Planning for a Successful Referendum: Winning Before You Start

Illinois Community College
Chief Financial Officers
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Presenters

- Kevin Heid
  Senior Vice President
  Stifel Nicolaus

- Rod Wright
  President
  UNICOM·ARC
“The days when a superintendent and the school board can sit in a room and make decisions about the future of a district or the future of a community are long gone.”

Dr. Chris (Wright) Nicastro, Commissioner of Education, State of Missouri, Former Superintendent of Hazelwood School District
“The Board of Education wins or loses a referendum before it ever votes to place it on the ballot.”

John Cary
Superintendent — Special School District of St. Louis County
Realistic Expectation Of Campaign Committees

THE NEW REALITY

Benchmark Survey

100%

0%

Election Day

Old Pattern

New Pattern
The Four Key Questions to Success:

1. Do we have a fighting chance?
2. Do we have a bulletproof plan?
3. Do we have internal unity?
4. Can we conduct an outstanding campaign?
Question #1

Do we have a fighting chance?
Solid Research: Why?

- Talk is cheap, nothing else is
- Intuition often wrong
- Attenders/emailers/callers/bloggers not representative
- Language matters
- Determine impact of theme and messages
- Where people get information
- Compare “everyone” to input from engagement
- Develop roadmap/plan
- Determine if you have a fighting chance
Support for Referendum

4. I’d like to ask you about a possible referendum for College of DuPage. If the Board of Trustees decides to put a referendum on the ballot, the purpose would be to repair, renovate and expand its facilities. For the purposes of this question, let’s assume the referendum would be a $168 million bond proposal. If an election were held today, would you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose this proposal?
Solid Research: How?

- Define audiences
- Brainstorm with team members
- Methods
  - Focus groups/input sessions
  - Telephone surveys
  - Mail/email surveys
  - Internet panels
  - Communication audits
  - Tracking surveys/on-going measurement
Question #2

Do we have a bulletproof plan?
Two critical elements of a bulletproof plan:

• **How?** - Through Community Engagement
  “Created by the people for the people”

• **What?** - Consensus on Key Issues
  “Greatest enemy of good is perfect”
Community Engagement Works

Why?

- Public permission is needed for meaningful change
- Public won’t support what it doesn’t understand
- Public is resistant to top-down approach
- Discovery is more powerful than persuasion
- It is a powerful communication tool
- Builds an army for implementation
Community Engagement Works

Why?

- Discovery is more powerful than persuasion
Community Engagement - Best Practices

- Involves a large number of people
- Meaningful dialogue resulting in consensus
- Ongoing two-way communication
Community Engagement - Best Practices

• Internal acceptance/support/communication
• Clear charge
• Citizen leadership
• More than the “usual suspects”
• An open process
• True dialogue/two-way communication
• Comprehensive timeline/planning syllabus
• Data/Information driven
Community Engagement - Best Practices

- Well planned/organized meetings/events
  - workshops
  - open houses
- Small group work sessions and one-on-one activities
- Documentation (information and consensus points)
Community Engagement Model
Validation of Plan

Facilitating Team
Develop Options
Communications Group
Outreach Group
Canvass Group

COMMUNITY INPUT
Forums
Electronic
Clip and Mail
Other

Input Processed
Recommendation to MISD Board
Action On Vision

CHARGE FROM THE GOVERNING BOARD
Community Engagement - Best Practices

Effective Two-Way Communications (upfront and continuous)

- Letter of Invitation
- Community Outreach
- Brochure
- Press Releases
- Mailings
- Media (Print/Electronic)
- Social Media/Internet/E-Mail
- Video
Community Engagement - Sample Names & Logos

- ENCORE: Planning For The Next 60 Years
- CODiscover: The Value of A Lifetime College of DuPage
- HIGH SCHOOL TASK FORCE: Decision 4 Decatur
- INFOCUS: Community insight, shared vision
- SchoolTalk200: Woodstock Community Unit School District 200
- Providing Advice for Tomorrow’s Harper: Protecting Our Community’s Investment
Speakers/Listeners Bureau:

ENCORE
Examing Needs and Creating Opportunities for Regional Excellence

Planning for the next 60 years
Social Networking:

Planning A Course Together For the St. Joseph School District.
Website http://www.PACTforSJSD.com/
Twitter @PACTforSJSD Twitter.com/PACTforSJSD
Facebook Facebook.com/PACTforSJSD
YouTube YouTube.com/PACTforSJSD
Picasa PicasaWeb.com/PACTforSJSD

PACT For SJSD if you missed last night’s meeting, check out the video just loaded onto the PACT website

6–Facilities II – PACT For SJSD
www.stjoekids.com
Planning A Course Together For St Joseph School District
October 20 at 5:57pm - Share

PACT For SJSD Dr. Franklin Hill returns to discuss the important issues of school size and grade configuration.

PACT CES #7 – School Planning III
Tuesday, November 9, 2010 at 6:00pm
Benton High School
October 20 at 3:33pm - Share - RSVP to this event

PACT For SJSD Hundreds again turn out and this time fill a Lafayette High School gym for a Community Engagement Session for PACT.

PACT CES #6 – School Planning II
61 new photos
PACT For SJSD PACT meetings resume on September 21 with an informative session on facilities. Dr. Franklin Hill, an internationally recognized leader in educational change and building design, is the guest presenter.

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday, Sept 21, 6:00 PM
Central High School nec.
...

See More
District seeks master plan

By Alonzo Weston

Wednesday, September 22, 2010 at 12:02 a.m.

Public involvement

The PACT (Planning A Course Together for the St. Joseph School District) reported receiving $46,675 in public donations so far.

The plan now is to have a master plan. That’s the message Franklin Hill gave to the Central High School gymnasium crowd during Tuesday night’s Planning A Course Together meeting for the St. Joseph School District.
Community Engagement - Key Outcomes

- Internal/External unity (Board/Staff/Students/Community)
- Bulletproof plan (what and how)
- Committed volunteers
- Public permission for meaningful change
Question #3

Do we have internal unity?
Winning From the Inside Out

- Employees
- Union Leadership
- Administrations
- Student Organizations
- All members of the Boards of Trustees
How To Gain Internal Unity

- Conduct research
- Involve internal people in planning
- Keep internal audiences well informed throughout the process
- Identify and address issues that divide
Can we conduct an outstanding campaign?
Referendum Communication

Information

Vote Yes
Referendum Organization

Committee Organizational Structure

Committee Chair(s)

- Communications
  - Chairperson (s):
  - Membership:

- Canvassing
  - Chairperson (s):
  - Membership:

- Community Outreach
  - Chairperson (s):
  - Membership:

- Contributions
  - Chairperson (s):
  - Membership:
Integrated approach = success

- Real community engagement
- Solid public opinion research
- Strong referendum campaign
Discussion