

How to pass a school bond

*From your first community meeting
to the ballot box.*

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Who are these people?

- ▶ Based in Kansas City
- ▶ In business with school districts since 1992
- ▶ Small staff (all work virtually - low overhead!)
- ▶ Work almost exclusively for public entities - K-12, libraries, cities and counties
- ▶ Clients have raised nearly \$7 billion in new revenue at the ballot box
- ▶ Simply put: We work to help our clients better connect with their key stakeholders

3-tier Approach

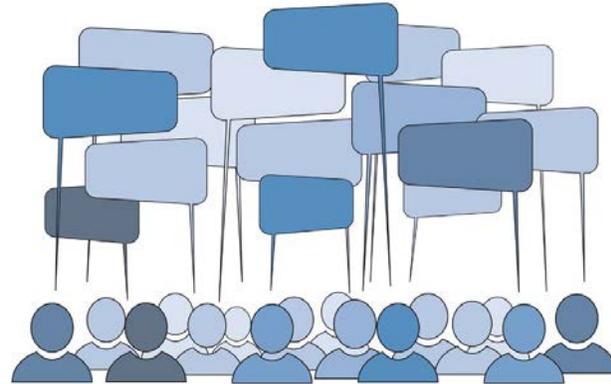
- ▶ Citizens Advisory Committee
- ▶ Pre-election Research
- ▶ Election Campaign



STEP ONE: Listen!

Citizens Advisory Committee

- ▶ What is a Citizens Advisory Committee?
- ▶ Why start one?
 - ▶ Receive on going input.
 - ▶ Create a sounding board.
 - ▶ Put initiatives to the test.
 - ▶ Surface surprise information.





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Citizens Advisory Committee

- ▶ Timing: 12 to 24 months before anticipated election date.
- ▶ Gather the right “cast of characters.”
- ▶ Consider a “state of the district” survey at the beginning.
- ▶ Consider a communication audit at some point in the process.

STEP TWO: Insight that informs decisions

Pre-election Research

- ▶ Why pre-election research?
 - ▶ Perception is reality. It is essential to know what a true cross-section of your patrons are thinking.
 - ▶ Helps structure a winning ballot proposal.



STEP TWO: Insight that informs decisions

Pre-election Research

- ▶ Benefits of pre-election research
 - ▶ Identify how to communicate with key stakeholders.
 - ▶ Identify what messages to communicate so they resonate with patrons.
 - ▶ Be certain a comprehensive analysis of key opinions are collected without bias.
 - ▶ Gather statistically reliable data. (400 phone calls)



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Pre-election Research

- ▶ Timing: 6 to 8 months before anticipated election date
- ▶ Identify your information needs. Ask yourself, “When we’re done, what do we need to know to help us make decisions?”

Examples:

- ▶ How patrons rate the school district’s performance
- ▶ What patrons like and dislike about a potential ballot proposal
- ▶ What patrons would be willing to pay for a proposal they like



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Pre-election Research

- ▶ Solicit potential research partners
 - ▶ If using a RFP, keep it simple and explain:
 - ▶ Your research needs
 - ▶ Your timing expectations
 - ▶ Your thinking on methodology (but be open to other suggestions)
 - ▶ Your expectations for experience (educational experience is helpful)
 - ▶ Your deadline for submission

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Pre-election Research

- ▶ Reviewing proposals, look for...
 - ▶ Do they understand your needs?
 - ▶ Do they have suitable experience, and do they provide references?
 - ▶ How do they collect data? (In-house staff, partner organization, etc.) Will they be credible representatives of your school district? (Remember, a mispronounced school name or an unprofessional approach by a college-age telephone researcher will reflect on your school district.)
 - ▶ Do they fully explain the budget they are proposing?



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Pre-election Research

- ▶ Promote your research plans
 - ▶ Good PR - it demonstrates transparency, and also stimulates greater levels of participation.
- ▶ Standby

STEP THREE: Get ready for the ballot box

Campaign Management

What you need to succeed on Election Day:

- ▶ 3 months to plan.
- ▶ A theme that resonates with voters.
- ▶ Benefit-driven messages.
- ▶ Campaign materials: signs, brochures, mailers, etc.
- ▶ Passionate volunteers.
- ▶ A schedule of activities designed to strategically disseminate the message in a manner that builds excitement and interest.





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Campaign Management

Milestone Dates

- ▶ 12 weeks out: Identify chairs/co-chairs and form committees, conduct first committee meetings, determine campaign theme, logo, budget and fundraising begins.
- ▶ 10-8 weeks out: Prepare communication efforts with website going live, seek enforcements, host kick-off event/recruit volunteers, start speaking engagements.



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Campaign Management

Milestone Dates

- ▶ 6 to 4 weeks: Launch social media, distribute printed materials, yard signs go up.
- ▶ 3 weeks: Prepare “Just the Facts” campaign for response to a Political Action Committee attack. Begin PR.
- ▶ 2 weeks: Final push efforts.
- ▶ Election Day: Volunteers stationed at polls.



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Campaign Management

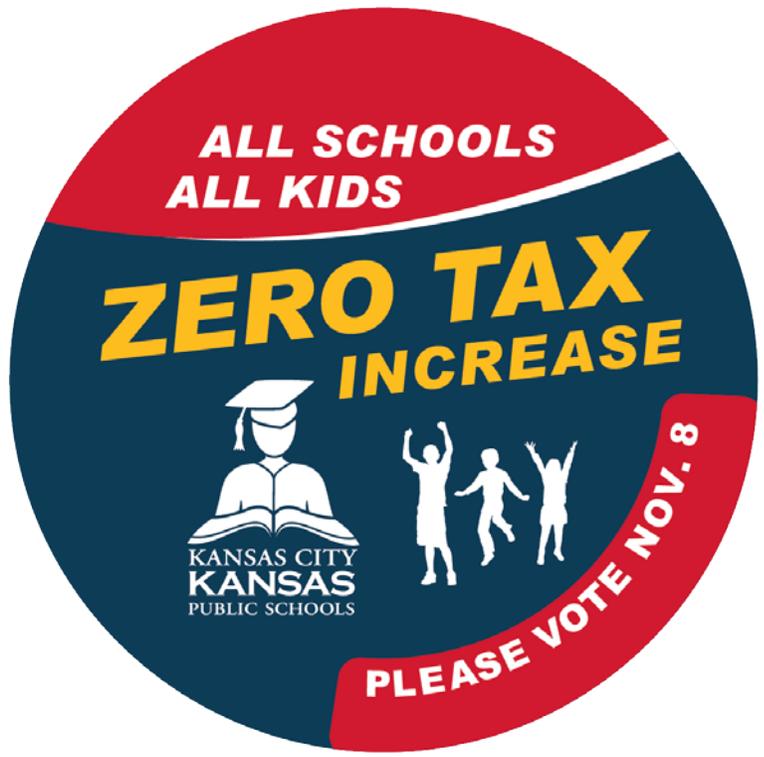
Campaign Theme

- ▶ Keep it simple.
- ▶ Use pre-election research to guide campaign theme.
- ▶ Generally, research has shown to stay away from the word “build” or “building.”
- ▶ “Excellence” language works well in wealthy school districts.



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Campaign Theme Samples





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Campaign Management

Key Messages Must Answer 3 Questions

▶ WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

"All schools benefit. The plan includes four new schools, extensive repairs and renovations and maintenance."

▶ HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

"An average household will pay about \$48 per year."

▶ WHY SHOULD I VOTE YES? (What's in it for me?)

"Investing in our schools supports our students and strengthens our community."



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Campaign Management

Campaign Materials

- ▶ Consistent and redundant.
- ▶ Positive message across all communications vehicles.
- ▶ Launch communications at the *right* time.

- ▶ Use same creative for “please vote” and “vote yes.”
 - ▶ Saves the budget.



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Campaign Management

“Please Vote” & “Vote Yes”

**ALL SCHOOLS
ALL KIDS** 

**ZERO TAX
INCREASE**


KANSAS CITY
KANSAS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PLEASE VOTE NOV. 8

**ALL SCHOOLS
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**ZERO TAX
INCREASE**
School Bond


KANSAS CITY
KANSAS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Paid for by KCK Strong. James White, treasurer.

VOTE YES NOV. 8



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Campaign Management

Passionate Volunteers!!

Where do you find them?

- ▶ Internal - staff and teachers
- ▶ PTA/PTO
- ▶ Community and civic groups
- ▶ Businesses

How can they help?

- ▶ Present a presentation
- ▶ Help rally more volunteers
- ▶ Distributing signage and communications materials
- ▶ Raise money



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Campaign Management

Final Thoughts

- ▶ Need a strong brand.
- ▶ 10-80-10 Rule
- ▶ Campaign focus can change and hinder your outcome.
- ▶ What works for one district, may not work for another.

EVERGREEN CONCEPTS

Communications Audit

- ▶ Evaluation that pinpoints the messages that are getting through and making a difference, and the ones that are falling short.

Student Exit Surveys

- ▶ Hear from the most important target market you have.

Parent Alumni Program

- ▶ Keep your connection to people who have made you successful in the past.

Climate Study

- ▶ Provides insight into what's really going on inside your buildings or organization.

QUESTIONS?

Thank you!

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