gathered and the committee should look for support for facility improvement. Secondly, the committee must educate the community on the needs of the school. Finally, it is recommended that the committee campaign for the election for three to four weeks (Conrod 2002, 14).

With this in mind, there are three major considerations in any bond campaign that must be identified and considered: Committee appointment and organization, time lines, and getting out the vote (North Carolina 1998, 7). With the committee organized, they have several tasks at hand. They must open discussions with the public, and educate the community on the need for school improvement. They must also actively campaign for the bond issue, make sure the "yes" votes are actually cast, assure that the community's emotional health is left intact (Conrod 2002, 2).

As Mathison asserts, "The Citizens committee is the backbone of the campaign process. This group is responsible for developing all campaign materials, contacting all significant voter groups and planning and coordinating the campaign" (1998, 33). Blanchfield (1998, 20) adds that there are political reasons for using committees. Community members tend to more readily accept the words and reasoning from neighbors than if it come from school administrators. Districts are advised to have these true stakeholders present the information to the community in a variety of formats and venues. As Mathison (1998, 32) states, campaigns led by administrators and teachers appear "self-serving and usually do not project the image of grassroots community wide support."

The Greek philosopher Epiatetus said, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak" (Blanchfield 1998, 20). With this in mind, it is important for committee members to listen not only to each other, but also to the community members they represent. Input and educated support should be gathered from all school employees because people ask them and from principals because they are viewed as community leaders. Elected officials, too, already have supporters in place. In dealing with the media, committee members should work to gain objectivity, if not support. Local business leaders, chamber of commerce officials, and local CEO's understand returns on investments and that education translates into economic development (North Carolina 1998, 6).

When organized, there are many functions an advisory committee can serve and many activities in which they may participate. Once the process has begun, there are many side paths that may be taken, but Holt (2002, 21) provides a list to serve as a guide for staying on track with the committee's most important activities: identifying the needs of the district, providing leadership in the promotion of the bond issue, fundraising, publicity, door-to-door and telephone

canvassing of the community, developing the campaign theme, designing brochures, making presentations to community groups, conducting building tours and participating in media events.

In quantifying the need for a new building, the advisory committee should evaluate existing buildings and sites for new facilities, as well as population projections. They should develop a mission statement and goals, meet with all "representative constituencies," develop priorities, and make recommendations to the board. This process insures the plan reflects community interests, ensures buy-in from key citizens, and provides momentum from the beginning of the process (Mathison 1998, 31).

The North Carolina State Department of Instruction recommends the formation of a steering committee to oversee several other committees, including Community Leaders, Schools Committee, Youth Committee, Speakers' Bureau, "Get Out the Vote" and Finance Committee. It is recommended that the steering committee be made up of the subcommittee chairs and at least one representative from each of the following: school board, administration, teachers, advisory councils, parents and students. Additionally, a Media Coordinator and Media Committee should be created (North Carolina 1998, 7).

It is suggested that the community leaders subcommittee have at least two members from each community in the district. Also, there is a need to assure racial balance. They should assist in scheduling speaking engagements, accompany speakers for presentations, work with individual citizens, and assist with a "get out the vote" drive (North Carolina 1998, 8). A strong school administrator should chair the schools committee. Each school should have a committee to determine campaign activities. This committee should coordinate and guide activities planned by individual schools (North Carolina 1998, 8).

The youth committee is made up of senior class presidents and school newspaper editors. The speakers' bureau trains and schedules speakers with clubs and organizations, ensuring complete coverage. They organize presentation equipment, as well as notify a principal and a community leader to accompany the speaker to the engagement (North Carolina 1998, 9).

The "Get out the vote" committee should have a chair who is politically active and who has campaign experience. This committee conducts a voter registration drive, identifies the YES voters and contacts them the day before and day of the election. They also conduct door-to-door canvassing and direct mail to remind the YES voters to vote the day before the election. The finance committee develops fundraising activities since all campaign funds should be donated (North Carolina 1998, 9).

Because education is such an important endeavor, schools cannot plan to give a partial effort to the passage of a school bond election. In order to successfully pass an election, "school leaders must solve both the quality and operational side of the equation with precision and balance" (Lifto 2000, 16). Successful campaigns depend on organizational strategies that start with a dedicated committee, especially when they are composed of citizens who have served on other committees and forums. Successful districts are able to "convert interest and enthusiasm into a well-organized plan, where each person knows the job to be done" (Mathison 1998, 32).

Strevel (1959, 27) addresses need prioritization, "These groups can be of great assistance to the school board in weighing needs for [school] plant relative to other [district] needs and in assessing the educational purposes and priorities of the purposes which the community sanctions. As long as the administrator can direct such groups toward these considerations, community participation has a real contribution to make." Because the school board makes the final

determination, administration, staff, and other participating groups should serve the function of helping the board to arrive at the best possible solutions (Strevel 1959, 25).

The advisory committee, in turn, should look to those knowledgeable in education for information and guidance. Members of the local school district staff, as well as other consultants can provide invaluable information. The committee's efforts should lead to the presentation of their best interpretation of the educational desires of the community to the school board (Texas Education Agency n.d., 3).

The Texas Education Agency (n.d., 13) indicates the role(s) of advisory committees will vary, based on the characteristics and size of the community. Whatever the size or type of community, however, the committee must remain a fact-finding and recommending organization. "The role of this committee is to choose which projects are most important and determine how much the community might be willing to support in a bond vote" (Houston 1985, 34). Also, he states that the decision of whether or not to call an election remains a function of the school board, while the committee should recommend when the election should occur.

As the committee sets about the task of examining a community's educational system and its facilities, the value of their time and participation must be kept in the forefront. "It must be a sincere approach – not the phony kind of position that allows everyone to have his say and then do what you already made up your mind to do anyway. It can't work that way" (Whittle 1973, 11). The committee should be organized for a clearly stated and needed purpose. It should have a set of guiding values and good leadership. The result should be an improvement in communication between the community and the school district (Hull 1957, 49). Strevel (1959, 32) also asserts in order for the committee to maintain interest and focus, as well as be productive, a clear task must be laid out for them.

One advisable task for committee members is to informally discuss the proceedings of the group with community members. This should include the projects, as well as costs (Houston 1985, 34). Houston states, "Our successful bond packages have been shaped by a committee of citizens, which reviewed the various proposed projects, discussed them with architects and laid issues informally before others in the community to establish a bottom-line cost for the total package" (1985, 34). Fatigue of committee members should be avoided since the overall purpose of the committee is to gain more widespread support (Houston 1985, 35). Rushing (1960, 18-19) suggests that school districts should select committee members who are interested in education. It is recommended that the committee should have strong community leadership and should not have school district administrators in committee leadership positions. School district administrators should serve in an advisory capacity.

<center>Needs Assessment and Long Range Planning</center>

The ultimate authority in assessing the needs and long-term goals of a school district rests with the superintendent and school board. The advisory committee should assist them in this important endeavor. The superintendent and school board actually comprise a team that occupies the most important responsibility in the development of a bond election (Mathison 1998, 32). They are responsible for strategic planning. Strategic planning has been characterized as "defining the organization's mission and developing strategies and plans to align resources with environmental opportunities and threats in such a way as to achieve its mission in the most effective way" (O'Brien 191.164).

Needs assessment and long-range planning are important in all schools, and particularly so in those districts that possess the need of additional schools. MacKenzie (1989, 5) states, "Planning is the process of making decisions in the present in order to bring about some future

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outcome. It involves determining appropriate goals (an educational facility) and the best means to achieve it (community involvement and support in identifying needs, expectations and wants)." According to MacKenzie the end result should be "that which best meets community needs." Kowalski offers a more precise description, specifying three purposes of strategic planning: "(1) it creates a procedure for widespread input; (2) it addresses a myriad of issues hopefully touching all the needs and objectives of the building project; and (3) it integrates the single act of designing a school facility with the overall philosophy and missions of the school system" (1989, 6).

There are three decisions that must be made prior to beginning a school building project (Kowalski 1989, 21). The "purpose of the facility project," "the selection of a planning format," and "a determination of the groups and individuals who will be involved in the planning process." Kowalski adds, "Good school facilities are the product of good planning. Although some degree of forethought is required for all projects, the best planning occurs when there is a commitment to the process by the educational leaders and when it occurs in an integrated and comprehensive fashion" (Kowalski 1989, 7). Systematic, participatory planning also has the benefit of reducing errors in planning for such complicated structures as public schools (Kowalski 1989, 18).

Planning a school building clearly involves a number of steps. It must start with a discussion about what "might be," shifts to data gathering, then to a study of the data and decision-making. The final stage of preparation involves the designing and construction of the school (MacKenzie 1989, 7). Long-range planning similarly consists of three major steps, according to Graves (1993, 183): enrollment projections, examining existing facilities, and determining options for meeting short and long-term needs for additional space.

In its examination of existing facilities, a citizens' advisory committee should determine what programs and facilities the school district has, what programs they want, and what facilities are needed to house the chosen programs. Graves (1993, 18) adds that this long-range plan development should not be a one-time event, but that the plan should be reviewed every year, making necessary changes. They must involve more than simply asking principals to report on their staff needs for the coming year. These processes can identify side issues and misperceptions that can have an impact on the vote unless they are addressed in publications and presentations (North Carolina 1998, 5).

There are several important principles of long-range planning. It should: (a) be based upon facts and sound, professional judgments, (b) make the most effective use of existing facilities, (c) not freeze the action of future school officials, (d) avoid the "tack-on" approach, (e) specify the most suitable grade organization, (f) be educationally sound, (g) be economical, (h) be flexible, (i) determine desired minimum and maximum enrollment, (j) consider the size of the school site needed, (k) determine the district's financial situation, (l) provide for safety, welfare, and convenience, (m) provide new facilities in appropriate locations (Castaldi 1994, 100). Holt (2002, 22) contends that there are four influential variables specific to the characteristics of specific school districts. The first of these is placement of the school building. This may be an issue in consolidation and length of bus rides should be considered. In regards to the school design, he recommends that districts not start with the simplest plan. Those who do will find that there is no place to make cuts. Demographics can also be an important factor, especially, for instance, if there is a large senior citizen population. In Texas, however, seniors are able to freeze property taxes. Finally, perceptions about the economy can be important. Growth of the economy in the community and population trends can be important factors.

School districts should actively seek community input as much as is possible in the opening stages of the development of the plan. "Many districts establish community task forces to study building needs, review existing reports and make recommendations to the board concerning the building program. Often, these people then become powerful voices for the referendum" (North Carolina 1998, 5).

Marketing Strategies and Materials

The determination of the committee's recommendation for a long-range plan does not complete its work. Communication of the recommendation quickly becomes the primary function of both the committee and the school district (Texas Education Agency n.d., 2). The marketing of the bond election is a primary function of the advisory committee.

When the decision has been made to proceed with a bond election, a school district must determine the steps it will take to market the election to the voting public, including a thorough market analysis (Minor 1992, 153). MacDonald (1955, 60) suggested early on that this task should be carried out by a committee of citizens, once they are satisfied that the need exists for a new school and that the plan proposed by the school board and administration are the best course of action. This, of course, requires communication and coordination between the citizens committee and school personnel. Holt (1993, 109), Swalm (1989, 24), Dana (1985, 358), McDaniel (1967, 2033), and Holt (1994, 34) also champion this approach. It is their unanimous position that school officials should maintain a low-key, positive, supportive role.

There are several overview questions that should be considered at the onset of this process. Districts should consider who supported them in the last election, why they supported the district, where they are now, and how they feel about current issues. The district committee should also anticipate any problems that might affect the vote, even if they are not directly

related to the issue. This, of course, should lead to a discussion about whether these problems can be minimized. Finally, consideration should be given to how to best capitalize on the good things the district is doing (North Carolina 1998, 15).

Holt (2002, 23) recommends activities for a successful bond referendum campaign: (a) unanimous board support, (b) administration, board maintaining a low profile, (c) a diverse community task force, (d) focus campaign on YES voters, (e) involving the local media and school staff in the early planning stages, (f) the use of bond consultants and architects to educate support groups, (g) the committee should focus a great deal on disseminating information, (h) collaborating with other government agencies, (i) limiting the tax levy as much as possible, (j) focusing on the benefits to children and the community, and (k) seeking advice from those who have won elections.

Once the election is called, a formal campaign strategy must be carried out (Mathison 1998, 32). The exact communication of ideas from those involved in the planning to the remainder of the public requires careful consideration. Ross (1983, 25) states that if a school district will "present a solid case of need, informed people will support your schools and give you their stamp of creditability." Some might favor a campaign based on the assumption that voters already know and support the issues but this seldom works. This leads to miscommunication and confusion and, therefore, more NO votes (Mathison 1998, 37). Carter says, "A good case can be made for community benefits to be derived from a quality education, but you've got to demonstrate it" and adds, "Above all, why should somebody whose kids moved out thirty years ago care about the current crop of K-12 students?" (1995, 290).

This brings up the question of who is most likely to vote, or what are their characteristics? Conrod (2002, 42) offers a list of those most likely to vote for the bond issue:

(a) voters with school-age children, (b) citizens interested in school affairs, (c) homeowners with mortgages, (d) 21-45 year olds, (e) married persons, (f) white collar workers, (g) those with some higher education, (h) those who have average or higher income, and (i) those who are active in the community, such as through organizations and churches.

Conrod (2002, 43) continues with a description of those most likely to support school improvement: (a) parents with a child in the affected area, (b) moderates, liberals, and independents, (c) professionals, clericals, and homemakers, (d) those who possess a positive attitude toward the school and its personnel, (e) long-term community residents and (f) those who are politically active. It is this group on whom Conrod urges districts to focus their efforts. Blanchfield (1998, 20) offers the suggestion that districts focus on undecided voters. The group of people who often do not vote, he says, are the very ones who may be convinced to vote for the bond.

There are several sources of guidelines and suggestions for marketing that are worthy of note. Holt (2002, 63) suggests first knowing the product – what it is and what it isn't, knowing the target population, including needs, wishes and core beliefs, and knowing the best marketing techniques to get that message across to that group. Once this is determined, focus must shift to the development of promotional materials.

Promotional materials should avoid the use of educational jargon and should be simply written. These materials should talk about what the building will mean for the children, as opposed to limiting the discussion to square footage. "Voters support issues about which they understand and feel emotional involvement" (North Carolina 1998, 6). Mathison suggests a clear focus of the election campaign, ". . .the single most important component for a successful bond issue election – a clearly articulated mission statement for the school district, with clearly

defined objectives that are spelled out to the public" (1998, 30). It is much easier, after all, for voters to support issues they understand. School districts must therefore be sure to commit adequate time and discussion to explaining the issues if they are to gain community support. They must create a feeling of ownership for the building plan (North Carolina 1998, 5).

Holt (2002, 112), too, suggests selling education, as opposed to a specific building. The campaign should focus on how the election benefits the community and individuals in the community, with a particular focus on children. Nearly everyone in the community wants the children in the district to get the best education possible. This is, in fact, almost impossible to argue against. If the thrust of the campaign is the benefit of education, a much more defensible case is presented. Districts should therefore be prepared to explain expenditures in terms of how they will benefit children. The campaign should be about education, he says, as opposed to lockers and art rooms. The public must also be assured and feel comfortable that the management and leadership of the local district is "solid" and "rational" (Holt 2002, 112).

Mathison (1998, 33) suggests key principles that are the focus of successful campaigns: (a) focusing on YES voters, (b) involving parents since they are the most likely to be motivated, (c) organizing efforts around the elementary attendance zone to capitalize on involved community members, (d) involving the school community to send a message of unity, (e) involving voters without children, (f) identifying the cost to individual homeowners in simple terms such as by using pizzas per week, and (g) clearly identifying the benefits of the bond issue to homeowners, such as a brighter future.

It is suggested that a community-based steering committee should oversee the actual bond election campaign. While there is nothing wrong with administrators and board members taking part in the campaign, the majority of the work should be carried out by community

members, and chaired by someone who is respected and possesses credibility in the community. Committee members should be chosen carefully, being certain to provide representation to all demographic groups (North Carolina 1998, 5).

The message from this group and the objectives of the bond issue must be constantly communicated to the voters (Mathison 1998, 32). A media coordinator should be responsible for writing and developing the overall promotional campaign. They write and design brochures, fliers, news releases, presentations, and carry out the campaign theme. The person in charge of this must clearly be skilled in the field of communication (North Carolina 1998, 7).

Deciding how to best get the word out can be a daunting task but there are suggestions available. Conrod (2002, 49-90) suggests using television, radio, news columns, news releases, public service announcements, media coverage of events, a web site, newsletter, video presentations, briefing books, events, posters, brochures, endorsements, campaign letters, a statement from the board, and paid advertising. Holt (2002, 119-128) offers the suggestions of door-to-door canvassing, telephone canvassing, coffee parties and small meetings, direct mail, flyers, brochures, information sheets, video presentations, special events and the use of media through letters to the editor, news articles, advertisements, radio and television. He further states (2002, 116) that marketing techniques should include demonstrating openness, respect, factual information, consider how school opinions are formed and deliver the information through mediums the public receives most and the best information.

Besides these media-type carriers of information, it is important to create some face-to-face time for the voters of the school district. Community-wide forums and workshops are effective for identifying big picture questions and ideas necessary for resolution. These forums allow citizens to express themselves and can be very effective for explaining all aspect of the

bond election, including the benefits of its passage, as well as the consequences of the bond not

passing (Mathison 1998, 31).

Carter (1995, 290) continues, however, with a warning that schools must treat patrons

with respect in bond election promotion. "Scare tactics or obfuscation" can have the negative

effect of irritating voters, leading to a negative vote. Mere vague appeals based upon the future

of our children should also be avoided and replaced by more specific arguments (Carter 1995,

292). Ross makes the following suggestions:

> (a) start your efforts at least a year before the referendum, (b) carefully analyze the results
> of your last election, (c) analyze your community relations program, (d) establish a
> "better schools" committee to offer advice on the forthcoming election, (e) establish an
> election task force, (f) develop resource materials for principals, (g) develop an election
> timetable, and stick to it, (h) go after the Yes vote, (i) don't forget to enjoy the campaign,
> (j) conduct a campaign post mortem (1983, 25-26).

Swalm (1989, 24) suggests that a campaign slogan be developed for use throughout the

campaign and that representatives from every major group in town should be invited to be a

member of the citizens committee. For campaign strategies, he recommends a video

presentation, newsletters, question and answer sheets, presentations to groups, door-to-door

visits, and a telephone campaign. Taylor (1984, 7) suggests a kick-off rally, news releases, a

speaker's bureau, an information hotline, an information brochure, a "Vote For" flyer, PTA

block walking, phone banks, endorsements and utilizing mass and minority media.

School districts are also urged to identify "Yes" voters and get them to the polls (Dana

1986, 38 and Dalton 1996, 44). These are voters who would potentially support the school

district in its efforts. By focusing efforts on getting them to the polls, the district will improve

the odds of having more favorable votes cast. Potential district publications include

informational folders, billboards, postcard reminders to vote, newspapers, and "vote" buttons.

There are several strategies, according to Holt (2002, 115) for community relations that should be considered for a successful school bond election. The campaign should be positive. It should emphasize the cost/benefit ratio, as well as the costs of providing facilities for mandated programs and the district's commitment to them. It should also emphasize that the board and administration took a conservative approach to building design. He suggests school districts find ways to appeal to senior citizens and further urges districts to conduct voter registration and "get out the vote" drives targeting those aged 18-45 (Holt 2002, 113).

Dealing With Opposition

School districts should keep in mind that even with an effective, comprehensive marketing plan victory at the polls is not assured. Schools districts must assume from the beginning that there will be opposition. Elections are not passed, after all, by 100% margins. The absence of an organized opposition in the early stages of the campaign does not mean that one will not appear. Some sort of opposition, whether organized or not, will show at some point in the campaign. School districts that prepare ahead for this opposition will be ready for it when it does arrive and should prepare to use facts in order to persuade voters and answer the concerns expressed by the opponents of the proposal.

An additional effective strategy for school districts to ward off opposition is to actively seek the endorsement of the bond issue by well-known community groups/clubs, as well as the support of well-known citizens. This activity should be conducted as soon as the particulars of the proposal have been reasonably set (North Carolina 1998, 6).

As a school district plans for opposition, it is useful to examine potential areas of dissent. School districts should considers whether or not they have had opposition in the past, where they can expect opposition in the current campaign, what these people will oppose, and how the

opposition will be countered if it appears (North Carolina 1998, 15). Some voters may fear that

school officials will spend the full sum approved by the election and will make little or no effort

to economize. They may also feel that some individual school employee or board member is

seeking personal glory. Some voters may also state that they believe it would be more cost-

effective to repair existing facilities that to build new buildings or that the real problem is with

curriculum or teaching methods and not with the facilities.

Increasing taxes may also be cause for concern on the part of citizens. These opponents

will not usually, however, come out and say that they oppose spending money on education.

When organized opposition is present, it usually focuses on some specific concern, such as

school site concerns or problems with the architectural plans (Hartman and Beal 1968, 1). When

the need to eliminate the "extras" and reduce costs is set forth as an opposing argument, school

districts are well advised to focus on the "basic educational features of the plan" (MacDonald

1955, 62).

Groups that may potentially oppose bond issues include: private interest groups, farmers,

local taxpayers associations, private school supporters, large landowners, old line establishment,

school board candidates opposing the bond issue, and senior citizens (Henry 1987, 26). All of

these groups should be answered conscientiously as early as possible (MacDonald 1955, 62).

The most effective tool for dealing with opposition is to use facts. Community members

should be invited in to show them statistics and data, as well as to answer their questions.

Opponents should be encouraged to participate in committee discussions. When doors are truly

opened schools districts may gain trust, if not support (Blanchfield 1998, 20).

Those seeking to pass a bond issue should realize, however that they are not going to

convince everyone and that attempting to do so can be an exercise in futility, as is indicated in

the literature. "A referendum reflects a 'values' vote. A person's values are not going to change during a two-month campaign. Changing an entrenched 'no' voter's mind becomes very difficult, if not impossible. Identify supporters and get them to the polls" (North Carolina 1998, 5). Conrod (2002, 42) concurs, that trying to convince the NO voters can be a waste of time and may even serve to motivate them to organize, so districts are well-advised to try not to antagonize them.

Why Bonds Fail or Succeed

Passing a school bond election is a tremendous, complicated task. "Success will usually come only as the result of firm resolve, sharp planning, and hard work" (Conrod 2002, xvii). The first basic necessity, though unrelated to advisory committee activities, is to have a unanimous decision by the school board to proceed with the election. Once the election is called, all board members must continue to support the referendum (Mathison 1998, 30 and North Carolina 1998, 5). Holt (1994, 95) calls this a "critical" need. Henry (1987, 26) found divided boards to be a factor in losing school bond elections. Mathison explains,

> To be successful in passing a bond issue, there is no doubt of the importance of a unified board of education. A board that has a single-minded purpose shows the community that its leadership is strong and committed to a particular direction. A board that is not unified signals the opposite. Why should a voter support the election when the board of education isn't unanimously behind it? Rosier (1980, 883) affirms similarly that a lack of confidence in the school board can lead to the failure of a bond election (1998, 30).

Having an open, visible superintendent is also an important factor. He or she must be a strong advocate for education and facilities. They must be visible in the community, taking every occasion to communicate the message. It is also important that they keep information and the decision-making process public so as to eliminate the appearance of deception or back-room politics.

Having strong citizen participation in the development of the bond election is the second step. Citizen participation in the planning and carrying out of school bond elections is crucial to the success of the campaign. Conversely, unsuccessful school bond elections are frequently characterized by a lack of this type of participation. The reason this is so important is because it is the communication with the public that is critical. Voters must be fully informed and feel that they can trust what is said to them (Blanchfield 1998, 20).

According to Holt (2002, 18), there are a number of factors that influence campaigns: (a) citizen participation through the development of a broad-based committees, (b) ongoing community relations programs, (c) the use of school planning and finance consultants, (d) a unity of purpose between the staff and the school board, (e) a high voter turnout to attract the YES voters, (f) endorsements from influential community members, (g) addressing the issues posed by opposition groups through presentations and the media, (h) limiting the tax increase, and (i) the timing and length of the campaign, although most do not see this as a factor.

Holt (2002, 20) continues by pointing out several variables that contribute to the success of school bond elections. A voter turnout of at least 35% is necessary in order to get out the YES votes. It is also important for citizens to have a more prominent role in campaign activities than the low-key role administrators should have. Media support is also important and key figures should submit letters to the editor. Finally, personal campaigning is a must. This can be effective in one-on-one situations, as well as in public meetings.

Henry also offers a list of positive contributing factors, all of which an advisory committee may address:

(a) speakers' bureau/slide presentations, (b) "get out the yes vote" organization, (c) business community support, (d) student and teacher support, (e) patron support, (f) direct personal contact, (g) early strong campaign organization, (h) openness of information, (i) timing of actual campaigns, (j) fact sheets/use of brochures, (k) positive

media coverage, (l) reduction of funds previously requested, (m) low key but persistent campaign, (n) complete community support, (o) personal conference to convince business/industry, (p) use of public forum, (q) thorough explanation of why funds are needed, (r) ѕteering committee had leaders from all geographic, social, and educational levels, (s) word of mouth, (t) high school board credibility and employee morale, (u) endorsement by taxpayer organizations and ministerial alliance, (v) local speakers campaigning, low profile by school officials, (w) surveyed taxpayers prior to campaign, (x) avoid open controversy, (y) widespread citizen support, (z) obvious need for physical improvements, (aa) history of successful renovations, (ab) early support from key leaders (1987, 26).

Other characteristics are also worthy of examination. Henry (1987, 26) reported that winning districts tended to be smaller, ask for less money, have developed "yes" voter identification techniques, have larger voter turnout, have no side issues attached to the election, and have no organized opposition. Lifto found in his study (2000, 17) that the size of a negative evaluation of a school district correctly discriminated between winning and losing elections in 96% of the cases he studied, exacerbating the importance of maintaining a year-round community relations program, as opposed to merely conducting one in concert with a bond election.

Bauscher (1994, 16) similarly suggests the following for successful school bond elections:

(a) develop a strong public relations program, (b) pre-planning. . .study and analyze, (c) study district historical data, (d) survey your community, (e) develop election campaign strategies, (f) conduct special voter registration drive, (g) develop targeted election materials, tools, and techniques, (h) identify your "yes" voters and the majority needed for victory, (i) plan election day strategies [poll watchers], (j) debrief and evaluate.

Holt (1993, iii) concludes that the universal factors that are particular to successful elections include

an active citizens support committee, adequate organization, an understanding of the needs of the community, effective communication of the needs of the schools, use of campaign activities that are personal and direct, appeal to the appropriate target audience, and involve all segments of the community in all stages of the campaign.

Officials in one school district that lost a bond election suggested that others assure that sufficient time is provided to properly educate voters about school district needs. This is crucial to the success of a bond election (Holt 1993, 96). Kennedy (1971, 6044) found that the public's faith in the ability of a superintendent and school board to properly manage the funds from an election to be associated with successful elections and, conversely, a lack of faith in them was associated with unsuccessful elections. Dalton (1995, 44) stated, "A focus on benefits for all children and a willingness to identify and work with education's supporters within a school district form the basis for passing local school bond elections."

Population growth and the economy can also be factors in the outcome of an election. Holt (1994, 35) found that communities with high population growth rates found it easier to sell bond elections, as did a positive outlook for the community's economic future.

A look at factors having a negative effect on the outcome of a school bond election is also merited. When examining the reasons for the failure of a bond election, Holt says (2002, 20), the first variable to identify as contributing to the failure of bond issues is a lack of understanding of attitudes and perceptions within the community and among the educational staff about the schools. He further argues that school board support of the election must be unanimous and that the size of the increase in tax levy requested appears to be important.

Lifto (2000, 15) offers a larger picture. He argues that successful bond elections "have as much to do with how the public rates overall quality within the school district as the nature of the campaign itself." He argues that many failed bond election campaigns are a result of not understanding the importance of the public's perception of overall quality. In his eyes, there are three important factors in this analysis: quality control, customer commitment, and communications. These three factors combine to define quality and play a large role in the

outcomes of bond elections, possibly driving as much as 50% of the election outcome. He, too, argues for a year-round effort to assure the community of quality.

Lifto continued by stating that quality control, customer commitment, and communications boiled down to nine variables: (a) a relentless focus on the district's primary focus of academics, (b) a culture of higher expectations, (c) mastery of basic skills, (d) an extraordinary commitment to customer service, (e) multiple and continuous feedback loops, (f) healthy relationships among school board members and between the board, superintendent, and staff, (g) broad and significant community involvement, (h) strategic planning and implementation at the highest levels and (i) outstanding and ongoing public relations.

Henry offers a list of reasons for districts losing school bond elections:

(a) voter apathy [low turnout], (b) lack of teacher support, (c) divided boards, (d) yes votes not identified, (e) excessive funds requested, (f) well organized and funded opposition, (g) oversell of bad school conditions, (h) failed to follow up last minute "yes voter" calls, (i) lack of visible opposition made "yes voters" overconfident, (j) improperly organized phone bank for "yes voters", (k) politics, (l) citizens desire to maintain local schools, (m) lack of concern for quality education, (n) lack of confidence in the school board, (o) black/white polarization, (p) lack of public understanding (1987, 26).

Ough (1991, 1971) offers similar reasons for failure: (a) ratio of private to public student enrollments, (b) school district reorganization, (c) total levy of the school district, (d) amount of the bond issue, (e) percentage of registered voter turnout.

Evidence exists to indicate that the amount of increase in the tax levy impacts the outcome of school bond elections. One study indicated that the amount of increase in the tax levy should be less than $2.00 per one thousand dollars of assessed property value for a successful election (Holt 1994, 35). Holt continues (1994, 36) by saying that voter perception of the tax levy increase is affected by how the public views the needs of the school, the design and

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location of the new building, the economic situation in the community, the presence of a large number of senior citizens and the district's ability to manage bond funds.

The effect of voter turnout on the outcome of school bond elections is mixed. Henry (1987, 25), Holt (2002, 18), and Crosswait (1967, 1612) all found that school districts with higher voter turnout tended to be more successful in their efforts to win elections. Ough (1991, 1971) found higher turnout to be related to failure. Crider (1968, 3408) found that smaller voter turnout was more closely associated with successful bond passage. Martin (1978, 106) found inconclusive results.

Kastory (1993, 785) found that in districts where the bond issue failed, voters perceived the issue differently from the school board. In school districts where the bond issue passed, there was more agreement between board members and the public than in districts where elections failed. This clearly demonstrates the importance of effective, accurate communication.

Finally, districts should be wary of side issues. Voters may be upset or frustrated by a side issue that causes them to vote against a bond election, even though they may not object to a tax increase. This side issue can come in the form of a new issue or it may be the result of some long-running community split. In either case, a single issue can defeat a bond election if not properly handled (North Carolina 1998, 5).

<center>Continuing Public Relations</center>

Clearly, the importance of developing and maintaining a year-round communications program cannot be forgotten. Most school administrators, in fact, "find that an ongoing community relations plan is essential to the eventual passage of bond referendums" (Holt 2002, 63). The existence of a continuing public relations program and a thoroughly developed campaign greatly enhance the probability of passing the bond election (North Carolina 1998, 5).

If the public is to be expected to provide additional financial support to a school district, support must be gained over a period of time. Waiting until a bond election to try to catch up will likely be ineffective. When voters are asked to assume responsibility for long-term debt, it is in the best interest of the schools to see to it that the public is kept constantly aware of all aspect of the district. Henry concludes, "By communicating with the public continually, the school district can help create a favorable climate for future referenda and other issues for which they may need approval" (1987, 27).

Communication only during an election is insufficient for a school district. Districts that engage in the strategy of only communicating with the community when attempting to pass a bond election risk eroding their trust. Parents may develop skepticism toward school communication, asking themselves or others what the district wants this time. Schools should avoid the appearance of trying to "butter up" the public and work toward providing effective communication.

Bauscher (1994, 16) contends that a strong public relations program should be "ongoing and year round," and that it should be coordinated by a top school district official. Martin (1978, 107) concurs with this continual need and adds to this, "The three most important groups in public relations were the superintendent, board of education, and principals." Community perceptions about the school board are also important, states Corrick (1995, 2054).

Rosier suggests, "School administrators need to develop and maintain an effective school-community information program based on knowledge of the district, understanding of effective communication principles and selection and use of the most effective media available to meet the needs of the local community" (1980, 883). Finally, and possibly the most important reason to develop and maintain an effective public relations campaign prior to a bond election is

that school districts involving citizens in decision-making already have a group of supporters to activate.

Summary

The deterioration of existing school buildings, as well as increased enrollment can put school districts in the position of needing to build new schools. Many districts choose to utilize an advisory committee made up of community members to assist in this endeavor. These committees help to gain insight and a different perspective for administrators who are charged with running schools. It is recommended that advisory committees should be representative of the communities they serve and that they serve in an advisory capacity since it is the school board who has ultimate authority in school districts. Once organized, the committee should conduct, in cooperation with school officials, a needs assessment for the district and develop a long-range plan. In direct relation to the passage of a bond issue, the advisory committee should determine marketing strategies and develop marketing materials. Part of this process should be preparation for dealing with opposition. It is also advisable for these committees to examine research for indications about why bonds fail or succeed. Finally, advisory committees should participate in the development of a continuing public relations program for the district.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study targets a specific Texas school district and its use of an advisory committee. Since the laws for passing school bonds and constructing new school facilities are not identical in every state, school officials should carefully research specific legal requirements applicable to their own state. Because the use of an advisory committee may be possible in any school or school system where public funds are used for the construction of new schools, the results of the research presented here will therefore be transferable to any school official who finds himself in the position of needing to pass a school bond election.

Research Questions

The study investigated the success of a variety of advisory committee activities and the value placed on them by the committee in a North Texas independent school district's successful school bond election. The primary focus was to determine the organizational design elements and activities having the largest impact on the success of the school bond election. The research questions were:

1. How were members of the committee selected?

2. Who determined the activities to be conducted by the committee?

3. Who had the primary responsibility of carrying out the committee activities?

4. How well did the committee represent the district?

5. How much value was placed on the input provided by committee members?

6. Which activities were deemed to be the most successful?

7. Which activities would not be duplicated in a subsequent election?

Data Collection

Quantitative research methods were utilized to examine the research questions in a between-subjects approach. The data were gathered through the administration of a written survey to all members of the three groups studied: advisory committee members, school district administrators, and school board members. The survey consisted of questions concerning the organizational design and activities recommended in the literature, as well as questions that collected data on the effectiveness of each of those individual activities, in the successful passage of a school bond election.

Population

The population studied consists of school board members, administrators, and school bond advisory committee members directly involved in a school bond election in a North Texas School district. For this study all participants were surveyed and names and addresses were obtained from the school district. The survey was mailed to a total of 69 participants that included 47 committee members, five school board members, and 17 administrators. Board members and administrators who also served on the advisory committee were counted as committee members for this study because of their first-hand knowledge of committee activities.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument was developed based on the framework established by the literature survey. It focused on those items most frequently espoused by the authors and was designed to determine how much influence the different activities had on the passage of the bond issue in the studied school district.

It is important to recall that the literature available in the study of advisory committees in school bond elections falls into one of two categories: commentary and empirical research. The

commentary is provided by a number of authors that have some first-hand knowledge and/or experience in the field of school bond elections, such as superintendents, school business managers, other school district administrators, architects, bond consultants, and some community members. Empirical researchers have studied one or more bond elections for their writings. Their measurements, observations and data are taken as evidence for one or more particular theoretical concepts and then used to make generalizations about their findings that transfer to others who engage in the school bond election process.

Because data are gathered from stakeholders by both those who have first-hand knowledge of election, as well as by those who have studied one or more elections, the resulting literature is very similar. The primary difference between commentary and empirical data, therefore, is the number of sources utilized to provide the suggestions espoused by the authors. This means, in effect, that the ideas and suggestions in both categories of literature originate from information provided by those who have participated in the process, and results in a high level of symmetry between suggestions and findings in both categories. The current survey mirrors these findings.

There are six themes that consistently arise in both forms of literature: (1) Administration and board keeping a low profile, (2) having a diverse community task force, (3) focusing on YES voters, (4) involving the committee in early planning, (5) focusing on disseminating information, and (6) focusing on benefits to children and the community. It is around these themes that the instrument was constructed. The items in the survey are grouped by characteristic, although they are not labeled in this way.

The survey was developed upon this basic foundation of research. The conception, design, methods, analysis, and interpretation of the survey were developed in conjunction with

the University of North Texas Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Analysis. The literature was examined, categorized, and organized into the six major suggestion themes. The survey was then formatted to provide ease of administration to the subjects and categorization of the responses.

Once finalized, the survey was submitted to the studied school district for permission to administer it to the participants. When this permission was received, the survey was submitted to and approved by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board. Research consent forms and surveys were mailed to school board members, district administrators, and advisory committee members in an envelope that included a self-addressed, stamped return envelope addressed to the researcher.

<div align="center">Analysis of Data</div>

The survey was divided into three major subsections: Advisory committee composition and leadership, committee features and activities, and open-ended questions. The committee attributes/activities section was further divided into six subsections, though this subdivision was not marked on the actual survey. The questions fit into one of six categories: (1) Administration and board keeping a low profile, (2) having a diverse community task force, (3) focusing on YES voters, (4) involving the committee in early planning, (5) focusing on disseminating information, and (6) focusing on benefits to children and the community. Participants were provided written instructions on the survey that asked them to mark one answer for each question, except for the final three questions, which were open-ended questions. In a few cases participants made no selection on a question or marked more than one answer. In all cases the actual answer or answers selected were tallied

creating a slightly different number of responses on a few questions. In all cases, responses were tallied and a spreadsheet was utilized to calculated percentages.

Survey information was analyzed to report and develop profiles collectively and by category of participant: advisory committee members, school district administrators, and school board members. These indicators were then utilized to construct theoretical concepts. An analysis was conducted to determine the value of each of these advisory committee activities and attributes as reported by the participants collectively and by category of participant.

Because the entire population of participants was surveyed, as opposed to a sample, this analysis uses descriptive statistics to report results by category of participant and collectively for each survey item, as well as by subsection. By surveying the entire population of participants, any other treatment of the data would be invalid, as any difference would be statistically significant. These descriptive statistics were also used to develop a profile of those activities deemed to have the greatest impact on winning a bond election. No correlations or causal relationships were determined from the data.

The survey consisted of forty-eight questions. Table 1 presents the items in each subsection. The first five questions addressed committee composition and leadership and asked respondents to check the response that best answered each question. Questions six through forty-five were concerned with committee features and activities and asked respondents to mark "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral/Undecided," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree" to state whether or not they believed the item to be crucial to the passage of the bond election. The final three questions were open-ended and allowed participants to respond with recommendations for effective use of committees in school bond elections. The

Table 1

Indicators of Successful Bond Elections Included in the Survey

Sub-categories of survey questions	Survey item numbers
Committee composition and leadership	1-5
School officials kept a low profile	6-7
Diverse community task force	8-9
Focus on YES votes	10-15
Committee involved in early planning	16-20
Focus on disseminating information	21-42
Focus on benefits to children and the community	43-45
Open-ended questions	46-48

findings of this study are presented in a narrative format, as well as through the use of charts demonstrating the relative importance of the design elements and activities for each of the research questions.

Conclusion

In December 2003, the survey was sent to all members of the school bond advisory committee, school board members, and school district administrators. A total of 69 surveys were mailed, surveying the entire population of all three groups. Fifty-two surveys were returned, translating into a return rate of 75.4%, with 100% of the board members returning their surveys. All data were recorded, tallied, and placed into a spreadsheet by group, as well as for the entirety of survey participants for computations. Committee features and activities receiving greater than 50% favorable response from all respondents collectively ("Strongly

Agree" and "Agree" combined) were considered to have been crucial to the passage of the

bond issue.   Those activities receiving less than 50% favorable response were considered not

to have been crucial to the passage of the bond issue. Responses to the open-ended questions

were recorded and reported, as well.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the survey administered to participants in the studied independent school district. It includes an examination of the findings and a report on the attributes and activities of the advisory committee. Data is reported in tables, as well as in a narrative format. It is organized and presented in a manner that follows the format of the survey, with subcategories of questions grouped together.

Examination of Findings

The first section of the survey targeted committee characteristics, including how the committee members were selected, who determined the committee activities, who held the primary responsibility for carrying out the committee activities, the composition of the committee, and the value placed upon the input of the committee members.

Table 2

How Were Committee Members Selected?

Respondents	Board Appointed	Volunteer	Nominated	Don't Know	Other
Committee	5.6	47.2	36.1	0.0	11.1
Board	14.3	28.6	42.9	0.0	14.3
Administration	5.9	41.2	35.3	11.8	5.9
Whole Group	6.7	43.3	36.7	3.3	10.0

Note: All figures are in percentages.

The first question addressed how committee members were selected. Most respondents indicated that committee members were selected through their own volunteering or were nominated by school officials. In combining the groups, 43.3% of the respondents said that committee members had volunteered to serve and 36.7% stated that the committee members had been nominated to serve by school district administrators. The ten percent who selected "Other" indicated primarily that it was a combination of these two.

Table 3

Who Determined Activities to be Conducted by the Committee?

Respondents	Administrators	Committee Chair	Committee Vote	Other
Committee	41.2	14.7	29.4	14.7
Board	80.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
Administration	68.8	0.0	25.0	6.3
Whole Group	52.7	9.1	27.3	10.9

Note. All figures are in percentages.

The question asking who determined the activities conducted by the committee received slightly different responses between the groups studied as illustrated by Table 3. In all categories of participants in the survey, more respondents indicated that the administrators had the lead role in determining the activities of the advisory committee. Board members, at 80%, clearly saw this as an administrative function. Committee vote was the second most common response for all three groups. Committee members saw their role in determining activities slightly more positively (29.4%) than other respondents saw committee members' role. The committee members were the only group that had any respondents state the

committee chair determined the committee activities. Those respondents who marked

"Other" indicated that it was some sort of joint effort or responsibility.

Table 4

Who Had the Primary Responsibility of Carrying Out Committee Activities?

Respondents	Admin.	Committee Volunteers	Community Volunteers	Chair	Other
Committee	39.5	42.1	10.5	2.6	5.3
Board	16.7	50.0	16.7	16.7	0.0
Administration	53.3	33.3	0.0	0.0	13.3
Whole Group	40.7	40.7	8.5	3.4	6.8

Note. All figures are in percentages.

    Table 4 shows how survey participants viewed the responsibility of carrying out the

committee's activities. Over half (53.3%) of the administrators felt that administrators had

this responsibility. Half the board members felt this was the responsibility of the committee

volunteers. The committee member respondents were split with 42.1% believing it was the

responsibility of committee volunteers and 39.5% believing it was the administration's

responsibility. Again, those who selected "Other" primarily indicated a shared responsibility.

    In the areas of balanced district representation on the committee, respondents agreed

largely that the committee was a well-balanced representation of the district. Only 4.1% of

the total respondents indicated that the committee was not a well-balanced representation of

the district. All other respondents indicated that the committee was either somewhat well-

balanced (26.5%) or well-balanced (69.4%).

Table 5

How Would You Describe the Composition of the Committee?

Respondents	Not Well-balanced Representation	Somewhat Balanced Representation	Well-balanced Representation
Committee	3.2	25.8	71.0
Board	0.0	0.0	100.0
Administration	7.7	38.5	53.9
Whole Group	4.1	26.5	69.4

Note. All figures are in percentages.

Views for this representation did differ somewhat between the three groups surveyed, as indicated by Table 5. Board members were the group with the strongest belief in this area, with 100.0% of their responses being that the committee was a well-balanced representation. District administrators were the least sure of balanced representation (53.9%), while committee members fell between the other two groups in their response (71.0%).

Table 6

What Overall Value Was Placed on Input Provided by Committee Members?

Respondents	Very High	High	Moderate	Slight	Little/ No
Committee	27.3	54.6	18.2	0.0	0.0
Board	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	7.1	78.6	7.1	7.1	0.0
Whole Group	25.0	59.6	13.5	1.9	0.0

Note. All figures are in percentages.

Participants reported that committee member input was valued, with 84.6% of the responses indicating that the committee's input was given either "High value" or "Very high value." Indeed, less than 2% of all responses indicated that only "Slight value" was placed upon committee member input and no respondent indicated "Little or no value" was placed upon this input. Board members, at 60.0%, appeared to place the highest value on committee input. They were the only category of respondent to have the majority of their responses in the "Very high value" category. Committee members (54.6%) and district administrators (78.6%) indicated primarily that the value placed upon committee input was "High value." Exact figures are shown in Table 6.

<center>Committee Attributes and Activities</center>

With the exception of the three open-ended questions at the end of the survey, the remaining questions listed advisory committee attributes and activities espoused in the literature survey. Survey participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed that the attribute or activity was crucial to the positive outcome of the election. These questions were subdivided into six categories. The first category, School Officials Keeping a Low Profile, consisted of two questions. Category 2, Having a Diverse Community Task Force, also contained two questions. Category 3, Focusing on YES Voters, contained six questions. Category 4, Involving the Committee in Early Planning, had five questions. Category 5, Focusing on Disseminating Information, was the largest category with twenty-two questions. The sixth and final category, Focusing on Benefits to Children and the Community, had three questions.

Table 7

School Officials Should Play a Low-key Supportive Role in Committee Activities

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School officials played a low-key supportive role in committee activities					
Committee	6.3	40.6	9.4	31.3	12.5
Board	20.0	40.0	20.0	20.0	0.0
Administration	0.0	28.6	14.3	42.9	14.3
Whole group	5.9	37.3	11.8	33.3	11.8
Non-district employees primarily carried out committee activities					
Committee	26.5	32.4	17.6	20.6	2.9
Board	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	7.1	28.6	21.4	28.6	14.3
Whole group	22.6	34.0	17.0	20.8	5.7

Note. All figures are in percentages.

On the issue of the school board and district administrators playing a low-key supportive role in committee activities and the passage of the bond issue, committee members reported the most balanced view. When combining "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," 46.9% felt this was important to the passage of the bond. When combining "Disagree" with "Strongly Disagree," 43.8% felt the opposite way. Those that were neutral on this issue amounted to 9.4%. The majority of the board (60.0%) either agreed or strongly agreed that school officials' playing a low-key role was crucial in the passage of the bond issue. Twenty percent disagreed and 20.0% were neutral on this issue. The administrators surveyed felt somewhat differently with 57.2% selecting "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree," 28.6%

selecting "Agree," 0% selecting "Strongly Agree," and 14.3% were "Neutral/Undecided." This did not receive more then 50.0% of the total group's vote and was not considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Concerning the assertion that non-district employees should primarily carry out committee activities, committee members felt this was important in the passage of the bond issue with 58.9% selecting "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 23.5% selecting "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree," and 17.6% selecting "Neutral/Undecided." Board members were 100.0% that this was crucial to the passage of the bond issue. The administrators were somewhat in disagreement with 42.9% selecting "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree," and 21.4% selecting "Neutral/Undecided." Only 35.7% selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." When all groups were combined 56.6% agreed or strongly agreed that this activity was crucial to the passage of the bond issue. Only 26.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 17.0% were neutral or undecided. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

All survey participants were clear in their belief in the presence of a diverse community task force positively impacting the election outcome, as indicated in Table 8. The importance of endorsements from prominent citizens and community groups in the passage of the bond issue seemed to have common agreement with none of the groups having anyone select "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" was selected by 96.9% of the committee members, with the remaining 3.1% selecting "Neutral/Undecided." The board indicated unanimously (100.0%) that they strongly agreed this was crucial. "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were chosen by 85.7% of the administrators and 14.3% were "Neutral/Undecided." When all three groups of respondents were

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Table 8

Importance of a Diverse Community Task Force

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Endorsements from prominent citizens/community groups were acquired					
Committee	59.4	37.5	3.1	0.0	0.0
Board	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	14.3	71.4	14.3	0.0	0.0
Whole group	51.0	43.1	5.9	0.0	0.0
Committee members represented the district's diversity					
Committee	50.0	34.4	6.3	9.4	0.0
Board	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	28.6	57.1	7.1	7.1	0.0
Whole group	45.1	41.2	5.9	7.8	0.0

Note. All figures are in percentages.

combined, 94.1% selected either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 5.9% selected

"Neutral/Undecided." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the

bond issue.

Having committee members that represent the district's diversity also received high

marks. "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" was selected by 84.4% of committee members, with

6.3% marking "Neutral/Undecided" and 9.4% marking "Disagree." All of the board

members indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the importance of having a diverse

committee. Administrators selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" 85.7% of the time, 7.1%

selected "Neutral/Undecided" and 7.1% selected "Disagree." When all respondents are

combined 86.3% marked "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," with 5.9% marking

"Neutral/Undecided," and 7.8% marking "Disagree." This activity was considered to be

important in the passage of the bond issue.

Table 9

Focus on YES Voters

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
YES voters were targeted					
Committee	39.4	30.0	15.2	12.1	3.0
Board	0.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	20.0
Administration	14.3	42.9	14.3	28.6	0.0
Whole group	28.8	34.6	17.3	15.4	3.8
A special voter registration drive was conducted					
Committee	18.2	18.2	39.4	18.2	6.1
Board	0.0	0.0	40.0	40.0	20.0
Administration	23.1	61.5	15.4	0.0	0.0
Whole group	17.6	27.5	33.3	15.7	5.9
Postcard reminders to vote were sent					
Committee	27.3	42.4	18.2	6.1	6.1
Board	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	1.4	61.5	23.1	0.0	0.0
Whole group	23.5	49.0	19.6	3.9	3.9

"Vote" buttons were distributed

Committee	15.2	63.6	9.1	3.0	9.1
Board	0.0	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	0.0	76.9	23.1	0.0	0.0
Whole group	9.8	66.7	15.7	2.0	5.9

Student/teacher support was sought

Committee	36.4	48.5	12.1	3.0	0.0
Board	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	21.4	78.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	34.6	53.8	9.6	1.9	0.0

Election-day strategies such as poll watching were conducted

Committee	3.0	24.2	48.5	18.2	6.1
Board	0.0	25.0	25.0	50.0	0.0
Administration	6.7	40.0	53.3	0.0	0.0
Whole group	3.8	28.8	48.1	15.4	3.8

Note. All figures are in percentages

Focusing on YES voters was the next category of questions on the survey. This category, too, received favorable responses. The majority of committee members (69.4%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed, 15.2% were neutral or undecided and 15.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Board members were less enthusiastic with 40.0% agreeing, 40% undecided, and 20% marking "Strongly Disagree." Administrators surveyed were more similar to committee member responses with 57.2% marking "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 14.3% neutral or undecided and 28.6% disagreeing. As a whole group 63.4% agreed or

strongly agreed that this was important to bond passage, 17.3% were undecided, 15.4% disagreed and 3.8% strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Conducting a voter registration drive was clearly not seen as being important to bond passage. Only 36.4% of committee members reported they agreed or strongly agreed. More of them were undecided (39.4%), while 24.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. No board members agreed this was crucial to bond passage. Forty percent were undecided, 40.0% marked disagree and 20.0% strongly disagreed. Administrators, however, gave this activity higher marks with 84.6% selecting "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," while 15.4% were undecided and none disagreed. With all groups combined, 45.1% stated they agreed or strongly agreed, 33.3% were undecided, and 21.6% marked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was not considered to be important in the passage if the bond issue.

Sending postcard reminders to vote received resounding approval from respondents. A majority (69.7%) of committee members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 18.2% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 12.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Board members (80.0%) agreed or strongly agreed on the importance of this activity in passing the bond issue. The remaining 20.0% were neutral or undecided. Administrators (62.9%) agreed or strongly agreed this activity was important, with the remaining 23.1% marking "Neutral/Undecided." With all respondents put together as a group, 72.5% marked either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 19.6% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 7.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Distributing vote buttons was also seen as important to the passage of the bond issue. When combining "Agee" and "Strongly Agree" 78.8% of committee members said this was crucial, 9.1% were neutral or undecided, 12.1% marked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." Sixty percent of the board members marked "Agree" and the remaining 40% selected "Neutral/Undecided." Administrators agreed at the rate of 76.9%, with 23.1% neutral or undecided. As a group, all respondents selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" 76.5% of the time, 15.7% were undecided or neutral and 7.9% marked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

As to the importance of seeking student/teacher support, 84.9% of committee members agreed or strongly agreed this was important, 12.1% were neutral or undecided, and 3.0% disagreed. Board members agreed or strongly agreed this was important with 80.0% of their responses, while 20.0% selected "Neutral/Undecided." All (100.0%) administrators agreed or strongly agreed this was important to the passage of the bond issue. When all groups are combined, 88.4% of the respondents selected either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 9.6% marked "Neutral/Undecided" and 1.9% marked "Disagree." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Utilizing election-day strategies such as poll watching was generally not seen as being crucial to the passage of the bond election. Only 27.2% of committee members selected either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 48.5% were neutral or undecided, and 24.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. One-fourth (25.0%) of the board members marked "Agree," 25.0% were neutral or undecided, and 50.0% disagreed that this was important for the passage of the bond. Administrators did rate this slightly higher but still only 46.7% agreed or strongly agreed this was important for passing the bond issue while the remaining 53.3%

were neutral or undecided. Overall, 32.6% of the respondents selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 48.1% were neutral or undecided, and 19.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This activity was not considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Table 10

The Committee Was Involved in Early Planning

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
District historical data were studied					
Committee	32.4	41.2	23.5	2.9	0.0
Board	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	35.7	42.9	21.4	0.0	0.0
Whole group	37.7	39.6	20.8	1.9	0.0
Results of last election were examined					
Committee	37.5	40.6	18.8	3.1	0.0
Board	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	53.8	38.5	7.7	0.0	0.0
Whole group	38.0	46.0	14.0	2.0	0.0
Election timetable was developed					
Committee	45.5	48.5	6.1	0.0	0.0
Board	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	46.2	46.2	7.7	0.0	0.0
Whole group	47.1	47.1	5.9	0.0	0.0

Early strong campaign organization was developed

Committee	69.7	24.2	0.0	6.1	0.0
Board	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	57.1	42.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	69.2	26.9	0.0	3.8	0.0

Timing of actual campaign was determined

Committee	50.0	34.4	15.6	0.0	0.0
Board	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	50.0	42.9	7.1	0.0	0.0
Whole group	47.1	39.2	13.7	0.0	0.0

Note. All figures are in percentages.

A majority of committee members (73.6%) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that studying district historical data was an important activity, 23.5% said they were neutral or undecided, and 2.9% disagreed that this was important to the bond passage. All (100.0%) of the board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." Administrators (78.6%) agreed or strongly agreed this was important, while the remaining 21.4% marked "Neutral/Undecided." With all groups combined, 77.3% indicated this was important to bond passage, 20.8% were neutral or undecided, and 1.9% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Examining results of the last election was also seen as important to bond passage. Committee members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" at a rate of 78.1%, 18.8% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 3.1% disagreed. Board members unanimously (100.0%) marked "Agree." Nearly all administrators (92.3%) marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," while the

remaining 7.7% selected "Neutral/Undecided." When all groups are combined, 84.0%

agreed or strongly agreed, 14.0% were neutral or undecided, and 2.0% disagreed that this

was important to passage of the bond issue. This activity was considered to be important in

the passage of the bond issue.

Developing an election timetable was seen as crucial to passing the bond election, as

well. Committee members agreed or strongly agreed with this notion at a rate of 94.0%,

while the remaining 6.1% were neutral or undecided. Board members again were unanimous

(100.0%) in their support of this question. Administrators nearly mirrored committee

members, with 92.4% indicating they agreed or strongly agreed, and 7.7% selecting

"Neutral/Undecided." No group had anyone select "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." All

respondents indicated at a rate of 94.2% that they agreed or strongly agreed this was

important in passing the bond. The remaining 5.9% were neutral or undecided and no

respondents selected "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was considered to be

important in the passage of the bond issue.

The creation of an early strong campaign organization received clear support from

respondents. Committee members selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" 93.9% of the time,

with 6.1% disagreeing. All board members (100.0%) selected "Strongly Agree" on this

activity. Administrators were also unanimous (100.0%) in marking they agreed or strongly

agreed. As a whole group, respondents clearly indicated this early strong campaign

organization was important to the passage of the bond issue with 96.1% marking "Agree" or

"Strongly Agree" and 3.8% selecting "Disagree."

Determining the timing of the actual campaign drew no "Disagree" or "Strongly

Disagree" responses. Committee members responded with "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" at a

rate of 84.4%, with 15.6% neutral or undecided. Eighty percent of the board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," with 20.0% neutral or undecided. Administrators strongly supported this activity (92.9%) with 7.1% undecided. With all groups combined, 86.3% indicated they agreed or strongly agreed this was important to bond passage and 13.7% were undecided. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

All categories of survey participants agreed that analyzing the community relations program was important to the passage of the bond. Committee members selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" at a rate of 81.9%, 12.1% were neutral or undecided, and 6.1% disagreed. Sixty percent of the board members chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 40.0% marked "Neutral/Undecided." Administrators strongly supported this as well (78.6%), with 21.4% marking "Neutral/Undecided." Overall, 78.8% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed this was important to bond passage, 17.3% were neutral or undecided, and 3.8% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important to the passage of the bond issue.

Survey participants also supported the development of a campaign slogan. Committee members (67.6%) agreed or strongly agreed this was important in the passage of the bond issue, 23.5% were neutral or undecided, and 8.8% disagreed. Sixty percent of the board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 40.0% were neutral or undecided. Administrators showed similar support with 61.4% indicating they agreed or strongly agreed, 14.3% marking "Neutral/Undecided," and 14.3% marking "Disagree." Looking across all three groups, 67.9% of survey respondents chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 22.6% chose "Neutral/Undecided," and 9.4% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important to the passage of the bond issue.

Table 11

Focus On Disseminating Information

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Community relations program was analyzed					
Committee	36.4	45.5	12.1	6.1	0.0
Board	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	14.3	64.3	21.4	0.0	0.0
Whole group	28.8	50.0	17.3	3.8	0.0
Campaign slogan was developed					
Committee	23.5	44.1	23.5	8.8	0.0
Board	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	21.4	40.0	14.3	14.3	0.0
Whole group	22.6	45.3	22.6	9.4	0.0
Kick-off rally was held					
Committee	3.1	31.3	46.9	15.6	3.1
Board	0.0	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	7.1	35.7	42.9	14.3	0.0
Whole group	3.9	33.3	47.1	13.7	2.0
Direct, personal contact was emphasized					
Committee	60.6	27.3	12.1	0.0	0.0
Board	20.0	80.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	42.9	50.0	7/1	0.0	0.0
Whole group	51.9	38.5	9.6	0.0	0.0

Openness of information was assured

Committee	66.7	27.3	6.1	0.0	0.0
Board	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	42.9	57.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	63.5	32.7	3.8	0.0	0.0

Low key but persistent campaign was conducted

Committee	12.1	54.5	9.1	21.2	3.0
Board	20.0	40.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
Administration	0.0	50.0	21.4	28.6	0.0
Whole group	9.6	51.9	11.5	25.0	1.9

Public forums were used

Committee	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Board	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	53.3	40.0	6.7	0.0	0.0
Whole group	64.2	34.0	1.9	0.0	0.0

A speakers' bureau was developed and used

Committee	45.5	33.3	15.2	6.1	0.0
Board	0.0	80.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Administration	14.3	50.0	28.6	7.1	0.0
Whole group	32.7	42.3	17.3	5.8	1.9

Presentations were made to groups

Committee	81.8	9.1	6.1	3.0	0.0
Board	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	57.1	42.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	73.1	21.2	3.8	1.9	0.0

Needs were thoroughly explained

Committee	72.7	21.2	0.0	6.1	0.0
Board	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	69.2	26.9	0.0	3.8	0.0

A video presentation was used

Committee	63.6	21.2	9.1	3.0	3.0
Board	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	42.9	35.7	7.1	14.3	0.0
Whole group	57.7	25.0	9.6	5.8	1.9

Resource materials were developed for principals

Committee	12.1	45.5	33.3	3.0	6.1
Board	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	23.1	53.8	15.4	7.7	0.0
Whole group	15.7	49.0	27.5	3.9	3.9

News releases/newspaper ads were developed

Committee	39.4	51.5	9.1	0.0	0.0
Board	40.0	20.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	21.4	64.3	14.3	0.0	0.0
Whole group	34.6	51.9	13.5	0.0	0.0

A newsletter was distributed

Committee	33.3	33.3	30.3	0.0	3.0
Board	40.0	60.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	28.6	42.9	28.6	0.0	0.0
Whole group	32.7	38.5	26.9	0.0	1.9

Question and answer sheets were developed

Committee	42.4	21.2	24.2	9.1	3.0
Board	40.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	21.4	57.1	14.3	7.1	0.0
Whole group	36.5	32.7	21.2	7.7	1.9

An information brochure was prepared

Committee	60.6	30.3	6.1	3.0	0.0
Board	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	35.7	57.1	0.0	7.1	0.0
Whole group	53.8	36.5	5.8	3.8	0.0

A "Vote For" flyer was prepared

Committee	73.3	6.7	6.7	13.3	0.0
Board	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	14.3	71.4	14.3	0.0	0.0
Whole group	31.1	53.3	11.1	4.4	0.0

A telephone campaign was conducted

Committee	21.2	39.4	21.2	15.2	3.0
Board	20.0	0.0	80.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	14.3	21.4	64.3	0.0	0.0
Whole group	19.9	30.8	38.5	9.6	1.9

An information hotline was established

Committee	33.3	36.4	21.2	9.1	0.0
Board	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	7.1	50.0	35.7	7.1	0.0
Whole group	25.0	42.3	25.0	7.7	0.0

Door-to-door visits were conducted

Committee	11.4	22.9	40.0	22.9	2.9
Board	0.0	20.0	60.0	0.0	20.0
Administration	14.3	28.6	50.0	7.1	0.0
Whole group	11.1	24.1	44.4	16.7	3.7

Television and/or radio commercials were run

Committee	0.0	0.0	50.0	34.4	15.6
Board	0.0	0.0	40.0	20.0	40.0
Administration	0.0	23.1	53.8	23.1	0.0
Whole group	0.0	6.0	50.0	30.0	14.0

Billboards were leased

Committee	0.0	9.4	40.6	31.3	18.8
Board	0.0	0.0	20.0	20.0	60.0
Administration	0.0	23.1	38.5	30.8	7.7
Whole group	0.0	12.0	38.0	30.0	20.0

Note. All figures are in percentages.

Holding a kick-off rally did not receive great support, with more respondents selecting "Neutral/Undecided" than any other response. Only 34.4% of committee members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 46.9% marked "Neutral/Undecided," 18.7% marked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." Forty percent of the board members agreed this was important and the remaining 60.0% were neutral or undecided. Administrators selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" for 42.8% of their responses, 42.9% were neutral or undecided, and 14.3% disagreed. Across all three groups, 37.2% agreed or strongly agreed a kick-off rally was important to the passage of the bond issue, 47.1% were neutral or undecided, and 15.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This activity was not considered to be important to the passage of the bond issue.

Emphasizing direct, personal contact was strongly supported. Committee members agreed or strongly agreed (87.9%) that this was important to the passage of the bond issue

and 12.1% were neutral or undecided. All (100.0%) of the board members agreed or strongly agreed this was an important activity. Administrators selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on 92.9% of the responses and 7.1% marked "Neutral/Undecided." None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, 90.4% of the respondents marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 9.6% marked "Neutral/Undecided." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Assuring openness of information received very high marks from all three groups. Committee members clearly supported this activity (94.0%), and 6.1% selected "Neutral/Undecided." All (100.0%) of the board members agreed that this was important. All administrators (100.0%) chose either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." None of the respondent checked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." When the three groups were combined, 96.2% either agreed or strongly agreed and 3.8% were neutral or undecided. This activity was considered to be important to the passage of the bond issue.

Conducting a low-key but persistent campaign was recognized as being important to bond passage, as well. A majority of committee members (66.6%) marked that they agreed or strongly agreed this was crucial, 9.1% were neutral or undecided, and 24.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixty percent of board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 20.0% disagreed. One-half (50.0%) of administrators marked "Agree," 21.4% were neutral or undecided, and 28.6% disagreed. Overall, 61.5% agreed or strongly agreed conducting a low-key but persistent campaign positively impacted the outcome of the election, 11.5% selected "Neutral/Undecided," 25.0% disagreed and 1.9% strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Using public forums received extremely high marks from respondents. All (100.0%) committee members and board members selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that this was important to passage of the bond issue. Administrators rated this activity only slightly lower with 93.3% choosing "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 6.7% selecting "Neutral/Undecided." No one selected "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." In total, 98.2% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed public forums were important to the bond passage and 1.9% were neutral or undecided. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

The development and use of a speakers' bureau received support across all three categories of participants. Committee members (78.8%) agreed or strongly agreed this was important to the bond passage, with 15.2% neutral or undecided and 6.1% disagreeing. Eighty percent of the board members marked "Agree" and 20.0% marked "Strongly Disagree." Administrators (64.3%) also agreed or strongly agreed, 28.6% selected "Neutral/Undecided" and 7.1% disagreed. In total, 75.0% chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 17.3% chose "Neutral/Undecided," 5.8% chose "Disagree," and 1.9% strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Respondents saw making presentations to groups as important to the cause of passing the bond, with nearly unanimous support. Committee members clearly indicated (90.9%) that they agreed or strongly agreed this was important to bond passage while 6.1% were neutral or undecided and 3.0% disagreed. All (100.0%) board members chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," as did all (100.0%) administrators. When all three groups are combined, 94.3% marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 3.8% chose "Neutral/Undecided," and 1.9% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Explaining needs thoroughly also received near unanimous support. Only 6.1% of committee members disagreed that this was important to bond passage. All other committee members (93.9%), all board members (100.0%), and all administrators (100.0%) chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." Overall, 96.1% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed and 3.8% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Respondents clearly indicated they believed the use of a video presentation positively impacted the election. Committee members indicated that they primarily agreed or strongly agreed (84.8%), with 9.1% neutral or undecided, 6.0% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Eighty percent of board members agreed or strongly agreed and 20% chose "Neutral/Undecided." More than three-fourths (78.6%) of administrators selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 7.1% were neutral or undecided, and 14.3% disagreed. When considering the three groups jointly, 82.7% agreed or strongly agreed, 9.6% were neutral or undecided, 5.8% disagreed, and 1.9% strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

The development of resource materials for principals was seen as important to the positive outcome of the bond election. Committee members agreed or strongly agreed with 57.6% frequency, 33.3% were neutral or undecided, 9.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Board members (80.0%) chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," with the remaining 20% neutral or undecided. A majority of administrators (76.9%) agreed or strongly agreed, 15.4% were neutral or undecided, and 7.7% disagreed. When the groups were combined, 64.7% chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 27.5% chose "Neutral/Undecided," and 7.8% chose

"Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Respondents indicated that the preparation of news releases and newspaper ads was important to bond passage. Committee members (90.9%) agreed or strongly agreed this was the case, with 9.1% being neutral or undecided. Sixty percent of the board members agreed or strongly agreed and 40.0% chose "Neutral/Undecided." Administrators also largely chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" (85.7%), with 14.3% indicating they were neutral or undecided. No one chose "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." When combining the three groups, 86.5% agreed or strongly agreed and 13.5% chose "Neutral/Undecided." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Participants reported that the distribution of a newsletter was important to bond passage. Committee members (66.6%) selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." Close to one-third (30.3%) were neutral or undecided and 3.0% strongly disagreed. Board members unanimously (100.0%) marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." Administrators also supported this activity, with 71.5% indicating "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." The remaining 28.6% of administrators were neutral or undecided. All respondents marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with 71.2% frequency, 26.9% were neutral or undecided, and 1.9% strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important to the passage of the bond issue.

The development of question and answer sheets was another communication tool receiving favorable responses. Committee members agreed or strongly agreed (63.6%) this activity was important. Approximately one-fourth (24.2%) marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 12.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eighty percent of board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," with the remaining 20.0% neutral or undecided.

Administrators also supported this activity, with 78.5% marking "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 14.3% marking "Neutral/Undecided," and 7.1% disagreeing. Combined across groups, 69.2% indicated "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that these question and answer sheets assisted the bond passage, 21.2% were neutral or undecided, and 9.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Preparing an information brochure received very high marks for helping the passage of the bond election. Committee members reported with 90.9% frequency they agreed or strongly agreed with this notion, 6.1% were neutral or undecided, and 3.0% disagreed. Eighty percent of board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," with the remaining 20.0% indicating "Neutral/Undecided." Administrators ranked this activity slightly higher than committee members, with 92.8% indicating "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 7.1% indicating "Disagree." Overall, 90.3% agreed or strongly agreed that preparing an information brochure was important to bond passage, 5.8% were neutral or undecided, and 3.8% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Developing a "Vote For" flyer was viewed favorably also. Eighty percent of committee members indicated this was important to bond passage, 6.7% were neutral or undecided, and 13.3% disagreed. Sixty percent of board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," with the remaining 40.0% neutral or undecided. Administrators had the highest percentage of respondents (85.7%) who marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." The remaining 14.3% were neutral or undecided. Combining the groups, 84.4% marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 11.1% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 4.4% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Conducting a telephone campaign also received supportive responses, though less clearly so. A majority of committee members (60.6%) reported they agreed or strongly agreed this was important to bond passage, with 21.2% neutral or undecided, and 18.2% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Only 20.0% of board members marked "Strongly Agree," while the remainder (80.0%) selected "Neutral/Undecided." Administrators offered little indication that a telephone campaign had a strong influence on the outcome of the bond election. Only 35.7% agreed or strongly agreed and the remaining 64.3% were neutral or undecided. Put together, 50.7% of the survey respondents selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 38.5% selected "Neutral/Undecided," and 11.5% selected "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

The establishment of an information hotline was seen as favorably affecting the bond issue. Committee members responded that this positively impacted the outcome of the election, with 69.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing, 21.2% neutral or undecided, and 9.1% disagreeing. Eighty percent of the board members marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," with the remaining 20.0% marking "Neutral/Undecided." Administrators provided the smallest margin of support for the establishment of an information hotline, with 57.1% marking "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," 35.7% marking "Neutral/Undecided," and 7.1% disagreeing. Approximately two-thirds (67.3%) of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 25.0% were neutral or undecided, and 7.7% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond.

Conducting door-to-door visits, on the other hand, was not largely viewed by survey participants as positively impacting the outcome of the election. Just over one-third of the committee members (34.3%) agreed or strongly agreed this was important to bond passage,

with 40.0% neutral or undecided, and 25.8% reporting they disagreed or strongly disagreed.
Only 20.0% of board members marked "Agree," 60.0% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and
20.0% strongly disagreed. Administrators gave this activity only slightly more credit, with
42.9% selecting "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," half (50.0%) were neutral or undecided, and
7.1% disagreed. Overall, 35.2% of the respondents selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree,"
44.4% selected "Neutral/Undecided," and 20.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This
activity was not considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Running television and/or radio commercials received almost no support. No
Committee members agreed this was important for bond passage, half (50.0%) were neutral
or undecided, and half (50.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, no board
members agreed, 40.0% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 60.0% disagreed or strongly
disagreed. Administrators did provide some support, with 23.1% marking "Agree." Just
over half (53.8%) were neutral or undecided and 23.1% disagreed. Combined, only 6.0% of
all respondents selected "Agree," 50.0% selected "Neutral/Undecided," and 44.0% marked
"Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was not considered to be important in the
passage of the bond issue.

Leasing billboards received a similar lack of support. Only 9.4% of committee
members agreed this aided the positive outcome of the election, 40.6% were neutral or
undecided, and the remaining 50.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. No board members
reported this had a positive impact, 20.0% were neutral or undecided, and 80.0% disagreed or
strongly disagreed. Administrators did report some success for this activity, though only
23.1% agreed, while 38.5% marked "Neutral/Undecided," and 38.5% marked "Disagree" or
"Strongly Disagree." In total, 12.0% of the respondents marked "Agree," 38.0% marked

"Neutral/Undecided," and 50.0% marked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was not considered to have been important in the passage of the bond issue.

Table 12

Focus on Benefits to Children and the Community

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The need for a quality education was demonstrated to the voters					
Committee	67.6	26.5	5.9	0.0	0.0
Board	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	42.9	57.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	62.3	34.0	3.8	0.0	0.0
Scare tactics/overemphasis of negative results of losing the election were avoided					
Committee	46.9	40.6	9.4	3.1	0.0
Board	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	28.6	64.3	7.1	0.0	0.0
Whole group	43.1	47.1	7.8	2.0	0.0
Benefits for children remained the campaign focus					
Committee	81.8	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Board	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	64.3	35.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Whole group	78.8	21.2	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note. All figures are in percentages.

Focusing on benefits to children and the community was the final category of advisory committee attributes and activities. Demonstrating the need for a quality education to voters received almost unanimous support from survey respondents in all three categories. Among committee members, 94.1% indicated they agreed or strongly agreed this was important to passage of the bond issue. The remaining 5.9% were neutral or undecided. All board members (100.0%) marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," as did all (100.0%) of administrators. Fully 96.3% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with 3.8% neutral or undecided. No one checked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Avoiding scare tactics and overemphasis of negative results of losing the election received support across participant groups. A clear majority of committee members (87.5%) chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" as their response, 9.4% chose "Neutral/Undecided" and 3.1% disagreed. Board members were unanimous (100.0%) in their "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses. Administrators chose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" for 92.9% of their responses and 7.1% selected "Neutral/Undecided." Overall, 90.2% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed this strategy positively impacted the election's outcome, 7.8% were neutral or undecided, and 2.0% disagreed. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

The final survey question of this type addressed assuring that benefits for children remained the campaign focus. This strategy received stronger support than any other feature or activity addressed in the survey. All (100.0%) committee members, board members, and administrators indicated they agreed or strongly agreed this was crucial to the passage of the bond. This activity was considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue.

Open-Ended Questions

The final three questions on the survey were open-ended. These questions allowed respondents to indicate the most important things for a school bond advisory committee to do, make recommendations concerning the use of an advisory committee in a school bond election, and make recommendations about which activities other school districts should not duplicate.

In their descriptions of the most important things for a school bond advisory committee to do, there was agreement between advisory committee members, board members, and district administrators. Themes that ran throughout the responses include the need to adequately prepare a proposal that meets district needs, to accurately and comprehensively inform the public as much as possible, and to seek input and support from a diverse group of citizens. Following are the written responses to this question. Each statement(s) from the respondents are listed and no attempt has been made to categorize or group them.

Committee Members

Decide financial needs, feasibility. Communicate with the community.

Be honestly informative.

Public forums, honest with voters about needs, use local leaders and newspapers.

Raise money for bond campaign, educate and inform voters.

Inform the voters of the need and present the facts.

Getting the info to the public is a necessity. Knowledge is comforting.

Assist in goals/strategy development. Obtain community/voter support.

Get information about "needs" to the voters.

Select a diverse committee team of very outgoing people. If the committee members will talk to others about the value added benefits of what the bond money is to be used for. How others can see the benefit for them like improve education, safety, and increase school recognition increases the value of their home. Prioritize goals long and short and break up tasks into smaller teams so that every member feels productive on the committee.

Create a realistic proposal benefiting the district. Inform the community of the scope and needs as well as real cost to taxpayer.

Determine needs of the district that needs to be addressed through a bond issue.

Determine the needs and the timing of the bond election.

To all have the same info, and be consistent with answers.

Involve community in strategic planning so the bond will reflect needs and support.

Ensure community buy-in (or encourage).

To be inclusive of and respectful of ideas and suggestions from all district residents and employees.

Be organized, solicit as many volunteers as possible with diversity, develop a plan of action.

Be honest, open, inclusive, supportive.

Tell the truth about how the money will be spent.

Analyze needs, determine goals.

Must be organized, raise funds for promotional materials, believe in what they are doing, have a plan, and make personal contacts.

Keep a balanced view and "play the devil's advocate" for the District – the "gut check."

Build facilities efficiently as needed, not "wanted."

Know who your "yes" votes will be – or the most likely to convince – and seek those groups. Word-of-mouth is a powerful tool. The most effective methods were small group discussions, public forums and passionate committee members sharing with their everyday neighbor.

Having a strong committee leader who has committed members.

To determine the needs of the district.

Involve key stakeholders early and keep them informed.

Represent a true cross-section of district voters and inform.

School Board

To communicate with the community, listening to questions and providing open information.

Focus on the children and their needs.

Make sure the/a plan is prepared to meet the long-range goals/growth of the district with the use of the bond money.

To act in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Lead the community.

Administrators

Put needs of students first.

Gather as much information as possible and the research needed to make sound decisions and to inform the public.

Get information out to the voters and then getting them to vote on election day.

Stay actively involved throughout construction ("watch dog" intent/terms of bond).

Focus on primary goals of bond purchases.

Understand need/timeline/voter desires.

Focus must be "child centered" driven!

Inform of actual need and develop trust that funds will be used appropriately.

Have and share the facts.

Reach the voters with information.

Determine long range needs of district.

To focus on the needs of the children.

Communicate the need to pass election. Identify district needs.

Respondents were also asked to make recommendations concerning the use of an advisory committee in school bond elections. There were several concepts that recurred throughout their comments. To begin, several stated that a bond election should not be attempted without an advisory committee. They also stated it was important to have a committee that was comprised of a cross-section of the community so that all stakeholders are represented. Finally, they felt it was very important for committee members to have a strong, active role in the preparation of the bond proposal and in the election campaign. Responses to this question follow by category of participant.

Committee Members

The advisory committee should set strategy for the bond – How big a bond? For what perceived needs? Over what time frame? Feasibility? Communication with the community.

Use people from all over the district.

Use cross section of district, organize way ahead, public forums.

Always use consistent and accurate information with every advisory member – never let anyone on the committee feel like an outsider.

Use a committee and let them take the lead.

I think the advisory committee was very effective and had a lot of impact.

They need to participate in development of strategy and goals so there is complete buy in and commitment to the elements of the bond.

I feel it must provide information to the voters and tell the truth in its costs and needs.

Always have an advisory committee.

The advisory committee makes recommendations made by teachers, administrators, students and the community to ensure the most important issues are addressed by the school bond team. Without a committee of everyone the bond election will probably not pass due to lack of communication and understanding of why more money needs to be spent. Society reads the paper about all the bad administrators, having a diverse committee helps in the bond election.

Make sure all aspects of community are involved. Include borderline voters on the committee.

Make absolutely sure that committee members understand their role as advisors and board/administration must set parameters.
Wouldn't run one without strong committee.

Absolutely necessary.

A must.

The use of an advisory board gives all groups input and a forum for various viewpoints and ideas. It prevents polarizing factions within the school district.

Communication to public. Coordinating with school administration.

Continue to be open and inclusive.

Include all segments of community along with professional consultants.

Be sure to have representation from all school support groups i.e. Band Boosters, Athletic Boosters, PTA/PTO, etc. Community groups, Senior Citizens, Chambers of Commerce, Pastors. Make sure everyone understands the issue and agrees with the goal.

Communication at all levels is key to success – open, honest information.

An advisory committee is critical – provides input from across the district, provides automatic network of supporters.

The leader of group is determined, provide support and access to information to that leader through open communication.

Must provide accurate and comprehensive information.

Make careful membership selections; Be honest with the taxpayers.

Administration guide without dominating.

Board Members

Don't try to pass a bond [issue] without one [advisory committee].

Involve community – admin – schools. Make sure they all buy in.

Look at the physical needs of the district.

Strongly recommend that this process be used for all bond elections.

Strong community participation.

District Administrators

Be certain to consider growth expected.

Be sure that you have the information needed to make sound decisions.

Involve as many as possible.

Stay actively involved throughout construction ("watch dog" intent/terms of bond).

Start early, talk to all voters.

Our committees in the past have been outstanding – follow same path.

It is a good way for non-employees of the district to be involved to keep people from thinking it is just school people asking for money.

Educate and empower.

Each school represented not just area.

Ensure that all communities within a district are represented equally.

The committee should represent all segments of the district.

Finally, respondents were asked to make recommendations about activities that should not be duplicated in the bond election process in other school districts. While comments were made here, the only consistent theme found in these comments was that little should be changed from the activities of the studied school district's process. The other

comments were sometimes broad and sometimes specific but followed no patterns, as

indicated below.

Committee members

> Don't do expensive glossy publications – perception is that school district is not spending wisely and not directly benefiting the students.

> Don't aggravate those who you know will oppose the election regardless of need. Find those individuals who can communicate the need to those who vote but have no ties to school (senior citizens, empty nesters, business owners.)

> 7:00 a.m. weekly advisory committee meetings.

> Just follow the example NISD set.

> To focus on key strategic elements and community education. I am not aware of any elements that did not work as planned.

> Do not include all items as one issue especially if it means combining academic facilities with extra-curricular facilities.

> I think we would run the same campaign again!

> All of the activities were valuable, especially touring the school facilities to see what the needs of each school or area were and how best to meet those needs.

> Try to allow more time to prepare.

> Don't assume that everyone agrees with issue.

> Do not use so many people that are school district employees. It gives the perception that there is a trade off; endorsement for a salary increase.

> Extend committee activities over long time period. Pursue "pie in sky" ideas.

> Publish information about public meetings in a timely manner; involve principals in the planning of the bond targets.

> Do not use "scare" tactics – positive, informative, thorough presentations saturating community provides better results.

Board members

 None.

District Administrators

 Don't know.

 Branch voting and provide as much information as possible to your voters.

 Do not have board members as the "only" leaders of committees and presentations.

 Stay actively involved throughout construction ("watch dog" intent/terms of bond).

 Our last bond passing was superb! An excellent model for any district wanting to pass a bond!

 No scare tactics.

 During committee meetings not repeat previous meetings discussions.

 Telephone campaign – too much time – could be used other means.

 Possibly avoid focusing too heavily on the negatives of the outcome if bond fails.

Summary of Findings

The study found that the district did, in fact, largely follow the recommendations found in the literature. Committee members volunteered to serve (43.3%), were nominated by school district officials (36.7%), or a combination of the two (approx. 10%). Committee activities were determined by a mixture of district administration (52.7%) and committee input (27.3%), with district administrators taking the lead role. In carrying out committee activities, board members viewed this as primarily a committee responsibility (50%), while committee members viewed this as a split responsibility between committee volunteers (42.1%) and administrators (39.5%). District administrators viewed carrying out the committee activities as an administrative responsibility (53.3%). The committee was viewed

as being a well-balanced representation of the district (95.9%) that was run through a joint effort of district administrators and committee members. All stakeholders viewed the input provided by the committee as valid and of high value (84.6%).

Advisory committee features and activities were largely seen as being important to the successful passage of the bond issue. The first category, school officials playing a low-key role received mixed responses. While administrators keeping a low profile was not seen as positively impacting the outcome of the election, having non-school officials carry out the majority of the work was supported. Having a diverse community task force was seen as being important in the successful outcome of the election. Focusing on YES voters had six questions that addressed this issue in the survey. The respondents deemed four of these questions important to the passage of the bond issue while two were not considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue. Involvement in early planning was seen as being important to the success of the election on all five questions that addressed these activities. Eighteen of the twenty-two activities that addressed the focus on disseminating information were seen as positively impacting the outcome of the election, while four of these activities were not seen as important. Focusing on benefits to children and the community was the final category of advisory committee attributes and activities. This section, too, had a great deal of agreement between the three surveyed groups and received overall high ratings from each group.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Findings

This study investigated the success of a variety of advisory committee activities and the value placed on them in a North Texas independent school district's successful school bond election. Those surveyed were comprised of three groups: advisory committee members, school district administrators, and school board members. The survey focused on which activities were deemed to have the largest impact on the positive outcome of the election. The research questions were:

1. How were members of the committee selected?

2. Who determined the activities to be conducted by the committee?

3. Who had the primary responsibility of carrying out the committee activities?

4. How well did the committee represent the district?

5. How much value was placed on the input provided by committee members?

6. Which activities were deemed to be the most successful?

7. Which activities would not be duplicated in a subsequent election?

Surveys were mailed to all of the studied district's school bond advisory committee members, school board members, and school district administrators. The return rate of the surveys was 75.4%, with 100% of the board members returning their surveys. Results were recorded for the entire studied group, as well as for each of the subgroups.

The study found that the district did largely follow the recommendations found in the literature. In the area of selection of committee members 43.3% stated that committee members volunteered to serve, 36.7% reported that school district officials nominated them,

and approximately 10% checked that it was a combination of the two. Committee activities were predominantly determined by district administration (52.7%), followed by committee input (27.3%). In carrying out committee activities, the groups were divided. Board members viewed this as a committee responsibility (50.0%), while committee members viewed this as a split responsibility between committee volunteers (42.1%) and administrators (39.5%). District administrators viewed carrying out the committee activities as an administrative responsibility (53.3%). The committee was viewed as being a well-balanced representation of the district (69.4%), with 26.5% checking "Somewhat Balanced." Most stakeholders (84.6%) viewed the input provided by the committee as having high value or very high value.

The advisory committee features and activities made up the largest portion of the survey. Respondents were provided a list of committee features and activities carried out in the election process. They then indicated whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral or undecided, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that each activity was important in the passage of the bond issue, in relation to the other features and activities. Activities in which at least 50.0% of the responses were "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" were considered to be important in the passage of the bond issue. The items considered to be important were:

Benefits for children remained the campaign focus	100.0%
Public forums used	98.2%
The need for a quality education demonstrated to voters	96.3%
Openness of information assured	96.2%
Needs thoroughly explained	96.1%
Early strong campaign organization developed	96.1%

Presentations made to groups	94.3%
Election timetable developed	94.2%
Endorsements from prominent citizens/groups obtained	94.1%
Direct, personal contact emphasized	90.4%
An information brochure prepared	90.3%
Scare tactics/emphasis of negative election results avoided	90.2%
Student/teacher support sought	88.4%
News releases/newspaper ads developed	86.5%
Timing of actual campaign determined	86.3%
Committee members represent the district's diversity	86.3%
A "Vote For" flyer prepared	84.4%
Results of the last election studied	84.0%
A video presentation used	82.7%
The community relations program analyzed	78.8%
District historical data studied	77.3%
"Vote" buttons distributed	76.5%
A speakers' bureau developed and used	75.0%
Postcard reminders to vote	72.5%
A newsletter distributed	71.2%
Question and answer sheets developed	69.2%
A campaign slogan developed	67.9%
An information hotline established	67.3%
Developed resource materials for principals	64.7%

YES voters targeted	63.2%
A low-key but persistent campaign	61.5%
Non-district employees primarily carry out committee activities	56.6%
A telephone campaign	50.7%

Those items receiving less that 50.0% "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" responses were not considered important to the passage of the bond issue. These items include:

A special voter registration drive	45.1%
School officials play a low-key, supportive role	43.2%
A kick-off rally	37.2%
Door-to-door visits	35.2%
Election-day strategies such as poll watching	32.6%
Billboards	12.0%
Television and/or radio commercials	6.0%

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

In the subcategory of school officials maintaining a low profile, the surveyed participants varied somewhat from the literature in their views of a successful campaign strategy. While the literature supports this low profile, the data from the survey were about evenly divided concerning the importance of this concept, with barely more than a simple majority (56.6%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that this was important to the passage of the bond issue. The committee members indicated at a similar rate (58.9%) that non-district officials carrying out the majority of the committee activities positively impacted the bond election.

Board members stressed the importance of the role of committee members in their responses, with 60% stating that administrators maintaining a low profile positively impacted the election outcome and, at 100%, that non-district officials playing the largest role in committee activities was beneficial. District administrators, however, felt that their maintaining a low profile was not an important factor in the election, with 67.2% marking either "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." They were also the group that indicated the least support, at 42.9%, for the idea that non-school officials carrying out a majority of the committee's work positively impacted the outcome of the bond issue.

Clearly the differing perceptions here are worth noting for school districts attempting to pass a bond election. The fact that committee members, board members, and administrators viewed these questions differently would appear to be a reflection of their perspectives. It may also, however, be a result of unclear expectations for all parties involved. Clear and consistent communication among all parties involved may help to alleviate this disparity.

While the respondents did support the premises a low-key role for school officials and having community members take the lead on community activities, other educators seeking to pass a bond election should carefully consider the fact that responses in this area were not clear-cut. They would be well advised to consider their own communities to determine what role should be played by school officials and what role should be played by committee members. In a very small district, for example, it may be impractical or a waste of effort to recruit and prepare a committee to study district information and disseminate it to the citizens.

Having a diverse community task force was clearly favored by all three categories of participants, and especially so by board members. There was not a single respondent who indicated that they disagreed that acquiring the endorsement of prominent citizens was important to the passage of the school bond election. Fully 94.1% marked either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," with the remaining 5.9% marking "Neutral/Undecided." The diverse composition of the committee was also clearly viewed as being important to the passage of the bond, with 86.3% of the respondents indicating that they agreed that this attribute was an important factor in the success of the election. This is certainly an organizational design element that should be replicated by any school district seeking to pass a bond issue. When all citizens in the community feel their interests have been represented, they will be much more inclined to offer their support. It helps people feel comfortable that the bond will positively impact all citizens and that no group is being excluded.

Although the category of focusing on YES voters received more "Neutral/ Undecided" votes than any other category, it did receive a generally supportive reaction from survey participants. Less than half of the respondents indicated that conducting a voter registration drive and employing the use of election day strategies were important to the passage of the bond but other activities received stronger support. Seeking student/teacher support was viewed as being important to the passage of the bond by 88.4%, 76.5% agreed in the distribution of "Vote" buttons, 72.5% supported the use of postcard reminders to vote, and 63.4% pointed to targeting YES voters as being important to the passage of the bond. All school districts should be keenly aware of their supporters and how to inform them and keep them connected to the district. This group should serve as a core of support during a bond election, as well as at other times.

Involving the committee in early planning drew favorable marks from the respondents. Within this subcategory, examining the results of the last election drew the least impressive numbers with 74.0% agreeing that this was important to the passage of the bond election. Studying district data was viewed as slightly more important, at 77.3%. Most (86.3%) agreed that determining the timing of the actual campaign was important, 94.2% felt developing an election timetable was important, and 96.1% stated that creating an early strong campaign organization was important to passage of the bond issue. This evidence points to the need for school district to know where they are going before they ever start. School districts should develop a timetable for the entire process from organizing and training the committee to election day activities before bringing in community members to work on the bond election process.

Because a focus on disseminating information is such a large function of a school bond advisory committee, and because this dissemination of information can take so many forms, this subcategory contained the most items on the survey. Advisory committee members marked "Strongly Agree" most often in this category of questions. More than 50% of the committee members indicated "Strongly Agree" on eight attributes/activities: Emphasizing direct personal contact, assuring openness of information, using public forums, making presentations to groups, explaining needs thoroughly, using a video presentation, preparing an information brochure, and developing "Vote For" flyer. In contrast, four items on the survey received less than 50% support by the respondents: holding a kick-off rally, conducting door-to-door visits, running television and/or radio commercials, and leasing billboards.

Over half of the board members marked "Strongly Agree" on six items dealing with the dissemination of information. Their list was very similar to the committee's list: Assuring openness of information, using public forums, making presentations to groups, explaining needs thoroughly, using a video presentation, and preparing an information brochure. Administrators marked three items highly: Using public forums, making presentations to groups, and explaining needs thoroughly. With all three groups combined, emphasizing direct personal contact, assuring openness of information, using public forums, making presentations to groups, explaining needs thoroughly, using a video presentation, and preparing an information brochure each were marked "Strongly Agree" indicating that the items were important to the passage of the bond election by more than half of the survey respondents. School officials should unquestionably take heed to this information. Voters must be confident that they have been fully and accurately informed before they approve spending more of their own money. They must also feel that there is a legitimate need to build a new school and its construction will lead to the fulfillment of goals widely seen as worthwhile. Without a strong feeling of trust developed through the comprehensive dissemination of information, there is little hope of passing a bond issue.

In comparing the items ranked lower in importance by the respondents, a pattern emerges as well. For this comparison, four items were found to have not received 50.0% "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" marks. In effect, less than half of the respondents in all three categories agreed that the following items were important to the passage of the bond: holding a kick-off rally, conducting door-to-door visits, running television and/or radio commercials, and leasing billboards. Board members and administrators added that a telephone campaign was not important to the bond passage. Administrators also did not indicate that a persistent

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but low-key campaign was important. It appears that while there is support for these activities in the literature, the respondents in the studied school district viewed these activities as having little impact on the outcome of the election. Other school districts seeking to pass a bond election may want to consider eliminating these activities. The low-key campaign should be replaced by an active campaign that attempts to reach as many voters as possible.

Focusing on benefits to children and the community also received high marks from all categories of participants, as a subcategory of committee attributes and activities. More than 90% of the responses indicated that demonstrating the need for a quality education to voters, avoiding scare tactics and overemphasis of negative results of losing the election, and focusing on the benefits for children were important to the passage of the bond issue. Voters must feel connected to the children of the district and must fully understand the benefits to be reaped by the passage of the bond. When the focus of the campaign is benefits for children, little is left for opponents to argue, except for less important side issues.

When respondents were asked an open-ended question about which activities should not be duplicated in other school districts seeking to pass a bond election, there was no clear pattern in their comments, as there was in the other survey items. Relative to the other open-ended questions, few answers were provided in response to this open-ended prompt. Only avoiding the use of scare tactics emerged as a possible pattern, with a total of three respondents writing that other districts should not use this strategy. Coincidentally, survey respondents (90.2%) indicated that avoiding the use of scare tactics was important to the passage of the studied bond election. They clearly believed that scare tactics were not

overemphasized. Participants clearly believed the activities used in the studied school district were largely effective.

Implications of Research Findings

The following recommendations are made in accordance with the findings and conclusions of this study. This is a minimal list to serve as a starting point for districts. Individual districts are encouraged to expand upon these according to the needs of their individual communities.

1. School districts should plan early to determine how many members the school bond advisory committee should have, how the members will be selected, and how best to assure a diverse community task force.

2. This pre-planning should determine the roles and activities to be conducted by the district administration, advisory committee members, and school board members, as well as the responsibilities of each of the three groups.

3. Early planning by the committee should involve determining the timing of the campaign, developing an election timetable, and creating an early strong campaign organization. Reviewing the results of the last election and studying district data are also important planning activities for the committee.

4. In efforts to focus on YES voters, school bond advisory committees should seek student and teacher support, and determine how best to reach voters, such as through the employment of "Vote" buttons and sending postcard reminders to vote. It is also important for school districts to consult with their attorneys to assure that the district takes no improper actions. Texas law, for example, prohibits the use of district funds to pay for "Vote For"

materials, but allows the use of district funds for materials that provide information on bond elections.

5. To effectively disseminate information, the most important function of a school bond advisory committee, the advisory committee should emphasize direct personal contact, assure openness of information, use public forums, make presentations to groups, explain needs thoroughly, use a video presentation, and prepare an information brochure.

6. The committee should demonstrate a need for a quality education to the community, avoid scare tactics and overemphasis of negative results of losing the election, and focus on the benefits for children in the passage of the bond election.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations for further research are made based on the findings and conclusions reported in this study.

1. It is recommended that investigations be made into districts losing a bond election to determine how closely they followed, or did not follow, the recommendations in the literature.

2. This study should be replicated in other districts to confirm the findings and conclusions, and to provide additional data and insights into the study of school bond advisory committees.

3. This study examined the data collected from those closely involved with the processes of the advisory committee. It would be beneficial to study those voters not directly involved in the process to determine their views about what advisory committee activities had the largest influence on their decision to support or not to support a bond election.

4. While the literature indicates that school officials should maintain a low-key, supportive role, this position was not supported by the present study. A study should be conducted to more closely examine the role that should be played by school district officials in the bond election process.

5. Clearly, the leadership of the committee and the personalities of its members, as well as how specific roles are defined should receive further study.

Conclusion

School districts desiring to pass a bond election then, should carefully consider the research available in determining their plan of action. Survey respondents consistently supported the practices put into place by the studied school district, which closely mirrored the activities espoused in the research. Respondents believed the diversity of the task force and the roles of the committee members to be crucial to the passage of the bond. The only subcategory of questions that drew mixed reviews and positions of support was that of the need for the administration and board to maintain a low profile. Participants in the survey viewed having a diverse community task force, focusing on YES votes, involvement in early planning, focusing on disseminating information, and focusing on benefits to children and the community as being important to the successful passage of the school bond election, with clear dissemination of information being the most important activity of the committee.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

School Bond Advisory Committee Activities in Your District
Survey of Participants

Your participation is needed to reflect the viewpoints of those involved in school bond advisory committees. Please complete this survey and <u>return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.</u> Responses should be postmarked by **December 28, 2003**.

This survey is part of a University of North Texas doctoral study of the characteristics of school bond advisory committees in public school districts and the activities conducted by these committees. The purpose of the study is to learn which school bond advisory committee characteristics and activities are most valuable. All data will be prepared in the aggregate. Surveys are numbered for tracking purposes only. ALL ANSWERS WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL.

If you have any questions, or if you prefer to answer by phone or e-mail, please contact me at home:
Philo Waters, III at 940-648-2241 or e-mail philoallena@academicplanet.com.

Use back of page to answer questions if needed. Thank you for your participation.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND LEADERSHIP

Please <u>check</u> the response that best answers each question. Select **<u>only one</u>** response per question.

1.   How were committee members selected?
_____ Board-appointed
_____ Volunteer
_____ Nominated by school district administrators
_____ I don't know
_____ Other (Please specify.) _____
2.   Who determined the activities to be conducted by the committee?
_____ Determined by district administration
_____ Determined by the committee chair
_____ Determined by committee vote
_____ Other (Please specify.) _____
3.   Who had the primary responsibility of carrying out the committee activities?
_____ School district administrators
_____ Committee volunteers
_____ Community volunteers
_____ Committee chair
_____ Other (Please specify.) _____
4.   How would you describe the composition of the committee?
_____ Not a well-balanced representation of the district
_____ A somewhat well balanced representation of the district
_____ A well-balanced representation of the district
5.   How would you describe the overall value placed on the input provided by committee members?
_____ Little or no value
_____ Slight value
_____ Moderate value
_____ High value
_____ Very high value

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

Below are a number of bond committee attributes and activities that are suggested to positively impact bond election results. Next to each of the following activities, please indicate whether you feel the item was crucial to the positive outcome of the 2000 school bond election, in relation to the other attributes and activities.

Circle **SA** if you **S**trongly **A**gree that the attribute/activity was crucial for bond passage.
Circle **A** if you **A**gree that the attribute/activity was crucial for bond passage.
Circle **N/U** if you are **N**eutral or **U**ndecided that the attribute/activity was crucial for bond passage.
Circle **D** if you **D**isagree that the attribute/activity was crucial for bond passage.
Circle **SD** if you **S**trongly **D**isagree that the attribute/activity was crucial for bond passage **or** if the item was **not used** by the advisory committee.

Advisory Committee Features and Activities

6.	School officials played a low-key supportive role in committee activities	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
7.	Non-district employees primarily carried out committee activities	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
8.	Endorsements from prominent citizens/community groups were acquired	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
9.	Committee members represented the district's diversity	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
10.	YES voters were targeted	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
11.	A special voter registration drive was conducted	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
12.	Postcard reminders to vote were sent	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
13.	"Vote" buttons were distributed	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
14.	Student/teacher support was sought	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
15.	Election-day strategies such as poll watching were conducted	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
16.	District historical data were studied	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
17.	Results of last election were examined	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
18.	Election timetable was developed	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
19.	Early strong campaign organization was created	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
20.	Timing of actual campaign was determined	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
21.	Community relations program was analyzed	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
22.	Campaign slogan was developed	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
23.	Kick-off rally was held	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
24.	Direct, personal contact was emphasized	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
25.	Openness of information was assured	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
26.	Low key but persistent campaign was conducted	SA	A	N/U	D	SD

27. Public forum(s) were used	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
28. A speakers' bureau was developed and used	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
29. Presentations were made to groups	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
30. Needs were thoroughly explained	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
31. A video presentation was used	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
32. Resource materials were developed for principals	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
33. News releases/newspaper ads were prepared	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
34. A newsletter was distributed	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
35. Question and answer sheets were developed	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
36. An information brochure was prepared	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
37. A "Vote For" flyer was prepared	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
38. A telephone campaign was conducted	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
39. An information hotline was established	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
40. Door-to-door visits were conducted	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
41. Television and/or radio commercials were run	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
42. Billboards were leased	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
43. The need for a quality education was demonstrated to the voters	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
44. Scare tactics/overemphasis of negative results of losing the election were avoided	SA	A	N/U	D	SD
45. Benefits for children remained the campaign focus	SA	A	N/U	D	SD

SUMMARY QUESTIONS
(Answers may be continued on back if necessary.)

46. What are the most important things for a school bond advisory committee to do to ensure bond passage?

_____

47. What recommendations do you have concerning the use of an advisory committee in a school bond election?

_____

48. What, if any, activities would you recommend other school districts seeking to pass a bond election not duplicate and why?

_____

Thank you for your time. Please place the completed form in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope and mail.

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