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An Analysis of a Building Bond Referendum

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AN ANALYSIS OF A BUILDING BOND REFERENDUM

(TITLE)

BY

Daniel L. Meyer

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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COMMITTEE MEMBER

June 30, 1981
DATE

DEPARTMENT/CHAIRPERSON

AN ANALYSIS OF A BUILDING BOND REFERUNDUM

By

Daniel L. Meyer

Spec. in Ed., Eastern Illinois University, 1981

ABSTRACT OF A FIELD STUDY

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of specialist in Education at the
Graduate School of Eastern Illinois University

Charleston, Illinois

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The decision regarding student housing is one which will affect every school board and administrator. Decisions made by the people involved will affect the community for generations. Making economically feasible and educationally sound decisions regarding student housing is most difficult, especially when one considers many of the variables involved with decisions of this type. Some of the variables researched for this successful building bond referendum were: enrollment patterns, birth rates, cohort survival rates for the district and enrollment projections.

The researcher was involved with the facility study committee during the period of time the information was being collected. Once the data had been gathered, the researcher and the school superintendent were given full responsibility for the development of a campaign designed to successfully promote the bond referendum.

Some difficulties encountered by the researcher involved community sentiment, economic factors, resentment over taxes and community involvement. The researcher, in conjunction with the superintendent, developed strategies which successfully dealt with these difficulties. The difficulties encountered during a building bond referendum can be overcome. To do so requires the people involved to unite and confront the problems as one.

To affect the successful passage of the referendum election, various methods were utilized by the administration. Some of these methods were:

1. An informational brochure
2. The use of a citizens' committee
3. Timely press releases
4. Personal contacts and involvement

By having two referendum elections, the researcher was able to note the differences and similarities between both elections. More importantly, the researcher was able to foresee the difficulties to be encountered and ways to help alleviate their presence.

AN ANALYSIS OF A BUILDING BOND REFERENDUM

AN ANALYSIS
PRESENTED TO
the Faculty of the Department of Education
Eastern Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Educational Administration

by
Daniel Lee Meyer

April 9, 1981

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background Information. Before any attempt is made to explain the decisions of the local board of education, a description of the events preceding the actions taken is necessary. The district involved is a rural agrarian community with a current school enrollment of 1,850 students. The district covers an approximate area of two hundred and thirty-one square miles. Seven different attendance centers are being operated within the district, including the senior high school, the junior high school and five elementary schools.

The attendance center addressed by this committee is currently being used as an elementary school. Originally built for use as the senior high school, Central School has been converted to the junior high school and once again converted for use as an elementary school. The original building was constructed in 1883. Additions to the building were constructed in 1904, 1920 and in 1928. The structure is a three story building, with the cafeteria utilizing the basement floor and the classroom areas being located on the second and third floors. The 1928 addition include the gymnasium which is located on the north portion of the building.

School districts throughout the State of Illinois are required to maintain all buildings within the standards found in Circular Series A, Number 157, which is issued by the State Board of Education. The speci-

fications covered in this state publication represent the minimum standards necessary to insure the health, life and safety of the students.

A life, health and safety survey of Central School was performed in 1968 and the building was found to be in non-compliance with the standards set forth by the State Board of Education. At that time, the estimation of cost to bring Central School into compliance was \$65,000. Several futile attempts to bring the building into compliance were made utilizing the district's janitorial staff. In 1975, State's Architect, Glen Rubenking, brought to the attention of the school board the fact that the building was still in non-compliance and that the estimation of cost to bring the building into compliance now had risen to well over \$600,000.

Late in 1976, the school board hired a new superintendent, hoping to obtain movement on the repair of the Central School building. Again, futile attempts at repairing the structure were made utilizing the janitorial staff. Mr. Rubenking, the State's Architect, returned in the spring of 1978 to inspect the progress and, finding that no changes had been made, raised the estimation for bringing the building into compliance to over \$1,000,000. The reason given for the huge increase in costs was inflation and the gradual deterioration of the structure. In June of 1979, the superintendent was removed and a new man was hired. This made the third superintendent in as many years for the district.

Immediately after accepting the position, the new superintendent received a letter from Mr. Rubenking stating that unless major progress

was made on Central School, the Office of the State Architect would be forced to close the building from further student use due to the severe life, health and safety problem existing. In the letter, Mr. Rubenking gave the district one year to show substantial progress regarding the required improvements. This action taken by the State Architect gave the new superintendent one year to resolve a perplexing problem that had been in existence for twelve years. The State Architect, in the same letter, condemned the gymnasium, the band room and three classrooms for student use due to the severe life, health and safety problems found in those areas.

A new survey was requested by the board of education to give the district the most recent cost figures for bringing the building into compliance because the last survey was over twelve years old. The new survey indicated that the cost of bringing the building into compliance would be a minimum of \$1,200,000. This figure represents what it would cost to bring the building into minimal compliance, meaning that any changes in the specifications from the State of Illinois would have to be immediately changed in the structure. The survey also specified that the work would have to be supervised by a registered architect, thereby eliminating the use of the janitors. Any hidden structural faults found while working on the building would be added to the cost of bringing the building into compliance.

Statement of the Problem. The local board of education indicated that to merely pass a resolution to do the immense amount of work to be

performed at Central School would be foolhardy, even though the laws of the state permit local boards to do so. Since the members of the board were unwilling to pass the resolution, the only alternative left to the district was to pass a building bond referendum. Again, the board was divided on the proper course of action and decided to attempt to gain community cooperation through the use of a citizens' committee. The purpose of the committee was to research the school district's problem and offer recommendations to the school board based on its findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The responsibility for education in the United States rests mainly with the individual state governments, with the majority of the states having a state board of education. A main objective of the state boards of education is concerning themselves with the distribution of money. The remainder of control for local districts is generally delegated to the communities where the district is located. A local board of education is elected to develop policies, making it possible for the administration to deal with the day to day operational problems.

One of the operational problems facing the district is that of passing a building bond referendum due to the condemnation of the elementary attendance center because of severe life, health and safety non-compliance. Regarding school closings, Gordon and Hughes state: "For officials faced with the task of closing schools, the job is clear: Document costs, track population shifts, and list building inadequacies. In other words, administrators must build a case that's strong enough to overcome the "Old Main Syndrome" - that sentimental attachment to favorite schools - and to soothe parents of children currently attending the scheduled-to-be-closed building."¹

¹William Gordon and Larry Hughes, "Consider This Before Closing Schools," The American School Board Journal, February, 1980, 31.

Closing a favorite old school is a painful process and one which must be done carefully. Before any school is closed, administrators and the board of education must thoroughly sift through all the facts and present an infallible argument to the public. Gordon and Hughes offer the following criteria to be considered when addressing the closing of a school:

1. Age of the buildings
2. Capacity of the buildings
3. Enrollment of the buildings
4. Rate of population decline
5. Maintenance costs per student
6. Energy costs per student
7. Changes in the nature of the area served by the school
8. Conversion/recycling potential
9. Racial balance
10. Percent of capacity used

Gordon and Hughes also state that: "Following the foregoing procedures will not guarantee community support for taking buildings out of service--such magic does not exist."² Wholeben offers the following observations pertaining to closing a school: "School closure is a technically complex and emotionally volatile issue. In few other circumstances do the school board and district administrators come face-

²William Gordon and Larry Hughes, "Consider This Before Closing Schools," The American School Board Journal, February, 1980, 32.

to-face with a problem which affects so many community residents in such diverse ways."³ The local school board directed the administration to obtain the information as previously suggested in this paragraph.

The administration decided to use citizen participation because, according to Banach, "referendum winners had the characteristic of one form or another of citizen involvement."⁴ The board also felt that successful achievement of the goals of the school district would be dependent upon the attitude and support of the community. A large following of the community would be a tremendous asset to the passage of the referendum.

While dealing with the projection of student enrollment figures, the accuracy of the projections were of concern to the members of the board of education and as Shaw notes, "researchers have pointed out that attempts to forecast population and/or enrollment for areas as small as a single county, city or school district have usually missed their marks by embarrassing margins."⁵ This fact caused concern for many citizens and the board. Without accurate figures regarding en-

³Brent Edward Wholeben, "How to Determine Which Schools to Close," NASSP Bulletin, Volume 64, Number 439, November, 1980, 7.

⁴Bill Banach, "The Difference Was Diligence," How to Win Millage and Bond Elections, A Report Prepared by the Michigan Association of School Boards, (Lansing, Michigan), 57.

⁵Robert C. Shaw, "How Accurate Can Enrollment Forecasting Be?," NASSP Bulletin, Volume 64, Number 439, November, 1980, 15.

enrollment projections, the decision the board of education had to make would be a much more difficult task. Research by Shaw regarding enrollment projections revealed that:

The Cohort-Survival Method of Projection is best used as a relatively short-range forecast tool where in-migration and out-migration ratios are expected to remain fairly stable or where the ratios are expected to change at approximately the same rate as they have in the recent past. Stated simply, the Cohort-Survival Method of Enrollment Forecasting should be accurate to the degree that the factors which have affected the enrollment positively or negatively in the past continue to exist in the future and continue to influence enrollment to the same degree as in the past.

This research project also assures that the Cohort-Survival Method of Enrollment Forecasting continues to be a viable technique for predicting enrollment with "acceptable" accuracy forecasts produced in more than three-fourths of the out-state school districts and in more than one-half of the suburban school districts. The size of the district itself appeared to make no significant difference in the accuracy of the Cohort-Survival Method for suburban as compared with out-state school districts. This difference is believed to be related to the abruptness and sporadic nature of the change being experienced by suburban districts as compared with the more stable conditions found in out-state districts.⁶

The board of education decided to move ahead with all due expediency and develop the rationale for the decision regarding a solution to the district's problem. The criteria used by the district followed very closely the guidelines as outlined by William Gordon and Larry Hughes.⁷ The criteria used were the age of the buildings, the

⁶Robert C. Shaw, "How Accurate Can Enrollment Forecasting Be?," NASSP Bulletin, Volume 64, Number 439, November, 1980, 15.

⁷William Gordon and Larry Hughes, "Consider This Before Closing Schools," The American School Board Journal, February, 1980, 32.

capacity of the buildings, the enrollment and the enrollment projections based on the Cohort-Survival Method of Enrollment Forecasting, the rate of population decline, the energy costs per attendance center, and the changes in the nature of the area served by the school. These criteria were selected because of their appropriateness to the special needs of the district.

The administration was delegated the responsibility of gathering the information and data for the criteria selected and to announce to the community the various reasons as to why the study was needed and the purpose of the study, which was to give the school board the most recent and up-to-date information possible from which to make their decision. Much of the information gathered had never before been researched for this community to the knowledge of the administration and the board of education. With a decision pertaining to the closing of a school soon to be facing the school board, the members of the board felt the need to be adequately prepared.

With this in mind, the preparation for the building bond referendum began with the formation of a facility study committee to aid in a study of the district. The members of the facility study committee were selected from the school board members, school administrators and community members. During the study, the committee members acquired a great deal of information useful to the school board. The following offices were helpful in providing the information requested by this committee:

The Illinois State Board of Education

Glen Rubenking, State Architect

Office of the Regional Superintendent of Educational Services

The County Supervisor of Assessments

The South Central Illinois Regional Planning and Development
Commission

The Office of the Mayor

The Chamber of Commerce

The real estate agencies

The business people

The land owners and developers

The school officials of the district

The maintenance personnel of the district

The public utility companies

The banks and loan companies

One of the first priorities of the facility committee was to determine an accurate picture of the enrollment trends of the district. By regressing for a period of ten years, the committee felt an accurate picture of these trends could be determined. Table I presents the enrollment data for the past ten years for the district.

TABLE I

ENROLLMENT DATA FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Sept.	GRADE LEVELS													Total
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1969	123	198	155	154	168	184	147	157	179	176	163	162	164	2176
1970	115	191	164	166	145	165	179	148	157	187	171	157	142	2129
1971	131	141	178	160	163	136	165	186	144	164	179	165	139	2094
1972	126	140	138	177	165	162	137	175	185	148	163	165	141	2072
1973	95	115	119	127	157	153	162	140	174	186	135	147	145	1998
1974	129	105	135	120	136	165	156	159	126	174	172	124	117	1903
1975	129	122	109	123	129	175	158	166	137	174	162	120	125	1934
1976	143	130	127	110	130	120	125	179	153	162	128	166	139	1924
1977	106	153	125	112	120	134	133	178	167	153	127	125	147	1914
1978	127	115	141	130	125	107	117	134	126	182	153	143	103	1832
1979	129	127	120	132	137	133	106	120	131	134	175	144	124	1840
1980	161	128	135	112	134	136	122	110	124	162	128	155	131	1850

To more readily visualize the enrollment trends, the committee developed the data presented in Figure I and Figure II. Figure I shows the marked decrease in total student enrollment since 1969.

FIGURE I

HISTORICAL ENROLLMENT K - 12 FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

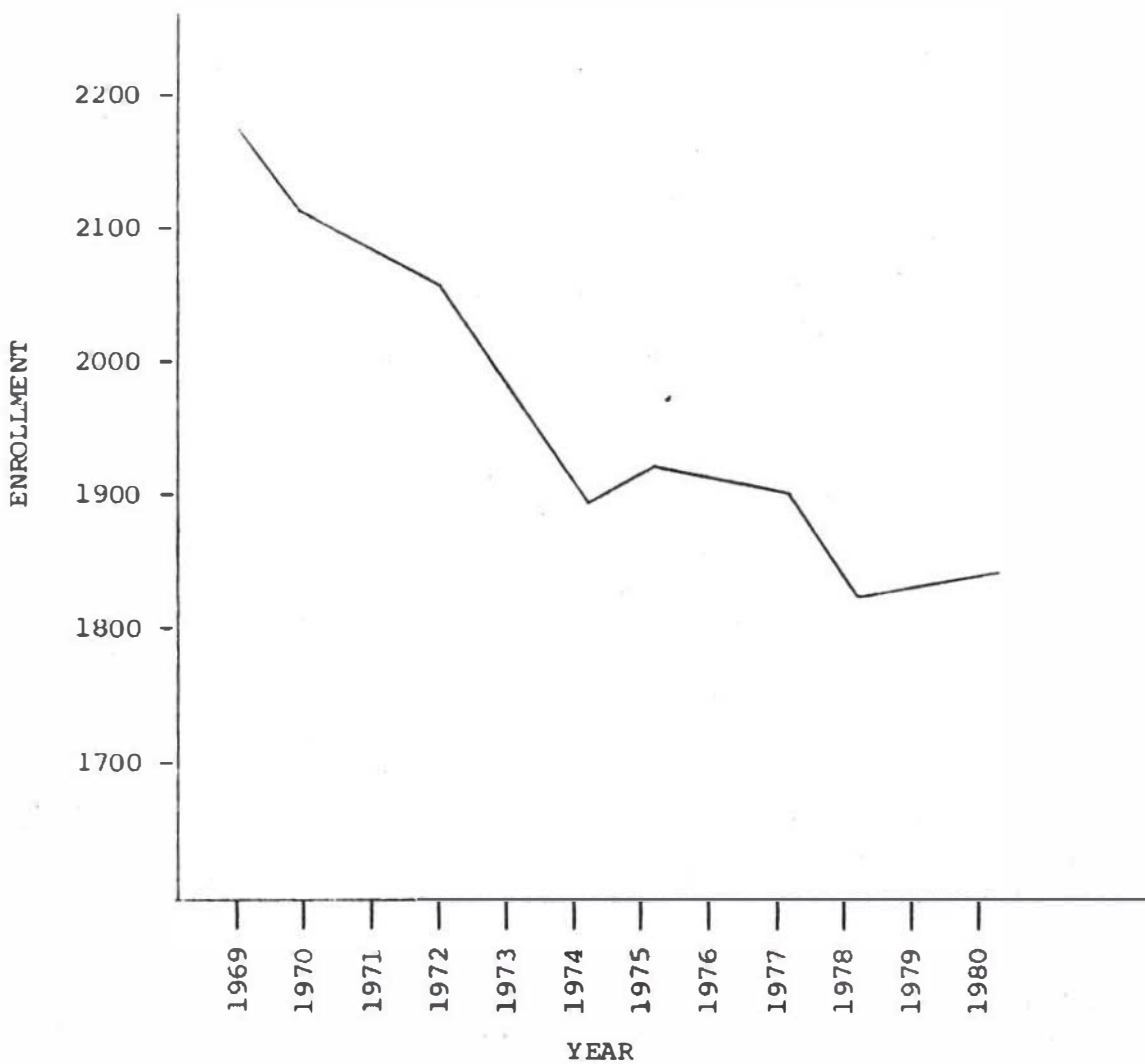
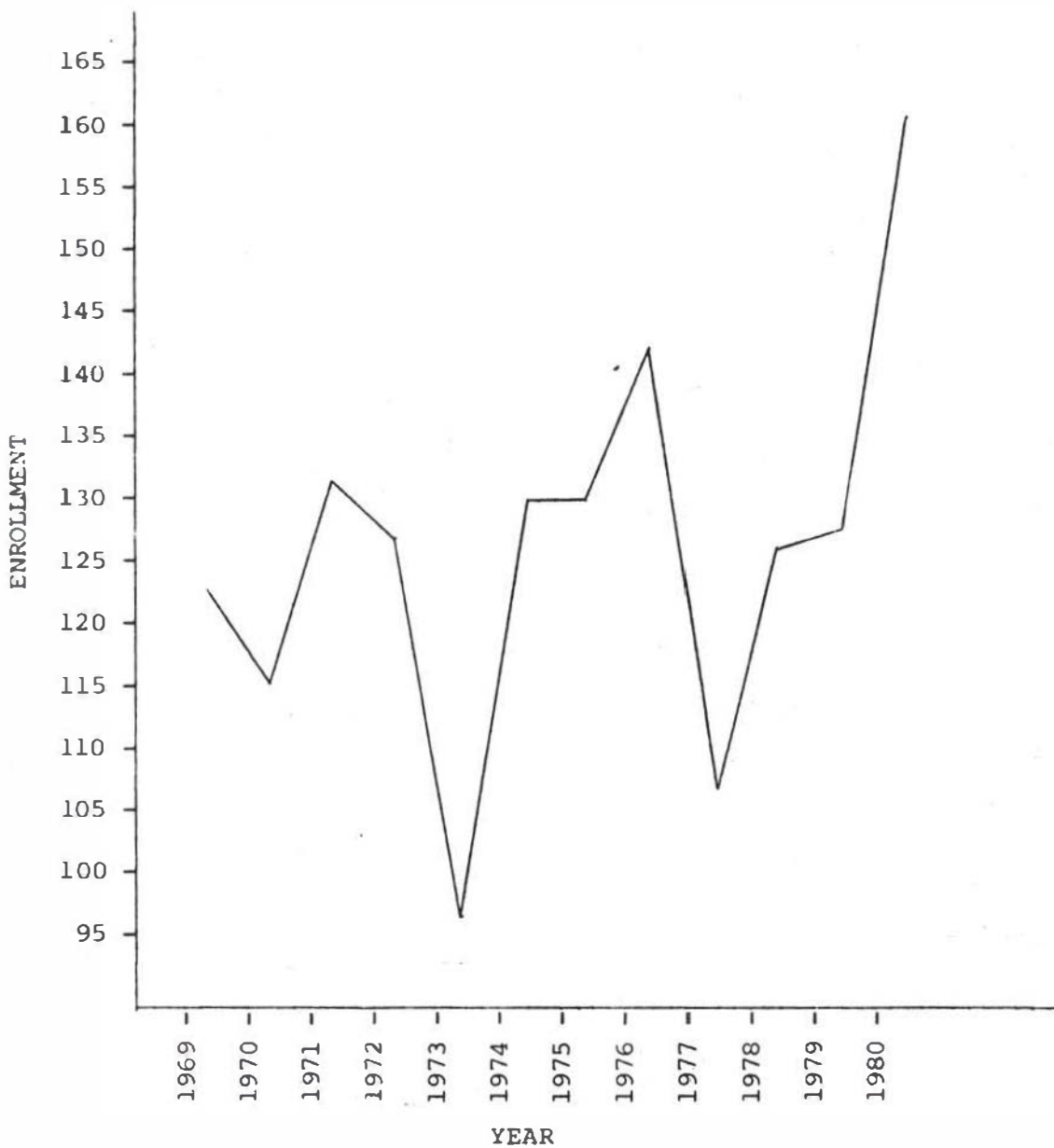


Figure II is used to show only the kindergarten enrollments from year to year, beginning with 1969. It was noted that extreme fluctuations in enrollments occurred from 1969 through 1980.

FIGURE II

HISTORICAL ENROLLMENT FOR KINDERGARTEN FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT



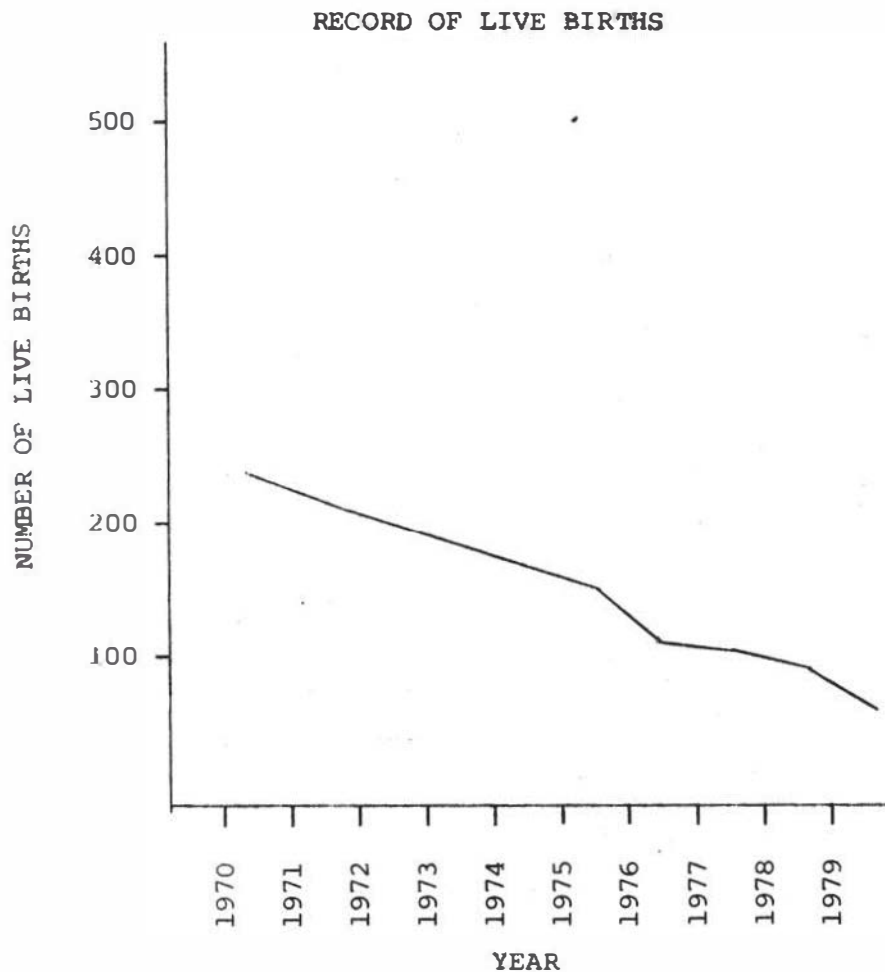
The information presented in Table II indicates the retention of students from one year to the next year, based on the previous five years. The information was derived from the data presented by the enrollment figures in Table I. The committee felt that the years from 1975 through 1980 would best indicate the enrollment trends of the district. Several of the figures in Table II indicate a retention of over one hundred percent. The transient student count was included in the enrollment picture and would, therefore, explain how the district could retain over one hundred percent.

TABLE II
COHORT-SURVIVAL TABLE

GRADE	PERCENT RETENTION
First Grade	100.4
Second Grade	96.1
Third Grade	95.0
Fourth Grade	105.7
Fifth Grade	100.7
Sixth Grade	107.3
Seventh Grade	102.4
Eighth Grade	98.8
Ninth Grade	104.4
Tenth Grade	95.0
Eleventh Grade	95.4
Twelfth Grade	87.7

The data on the Cohort Survival presented in Table II reflect a five-year experience since the committee agreed that the past five years would best reflect the pattern of enrollments expected over the next five years. To be able to determine the pattern of enrollments for the next five years, the committee researched information pertaining to the birth rate in the area. Area hospitals were surveyed and information concerning the total live birth rate was gathered. Figure III presents a graphic picture of this information gathered.

FIGURE III



By comparing the enrollment data presented in Table I, the live birth rate for the area and using the percentage of students retained as shown in the Cohort Survival Table found in Table II, the members of the committee agreed upon the five-year enrollment projections presented in Table III. For example, if the first grade in 1981 were followed for a period of five years, the calculations would be as follows:

The 1981 enrollment was 160 students, and when multiplied by the 96.1% retention figure presented in Table II, the number of students projected for the 1982 school year as second grade students would be 154.

To calculate the number of students projected for the third grade in 1983, one must multiply the number enrolled in 1982, which was 154 students, by 95% as indicated in Table II. This procedure can be followed throughout the twelve years this class will be enrolled in this district.

TABLE III

KINDERGARTEN - TWELFTH GRADE ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Sept.	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
1981	117	160	125	116	100	141	127	135	108	124	130	121	145	1755
1982	120	118	154	119	123	106	151	130	133	113	118	124	106	1725
1983	122	121	112	146	126	124	107	155	128	139	107	113	109	1719
1984	122	123	116	108	155	127	133	110	153	134	132	102	99	1724
1985	125	123	118	111	114	156	136	136	109	160	128	126	90	1742

While the tables for enrollments indicate a gradual decrease in student population over the past several years, the committee noted that the construction of two correctional centers, both within thirty miles of the community, are in the process of completion and are due to be opened shortly. This fact could help explain the large number of students that are enrolled in this year's kindergarten class.

The committee also noted that the addition of one or more small industries in the community would have an increasing effect on the enrollment projections. As with every small community, the variables affecting student population are far too numerous for one to be comfortable with enrollment projection.

Figure IV more graphically displays the historical enrollment and the projected enrollment trends for kindergarten.

FIGURE IV

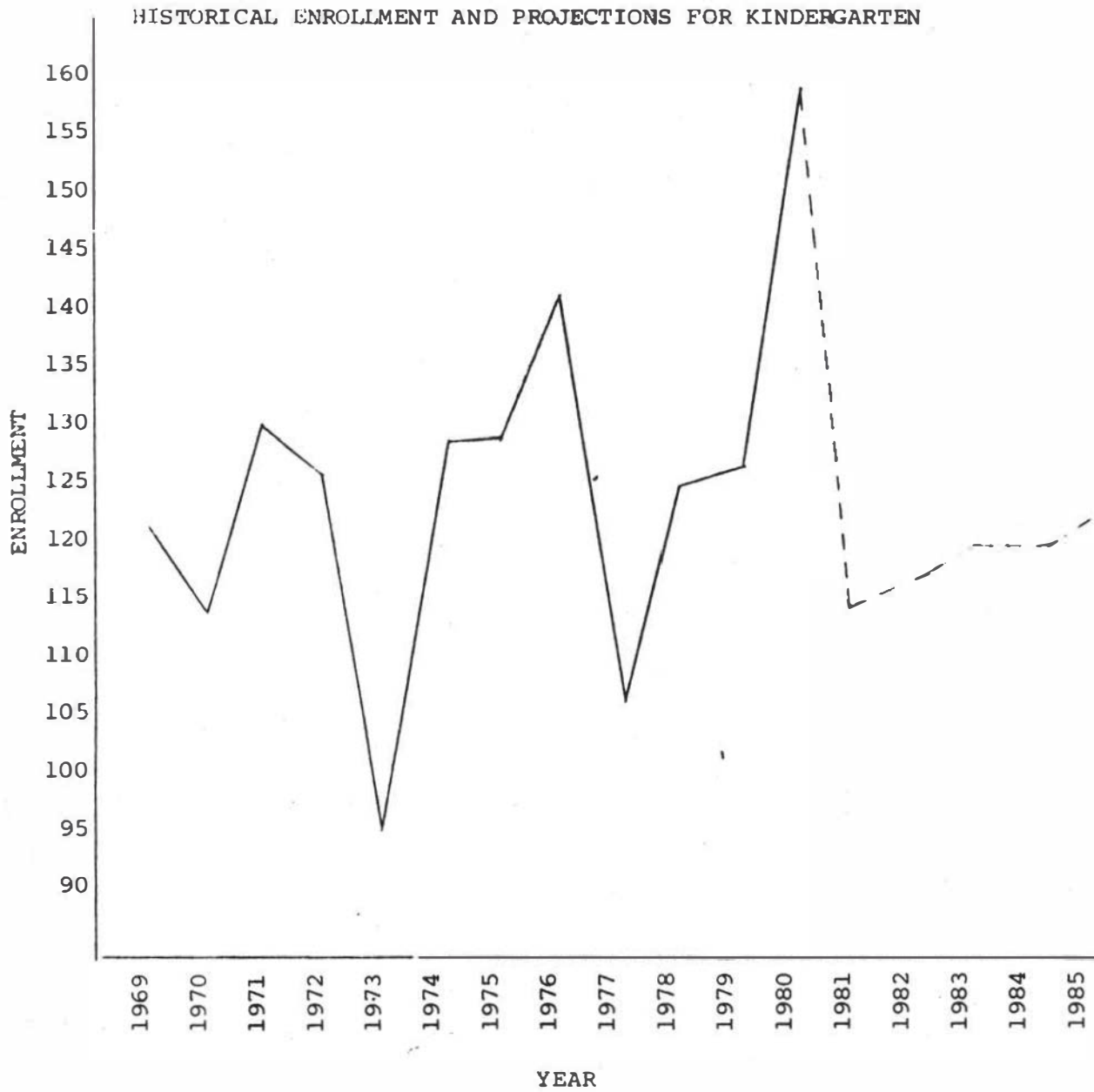
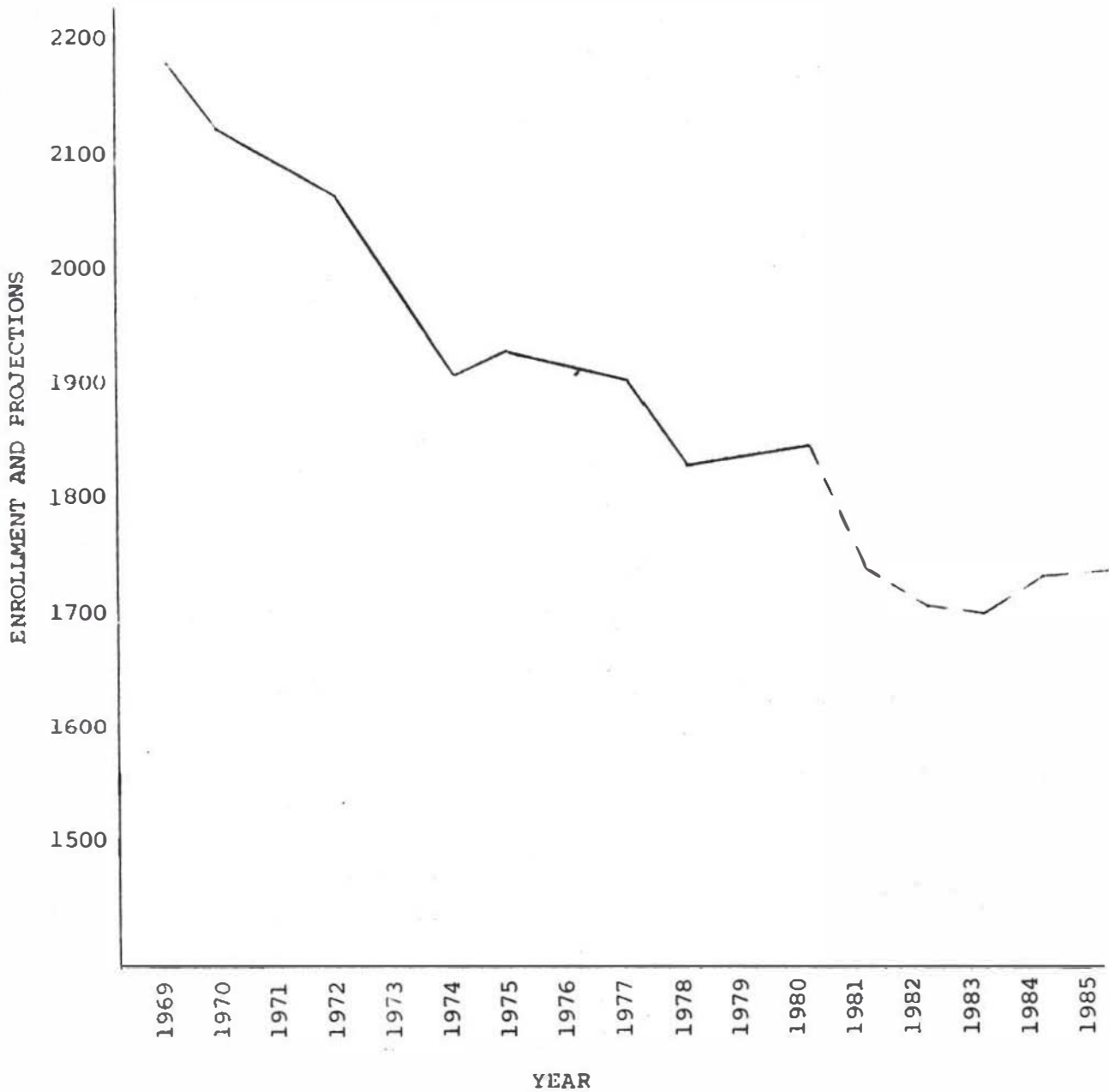


Figure V presents the historical and projected enrollment data in a more graphic and meaningful method. This figure indicates the projected enrollments for the grades kindergarten through twelfth.

FIGURE V

HISTORICAL ENROLLMENT AND PROJECTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN - TWELFTH



Once the enrollment picture had been established as accurately as possible, the committee turned to the financial aspect of the problem. The members of the committee decided to determine the actual bonding power of the district before deciding what should be recommended to the board of education. The members of the committee found that House Bill 2730 (1979), "increased the indebtedness limit for dual districts from 6 percent to 6.9 percent and in unit districts from 12 percent to 13.8 percent. The bill contains a 'hold harmless' provision (based on the 1978 equalized assessed valuation and former debt limits) until January 1, 1983."⁸ The committee members then took the 1978 equalized assessed valuation, multiplied that figure by 13.8 percent and found that the district had a bonding power ceiling of over \$6,000,000. The outstanding debts in effect are those on the new junior high building and which expire within five years. These bonds were subtracted from the total to obtain the \$6,000,000 figure.

Cognizant of the enrollment pictures and the financial limit the district could spend, the committee turned to the facility problem. Whether or not the district even needed to build was the first question to be answered by the committee. The capacities of the remaining buildings were determined to ascertain if the present structures would be able to house the displaced students. The capacities of the

⁸State, Local and Federal Financing for Illinois Public Schools, 1980-81, A Report Prepared by the Illinois State Board of Education, (Springfield: Finance and Reimbursements Department), page 61.

remaining buildings was found to be seven hundred students. This was determined by taking the number of available classrooms and multiplying that figure by thirty students, the number that could be physically housed in each classroom without crowding. With our present enrollment of eight hundred and sixty students, there was obviously no method of placing all elementary students in the present buildings without changing the present educational plans and schedules of the district. This left the committee the alternatives of either constructing a new building or remodeling Central School. This is, of course, an extreme simplification of the solution since there are various options for each alternative to consider.

Some of the options for new construction included:

1. An addition to an existing elementary center
2. A totally new building and site location
3. A new building on the present site after the razing process
4. A portable, temporary building
5. Additions to several of the elementary buildings
6. A major revision of the present grade placement and an addition to the junior high school

Much time was spent discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each of the various options. Eventually, for either educational or financial reasons, the decision was reached to build at one attendance center. The number and the usage of the addition was also a viable and determining factor in the selection of the option. The site chosen also had adequate playground space to accommodate both the

addition to the building and the increase of one hundred twelve students.

The facility committee then moved to option number two, that of remodeling Central School. The same procedure was followed as was done in the discussion of new construction. The committee decided that total renovation would be too costly for the district and that merely bringing the building into minimal life, health and safety requirements would be foolish. The decision was reached to bring the building into life, health and safety requirements and additional remodeling the district could afford. This would allow the building to be in compliance as well as have an esthetically pleasing appearance which would improve the educational environment for the students.

The only option open to the committee, other than construction, was to change the educational program of the district. This meant changing to a year around schooling or double shifting the students attending elementary schools. The ramifications of a change of this magnitude were so overwhelming the committee spent very little time studying this option. As a result, this option became the emergency plan, to be used only when all other options failed.

The committee then finalized its findings and presented them to the school board. The board acknowledged the work of the committee and, using the information gathered, made the decision to construct an addition to the Jefferson School attendance center. Even though the district had made adequate progress in a few short months, the decision

only served to pave the way for the multitude of problems yet to surface in the community.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Having reached its decision, the school board now was faced with the task of hiring an architect, hiring a bondsman, developing an informational brochure, initiating the formation of a citizens' committee to help in promoting the bond referendum and assisting in the development of the campaign strategies.

The hiring of an architect was the first item to be undertaken, because all referendum information would be based upon the architect's estimations and preliminary drawings. Architects were contacted and interviewed by the board and the administration. An architect that possessed personable characteristics, as well as an indisputable reputation, was felt to be essential. After interviewing six different architects, the board made the decision based on the above criteria.

The bondsman was hired in the same manner as was the architect. The emphasis in the hiring of the bondsman was on the business and financial aspect rather than the personality of the person. The bondsman would not have the public exposure the architect would have and, therefore, the strength of the bondsman would be in his financial abilities rather than his personability as viewed by the public.

As soon as the architect provided the administration with the preliminary cost estimations and drawings, a committee of two board

members, and two members of the administration developed the brochure for the upcoming referendum. Much of the information gathered by the facility study committee was used in the development of the brochure. Also provided by the architect were several examples of other brochures developed by school districts with similar problems. In developing the brochure, the committee found the task of keeping the brochure short, yet fully informative, most difficult. A copy of the brochure can be found in the Appendix.

While the brochure was in the process of being printed, the school board decided to begin the formation of the citizen's committee. Several public meetings were held to discuss the referendum. From the people attending the public meetings, the administration identified a group leader from each of the ten voting precincts, with two group leaders being identified from the largest voting precinct. The group leaders would have the responsibility of identifying four households from the voting precinct in which that particular group leader lived. A series of meetings was held with the group leaders to discuss the referendum in detail. In addition to the information that was to be printed in the brochure, the group leaders were given a great deal of supplementary information pertaining to the referendum. The supplementary information was not included in the brochure, since to do so would have meant confusing the information in the brochure with related, but not vital, facts.

Once the administration and the school board were assured the

committee members were knowledgeable of the information pertinent to the referendum, each of the committee members was instructed to identify a minimum of four households from which to obtain positive votes. The group leaders furnished the school district eleven households from which to expect a positive vote, and with each of the group leaders identifying four other households, the number of people working to help pass the bond referendum quickly rose to 110 people.

The school board and the administration researched past elections and found that the average election attracted between 600 and 700 voters with the largest voter turnout being 1,056 votes. With 110 people working for the referendum, the board decided to have each of the people of the citizen's committee bring six voters to the polls. This would assure a victory at election time.

Each committee member was given a checklist to follow while preparing for and while discussing the referendum with prospective positive voters. The checklist contained seven different points to consider. They were:

1. Review all information before calling on the voter
2. Estimate the voter's tax bill and the appropriate tax increase
3. Fully answer all questions asked by the voter
4. Do not waste time with obvious negative voters
5. Be sure the person is a registered voter
6. Explain the process of absentee voting

7. Be friendly, courteous and thank the voter for his consideration given on behalf of the students

The superintendent designed the campaign to be one of a low-key nature. This was done in an effort to keep the opposition at a minimum. At the request of the news media, several articles were published in the local newspaper and four interviews were aired by the local radio station. This local news coverage and the brochures distributed by the committee to the public were the total informational dissemination effort. The brochures were distributed door to door as the committee members worked to gather more positive votes.

During the week preceding the referendum election, the group leaders reminded the four households to call the various people identified as positive votes. Five tours of Central School were held during this last week to give the community an opportunity to verify the condition and the inadequacies cited by Mr. Rubenking. The number of people that turned out for the tours was dismal. Never were there more than thirty people attending any one of the tours. This apparent lack of concern and apathy toward the district's problem remained evident until election day.

The school board members, the administration and the members of the citizen's committee were totally oblivious of any organized effort against the referendum until the last week when this fact was brought to the attention of the school board. Two groups were working against the passage of the referendum, both of them for a different reason. One group was using billfold logic, telling people that a no vote would

mean no raise in taxes. This was totally untrue. The State Architect had explained several times the stand he was forced to take, a stand that meant expenditure of funds whether the referendum was successful or not. The other group wanted the referendum defeated because of so-called sentimental reasons and historical value to the community. The truth is that the building has been remodeled and added onto so many different times that, unless the community was willing to pay the cost of total renovation, the structure had virtually no significant value historically.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The voters of the community turned out in record numbers for the building bond referendum. The 1,863 votes cast were, in the opinion of the board, the determining factor in the defeat of the referendum. Had this election produced the usual amount of votes, the referendum would have been a success. The campaign strategy produced 598 votes, and would have been enough support to carry any of the previous elections held in the district.

When analyzing the election results, the school board and the administration determined four basic factors for the negativism on the part of the community. These factors are, in prioritized order, as follows:

1. The general feeling people have toward the economy
2. The credibility gap between the community and the state
3. The age of the voters in the community
4. The other individual feelings and factors affecting voting

The general feeling of the Illinois population has been increasingly negative toward any type of school referendum in recent years.

Perhaps this negativism is due to the fact that a referendum proposed by a school district is the only form of tax upon which the people of Illinois may vote. Figures from the Illinois State Board of Education indicate that, during the period from July 1, 1979, and June 30, 1980,

only 23 percent of the referenda dealing with more than one million dollars of building bond referenda were passed by the voting public.¹ These figures show an increasing trend toward the defeat of any type of tax referenda since in 1969 75 percent of the total referenda attempted were successful.

There were thirteen other referenda in the general area on the same day as the one attempted in this district. Of the other thirteen, only one was successful. The successful referendum dealt with the issue of either a small district merging with a larger district or passing an issue to build a new school building. If there is ever an issue that has a better than even chance of passing, it is the issue of a smaller district losing its hometown school and students being bused to a larger district.

Of the remaining twelve referenda, the construction costs ranged from \$600,000 to \$2,900,000. In each instance, the referendum dealt with new construction or additions to an existing building or buildings. Capital Development monies never entered into the campaign strategies of any of the districts since this source of revenue has been impossible to obtain for approximately two years. Several of the other districts suffered defeats by a six-to-one margin. The margin defeat in the district studied was slightly over two-to-one, which shows the effectiveness of the campaign.

¹Illinois State Board of Education, Tax Referenda Conducted Between July 1, 1979, and June 30, 1980, A Report Prepared by the Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield, Illinois, 1980.

The credibility of Mr. Rubenking was in question during the days preceding the election. The number of local experts on school construction was at an all time high, with the majority of the experts disagreeing with what the state architect had said in regard to the findings in Central School. As a direct result, many people in the community were led to believe the findings of the state architect were contrived. Of the more obvious faults to be found in the building, the experts believed the janitorial staff of the district would be able to repair the faults at a minimum of expense to the district. The architect hired by the board of education had already assured the board that neither his firm nor any other reputable firm would have any dealings with such major construction done by inexperienced workers. The architect indicated that some of the finish work, such as painting and cleaning the construction area, could be done by the district's staff. This type of work, however, represented only a minimal amount to be saved, and the board felt the total job should be done with the construction firm to be hired.

Apparently the community, as indicated with its vote, felt the building was in a good enough condition to continue serving as an elementary center. The Twelfth Annual Gallup Poll indicates the composition of the respondents showed that 68 percent of the people had no children in school. The Gallup Poll also indicated that only 2 percent of the public feel the schools are lacking proper

facilities.²

In another poll taken by an independent research organization known as the Practical Research into Organizational Behavior and Effectiveness, research shows that the feeling of 1,272 school superintendents rated the lack of facilities third in their list of problems facing school districts.³ The extreme dichotomy between the thinking of school personnel and the general public must be resolved if school districts are ever to have a chance at passing a building bond referendum in the near future.

The general feeling of the public after the election was over was that the school board had asked for too much at a difficult time. The board, taking this into consideration, decided to reduce the size of the addition and hold another election on April 7, 1981. The reductions included the removal of the library, the gymnasium and the addition to the cafeteria. None of these reductions affected any of the present programs. The reductions in the building did, however, limit the amount of growth and flexibility in the future.

Many of the difficulties encountered in the second election were very similar to those faced in the previous election. The major difference between the first election and the second was the amount of

²George H. Gallup, "Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, 44, September, 1980.

³Jerry Duea and Walter L. Bishop, "Important Differences in Public and Professional Perceptions of the School," Phi Delta Kappan, 51, September, 1980.

construction at Jefferson School. Of course, the amount of construction drastically affected the tax increase for the community. By reducing the amount of tax for the building bond referendum the board and the administration felt the referendum had a much greater chance than during the first election.

Notices were distributed throughout the community informing the public about the new referendum. Public endorsement was obtained from several civic organizations. The number of people working on the citizens' committee was increased. Optimism ran high through the campaign. By reducing the amount of money needed to build the addition, the argument used in the first election regarding the cost factor involved with remodeling or building the new addition was destroyed.

The results of the April 7 election were 1,805 yes votes and 1,517 no votes. Several factors contributed to the success of the second referendum. These factors include:

1. Planning
2. Personal contact with the community
3. Community involvement
4. Board and administrative unity
5. Dedication
6. Organized informational publications

The factors were present in both elections. Without these factors being present in one form or another, the election would have had a much more difficult time being passed.

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6.

APPENDIX

On Saturday, November 15, 1980

THE PEOPLE OF

VANDALIA UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 203

VANDALIA, ILLINOIS

will be asked to consider the very urgent question . . .

SHALL WE BUILD THE PROPOSED JEFFERSON ADDITION?



OUR PROBLEM

The enforcing authority of the Illinois State Board of Education has condemned the Central School Building for failure to meet minimal Health and Life Safety requirements.

The District has temporary approval until July 1, 1981, after which time we must make many improvements in the building to gain state approval. This would mean vacating Central School for one year while renovating.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Remodel Central School to bring the building into minimum standards established by the State and some remodeling for educational purposes at an estimated cost of \$1,577,000.
2. Construct a new addition at Jefferson School at a cost of \$2,050,000.

THE SOLUTION

The Board unanimously voted to build the addition to Jefferson School rather than undertake a complete overhaul of the Central building. Listed below are some of the reasons for their decision.

Renovation of Central - \$1,577,000	Jefferson Addition - \$2,050,000
1) LOCATION Routes 51, 40 & 185 Commercial area.	1) LOCATION Quiet residential area with no busy streets bordering the school property.
2) SIZE OF BUILDING SITE 1.08 acres	2) SIZE OF BUILDING SITE 8.85 acres
3) CAPACITY 51,100 square feet 15,000 square feet of classroom space; the gym has 7,400 square feet additional space.	3) CAPACITY 52,400 square feet 23,596 square feet of classroom space. The multi-purpose room has 7,800 square feet additional space.
4) RELOCATION OF STUDENTS All students must be moved to another location for at least the 1981-82 school year.	4) RELOCATION OF STUDENTS No students will be required to move until the addition is complete.
5) UTILITIES Being nearly 100 years old. Central is inefficient to heat. To make this building more efficient would cost additional money since not all expenses are covered by Life, Health, Safety.	5) UTILITIES Being a new building built for today's energy needs, this building will be as efficient to heat as modern building methods will permit.
6) BUS FACILITIES The only accessible area is the 1/2 block to the south of Central. Here there is room for approximately four buses.	6) BUS FACILITIES Jefferson has access on all four sides, giving room for the safest and most convenient methods of pickup and delivery of students.
7) CENTRAL SCHOOL was a high school, junior high, and is now an elementary building. Its structure doesn't readily adapt to the current and future programming for elementary students and students with special needs.	7) THE NEW ADDITION is designed with elementary students and special education students in mind. It offers much to the elementary student of tomorrow.

Central School has served the Vandalia community with great distinction, but has passed its prime. The school system must plan for a future which will soon bring us to the twenty-first century. Decisions made today must be made with an eye to the future and the type of world represented by that future. It is in light of this thinking that a new addition to the Jefferson Elementary School is proposed rather than renovation of Central which is nearly a hundred years old and will require a continued high level of maintenance even with large expenditures for renovation and Life Safety work.

WHAT WILL THE ADDITION INCLUDE?

Fourteen full-size classrooms (24'x32').

Six of the new classrooms will be complete with its own toilet facilities — four for special education students and two for kindergarten students.

The kindergarten rooms will be designed for kindergarten students and will have special exits for ease of separate bus loading and unloading.

Classrooms for all students from Central are planned for the new addition. This includes grades 1-5, learning disability classes, Title I classes, gifted class, music class, art class, speech class and janitorial areas.

A special vocational area for trainable mentally handicapped students.

A shower and grooming area for special education students.

A 40'x40' learning center for library, media and audio-visual equipment.

A multi-purpose room for assemblies and large group meetings. This room has a gymnasium floor, seating for 480 people and two dressing rooms.

Ample storage areas are planned in the new addition.

A large commons area for loading and unloading of bus students. This area can double as a cafeteria area.

A new centrally located office with rooms for parent, teacher, student conferences and staffings.

A new heat plant for the new addition.

A central yard area which can be utilized as an outdoor classroom, kindergarten play area, and outdoor cafeteria area.

Additional restroom facilities for students.

An entire structure of fire-safe, maintenance minimizing material, all designed in accordance with the latest recommendations and provisions of the Illinois School Code.

WHAT WILL IT COST?

The total bond issue for the Jefferson addition, all remodeling, code compliance, and fixed equipment will be \$2,050,000.

The repayment of this amount will be spread over a 15-year period at an 8 percent interest rate.

This will mean an increase in property taxes of \$.36 per \$100.00 of assessed valuation. Assessed value means the value placed on your property for tax purposes, not the market or true value. As a general rule, real estate property will be assessed at about 1/3 of its true value.

Using the preceding information the chart below will help you in determining the tax increase you will experience with a 36 cent increase.

Home (Market Value)	Assessed at 1/3	Annual Increase	Additional Tax at \$.36	
			Monthly Increase	Weekly Increase
\$ 20,000	\$ 6,666	\$ 24	\$ 2	\$.40
30,000	10,000	36	3	.60
40,000	13,333	48	4	.92
50,000	16,666	60	5	1.15
60,000	20,000	72	6	1.38
70,000	23,333	84	7	1.62
80,000	26,666	96	8	1.85
90,000	30,000	108	9	2.08
100,000	33,333	120	10	2.31

WHAT WILL THIS DO TO THE SCHOOL TAX RATE?

The 1980 tax rate for Vandalia Unit 203 was 2.55. The 1980 tax rates for some area schools were as follows:

Mulberry Grove	2.70	Brownstown	2.88
Altamont	2.92	St. Elmo	2.38
Nokomis	2.86	Ramsey	2.81
Paroka	2.92	LaGroves	2.94

A 36 cent tax increase would place Vandalia at a 2.91 rate which is comparable to current rates in many area districts.

VOTING INFORMATION

A Special Election will be held on Saturday, November 15, 1980. The ten regular school polling places will be open from 12 noon to 7 p.m.