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Strategies, Obstacles, and Methods Related to Conducting Building Bond Campaigns in Rural Illinois Unit (K-12) School Districts

Todd E. Pence

Eastern Illinois University

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Strategies, Obstacles, and Methods Related To Conducting Building Bond
Campaigns In Rural Illinois Unit (K-12) School Districts

BY

Todd E. Pence

1998

FIELD EXPERIENCE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS FIELD EXPERIENCE BE ACCEPTED AS
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DATE

ADVISOR

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DATE

DEPARTMENT HEAD

Abstract

This study was designed to determine (a) the strategies used by school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts to help pass school building bond issues, (b) the obstacles that school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts faced when trying to pass building bond issues, and (c) the methods used by school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts to overcome the obstacles.

The study took place during the spring of 1998. The study included a survey that was sent to the superintendents of the 88 small and medium sized (less than 1,800 students) rural Illinois unit school districts (grades K-12) which attempted to pass school building bond issues from 1991-1997. Fifty-nine superintendents (67%) responded to the survey.

The results indicated that 15 out of the 16 strategies surveyed were used by at least 40% of the superintendents that responded. These results indicate that school districts are taking a proactive role in their efforts to obtain voter approval. The results also indicated that district personnel can expect to face many obstacles as they attempt to pass a building bond issue. The obstacles were sorted into eight categories: (a) cost impact on taxpayers, (b) recent reassessment of property, (c) a split board, (d) potential of school consolidation, (e) informing the taxpayers with the same message, (f) apathy and lack of trust, (g) scope of the project, and (h) anti-tax group.

Additional results indicated that several methods are available to help overcome obstacles related to a successful building bond campaign. Two or more methods used by school district personnel were presented for each of the

eight obstacles faced by districts attempting to pass building bond issues.

The findings led the researcher to recommend five areas that school district personnel need to use as a focus: (a) the timing of the bond issue, (b) involving the community in the planning and implementation of the building bond campaign, (c) developing a strong public relations program, (d) having strong educational leadership, and (e) thorough planning of the building bond campaign.

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Chapter 1

Overview of the Problem

Background

The Atwood and Hammond communities are faced with the need to improve their educational facilities. The junior high and high school buildings were constructed around the turn of the century. In the researcher's opinion, these antiquated facilities negatively affect the quality of education offered in the Atwood-Hammond Community Unit District #39.

The researcher, who has been hired as the superintendent of the Atwood-Hammond Community Unit School District #39, determined through his discussions with members of the board of education that they would like to pursue the idea of constructing a new junior-senior high school facility. The board of education is looking to the researcher for leadership in the development of a building bond campaign.

Statement of the Problem

The specific problems addressed by this study were to identify (a) the strategies that were used by school personnel from other districts utilizing a bond issue campaign to enhance the likelihood of the building bond issue passing, (b) the obstacles that were encountered by school personnel from other districts in their efforts to develop an effective building bond issue campaign, and (c) the methods that were used by school personnel from other districts to overcome the obstacles facing the building bond issue.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed were:

1. What strategies have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts used to help pass school building bond issues?
2. What obstacles have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts faced when trying to pass school building bond issues?
3. What methods were used by school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts to overcome these obstacles?

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made of the superintendents who responded to the survey:

1. Respondents had sufficient information pertaining to the building bond campaign to accurately complete the survey.
2. Information gathered from respondents would be useful regardless of whether or not a school district bond issue was successful.

Limitation

The superintendent who completed the Building Bond Campaign Survey may not have been the superintendent at the time the building bond issue was attempted.

Delimitations

The following factors were placed outside the scope of this study by the researcher:

1. Building bond campaigns in large Illinois districts with more than 1,800

students.

2. Building bond campaigns in districts in states other than Illinois.

3. Building bond campaigns held in Illinois elementary school or high school districts.

4. Building bond campaigns held in Cook, Lake, and DuPage counties.

Definition of Terms

Bond. A written certificate of evidence of a debt signed by the president and clerk of the school board to pay a specific sum of money (frequently called the face value) at a fixed time in the future, frequently called the date of maturity, at a fixed rate of interest. A bond represents a general obligation of the district. Taxes in the amount necessary to pay principal and interest due each year are extended by the county clerk.

Building and school site bonds. Bonds for the purchase of a school site, construction of new facilities, equipping new facilities, and repairing, remodeling or adding to existing facilities.

Rural Illinois unit school districts. Districts (grades K-12) with enrollments of less than 1,800 students.

School building bond campaign. A connected series of operations designed to bring about voter approval of a school building bond referendum.

Speakers bureau. A group of influential citizens whose purpose is to represent the district and speak in favor of the proposed school building bond referendum.

Uniqueness of the Study

A study of strategies, obstacles, and methods used to pass school building bond issues had never been done by Atwood-Hammond Community Unit School District #39. Thus, information related to strategies, obstacles, and methods has never been used by the district in the context of a building bond referendum.

Chapter 2

Rationale and Related Literature

Rationale

It is the opinion of the researcher that it would be helpful to the Atwood-Hammond Community Unit School District #39 as it develops a building bond campaign to gather information from other districts regarding strategies used, obstacles faced, and methods for overcoming the obstacles for passing building bond issues. In order to effectively survey superintendents of districts which previously conducted building bond campaigns criteria, were needed to develop a survey instrument. This section examines literature of experts pertaining to the passage of building bond referenda.

Review of Literature

Sixteen strategies school district personnel have used to help pass school building bond issues were identified through a review of the related literature. The 16 strategies are presented in the order they would likely take place. The 16 strategies are: (a) the development of a strong public relations program; (b) a minimum one year pre-planning stage to focus on need, timing, costs, and advantages and disadvantages of each alternative; (c) a survey of community members to determine what they want and expect; (d) unanimous board approval for the building bond issue; (e) the use of expert assistance; (f) the use of an active citizens' support group to educate the public; (g) the use of a speakers bureau comprised of speakers with whom the public can identify with; (h) the use of video to help give presentations more impact; (I) the use of printed

materials, such as brochures, flyers, and question and answer sheets; (j) identification of potential yes voters and the majority needed for victory; (k) use of parent volunteers to phone perspective voters asking for a yes vote; (l) use of volunteer staff members to phone perspective voters asking for a yes vote; (m) conducting special voter registration drives; (n) utilization of election day strategies such as getting people to the polls, calling all potential yes voters and reminding them to vote, and poll watching; (o) holding a large gathering of citizens to see the election results as they are reported; and (p) gathering all campaign workers together after the election to debrief and evaluate the campaign, as well as thanking them; for their time and effort.

Developing a strong public relations program is the first area that school district personnel must address. According to Simpson (1993, p. 29), the emphasis of a public relations program has to be placed on the positive aspects of the school district. For months the newspapers need to be bombarded with positive stories about the school district, all of which should be done before even mentioning that a school building bond issue is going to be put on the ballot. At least 16 months prior to the election district personnel should begin efforts to build public confidence by conducting local town meetings and open forums designed to update the public, listen to public input, and clearly answer questions. Further, community pride and confidence in a school district need to be in place before a district attempts to pass a school building bond issue (Malito, 1993, p. 44).

The pre-planning stage of a school building bond issue is composed of

studying and analyzing current information and historical data. The formation of a task force should take place at this stage. The purposes of the task force are reviewing needs, studying alternatives, making recommendations, and marketing the proposed bond issue. Districts need to plan early and be sure to involve the local media, key people from the community, and school staff (Holt, 1994, p. 37). Historical data also need to be reviewed which include past election results, strategies used in past campaigns, and the causes of past issues passing or failing (Bauscher, 1994, p. 16). Bauscher (1994, p. 16) also indicated that the pre-planning stage should occur at least one year prior to the election and should focus on the need, timing, costs, and advantages and disadvantages for each alternative.

School districts should survey residents to determine what they want and expect regarding the communities' educational facilities, thus giving the districts' campaign direction. Eleven months prior to the election districts should conduct a door-to-door survey of the community (Malito, 1993, p. 44). A door-to-door personal interview should ask respondents to answer yes or no and then follow-up with a second question as to why they feel that way (Bauscher, 1994, p. 16). The survey should be useful in determining if the district has public support for the bond issue, the potential yes voters, and the reasons for the potential no votes. Carter (1995, p. 291) stressed the importance of showing residents that school district personnel have listened to their input regarding the proposed project.

Unanimous board approval is imperative for a school building bond issue.

A negative vote by a school board member sends a message to the public that something may be wrong with the proposed plan and that it does not warrant support at the polls (Holt, 1994, p. 35).

School districts will likely need to obtain expert assistance. The services of bond consultants, architects, and other trained individuals should be used to educate support groups and the community about such issues as costs and building design, and general requirements (Holt, 1994, p. 37). The employment of a professional demographer should be considered if enrollment growth underlies the cause for the school construction. The district needs to show the community where the enrollment is headed over the next decade if the district hopes to build voter confidence (Smith, 1992, p. 58).

The development of election campaign strategies is the nuts and bolts of any school building bond campaign and should last no more than six weeks prior to the election (Bauscher, 1994, p. 16). The main purpose of the campaign is to inform the voters. The use of local citizens is a very effective way to inform the public. More specifically, a grass roots movement led by an active citizens support group is critically important to a successful building bond campaign (Holt, 1994, p. 33). While it is vital to have good administrative leadership and staff support, the districts experiencing the greatest success in passing a referendum were those in which administrators played a low key role. This allowed members of the citizens support group to assume the primary responsibility for educating the public (Holt, 1994, p. 33).

Developing a speakers bureau is a key element of effectively utilizing a

citizens support group. Materials such as transparencies, scripts, and video help ensure the consistency of the presentations.

The use of video is becoming a popular tool because it can make a huge impact on presentations and be produced for a relatively low cost. A video can progressively show the needs for the building project and the process used to determine that the project is the best alternative for present and future students (Freeman, 1996, p. 32).

The development of targeted election materials, tools, and techniques is the next area of a school building bond campaign that should be addressed. Printed materials, such as brochures, flyers, and question and answer sheets, should be utilized to disseminate important information. School district personnel should be prepared to answer which elements of the proposed project are necessary and which are merely desirable. School district personnel should use their architect and planner to assist them in preparing to answer questions about the proposed project (Bauscher, 1994, p. 16). School districts need to identify the potential yes voters and the majority needed for victory. According to Holt (1994, p. 37), bond issue activities should focus on maintaining the support of potential yes voters and assuring that the yes voters go to the polls. Two tactics used to concentrate on the positive vote are to recruit parent volunteers to call every parent in the district to ask for a yes vote and to have each staff member find five people who promise to vote yes and ask three of those five to find five additional yes voters (Fielder, 1995, p. 36).

Conducting special voter registration drives can be very helpful for school

districts trying to pass building bond issues. According to Fielder (1995, p. 37), the key to conducting voter registration drives is to register positive voters such as parents and high school seniors.

School districts need to plan their election day strategies. The following strategies should be emphasized: (a) getting people to the polls; (b) calling every potential yes voter and reminding them to vote; and (c) poll watching (Malito, 1993, p. 44). Malito (1993, p. 44), also recommended that a district hold a large gathering of citizens to see results as they are reported. This can be done informally at the school.

Once the election has taken place, district officials should plan to gather all campaign workers together to debrief and evaluate the campaign. It is important to summarize the election whether the district was successful or not. It is equally important to hold an appreciation program to thank the people for all their time and efforts (Malito, 1993, p. 44).

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

General Design

This field study was conducted by utilizing superintendents as respondents and surveying them in regard to school policies previously used in their districts for conducting a building bond campaign. The dependent variable was the perceptions of the superintendents. There was no independent variable because the respondents were not placed in different categories (e.g., size of district). Further, nothing was manipulated to serve as an independent variable.

The study was designed to provide data to answer the following research questions:

1. What strategies have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts used to help pass school building bond issues?
2. What obstacles have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts faced when trying to pass school building bond issues?
3. What methods were used by school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts to overcome these obstacles?

Sample and Population

The population surveyed was the superintendents of the 88 rural Illinois unit school districts which attempted to pass school building bond issues from 1991-1997. The sample consisted of the 59 superintendents who responded to the survey. This was a 67% response rate.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The cover letter (see Appendix A) and Building Bond Campaign Survey (see Appendix B) were sent in February 1998 to the superintendents of the 88 rural Illinois unit school districts who attempted to pass school building bond issues from 1991-1997.

The Building Bond Campaign Survey was developed by the researcher based on the information presented in Chapter 2, which comprised a review of experts' opinions pertaining to the strategies for having a successful building bond campaign. Validity of the Building Bond Campaign Survey was predicated on the knowledge these experts bring which was incorporated into its development. Reliability was addressed by standardization of the instructions for completing the Building Bond Campaign Survey through the use of a cover letter.

Data Analysis

The results were tabulated manually by the researcher. The gathered data from survey item 1, which answer research question 1, were displayed and organized into frequencies and percentages and arranged into a table that is accompanied by narrative. The data from items 2 and 3 of the survey which answer research questions 2 and 3, were displayed using a word table.

Chapter 4

Results of the Study

Overview

The format of this section presents the results separately for research question 1 and combines the results for research questions 2 and 3. Each table reflects the responses given by the superintendents of the school districts surveyed. In Table 1 the letter n represents the number of responses and the symbol % represents the percentage of those responses. Table 2 is a word table in which the first column is the obstacle the district faced, and the second column represents the methods used to overcome the obstacle.

Results for Research Question 1

Research question 1 was: What strategies have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts used to help pass school building bond issues? Table 1 shows superintendents' responses regarding strategies used by school district personnel during the last building bond campaign. There were four strategies used in at least 80% of the districts. Printed materials, such as brochures, flyers, and question and answer sheets, were used in 97% of the districts. Eighty-three percent of the districts used an active citizens support group to educate the public. Developing a strong public relations program and obtaining unanimous board approval for the building bond issue were used in 81% of the districts.

Three strategies were used in at least 70% of the districts. At least a one year pre-planning stage to focus on the need, timing, costs, advantages and

Table 1

Results for Strategies used in Building Bond Campaigns

Strategies	<u>n</u> who used strategy	<u>%</u> of total Respondents (59)
1. Development of a strong public relations program	48	81%
2. At least a one year pre-planning stage to focus on the need, timing, costs, and advantages and disadvantages of each alternative	44	75%
3. Survey of community members to determine what they want and expect	27	46%
4. Unanimous board approval for the building bond issue	48	81%
5. The use of expert assistance (bond consultants, architects)	42	71%
6. The use of an active citizens support group to educate the public	49	83%
7. The use of a Speakers Bureau comprised of speakers voters can identify with		

(table continues)

Strategy	n who used strategy	% of total respondents (59)
(coaches, school board members, ministers, parents, senior citizens, and key school staff members)	26	44%
8. The use of video to help give presentations more impact	25	42%
9. Printed materials, such as brochures, flyers and question and answer sheets	57	97%
10. Identification of potential <u>yes</u> voters and the majority needed for victory	44	75%
11. Parent volunteers to phone asking for a <u>yes</u> vote	39	66%
12. Volunteer staff members to phone asking for a <u>yes</u> vote	24	41%
13. Conducted special voter registration drives	30	51%
14. Utilized election day strategies, such as getting people to the polls, calling every potential <u>yes</u> voter and reminding them vote, and poll watching	30	51%

(table continues)

Strategy	<u>n</u> who used strategy	<u>%</u> of total respondents (59)
15. Held a large gathering of citizens to see results as they came in	9	15%
16. Gathered all campaign workers together after the election to debrief and evaluate the campaign, as well as thank them for their time and effort	25	42%

disadvantages of each alternative, the identification of potential yes votes, and the majority needed for victory were reported by 75% of the districts. Seventy-one percent of the districts used expert assistance (bond consultants, architects, or both).

The use of parent volunteers to phone asking for a yes vote was reported by 66% of the districts. Conducting special voter registration drives and utilizing election day strategies (such as getting people to the polls, calling every yes vote, and poll watching) were reported in 51% of the districts.

Five more strategies were utilized in at least 40% of the districts. The use of a survey to determine what community members want and expect was used in 46% of the district. The use of a speakers bureau comprised of individuals with whom voters identify was used in 44% of the districts. The use of video to help

give presentations more impact and gathering all campaign workers together after the election (to debrief, evaluate the campaign, and thank them for their time and effort) were utilized in 42% of the districts. Using volunteer staff members to phone to ask for a yes vote was reported in 41% of those districts. Of the 16 strategies surveyed, holding a large gathering of citizens to view the results as they were reported placed the lowest in that it was used in only 15% of the districts.

Results for Research Questions 2 and 3

Research question 2 was: What obstacles have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts faced when trying to pass school building bond issues? Research question 3 was: What methods were used by school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts to overcome these obstacles?

Table 2 reveals obstacles that school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts faced when trying to pass building bond issues and the methods they used to overcome the obstacles. In an effort to deal with the cost impact on taxpayers (A. Cost impact on taxpayers), districts' personnel have asked the community members what amount of tax increase would be acceptable. Districts' personnel also tried to restructure debt to result in little or no tax increase, and they tried to offset the cost by informing the taxpayers of the benefits of a new facility.

A recent reassessment of property (B. Recent reassessment of property) can be a major hurdle for any building bond issue. The timing of a building bond

Table 2

Obstacles of Building Bond Issues and Methods for Overcoming TheseObstacles

Obstacle	Methods
A. Cost impact on taxpayers	Ask the community what type of increase it can handle, try to restructure debt to result in little or no tax increase, and inform the taxpayers of the benefits of a new facility.
B. Recent reassessment of property	Timing is definitely something that must be considered, but a clear statement of cost of the project will help in the efforts to inform the taxpayers.
C. A split board	Consult the community in the planning stage, hold public hearings and provide architects, and bond consultants.
D. Potential of school consolidation	Show the taxpayers the advantages of having a new facility if consolidation does take place.
E. Informing the taxpayers with	Keep information consistent and easy to

(table continues)

Obstacle	Methods
the same message	<p>understand for the common voter.</p> <p>The use of open meetings, door-to-door flyers, public forums, video, and <u>canned</u> speeches for presenters.</p>
F. Apathy and lack of trust	<p>Have to show a need through the use of tours of the facility, open houses, and invitations to the public to have lunch with the students. If applicable, show how current facilities do not meet life safety standards.</p>
G. Scope of the project	<p>In the planning stages, include the community, educate the voters, and have a clear set of plans and benefits to the community.</p>
H. Anti-tax group	<p>Two ways to approach this type of opposition are to ignore them because their minds are already made up, or give them the facts and point out the benefits that everyone will gain by having quality schools.</p>

issue is related to its potential passage. It is not advised to conduct a building bond issue if a recent reassessment of property values has taken place. Giving the taxpayers a clear statement of the cost of the project will help to better inform them.

During the campaign, many decisions will be made by the board. The board is bound to be split over certain issues (C. A split board) due to the very nature of the decisions to be made. In order to minimize these issues, a district should consult the community in the planning stage, hold public hearings and provide architects and bond consultants.

Potential consolidation (D. Potential of school consolidation) is an issue that may surface during a building bond campaign. In an effort to deal with this obstacle, districts' personnel tried to show the taxpayers the advantages of having a new facility if consolidation does take place.

Districts' personnel faced the obstacle of informing the taxpayers (E. Informing the taxpayers with the same message) with the same message during a building bond campaign. Districts' personnel tried to keep information consistent and easy to understand for the voter. Open meetings, door-to-door flyers, public forums, videos, and canned speeches for presenters were used by districts' personnel trying to deal with this obstacle.

Apathy and lack of trust (F. Apathy and lack of trust) are obstacles that districts may face when trying to pass a building bond issue. In an effort to overcome these obstacles districts should show a need for the new facility, use tours of current facilities and open houses, and invite the public into the

buildings. Another strategy used was to show how the current facility does not meet life safety standards.

The scope of the project (G. Scope of the project) is an obstacle that many districts have faced. In order to give the project direction and focus, districts included the community in the planning stages, educated the voters with pertinent information, and established a clear set of plans and benefits to the community.

Dealing with the anti-tax group (H. Anti-tax group) may be the toughest obstacle for districts' personnel to overcome. Districts have tried two approaches: (a) ignore members of the anti-tax group because their minds are made up and (b) give them the facts and try to help them understand that quality schools can benefit everyone.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to give the Atwood-Hammond Community Unit School District #39 Board of Education the background information necessary to develop a building bond campaign that will enhance the likelihood of a building bond issue passing. It was the researcher's belief that ascertaining the strategies employed by school personnel from other districts utilizing a building bond campaign, determining what obstacles were encountered, and identifying what methods were used to overcome the obstacles would provide the Atwood-Hammond Community Unit School District #39 Board of Education with the information needed to develop a building bond campaign.

The research questions addressed were:

1. What strategies have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts used to help pass school building bond issues?
2. What obstacles have school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts faced when trying to pass school building bond issues?
3. What methods were used by school district personnel in rural Illinois unit school districts to overcome these obstacles?

A survey was developed by the researcher predicated on the knowledge of experts. The survey was sent to superintendents of the 88 rural Illinois unit school districts who attempted to pass school building bond issues from 1991-1997.

Results for research question 1 indicated that 10 of the 16 strategies surveyed were used in a majority of the districts. The 10 strategies were: (a) development of a strong public relations program; (b) at least on one year pre-planning stage to focus on the need, timing, costs, and advantages and disadvantages of each alternative; (c) unanimous board approval for the building bond issue; (d) the use of expert assistance (bond consultants, architects); (e) the use of an active citizens support group to educate the public; (f) printed materials, such as brochures, flyers and question and answer sheets; (g) identification of potential yes voters and the majority needed for victory; (h) parent volunteers to phone asking for a yes vote; (i) conducted special voter registration drives; (j) utilized election day strategies, such as getting people to the polls, calling every potential yes voter and reminding them to vote, and poll watching.

Results for research question 2, which was designed to determine what obstacles school districts faced, identified eight categories: (a) cost impact on taxpayers, (b) recent reassessment of property, (c) a split board, (d) potential of school consolidation, (e) informing the taxpayers with the same message, (f) apathy and lack of trust, (g) scope of the project, and (h) anti-tax group.

Results for research question 3 identified the methods used by the districts to try to overcome the obstacles faced during the building bond issue campaign. Examples of methods used were: (a) including the public in the planning stages, (b) having a clear set of plans and benefits to the community, (c) restructuring debt, (d) holding public hearings and open houses, (e) keeping

information consistent and easy to understand.

Conclusions

The researcher concluded from the results of research question 1 that school districts utilized numerous building bond campaign strategies in their efforts to obtain voter approval. It was also concluded that districts developing building bond issue campaigns can expect to face many obstacles. Even though the obstacles faced during a building bond issue may seem insurmountable, districts should rest assured that many of these obstacles have been successfully addressed by other districts.

The results led the researcher to conclude that school districts are taking the steps necessary to inform their communities in regard to the building bond issues. However, with property taxes at the center of school funding systems even the most carefully thought out campaign may have a difficult time gaining public support.

Recommendations

The findings led the researcher to recommend five areas that school district personnel need to use as a focus: (a) the timing of the bond issue, (b) involving the community in the planning and implementation of the building bond campaign, (c) developing a strong public relations program, (d) having strong educational leadership, and (e) thorough planning of the building bond campaign.

Determining the right time to conduct a building bond issue is difficult for school personnel. The planning stage usually takes place at least a year before

the issue is placed on the ballot. In rural school districts winning football or basketball teams, good farm crops, or previous bonds recently expiring can have a positive impact on a future bond issue. Some of the negative aspects that can affect timing are a reassessment of local property taxes, poor test scores, and a poor economy.

Getting the community involved is another key to conducting a successful building bond issue campaign. In order to pass a building bond issue, the community needs to take ownership in its schools. The community will likely take ownership in schools if it is involved in the planning. Two strategies for involving the community are surveying the community in terms of what it wants and expects from the educational system and forming a citizens advisory committee.

A strong public relations program should be in place before a district attempts to pass a building bond issue. This takes a commitment from all school personnel, not just the administration. The community needs to be informed of all the good happenings that are taking place in the district. The athletic teams usually get ample of coverage, but the scholastic and social programs also need to be publicized.

Strong administrative leadership is a key, especially in rural communities. In rural school districts leadership often becomes the responsibility of one person. It is important that this individual has the respect of the community.

Thorough planning, spearheaded by the district's administration and backed by the board of education, is vital to the development of a successful

building bond issue campaign. This is the area in which the strategies and methods addressed by this study come into play. The ability to organize and implement a building bond issue campaign is a skill that should be developed by a school administrator.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

February 4, 1998

XX XXXXXX XXXXXX
Superintendent
XXXXXXXXXX C.U.S.D. # X
XXXXXX XXXXXX XXXX
XXXXXX, IL XXXXX

Dear XXXXXX:

I am a high school principal and a graduate student at Eastern Illinois University working on my Field Study Experience as part of the requirements for obtaining a Specialist degree in Educational Administration. The topic of my field experience is The Perceptions of Superintendents in Rural Illinois Unit School Districts Concerning Building Bond Campaign Techniques, Obstacles and Strategies.

Rural school districts such as yours that have a combined elementary and high school enrollment of less than 1,800 students and that have passed or attempted to pass a school building bond issue in the last six years have been selected to participate in this survey. I would greatly appreciate it if you would take a few minutes of your time to fill out the enclosed survey and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope by February 12, 1998. All responses are confidential.

If you would like results of this survey made available to you, please provide your name and address on a separate sheet of paper. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Todd Pence
Principal
Atwood-Hammond High School

Appendix B

Building Bond Campaign Survey

1. Please check the techniques that were utilized by your district during its last building bond campaign.
 - Development of a strong public relations program
 - At least a one year pre-planning stage to focus on the need, timing, costs, advantages and disadvantages of each alternative
 - Survey of community members to determine what they want and expect
 - Unanimous board approval for the building bond issue
 - The use of expert assistance (bond consultants, architects)
 - The use of an active citizens support group to educate the public
 - The use of a Speakers Bureau comprised of speakers the voters can identify with (coaches, school board members, ministers, parents, senior citizens, and key school staff members)
 - The use of video to help give presentations more impact
 - Printed materials, such as brochures, flyers, and questions and answer sheets
 - Identification of the "yes" voters and the majority needed for victory
 - Parent volunteers to phone asking for a "yes" vote
 - Volunteer staff members to phone asking for a "yes" vote
 - Conducted special voter registration drives
 - Utilized election day strategies, such as getting people to the polls, calling every "yes" vote and reminding them to vote, poll watching
 - Held a large gathering of citizens to see results as they came in

___ Gathered all campaign workers together after the election to debrief and evaluate the campaign, as well as thank them for their time and effort

___ Other, please list

2. Please list the three main obstacles your school district faced during their last building bond issue.

1.

2.

3.

3. For each obstacle that you listed above, please briefly explain what strategies were used to overcome the obstacle.

1.

2.

3.

If you would like the results of this survey sent to you, please indicate your name and address on a separate sheet of paper so that your answers may be held in strict confidence.

**PLEASE RETURN THIS SURVEY IN THE ENCLOSED SELF-
ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE BY FEBRUARY 12, 1998.**