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by

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2018

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**Variables Influencing the Successful Passage of School Bond Referenda
as Identified by Selected Stakeholders in Texas**

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Treatise

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2018

Dedication

To my parents,

Gordon E Heitzman

and

Carolyn Lee Bogan Heitzman

who were my first teachers.

You showed me the love of learning for its own sake,

as well as the value of a good education.

To my dad, for your zest for life, your curiosity, and your passion.

Thank you for showing me that life is an adventure to be lived, for believing I could do

anything, and always challenging me to be more.

To my mom, for your goodness, your courage, and your steadfastness.

*Thank you for teaching me the value of persistence, of never giving up in the face of
adversity; for showing me the importance of the small things in life; and for sharing with*

me a sense of the eternal.

Thank you for supporting every dream I have ever had,

no matter how small or large.

This is for you.

Acknowledgements

A process such as this takes courage, stamina, and persistence, which no one can do alone. I am grateful to my family members, friends, and colleagues who have supported me on this journey. I would like to thank my immediate family: my parents, Gordon and Carolyn Heitzman, and my brothers and sisters, and their spouses: Paula & Moussa, David, Emily & Anthony, William & Anna, and Stephen, for your love and support. I would like to give a special thanks to the Camara family: Paula, Moussa, Mohamed, Monalyn, and Gabriel, for adopting me as one of your own, and for telling me “You can do it!” I would also like to thank my extended family on both sides, for your love, support, and prayers throughout the process, and a give a special shout out to my newfound Texas cousins, Melissa, Phyllis, and Linda for taking me under your wing and giving me a place to call home in Texas.

I would not be here today without the support of my work “family,” and it truly does feel like family. Thank you Mollie, Amanda, Jason, Michael, Lashanda, Dean, Ryan, and Felicia, for giving me the encouragement needed to “cross the finish line”. To you I give my deepest appreciation for all the support you have provided this year. Thank you to Janice Varnell and Dr. Marilyn Wright, for your prayers and mentorship, and for providing detailed feedback on the final versions of the paper.

Thank you to everyone in the CSP 23 cohort for your amazing support and friendship on this journey. Thank you Marisol, for being the best “study buddy” ever, and thank you Annette, Joanne, Rick, Susanna, and Andria for helping me become a better person both personally and professionally. I have learned so much from each one of you. Thank you to Dr. Suzy Lofton, for introducing me to the CSP program, and convincing

me that maybe I could get my Master's degree after all! And thank you Dr. Susie Villalpando, for seeing my potential and mentoring me along the way.

There are so many friends and colleagues I would like to thank, many more than can be named here. Thank you to Jeanne Lecher and Robin Sheppard for your spiritual mentorship and guidance, and Elaine Walsh and Melissa Johnson Hornung for your long-standing friendship and support. Thank you to Maureen Flanagan, Collin Shaughnessy, and Christine Wroblewski for being role models to me throughout my career and life. A special thank you to Dr. Martha Ovando, for your wisdom, your mentorship, and support when I had no idea where "San Antonio" even was; and to Hortensia Palomares for helping me navigate the UT system. Thank you to Lupita Gutierrez and Amelia Gomez Palacios for supporting me in small and large ways throughout this process. Thank you Dr. Cody Arvidson, for keeping me on track and seeing me over the finish line!

I would like to thank my committee. Dr. Edwin Sharpe, thank you for your long-standing encouragement and support in this program and in many professional roles from the minute I landed in Texas. Dr. Norma Cantu, thank you for the breadth and depth of your knowledge and expertise, and for the valuable recommendations you provided along the way. Dr. Wes Hickey, thank you for bringing your specialized knowledge and expertise in this area, as well as your immediate feedback and support throughout the process. Dr. Rubén Olivárez, thank you for believing in someone who followed a non-traditional path, for seeing my potential, and helping me get here today.

Finally, thank you to Monalyn and Gabriel, Mohamed, Max and Noah, and Elinor and Teddy, my nieces and nephews, who inspire me every day to become a better person and educator. I dedicate this to you, who are our future. This is for you --- so that you know that you are capable of anything and can achieve any dream your heart desires.

"What starts here changes the world! – Hook 'em Horns!"

Abstract

Variables Influencing the Successful Passage of School Bond Referenda as Identified by Selected Stakeholders in Texas

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School districts that successfully pass a school bond election after a failed bond election offer a unique opportunity to investigate variables involved in both the failure and subsequent successful passage of a bond referenda (Hickey, 2006). This in-depth qualitative case study of a representative school district that experienced success after a prior failure was used to develop a greater understanding of the variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment toward school bond passage, as well as update, enhance, elaborate, and clarify previous quantitative and qualitative work in the field. This study examined the participants' views to establish what the variables were that affected the outcome of bond elections that "statistical analysis alone cannot capture" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 417). This qualitative study answered three questions: (a) What variables contributed to the failure of a school bond election? (b) What variables contributed to the success of a school bond election? (c) What relationships existed among these variables with regard to selected characteristics of a school district? The overarching research paradigm was a qualitative single-case study in which artifacts and interviews were the primary data analyzed. This study investigated one representative district in Texas that had a successful bond election after prior failure, using a purposive, theoretical sampling technique from the subset of districts who failed and then passed a subsequent bond referenda between May 2013 and May 2017 in Texas using bond data from the Texas

Comptroller's Office. The findings revealed that the school district leaders and the school bond referendum election process must be responsive to changing community environments and voter preferences. Key strategies that were used in successfully passing a school bond referendum included: an extensive pre-bond needs assessment process; securing strong consulting expertise to support a comprehensive school bond election planning process; mapping the political environment and involving key community influencers; a focus on effective leadership recruitment and development of parent and community leaders; substantive input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders throughout the process, especially parents and campus staff; a clear, appealing bond proposal; and acknowledgement and recognition of losses caused by the change process. The study contributed new knowledge to the body of research on successful school bond referenda. This study also offered new insights into key strategies that enable leaders in public school districts and communities to be able to succeed in school bond referendum elections in the future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The quality of school facilities affects the lives of children and communities for years to come and reflects the value communities place on children and their future. “Research shows that high-quality facilities help improve student achievement, reduce truancy and suspensions, improve staff satisfaction and retention, and raise property values” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3). Excellent school facilities are the very foundation of educational and community success (Holt, 2009; Ortiz, 1994). “It is not an accident that communities that have the means to invest in their public school buildings do so. They improve and enhance their school facilities because it matters to the quality of education, the strength of their community, and the achievement and well-being of their children and teachers” (BEST, 2006, p. 29).

The U.S. General Accounting Office (USGAO), in a 1995 report entitled *School Facilities: Condition of America’s Schools*, recognized the need to provide adequate educational facilities: “A number of state courts as well as Congress have recognized that a high-quality learning environment is essential to educating the nation’s children. Crucial to establishing that learning environment is that children attend school in decent facilities” (p. 3). Nevertheless, school districts encounter challenges when raising funds for facilities. Therefore, this chapter includes sections specific to the background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, a brief overview of the methodology, definition of terms, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and significance of the study.

Background of the Problem

School facilities needs have repeatedly emerged as a major issue in ongoing efforts to improve education over the past two decades. The scale of the nation's public school facilities is astonishing. "Nearly 50 million students and 6 million adults are served in close to 100,000 buildings, encompassing an estimated 7.5 billion gross square feet and 2 million acres of land" (Filardo, 2016, p. 3). The square footage of public school district buildings is almost half the area of all commercial office space in the United States (Filardo, 2016). Texas' public schools alone serve over 10% of the nation's school-age population, with over 5.3 million students served by 1,247 public school districts (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2017).

Over the past 20 years, numerous reports have documented the need to repair, renovate, and replace aging school building or school structures considered to be in poor condition (BEST, 2006; Filardo, 2016; Holt, 2009; National Education Association [NEA], 2000; USGAO, 1995). The average age of schools throughout the United States is 44 years, and this average building age for the nation's schools has been increasing (NEA, 2014). Almost a quarter of the nation's school buildings operate while in fair or poor condition, growing from 16% of all schools in 1998-1999 to 24% in 2012-2013, representing a 50% increase in the number of school buildings kept in operation regardless of their poor structural conditions (NEA, 2014). As a result, the country has an increasing number of schools operating while aging under deferred maintenance conditions and in poor repair that need to be renovated, repaired, or replaced. In 1995, the USGAO indicated that it would cost \$112 billion to bring all public school buildings

throughout the country into good overall condition. By 2000, the NEA estimated \$322 billion was needed for school facilities' repairs, construction, and technology updating (Edweek, 2004).

In one of the newest and most comprehensive summaries on K-12 school facilities' conditions and funding needs to date, Filardo (2016) estimated that school districts and states have spent over \$2 trillion dollars (\$99 billion annually) over the past 20 years to maintain and modernize school facilities, making state and local investments in school facilities "the second largest sector of public infrastructure spending," behind only investments in highways (Filardo, 2016, p. 2). "School districts worked hard from 1994 to 2013 to operate, maintain, modernize, and meet the enrollment growth of the nation's K-12 public schools" (Filardo, 2016, p. 3).

Increased Educational Program and Facilities Requirements

In addition to the challenges related to outdated and aging facilities, school districts also have faced increasing educational program and facilities requirements associated with rising enrollment, increasing national and state accountability requirements, changing student demographics, expanded educational programming, increased accessibility and safety standards, and technology requirements (Filardo, 2016; Kowalski, 2002). These changes are often accompanied by significant new facilities requirements. "Over the past 20 years, educational environments have undergone enormous change, driven by shifting expectations and requirements from educators, parents, communities, and regulators" (Filardo, 2016, p. 7). Increasing accountability requirements, changing student demographics, and expanded educational program

requirements have created extra facilities' requirements to support "new teaching models and student-directed learning" (p. 11). Filardo (2016) summarized the kinds of facilities' alterations needed "to add capacity and make the facility more suitable for education or other district purposes" in the 21st century:

Significant drivers for facilities alterations included new requirements for special education and physical accessibility; expansion of early childhood education; integration of technology for instruction and administration; class-size reduction; and heightened safety and security concerns. (p. 10)

Filardo (2016) also indicated that districts expanded facilities' space for programs that "reduced barriers to students' academic success" enable districts to assign:

Additional administrators and student-support personnel, such as social workers and academic counselors. And they have expanded after-school care and other school-based services and support for families through partnerships with community-based organizations. These added functions require additional space. (p. 11)

School districts have also "modernized labs to support sophisticated and specialized science and technology instruction so that students can pursue studies in fields such as robotics and biotechnology" (Filardo, 2016, p. 11). Increasing health, safety, accessibility, and technology requirements have required increased facilities repairs, renovations, and modernization (Kowalski, 2002; Tanner & Lackney, 2006; Penn State, 2017). "In the span of these 20 years, school facilities changed more rapidly than at any time in recent memory, fueled by improved health and safety standards, stronger

accessibility requirements, increased use of technology, and expanded programming within schools” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3). Tanner and Lackney (2006), citing Graves (1993), indicated that aligning school facilities to educational programming is an ongoing challenge, especially in times of rapid change: “Facilities should be more sensitively designed to the new needs of education in a period of rapid, indeed revolutionary, change in instruction and social conditions” (Tanner, C. K. & Lackney, J. A., 2006, p. 83).

Growing Enrollment

Many districts have needed to renovate or expand existing schools or construct new schools to meet the needs of rapidly growing student populations (EdWeek, 2004; Holt, 2009). “Public school enrollment has increased in recent years, particularly in the southern and western United States, and more growth is expected in the future” (TEA, 2017, p. 5). Rising enrollment has resulted in the need for school districts to expand or reconfigure existing facilities or build new temporary or permanent facilities (Filardo, 2016). Filardo (2016) predicted school districts will need an additional \$87 billion annually for capital construction and new facilities costs between 2014 and 2024 (a gap of \$38 billion annually) (p. 26).

Texas school districts find themselves in dire need of renovating and expanding existing facilities and constructing new school facilities. Texas educates one of the largest school-age populations in the country and also is one of the highest growth states in the country (Filardo, 2016; NCES, 2016; TEA, 2017). “In the 2006-07 school year, 4,594,942 students were enrolled in Texas public schools. By 2016-17, enrollment had risen to 5,359,127 students. Over the 10-year period, total enrollment increased by

764,185 students, or by 16.6 percent” (TEA, 2017, p. ix). Student enrollment is projected to continue to increase between 9% and 14% between 2014 and 2024 (Filardo, 2016; TEA, 2017). With this record student growth, recent estimates indicated Texas has the second highest projected costs for new construction in the nation over the next 10 years at \$13.8 billion for new construction alone (Filardo, 2016). Due to the size and rapid growth of school enrollment in Texas, the renovation and expansion of school facilities is a significant undertaking. In the end, “Improving the quality of school facilities is an expensive undertaking. However, when the positive impacts of facility improvement on teachers and students are translated into dollar figures, the rewards of such investments far outstrip the cost of the investments” (Penn State, 2017).

The Need for Local School Bond Referenda

Traditionally, financing for school facilities has been almost entirely a local school district responsibility approved through local bond referenda, making the successful passage of school bonds elections vital to the continued growth and development of school districts and communities (Duncombe & Wang, 2009; Sielke, 2001; Zimmer, Buddin, Jones, & Liu, 2011). Despite the existence of several forms of state support for school facilities funding in Texas including the Permanent School Fund (PSF), the Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (IFA) and the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) program, local school bond elections continue to be the primary method used to finance school facilities’ repair, renovation, and new construction in Texas (Clark, 2001; Duncombe & Wang, 2009; Plummer, 2006; Sielke, 2001). Although 84% of school districts participate in the IFA or EDA program in Texas (Legislative

Budget Board, 2016, p. 1), the state's share of capital outlay for school facilities was only about nine percent (9%) of the total costs, leaving the remainder to local communities to fund (Filardo, 2016).

As communities in Texas are faced with the challenge of maintaining and modernizing facilities, superintendents and school boards are under significant pressure to pass school bond referenda to renovate or expand existing facilities and finance new construction (Filardo, 2016; Hickey, 2008). "When it comes to persuading voters to provide capital improvement funding, each school district is largely on its own" (Bowers, Metzger, & Militello, 2010a, p. 404). Without school facilities' funding, districts may risk "falling behind more successful neighboring districts, particularly in regions where school-choice competition and high-stakes accountability exists" (Bowers et al., 2010a, p. 399). However, in an environment where passing a school bond referendum is critical to the long-term health of schools, the likelihood of passage is far from certain. Many school boards and superintendents have difficulty gaining the support needed to pass bond referenda (Hickey, 2006; Zimmer et al., 2011). The ability to work with the community to ensure success in a school bond election is a critical duty of school boards and superintendents (Hickey, 2006, 2008). Godown (2010) found as school boards and superintendents turn toward the community to gain voter approval to fund building projects, it is essential "to understand how to properly plan and execute a school facilities bond referendum" (p. 4).

In addition, research indicated that superintendents and school administrators are rarely prepared to conduct school bond referenda:

The problem of passing school bond referendums [sic] is exacerbated by the fact that few institutions of higher education prepare school administrators for the task. Most of the textbooks on educational facilities used to prepare school administrators are directed towards the specifics of planning educational facilities. They adequately address the historic development of educational facilities, how to determine school building needs, how to plan a building, how to modernize a building and how to finance the capital outlay. But few, if any provide specific strategies on how to win bond referendums [sic]. In many instances, school bond issues have failed because administrators were not prepared to plan an effective strategy for passing them. (Holt, 2009, p. 17)

Research on School Facilities Bond Passage

Prior research in the field of school bond referenda passage can be classified into two main categories: empirical and normative models of school bond passage. Empirical research over the past 40 years has focused on factors that impact the likelihood of bond passage that can be quantitatively measured, including voter preferences, district and community characteristics, bond characteristics, and election characteristics (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010a, 2010b; Gong & Rogers, 2014; Hickey, 2008; Ingle, Johnson, Givens, & Rampelt, 2013; Piele & Hall, 1973; Theobald & Meier, 2002; Zimmer et al., 2011). Normative models have consisted mainly of unpublished dissertation articles and procedural advice found in professional/trade journals for school and district administrators on “lessons learned” and suggestions on “how to pass your bond” (Bowers et al., 2010b). There also is an additional line of related

research that explored the factors in passing school levy referenda as opposed to school bond referenda (Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Smith, & Zhang, 2004; Ingle & Johnson, 2009; Ingle, Petroff, & Johnson, 2011; Ingle, Johnson, & Petroff, 2013; Ingle, Johnson, et al., 2013; Johnson & Ingle, 2009; O'Connor, 2011).

Empirical research. The empirical research addressed voters, bond characteristics, and other variables affecting bond referenda viability. Appendix A displays the detailed comparison of the empirical research discussed in this section. First, voter impact studies are explained.

Early research focused on voter impact on bond elections. Early work in the empirical field on school bond referenda concluded school leaders and practitioners might have little impact on school bond elections outcomes (Piele & Hall, 1973), but more recent work suggested there are a number of factors that school leaders can influence in order to impact the outcome of a school facilities bond election (Bowers & Lee, 2013). Piele and Hall's (1973) early influential work, based on an exhaustive analysis of 100 studies, created a groundbreaking theory about the factors that most impact school bond elections. Their work advanced the theory that two major factors, voter participation and voter characteristics, such as voter age, economic status (SES), education, and ethnicity significantly affected the outcome of a school bond election. They found increasing voter participation actually decreased the likelihood of bond passage. Voter age was negatively associated with bond passage; that is, older voters were more likely to vote no. Other voter characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and education also impacted election outcomes. Although they also looked

at other factors including district demographics and bond and election characteristics, Piele and Hall (1973) concluded these factors were not as impactful to bond election outcomes as voter participation and voter demographics. This research “painted a fairly discouraging picture of the ability of the school district to influence the outcome of school bond elections” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 735). Increasing voter turnout would likely decrease the odds of bond passage; whereas, other intrinsic voter characteristics that impacted the likelihood of bond passage, such as age, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and education level were not able to be influenced by school leaders.

In literature reviews in the field since Piele and Hall (1973), researchers concluded empirical research on the factors most associated with passing or failing school district bond elections since the early work of Piele and Hall (1973) had been limited. “Very little peer-reviewed, published research has examined what factors have an impact on the outcome of school levies, budget referenda, or bond issues” (Johnson & Ingle, 2008, p. 5). Bowers et al., (2010b) found “Surprisingly, few studies since the 1970s have focused on modeling the factors associated with the likelihood of whether school bond elections pass or fail” (p. 378). Bowers and Lee (2013), in one of the most recent and exhaustive literature reviews in the field, concluded “recent empirical research is sparse on exactly what factors are most associated with passing or failing a school facilities bond” (p. 734-35).

Recent research focused on bond characteristics impacting bond passage. More recent empirical studies discovered that a “small and growing body of research has begun to focus on updating this research domain on facility bonds” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p.

735). A series of quantitative studies over the past 15 years utilized inferential statistics to investigate quantitative factors that might be important in predicting bond passage or failure. Through these studies, researchers identified district, community, bond, and election characteristics significantly linked to the likelihood of bond passage.

Quantitative research in the field concluded that numerous factors linked to bond passage likelihood may be influenced by district leaders including the amount of the bond request, purpose of the bond, timing of the bond election, number of bond floats, bond wording, and the number of the bond proposal on the ballot (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010a, 2010b; Gong & Rogers, 2014; Ingle, Johnson, et al., 2013; Zimmer et al., 2011).

Despite this work in the field, Bowers et al. (2010b) indicated “considerable investigation was conducted in the 1960s and 1970s,” but “school bond passage has received less attention by policy researchers in recent decades” (p. 394). They recognized the lack of a theoretical model regarding school bond passage: “What is needed is a theoretical model that takes into consideration the variables tested in the past and updates them for the 21st century.” They called for development of a theoretical model regarding school bond passage: “Future research is necessary to construct a broader theory of bond passage.” They recommended that future qualitative research was needed “to describe and understand the complex work and interrelationships of district and community actors during the bond election phases,” and to “address how or why each of the significant variables in the model act in districts attempting to pass bonds” (p. 394).

Consequently, Bowers and Lee (2013), in one of the most recent quantitative studies on school bond passage, addressed many of the concerns of prior quantitative studies. The Bowers and Lee (2013) study, which analyzed 2,224 school bonds in Texas from 1997-2009, addressed criticisms that prior work had limited geographic representation and small sample sizes. Based on a synthesis of results of earlier work on voter preferences, as well as more recent quantitative research on district and bond characteristics, Bowers and Lee's (2013) study proposed a mediated model of school bond passage that included the impact of district and community characteristics, bond characteristics, and voter preferences on school bond election outcomes. They contended "there are significant malleable factors in a bond election that are under the control of school district administrators" (p. 759).

While the Bowers and Lee (2013) mediated model of school bond passage is the most comprehensive theoretical model to date, this model still only accounted for 33.2% to 44.3% of the variance in outcomes of a bond election. In other words, the best quantitative models currently available only account for up to 44% of the variation in bond outcomes, leaving a significant amount of variation potentially due to other factors. They also had specific recommendations for Texas, suggesting that athletics and the arts might be difficult to pass. They also recommended the use of "omnibus single ballot measures" for school districts, specifically advising against separate bond proposals.

For Texas bonds, proposing renovations and debt refinancing appear to be successful strategies for passing a bond. As a caution, while specific requests for athletics and art facilities were not significant in the final model, the preliminary

models and descriptive statistics indicate that, by themselves, *these two types of requests are favored less than others at the polls and we would caution against districts putting these two types of requests as individual and separate ballot measures. . . .* Together, these findings indicate that *omnibus single ballot measures that include all of the needs of the district and include renovations*, that are at the top of the ballot (or are the only issue on the ballot), and that are the first float *are the most likely to pass* [italics added for emphasis]. (p. 762)

Bowers and Lee (2013) hinted of the potential for change in the environment for school bond passage in Texas:

For Texas, interesting times appear to be ahead, as what has been seen in the past research on bond passage as a constant—the percentage of voters who will vote yes—may be shifting as the demographics of the state change. (p. 762)

Additional research on variables affecting bonds. There also are a series of unpublished dissertations and articles in professional publications included investigations of variables that impact school bond elections and attempted to identify effective campaign strategies used in successful bond passage. While this literature is promising, there are serious limitations with the existing research.

Holt (1993), in an unpublished dissertation, used an exploratory data analysis to investigate the “factors within a community, inherent in the proposal, and within the campaign structure that have an effect on school bond election outcomes” (p. 5). The study interviewed the superintendent of schools, a member of the citizens’ bond support committee, the editor of the local newspaper, and a local banker in 4 districts in South

Dakota. The study was conducted in 2 school districts with successful bond passage and 2 districts with bond failure. Holt (1993) found these factors important to bond success:

Results from interviews reveal these factors to include: having an active citizens support committee and adequate organization; understanding of the needs of the community; effectively communicating of the needs of the schools; using campaign activities that are personal and direct; appealing to the appropriate target audience; and involving all segments of the community in all stages of the campaign. Findings suggest that school boards and administrators need to plan the amount of the bond issue and must demonstrate a good plan for managing the funds after the election.

While this study provided valuable information about potentially significant elements of successful school bond elections and effective campaign strategies in bond passage, the study examined only relatively small school districts with a median size of 2,197 students, making generalizability potentially difficult to larger districts. In addition, the study is limited to the state context of South Dakota, which may have a different political and educational context than Texas. The study is now almost 25 years old, and there have been significant social, political, and educational changes in the intervening years.

Holt's (2009) book updated this work. In the 2009 work, Holt organized factors that impact school bond elections into factors that influence campaigns, variables that contribute to the success of school bond referendums [sic]; variables that contribute to the failure of school bond referendums [sic]; and influential variables specific to the

characteristics of a given school district. Factors that Holt (2009) identified as important to campaigns, included: placement of citizen participation, community relations program, consultants, unity of purpose, voter turnout, endorsements, opposition groups, tax increase limitations, and timing and length of campaign. Holt identified voter turnout of “yes” voters, an active citizens’ support group, media support, and personal campaigning as variables important to the success of the school bond referenda. Variables that contributed to the failure of school bond referenda included: “lack of understanding of the attitudes and perceptions within the community and among educational staffs about the schools” (p. 22). Other variables that contributed to the failure of school bond referenda included: lack of school board support and the size of the increase of the school bond referendum. Variables that were specific to a given school district, included: placement of school buildings, school design, demographics, and perceptions about the economy.

Lode (1999) replicated Holt’s (1993) study with a similar study in Iowa also interviewing four key stakeholders: superintendent of schools, a member of the citizens bond support committee, the editor of the local newspaper, and a local banker in 4 districts in Iowa: 2 school districts with successful bond passage and 2 districts with bond failure. Findings of the study indicated the importance of an organized and well-represented citizen committee in the promotion of the school bond election. In addition, the findings supported the need for bond promotion groups to target “yes” voters to ensure they vote to ensure success. Good internal and external communication and use of

the media were supported by the findings as elements essential to a successful bond election. Neither of these studies gathered information from parents.

Stockton's (1996) dissertation utilized a quantitative research design to examine what factors influenced the voters' decision during the October 1, 1994 Conroe Independent School District (CISD) Bond Referendum (Texas). The study utilized surveys that were sent to 400 randomly selected voters who voted absentee/early in the October 1, 1994 CISD School Bond Referendum during the summer of 1995. Surveys were followed by personal interviews to gather further data. Stockton (1996) analyzed data according to 26 elements that might be important in school bond passage. This research found 20 elements voters indicated were important. Those factors included: the opportunity for early/absentee voting; trust in the CISD School Board; trust in the CISD administration; trust in CISD in general; the involvement of school personnel; personal endorsements and endorsements from the Chambers of Commerce; the growth in student population; having children in CISD; having detailed information about the bond referendum; information comparing surrounding school district's tax rates; previous school bond follow through; information on the cost increase for the average home in CISD; government compliance needs; the use of a public relations campaign; campus activities to promote the needs of bond passage; community participation in the bond referendum; parent participation in the bond election; the consequences of a failed bond referendum; the theme Taking Hold of the Future...A Plan for our Students to the Year 2000; and the presence of long range planning. While these results are informative, they also are now over 20 years old. Results explored only the input of an undifferentiated

group of voters, without differentiation between stakeholder groups, e. g. parents, teachers/district staff, and community members.

Faltys' (2006) dissertation studied the factors influencing the successful passage of a school bond referendum as identified by selected voters in the Navasota Independent School District in Texas, and examined pre- and post-strategies of a failed and then successfully passed bond referendum. Faltys (2006) found that lack of trust in the administration and lack of follow-through in previous bond referenda played a significant role in determining the negative outcome of the initial school bond referendum failure. Faltys (2006) identified factors impacting success in the succeeding bond referendum included: detailed information on bond plans; individual campus activities promoting needs for the passage of the bond referendum; opportunity to vote on more than one proposition; and information on the cost of the tax increase for the average home were instrumental in the positive outcome of that referendum. In regards to demographics of the voting population, the factor "currently having children in the district" played a significant role in determining the outcome of the referenda. The limitations of this study is that it is in one district in Texas, the district is of small size, and a mixed group of voters were interviewed.

In 2009, Kraus' dissertation analyzed the perceptions of selected school district stakeholders regarding potentially critical factors in school bond referendum success and failure in Kansas during the years 2004 through 2007. Of 72 eligible school districts in Kansas, one district was randomly selected from each of six groups formed through a stratified random sampling process utilizing district enrollment (small, medium, large)

and bond election result (successful, unsuccessful). Four purposefully selected respondents—the superintendent of schools, a member of the local citizens’ bond committee, a local banker, and the editor of the local newspaper from each district—participated in a mixed methods strategy of inquiry that included completion of a 32-item written survey and participation in an interview. This study found three critical factors in a successful bond election: having unanimous school board support for the school bond referendum; having an ongoing public relations strategy with patrons; and communicating the elements of a bond referendum to all patrons in simple, clear, and honest language. Again, feedback from parents was not specifically solicited.

Godown’s (2010) dissertation looked the factors that contributed to passing a successful school bond referendum as identified by selected New Jersey school superintendents. The study utilized an online electronic survey of superintendents of 121 New Jersey school districts, and follow-up interviews of randomly selected participants to explore four variables potentially impacting bond passage: Credibility/Trust; Involvement of Stakeholders; Campaign Organization; and Financial Factors. This study utilized an adapted version of Stockton's (1996) survey, which was originally developed to study voter perceptions in the Conroe School District in Texas. Godown (2010) found that the perception of trust, credibility, and involvement of the stakeholders proved to be very influential in passing a school bond referendum. Hickey’s (2006) study qualitatively analyzed “three school districts that achieved bond election success after a prior failure” and found “obtaining the support of teachers, listening and communicating to all stakeholders, and consistently building a foundation of trust to help in overcoming the

negative sentiment” were important in bond success (p. 1). This study interviewed superintendents on their perceptions of school bond efforts.

Closely related research also investigated the variables involved in the passage of school levy referenda (for district operating costs vs. capital costs). Ingle, Johnson, and Petroff (2012) examined five districts pursuing new operating levy campaigns in Ohio, and interviewed district-level administrators, school-level administrators, teachers, and parent volunteers in the selected Ohio school districts regarding the districts’ role in crafting school budget referenda campaigns. Using a macropolitical, micropolitical, and campaign strategies framework, this study found four macropolitical themes significantly impacted levy passage: state campaign policies, state education finance policy, the high-profile nature of the Presidential election, and the state of the economy. They found school districts had a great deal of variation in strategies used and community involvement. Districts that had significant community engagement and created a sense of urgency produced greater success at the polls than “central office campaigns.”

Message training for campaign participants also was critical to success. They utilized Johnson (2008)’s 21 school levy strategies that had been previously identified through a literature review associated with successful school levy campaigns in the context of a single Ohio case study district to analyze campaign strategies. Johnson (2008) identified the following strategies for the passage of school levy referenda: create a clear vision for the district’s future; justify the need; create a sense of urgency; establish an ongoing school-community relations program; use all positive data available; survey constituents; consider the amount requested; consider the timing and length of the

campaign; ensure board unity; involve community leaders, staff and media; educate district staff and students; analyze previous elections; establish a diverse campaign committee; focus on “Yes” voters; disseminate information; focus on the benefits; utilize experts; keep a low administration profile; use technology; avoid controversy; and debrief regardless of the results. While this study was more recent and included a broader sample of districts, including urban and suburban school districts, this study was part of related literature pertaining to school *levy* referenda passage, and did not specifically investigate *bond* referenda passage.

In summary, the dissertation literature on school facilities bond passage to date has the following limitations, creating a number of gaps: 1) much of the literature is over 10 years old (Holt, 1993; Stockton, 1996; Pappalardo, 2005; Faltys, 2006; Lode, 1999; Williamson, 1997); 2) the literature is from other states (CA, KS, IA, OH, SD) and may not generalize to the Texas context (but might be successfully replicated in Texas) (Holt, 1993; Kraus, 2009; Godown, 2010); 3) No study has specifically included parents or community members in the interviewed or surveyed stakeholder groups (Holt, 1993; Stockton, 1996; Kraus, 2009; Godown, 2010; Williamson, 1997); 4) literature examined school districts of small size (Holt, 1993; Faltys, 2006); 7) the dissertation studies in Texas examined the perceptions of voters, but not specific stakeholder groups such as parents (Stockton, 1996; Faltys, 2006, Williamson, 1997). Most importantly, 8) lack of a theoretical framework regarding variables significant in school bond referenda passage.

Statement of the Problem

There is no updated qualitative study that has investigated the variables that impact the outcome of school bond elections in Texas from the perspective of key stakeholders. The overall literature providing guidance for superintendents and school boards on the variables influencing the successful passage of a school bond referenda is sparse (Bowers et al., 2010; Hickey, 2006, 2008; O'Connor, 2011). Theobald and Meier (2002) found “school bond elections receive little attention in political science of educational policy literature, and the research that does exist is based on the observation of a single or handful of elections” (p. 1).

Second, there is a lack of updated research on variables impacting school bond passage for the 21st century. Despite the fact that school bond elections have a significant impact on school facilities, student achievement, and property values, Bowers, et. al (2010b) concluded there was a lack of updated research on variables that impact successful passage of school bond referenda in the 21st Century:

While considerable investigation was conducted in the 1960s-70s (Piele and Hall 1973, 1973b), school bond passage has received less attention by policy researchers in recent decades. What is needed is a theoretical model that takes into consideration the variables tested in the past and updates them for the 21st century. (p. 394)

Even in some of the most recent research on school bond elections, Bowers and Lee (2013) identified that changing demographics in Texas as a factor that could potentially impact voter willingness to support school bond referenda in the future:

For Texas, interesting times appear to be ahead, as what has been seen in the past research on bond passage as a constant—the percentage of voters who will vote yes—may be shifting as the demographics of the state change . . . the effects of the most recent recession are obvious in the most recent data, but it is difficult to predict how tastes for community self-taxation in support of school facilities may change in the coming years, especially with the changing demographics. (p. 762)

In addition, there is little research on “overcoming the negative community environment after a bond election failure, leading to the development of support and success in a later bond election” (Hickey, 2006). School districts that successfully pass a school bond election after having failed a bond election offer a unique opportunity to investigate and compare variables involved in both the failure and subsequent successful passage of a bond referenda (Hickey, 2006). Bowers et al. (2010a) called for research on “strategies employed by school districts that fail to get a bond request passed on the first attempt” (p. 417).

Bowers and Lee (2013) proposed a new theoretical model of school bond passage¹, based on some of the most recent and extensive quantitative research on school bond elections to date. However, this model still only accounted for 33.2% to 44.3% of the variance in outcomes of school bond referendum elections. This may be because quantitative research “does not address how or why each of the significant variables in the model act in districts attempting to pass bonds” (Bowers et al., 2010a, p. 394).

¹ The Bowers and Lee (2013) research was based upon a quantitative analysis of 2,224 school bonds in Texas from 1997-2009.

Bowers et al. (2010a) suggested that qualitative research was needed to identify additional variables that play a key role in school bond passage:

Finally, we recommend qualitative research to examine case studies of actual bond elections by school districts as “lived experiences” . . . [to] explore how local context and decision-making processes affect the outcome of bond elections that statistical analysis alone cannot capture. (p. 417)

Prior research also failed to include the viewpoints of key stakeholder groups such as parents and community members. Bowers, et al., (2010a) suggested the potential of “Future qualitative research . . . to describe and understand the complex work and interrelationships of district and community actors during the bond proposal and election phase” (p. 394). Consequently, the problem involved the lack of updated research on the variables impacting the passage of school bond elections from the perspectives of key stakeholders in Texas.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to investigate and analyze the perceptions of a representative group of district and community stakeholders regarding variables that contributed to the failure or successful passage of school bond referenda. Using qualitative methods, this study was conducted to update, enhance, elaborate, and clarify previous bond passage models developed by recent quantitative and qualitative studies, and to illuminate issues and factors influencing school bond passage. This in-depth qualitative case study of a representative school district that experienced success after a prior bond election failure was used to develop a greater understanding of

the variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment. This study examined the participants' views of the variables that affect the outcome of bond elections that “statistical analysis alone cannot capture” (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 417).

Research Questions

1. What variables contributed to the failure of a school bond election?
2. What variables contributed to the success of a school bond election?
3. What relationships existed among these variables with regard to selected characteristics of the school district?

Overview of the Methodology

This qualitative study used a single-case study design to examine the passage of school bond referenda. This researcher analyzed a representative district that had a successful bond election after prior failure, to uncover variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment in bond elections (Hickey, 2006). The single-case study design was used to examine stakeholder perceptions of key variables in the failure and subsequent passage of school bond referenda. This researcher investigated a representative district in Texas that had a successful bond election after prior failure to explore variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment in bond elections (Hickey, 2006). The district was selected using a purposive, theoretical sampling technique from the subset of districts who failed and then passed a subsequent bond referenda between November 2013 and May 2017 in Texas using bond data from the Texas Comptroller's Office. (Out of 444 districts that sought a bond referenda during the same time period, 35 school districts failed, then passed a bond referenda). In this

qualitative study, the researcher investigated the perceptions of a representative group of key stakeholders, including the superintendent, selected school board member(s), key district personnel, such as the chief financial officer and the chief communications officer, parents, and community members. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with district leaders, school board members, interviews or focus group(s) with parents and community members, and a review of documents. Additional data sources of documents associated with school bond referenda were reviewed in order to gain a deeper understanding of the development and execution of bond referenda plans and activities that contributed to school bond referenda failure or success.

Definition of Terms

Approval Rate – The percentage of voters who voted in favor of a school district’s bond referendum.

Bond Election – School districts hold a school bond election to support expenses associated with capital projects, such as the construction, maintenance, or renovation of facilities. Bond elections generate revenues for the building, remodeling, and maintenance of facilities. Bond elections are also referred to as Bond or Capital Project referenda.

Capital Construction Costs – As defined by NCES, capital construction costs include “the direct cost for construction contracts (‘hard’ costs) and ‘soft’ costs for architects, engineers, bond counsel, and other fees and administrative costs required to manage building improvements, whether done in-house or contracted out. Capital

construction costs do not include the costs for land and existing structures or instructional and other equipment” (Filardo, 2016, p. 13).

Instructional Facilities Allotment (TX) – “The Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) program provides funding to school districts for debt service payments on debt associated with the purchase, construction, renovation, and expansion of instructional facilities” (TEA School Finance 101: Funding of Texas Public Schools, 2013, p. 37). IFA funds are for “districts whose voters have granted them authority to sell bonds for instructional facilities, but who have not yet issued the bonds nor levied the related I&S taxes” (Plummer, p. 534).

Interest and Sinking Fund (TX) (I&S) - Tax rate increases generated through bond elections are levied to meet capital asset needs of a district. If bonds are approved, the taxes required to pay for the bonds are levied through the interest and sinking (I&S) fund tax rate. The tax rate levy for the building, remodeling, or maintenance of facilities is often referred to as the interest and sinking (I&S) fund. The I&S fund is established only for paying for capital projects (TEA, 2010).

Maintenance and Operations of Plant (M&O of Plant) – “M&O of Plant expenditures include the annual costs for routine and preventative maintenance, minor repairs, cleaning, grounds keeping, utilities, and security of facilities, in accordance with the definition used by NCES for Operation and Maintenance of Plant. School districts pay for M&O of Plant activities out of their annual operating budget” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3).

Maintenance and Operations Tax Rate in TX (M&O) – The tax rate levy for the general operations of the district is often referred to as the maintenance and operation tax rate (M&O). The M&O tax rate is used to support basic operations of a school district such as employee salaries, electrical bills, curriculum needs, and transportation. M&O taxes can support all programs in the day-to-day operations of a school district (TEA, 2010).

New Instructional Facilities Allotment (TX) – The New Instructional Facilities Allotment (NIFA) in Texas “was enacted in 1999 to provide funding to equip newly constructed instructional facilities” (Sielke, 2001, p. 696).

Passage – A majority vote on each election day.

Permanent School Fund (TX) – In Texas, the Permanent School Fund (PSF) uses the accumulated assets derived from the income from state-owned land (including many oil and gas reserves) to guarantee school-district bonds, thus providing a general obligation loan guarantee as a mechanism for lowering district-interest costs (Duncombe & Wang, 2009).

School Wealth – In Texas, school wealth is the “district’s taxable property per student. This measure is consistent with the state of Texas to evaluate school districts for purposes of school funding” (Plummer, 2006, p. 540). Plummer’s model utilizes five (5) quintiles (20% segments – Q1 poorest 20%; Q2 next poorest, Q5 – wealthiest).

Total Capital Outlay Costs – “Capital investments defined by NCES include all capital costs for school construction, land, building, facilities improvements, and equipment” (Filardo, 2016, p. 13). Total capital outlay costs include capital construction

costs (the ‘hard costs’ of actual construction and the ‘soft costs’ of project planning, design, engineering, and project management), as well as land acquisition, furniture, fixtures, instructional and non-instructional equipment, other related fees and costs, and interest (BEST, 2006).

Tax Rate – Texas school districts can impose two separate tax rates: one for maintenance & operations (M&O) that can support all programs in the day-to-day operations of the school district, and another for debt that is specifically limited to capital expenditures, called the I&S tax rate where revenues fund an ‘interest and sinking’ fund for bonded debt (Plummer, 2006, p. 533).

Tax Ratification Election (TRE) – The “tax ratification election” (TRE) is a tax election held in Texas to increase the M&O tax rate to support the day-to-day general operations of a district. A tax ratification election must be held if Texas school districts exceed a \$1.04 M&O tax rate (TASB, 2010).

Limitations

A limitation of this study involved the single-case sample size of the study. However, the single-case sample size allowed for depth during the interview process as part of investigating the complex work and interrelationships of district and community stakeholders regarding the bond proposal and school bond election process. The participating school district was selected from the 444 districts in Texas who participated in school bond elections from November 2013 to May 2017. The selected district failed a bond election that was subsequently followed by a successful school bond election.

Another limitation of this study involved the potential for selective or altered recall by study participants. The participants who participated in the study were asked to reflect upon their experiences from school bond referenda elections which had occurred up to 4 years in the past. It was possible participants only recalled limited experiences or had beliefs, opinions, and perceptions that had changed over time.

Delimitations

This study focused on one school district that first had a failed school bond election followed by the successful passage of a school bond election between November 2013 and May 2017. This study did not include districts that only successfully passed school bond referenda nor school districts that only showed failed school bond referenda. This study included stakeholder perceptions of the superintendent, key district administrators, school board members, parents, and community members.

Assumptions

This study proceeded under several assumptions. First, the researcher assumed there were variables that influence the failure or successful passage of school bond referenda. The researcher assumed interview participants could distinguish between effective and ineffective approaches in a school bond referendum passage or failure and were able to recall and share key variables involved in school bond referenda failure or success. The researcher assumed the participants would openly and honestly share their experiences and perceptions regarding the passage of a school bond referendum, and they would report their observations truthfully, objectively, and thoroughly in the interviews. The researcher assumed adequate records were available to accurately describe what

occurred in the school bond referenda elections pertaining to the case study school district being investigated.

Significance of the Study

With the explosive growth of school facilities' needs, school administrators and researchers have been keenly interested in the variables that influence school bond referendum election outcomes. This study documented the perceptions of district and community stakeholders regarding failed and subsequently passed school bond referenda. There was a demonstrated gap in the literature on variables influencing the successful passage of a school bond referenda, especially from the perspective of key stakeholders, particularly parents. Thus, this study contributed new knowledge to the body of research on successful school bond referenda.

The data and findings from this study were used to update, enhance, elaborate, and clarify previous theory regarding the variables that influence the failure or passage sbetter able to develop a plan for school bond election success. The study was significant both for “the researcher focused on the theory of why and how bonds come to be passed, and the practitioner looking for specific generalizable, and applicable findings that they can apply to help them pass their bond” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 736). The study provided valuable information to inform future researchers as well as school board members, superintendents, school district administrators, and community leaders facing important decisions regarding local school bond referendum elections.

Summary

Chapter One of this proposal introduced the study, including background information, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and an overview of the methodology. Also included were the definition of terms, limitations, and delimitations of the study, and assumptions and significance of the study.

Chapter Two provides a review of the existing literature on school bond elections. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section One provides information on the need for school facilities improvement. Section Two provides information on state and local funding for school facilities. Section Three provides a summary of recent research on school bond passage.

Chapter Three contains a detailed explanation of the research methods and procedures used in the study as well as a description of the study design. This chapter outlines sources of data, site and participant selection, procedures for data collection, and methods of data analysis. Chapter 4 contains the extensive data presentation and findings that resulted from data collection. Chapter 5 concludes the study with the discussion of the findings and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review the current literature and expert opinion on variables that have been found to be influential to the passage of school bond referenda. The chapter is divided into five sections. Section One provides an overview of the need for school facilities improvements. Section Two reviews existing research on state and local methods for generating funding for school facilities improvements. Section Three examines school leadership models impacting school facilities improvements and the school bond referenda process. Section Four presents an overview of the research on factors affecting school bond referenda passage. Section Five summarizes the review of literature and provides an introduction to Chapter Three.

The Need for School Facilities Improvements

The quality of school facilities affects the lives of children and communities for years to come. It is not surprising that investments in school facilities reflect the value communities place on children and their future. “Research shows that high-quality facilities help improve student achievement, reduce truancy and suspensions, improve staff satisfaction and retention, and raise property values” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3). Excellent school facilities are the very foundation of educational success (Holt, 2009, Ortiz, 1994). The U. S. General Accounting Office, in a 1995 report entitled *School Facilities: Condition of America’s Schools*, recognized the need to provide adequate educational facilities: “A number of state courts as well as Congress have recognized that a high-quality learning environment is essential to educating the nation’s children. Crucial to

establishing that learning environment is that children attend school in decent facilities" (US GAO, 1995, p. 3).

School facility needs have repeatedly emerged as a major issue in ongoing efforts to improve education over the past two decades. The scale of U.S. public K–12 school facilities is astonishing. “Nearly 50 million students and 6 million adults are in close to 100,000 buildings, encompassing an estimated 7.5 billion gross square feet and 2 million acres of land” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3). The square footage of public school district buildings is almost half the area of all U.S. commercial office space (Filardo, 2016). Texas alone accounts for over 10% of the nation’s school-age population, with over 5.3 million students served by 1,247 public school districts (TEA, 2017).

The Cost of Schools in Aging/Poor Condition

Over the past 20 years there have been numerous reports documenting the need to repair, renovate, and/or replace schools in aging or poor condition (GAO, 1995; NEA, 2000). The average age of schools in the US is 44 years, and it has been increasing (NEA, 2014). Almost a quarter of the nation’s school buildings operate while in fair or poor condition, growing from 16% of all schools in 1998-1999 to 24% in 2012-2013, representing a 50% increase in the number of school buildings kept in operation regardless of their poor structural conditions (NEA, 2014). The result is the country has an increasing number of schools aging or in poor repair that need to be renovated, repaired, or replaced. In 1995, the U.S. General Accounting Office report indicated it would cost \$112 billion to bring K-12 schools throughout the country into good overall condition. By 2000, a National Education Association report estimated \$322 billion was

needed for school repairs, construction, and technology (Edweek, 2004). The problem of school districts needing new buildings or major upgrades to existing buildings or major upgrades to existing facilities is real and has been serious for many years” (Bowers et al., 2010a, p. 400).

In one of the newest and most comprehensive summaries on K-12 school facilities’ conditions and funding needs to date, Filardo (2016) estimated school districts and states have spent over \$2 trillion dollars (\$99 billion annually) over the past 20 years to maintain and modernize school facilities, making state and local investments in school facilities “the second largest sector of public infrastructure spending,” behind only investments in highways (Filardo, 2016, p. 2). “School districts worked hard from 1994 to 2013 to operate, maintain, modernize, and meet the enrollment growth of the nation’s K–12 public schools” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3).

Increased Educational and Facilities Requirements

In addition to the challenges related to outdated and aging facilities, school districts also have faced increasing educational program and facilities requirements associated with rising enrollment, increasing national and state accountability requirements, changing student demographics, expanded educational programming, increased accessibility and safety standards, and technology requirements (Filardo, 2016; Kowalski, 2002). These changes are often accompanied by significant new facilities requirements. “Over the past 20 years, educational environments have undergone enormous change, driven by shifting expectations and requirements from educators, parents, communities, and regulators” (Filardo, 2016, p. 7). Increasing accountability

requirements, changing student demographics, and expanded educational program requirements have created extra facilities' requirements to support "new teaching models and student-directed learning" (p. 11). Filardo (2016) summarized several kinds of facilities' alterations needed "to add capacity and make the facility more suitable for education or other district purposes" in the 21st century:

Significant drivers for facilities alterations included new requirements for special education and physical accessibility; expansion of early childhood education; integration of technology for instruction and administration; class-size reduction; and heightened safety and security concerns. (p. 10)

Filardo (2016) also indicated that districts expanded facilities' space for programs that "reduced barriers to students' academic success" by assigning:

Additional administrators and student-support personnel, such as social workers and academic counselors. And they have expanded after-school care and other school-based services and support for families through partnerships with community-based organizations. These added functions require additional space. (p. 11)

School districts have also "modernized labs to support sophisticated and specialized science and technology instruction so that students can pursue studies in fields such as robotics and biotechnology" (Filardo, 2016, p. 11). Increasing health, safety, accessibility, and technology requirements have required increased facilities repairs, renovations, and modernization (Kowalski, 2002; Tanner & Lackney, 2006; Penn State, 2017). "In the span of these 20 years, school facilities changed more rapidly than at any

time in recent memory, fueled by improved health and safety standards, stronger accessibility requirements, increased use of technology, and expanded programming within schools” (Filardo, 2016, p. 3). Tanner and Lackney (2006), citing Graves (1993), indicated that aligning school facilities to educational programming is an ongoing challenge, especially in times of rapid change: “Facilities should be more sensitively designed to the new needs of education in a period of rapid, indeed revolutionary, change in instruction and social conditions” (Tanner, C. K. & Lackney, J. A., 2006, p. 83).

Growing Enrollment

Many districts have needed to renovate or expand existing schools or construct new schools to meet the needs of rapidly growing student populations (EdWeek, 2004; Holt, 2009). “Public school enrollment has increased in recent years, particularly in the southern and western United States, and more growth is expected in the future” (TEA, 2017, p. 5). Rising enrollment has resulted in the need for school districts to expand or reconfigure existing facilities or build new temporary or permanent facilities (Filardo, 2016). Filardo (2016) predicted that school districts will need an additional \$87 billion annually for capital construction and new facilities costs between 2014 and 2024 (a gap of \$38 billion annually) (p. 26).

Texas school districts find themselves in dire need of renovating and expanding existing facilities and constructing new school facilities. Texas educates one of the largest school-age populations in the country and is also one of the highest growth states in the country (Filardo, 2016; NCES, 2016; TEA, 2017). “In the 2006-07 school year, 4,594,942 students were enrolled in Texas public schools. By 2016-17, enrollment had

risen to 5,359,127 students. Over the 10-year period, total enrollment increased by 764,185 students, or by 16.6 percent” (TEA, 2017, p. ix). Student enrollment is projected to continue to increase between 9% – 14% between 2014 and 2024 (Filardo, 2016; TEA, 2017). With this record student growth, recent estimates indicate that Texas has the second highest projected costs for new construction in the nation over the next 10 years at \$13.8 billion for new construction alone (Filardo, 2016). Due to the size and rapid growth of school enrollment in Texas, the renovation and expansion of school facilities is a significant undertaking. In the end, “improving the quality of school facilities is an expensive undertaking. However, when the positive impacts of facility improvement on teachers and students are translated into dollar figures, the rewards of such investments far outstrip the cost of the investments” (Penn State, 2017).

The Need for Local School Bond Referenda

Nationally, and in Texas, the primary way to pay for school facilities’ renovation, expansion, or new construction is through property taxes at the local level. This makes the successful passage of school bond referenda critical to the continued growth and development of school districts (Duncombe & Wang, 2009; Hickey, 2006; Sielke, 2001; Zimmer et al., 2011). “It is not an accident that communities that have the means to invest in their public school buildings do so. They improve and enhance their school facilities because it matters to the quality of education, the strength of their community, and the achievement and well-being of their children and teachers” (BEST, 2006, p. 29).

Funding for School Facilities Local Tax Responsibility

Historically, funding for school facilities has been a local responsibility (Clark, 2001; Duncombe & Wang, 2009; Plummer, 2006; Sielke, 2001). “While school infrastructure needs have changed dramatically over the years, in far too many states the fiscal responsibility still falls heavily on the local school district” (Sielke, 2001, p. 653).

Although Texas has several forms of state support designed to equalize school facilities funding, including: the Permanent School Fund (PSF), the Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (IFA) and the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) program (see further discussion in section below), school bond elections continue to be the foremost method used to finance school facilities repair, renovation, and new construction in Texas (Clark, 2001; Duncombe & Wang, 2009; Plummer, 2006; Sielke, 2001). Although 84% of school districts participate in the IFA or EDA program in Texas (Legislative Budget Board, 2016, p.1), the state’s share of capital outlay for school facilities was only about nine percent (9%) of the total costs, leaving the remainder to local communities to fund through local property taxes (Filardo, 2016).

Long-Term Negative Impacts of School Bond Election Failure

In this funding environment, school communities and district leaders are under significant pressure to pass school bond referenda to renovate existing facilities or finance new construction (Filardo, 2016; Hickey, 2008). “This trend put school district leaders in the position of needing to make the case to their local communities that capital fund requests are necessary to provide adequate educational services” (Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010, p 401). Bowers et al. (2010b) summed up the very visible and negative

consequences of failing to pass a school bond referendum election for students, schools, and the community:

Districts that cannot secure funding from their voters for up-to-date capital improvements may fall behind more successful neighboring districts in providing quality teaching and learning conditions. This can be potentially damning in regions where high-stakes accountability puts school districts in a results-driven race and school-choice competition empowers families to move their students into whichever nearby district looks to be doing the best. Given that adequate capital facilities are a very publicly visible component in this equation, school district leaders need to find strategies for convincing local voters to approve bond request. (p. 375)

Theobald and Meier (2002) summarized the negative impact that a failed school bond can have for a superintendent: “Seeking a bond issue is a risk. The superintendent who presents a bond issue risks the public rebuke of the citizens if the bond issue fails” (p. 3).

Unfortunately, in this environment where passing a school bond referendum is critical to the long-term health of schools, the likelihood of school bond referendum passage is also far from certain (Zimmer et al., 2011). Many school boards and superintendents have difficulty gaining the community and voter support needed to pass school bond referenda (Hickey, 2006). As school boards and superintendents turn toward the community to gain voter approval to fund building projects, it is essential for school boards and school district administrators “to understand how to properly plan and execute a school facilities bond referendum” (Godown, 2010, p. 4).

National Overview of State Funding for School Facilities

School districts typically issue long-term general obligation bonds to finance facilities' investments. Because the amount of property taxes a community has available to invest is based upon the value of the property and the size of the community, the amount of funding for school facilities that can be raised based on local taxation can be inequitable across communities (Duncombe & Wang, 2009; Plummer, 2006; Sielke, 2001).

Larger, wealthier communities have more available resources to invest in their school buildings with the ability to raise more money with a smaller tax rate (lower tax burden), as each property generates more tax revenue. Smaller or less wealthy districts are able to generate fewer dollars overall and/or must place a higher tax burden to generate the same amount as wealthier districts, resulting in an inequity between school districts and their ability to raise capital for their schools (Plummer, 2006). Sielke (2001) summarized this situation:

Reliance on local bond issues raises equity issues for students and taxpayers alike as bond issues are inextricably tied to property wealth. The amount of property wealth not only limits the size of the bond issue, but places a heavier burden on taxpayers in low-wealth districts. Since most states impose debt limits, many local school districts are limited to a fixed percentage of total property wealth, which can limit the size and standards for infrastructure project. (p. 657)

State Facilities' Funding Programs

In response to growing school facilities' needs, as well as "equity concerns stimulated by existing or potential litigation," states have adopted a number of funding programs to equalize funding for school facilities (Duncombe & Wang, 2009, p. 325). Plummer (2006) concurred "because of the enormity of estimated funding requirements, existing or threatened litigation, and equity concerns, states are taking an increasingly active role in funding school facilities" (p. 533).

Types of state aid programs for school facilities. State aid to support the financing of school infrastructure improvements is a relatively recent occurrence. In an initial analysis of state facilities funding mechanisms, Sielke (2001) categorized state aid for school facilities into four major categories: "flat grants, equalized grants, categorical grants, and full state funding" (p. 655). This analysis of state funding mechanisms for school infrastructure in 1998-1999 found that states used various combinations of types of funding for school facilities (38 states) or provided no state aid for school facilities at all (12 states). At that time, Texas was categorized as a state that "embedded infrastructure into the basic support program" (Sielke, 2001, p. 657). The amount of support also varied significantly from state to state.

In an updated study in 2009 on state aid for school facilities, Duncombe and Wang (2009) examined the "relationship between the type of capital assistance program adopted by a state and the equity of capital-outlay distribution" (p. 325). In order to analyze the impact of the type of state aid program on funding equity for school facilities, they created a detailed categorization of state aid programs for school facilities, which

classified state facilities' aid programs into three major categories: 1) credit enhancements, 2) state loan programs, and 3) building-aid programs. Duncombe and Wang (2009) found that Texas utilized the second and third type of equalization programs.

Overview of state aid programs for school facilities in Texas. Duncombe and Wang (2009) defined the first type of state facilities' aid program as "credit enhancements" that "involve state-government investment in local school district borrowing with the goal of raising district credit ratings and lowering interest costs" (p. 329), allowing bondholders first claim on state aid in case of bond default. Texas did not utilize this type of facilities' aid program. However, Duncombe and Wang went on to delineate a second type of state aid for school facilities as state loan programs that "directly provide loans or guarantee school district loans . . . [where] the objective is reducing the borrowing cost for school district" (p. 329). One of these state loan programs included the Permanent School Fund in Texas. The Texas PSF is one of the largest such programs in the nation in which "accumulated assets derived from the income from state-owned land (including many oil and gas reserves) is used to guarantee school district bonds" (Duncombe & Wang, 2009, p. 329).

Duncombe and Wang (2009) defined a third type of state aid for school facilities as direct building-aid programs. The direct building-aid programs were categorized by their scope as general or categorical aid; selection process as ranking, prioritization, or application process); distribution via lump-sum grant or matching aid and via open-ended or closed-ended amounts; and formula components labeled as flat grant or weighted

differences that include student needs and district fiscal capacity (Duncombe & Wang, 2009). Texas utilized open-ended, matching aid programs through the Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (IFA), New Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (NIFA), and the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) programs that are described in more detail in the section below.

Impact of State Aid Programs on School Facilities Funding

Duncombe and Wang (2009) observed “significant variation across states in the equity of the capital-finance systems” and noted that “many states provide considerably less financial support for capital investment by school districts than for operating expenses (Sielke, 2001), which results in significant disparities across school districts in their ability to fund school infrastructure” (Duncombe & Wang, 2009, p. 325).

For states like Texas with matching aid programs, Duncombe and Wang (2009) found that these states “have on average a higher per-pupil capital expenditures (\$639) than states with other types of building aid”; “have bigger differences between expenditures at the 95th percentile and the 5th percentile than states that provide lump-sum or a combination of both matching and lump-sum aid”; and “have shown on average higher inequality across districts than states that have a lump-sum aid program” (p. 342).

In the end, despite state aid programs, Sielke (2001) concluded that “39 of 50 states, still rely on voter approved bond issues to fund some, if not all, of their infrastructure needs” (p. 657).

Texas State Support for School Facilities

Traditionally, financing for school facilities in Texas has primarily been the responsibility of the local community (Luke, 2007; Sielke, 2001). However, several major supports for school facilities funding have been established in the state: the Permanent School Fund (PSF), the Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (IFA), the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) program; and the New Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (NIFA).

Permanent School Fund

The PSF was established in the Texas Constitution in 1854 with an appropriation of \$2 million “expressly for the benefit of the public schools of Texas” (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2018, para. 1). Through the Bond Guarantee Program, the Texas Permanent School Fund (TPSF) is pledged to guarantee bonds issued by Texas school districts with the accumulated assets of the PSF. The Bond Guarantee enhances school districts’ credit rating, allowing participating school districts to borrow at a lower cost (TEA, 2017e; Boswell, 2010).

PSF assets are the “product of royalties, leaseholds, and other revenue contributed by Texas land dedicated to the fund” (Clark, 2001). Today, the PSF has an approximate value of \$37 billion and continues to receive revenue from state taxes on land and minerals (including oil and gas) (PSF Annual Report, 2016, p. 73). Since its establishment in 1983, the Bond Guarantee Program (BGP) has guaranteed 6,582 school district bond issues for a total of more than \$151.7 billion. At the end of fiscal year 2016,

there were 3,244 issues of guaranteed school district bonds outstanding with a balance of \$67.34 billion (PSF Annual Report, 2016, p. 79).

Foundation School Programs (FSP) for School Facilities' Funding in Texas

The *Tier 3* Foundation School Programs (FSP) or The Instructional Facilities Allotment Program (IFA) and Existing Debt Allotment Program (EDA) were authorized in response to litigation that found Texas' school finance system inequitable and thus unconstitutional.

Between 1984 and 1993, in what has become known as the *Edgewood* lawsuits, the Texas Supreme Court found various school finance systems to be unconstitutional because they failed to provide equitable funding for property-poor school districts. In 1993, the Texas legislature designed a school finance system . . . whereby high-wealth school districts must reduce their wealth to a specified level, and the excess tax revenues are distributed to lower-wealth districts (Plummer, 2006, p. 534).

However, the new finance system did not address facilities funding, and the courts indicated the school finance system could be found unconstitutional if the inequity in school facilities funding was left unaddressed. As a result, the Texas legislature first implemented the IFA program in 1997, and then the EDA program in 1999 (Plummer, 2006).

Instructional facilities allotment program (IFA). The IFA Program is a “matching aid” program that helps school districts “cover debt service costs associated with bonds issued for school construction” (Plummer, 2006, p. 533; Legislative Budget

Board, 2016). The main purpose of the IFA funding program was to increase school facilities construction (Plummer, 2006). The IFA program was approved in House Bill 4 by the 75th Legislature in spring 1997 and became effective September 1, 1997 (IFA FAQ p. 1).

IFA funds were made available only to districts whose voters granted the authority to sell bonds or enter lease-purchase agreements but had not yet issued debt. School districts accessed the program through an application and award process managed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Awards were based upon the availability of new funding appropriations. “By statute, districts are ranked for the purpose of making awards, with district property wealth per student being the primary ranking criterion to ensure that funding is targeted toward property-poor school districts” (Legislative Budget Board, 2016). Three other factors were then considered with priority given to districts with a high rate of enrollment growth, districts with no outstanding debt, and districts not awarded IFA funding in a prior funding cycle (Clark 2001; Legislative Budget Board, 2016). The amount of funding award amounts per district per biennium were limited to the greater of \$250 per student or \$100,000 (Legislative Budget Board, 2016). “State assistance for facilities funding is equalized, meaning that low-wealth districts receive more IFA state aid per penny of tax than do higher-wealth districts” (Clark, 2001, p. 693).

There have been 10 IFA award cycles since the program’s launch. The 84th Legislature appropriated \$55.5 million for a new cycle of IFA awards for fiscal year 2017. In fiscal year 2016, 440 school districts had debt service covered by previously

issued IFA awards, making the projected entitlement for the IFA program for the 2016–17 biennium \$1.5 billion.

Plummer’s (2006) research analyzed the impact of IFA funding in Texas and found that “IFA districts have increased their capital outlays more than non-IFA districts” (p. 532) and that “districts receiving IFA funds have increased their capital outlays more than non-IFA districts by an average of \$1.77 per student dollar of IFA funding” (p. 532). Plummer (2006) also investigated whether or not capital outlays had become more equitably distributed across school districts of different wealth levels and found that:

Research suggests that the poorest school districts (those in Quintile 1) increased their capital outlays because of significant IFA funding they received, while the richest districts (Quintile 5) increased capital outlays by increasing tax rates. In contrast, middle wealth school districts (the 60% of school districts in Quintiles 2, 3, and 4) do not receive significant amounts of IFA funding, nor do they have the tax revenue ability of the richest school districts. (p. 534)

In other words, while the IFA program helped many districts in Texas, many more school districts were still entirely reliant on local bond funding for their school facilities capital improvements needs. In addition, IFA assistance was a matching grant program, which means school districts needed to pass a school bond referendum election in order to access IFA funding. Furthermore, while a high percentage of districts received state aid, the IFA covered only a small percentage of overall school district need for capital for facilities. Between 2013 and 2016, school districts passed \$31.5 billion in bonds, approximately \$10 billion per year. While the IFA amount was high, \$1.5 billion

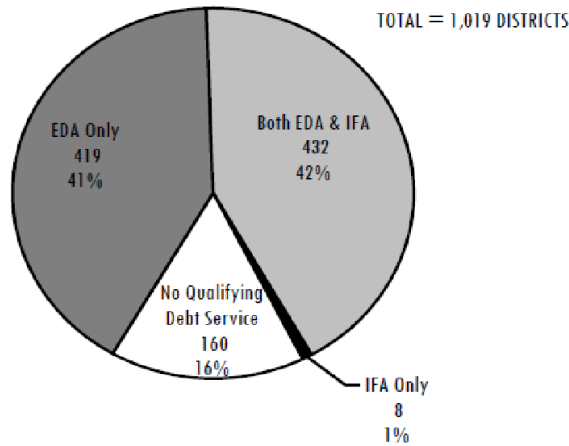
is approximately 15% of \$10 billion in total bonds passed during those 3 years (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 2017).

Existing debt allotment program (EDA). The Existing Debt Allotment Program (EDA) provided “assistance for existing debt” (Plummer, 2006, p. 535). Created by the Texas Legislature in 1999, the Existing Debt Allotment (EDA) program “provides a guaranteed yield on interest and sinking fund (I&S) taxes levied by school districts to pay the principal of and interest on eligible bonds” (Texas Education Agency, 2017b).

The primary purpose of the EDA program was to provide tax relief for districts receiving funding.

The EDA program provides state aid through a guaranteed yield on school district taxes levied to pay the principal and interest on eligible bonds. Annual EDA entitlement per school district is limited to a guaranteed yield of \$35 per penny per student for the lesser of the following three rates: (1) the district’s effective rate needed to service eligible debt; (2) the district’s effective interest and sinking rate for the second year of the prior biennium; or (3) \$0.29. School districts’ local share of EDA is met by levying and collecting property tax revenue. For the 2016–17 biennium, 851 school districts have debt service that is eligible for the EDA program. Projected entitlement for the EDA program for the 2016–17 biennium is \$6.7 billion, consisting of \$0.6 billion in state aid with a local share of \$6.1 billion. (Legislative Budget Board, 2016, p. 2)

In fiscal year 2016, 419 (of 1,019) or 41% of school districts had qualifying debt service for the EDA program as seen in Figure 1 (Legislative Budget Board, 2016, p. 2). Figure 2 shows the state and local share of entitlement for the programs for historical fiscal years and the current biennium.



SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board.

Figure 1. The school district's participation in FSP facilities programs for fiscal year 2016.

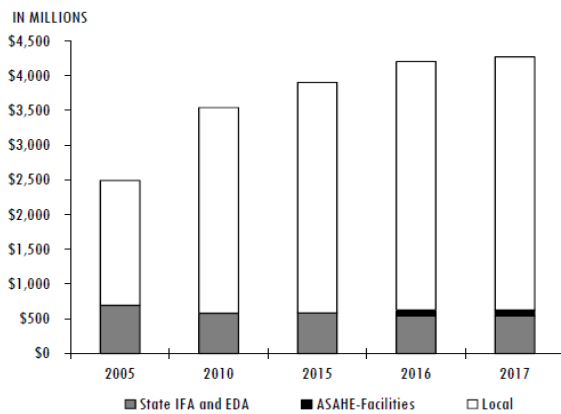


Figure 2. The state and local shares for FSP facilities entitlement for fiscal years 2005, 2010, as well as 2015-2017.

During fiscal year 2016, “the share of local revenue making up total entitlement has increased due to the combined effects of property value growth and the guarantee remaining constant at the \$35 level” (Legislative Budget Board, 2016, p. 2). Additionally:

As property values have increased, a larger proportion of districts have local yields above the guarantee level. For fiscal year 2016, the \$35 per penny per ADA yield represents the 45th percentile of wealth per ADA among school districts. Of the 859 districts with qualifying debt service in one or both programs, 416 are projected to have local yields at or above the \$35 yield during fiscal year 2016. For districts with local yields greater than or equal to \$35 guarantee level, EDA and IFA entitlement consists solely of local revenue. (Legislative Budget Board, 2016, p. 2)

Over the past 10 years, school districts were bumped above the level where the EDA could help them; thus, they became more dependent upon their local tax base once again. In addition, Texas’ equalization programs were matching grant programs, which made passing the local bond referendum election even more important because without passing the local bond referendum election, school districts were not able to access any additional state aid.

Conceptual Frameworks

Three conceptual frameworks were identified from the literature regarding the variables that impact school bond elections. The first two conceptual frameworks were organizational leadership models affecting leaders in school districts promoting organizational change. The third conceptual framework was a theoretical model

specifically related to the process of school bond passage. The three conceptual frameworks included the following: (a) Olivárez's (2013) Ten Functions of the School District; (b) Bolman and Deal's (2008) Framework for Analyzing Organizational Behavior (a.k.a., the *four frames*); and (c) Bowers and Lee's (2013) *mediated model of bond passage*. Olivárez developed the 10 Functions of the School District model to provide an administrative, instructional, and political leadership theory for superintendents and school district leaders seeking to more effectively perform executive leadership roles in public schools. Bolman and Deal provided a methodology to analyze change in organizations through the lenses of the following four frames: (a) structural, (b) human resources, (c) political, and (d) symbolic. In 2013, Bowers and Lee proposed a theoretical model for the school bond election process based on their synthesis of earlier research about voter preferences as well as more recent quantitative research on district and bond characteristics. Those three models are explained in this section.

10 Functions of the School District Model

The responsibilities of superintendents, school leaders, and school districts have magnified in scope and complexity. Today's superintendents, district administrators, and school leaders must be prepared to address a complex array of leadership and managerial responsibilities that go far beyond the basic delivery of instructional content, including but not limited to: (a) safety and security of students and staff; (b) comprehensive health, physical, social and nutritional services; (c) coordination with institutions of higher education; (d) federal and state accountability standards for student academic performance; (e) complex financial and technology-based planning and management

systems, and (f) site-based decision making and collaboration with professional educators, labor organizations and other external service providers (Olivárez, 2011). In response to significant changes in education, Olivárez of the University of Texas at Austin, and Director of the Cooperative Superintendency Program, developed the Ten Functions of the School District to provide an administrative, instructional, and political leadership theory for superintendents and school district leaders seeking to more effectively perform executive leadership roles in public schools.

The 10 Functions leadership theory is based upon the premise that “school districts are organized to carry out critical functions that collectively make up the totality of the district’s operations, under the leadership of the superintendent and the approval of the district’s board of trustees” (Olivárez, 2011, p. 5). The leadership responsibilities of the superintendent “encompass ten distinct but overlapping functions that provide definition to the ongoing activities of school districts: 1) governance & operations; 2) curriculum and instruction; 3) elementary and secondary campus operations; 4) instructional support services; 5) human resources; 6) administrative, finance, and business operations; 7) facilities planning and plant services; 8) accountability, information management, and technology services; 9) external and internal communications; and 10) operational support systems: safety and security, food services, and transportation” (Olivárez, 2011, p. 5).

Facilities planning and plant services. One of the major responsibilities of school leaders is to ensure students are educated in high-quality facilities (Kowalski,

2002; Ortiz, 1994; Tanner & Lackney, 2006). Texas Education Code #11.201 indicates the superintendent is responsible for ensuring the adequacy of school facilities:

The duties of the superintendent include: assuming administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning, organization, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the education programs, services, and facilities of the district . . . and overseeing compliance with the standards for school facilities established by the Commissioner under Section 46.008. (Texas Education Code, Subchapter E, Sec.11.201.d.1-4, 2015)

Facilities Planning and Plant Services is one of the 10 Functions of the school district for which the superintendent is responsible (Olivárez, 2011). Of the 10 Functions, the Facilities Planning and Plant Services directly includes all aspects involved with school facilities, including the following:

(a) evaluation of existing facilities, (b) operational management of facilities, (c) long- and short-range planning of facilities, (d) plans for and implementation of school construction, (e) educational specifications for new buildings including technology integration, (f) safety and security in addition to flexibility for variable learning purposes; (g) development of a capital improvement program, (h) site selection and acquisition, and (i) architect selection. (Purcell, 2017, p. 43)

Olivárez (2013) indicated that as a part of the Facilities and Plant Planning function, superintendents must be able to project future district enrollment, ascertain future facility needs, maintain existing facilities in good repair to ensure the safety of students and staff, oversee the renovation, replacement, or construction of new facilities,

and update infrastructure priorities due to changing enrollment or legislative mandates.

Purcell (2017) summarized the superintendent's role in the Olivárez 10 Functions Model regarding facilities:

The superintendent is responsible for the following: (a) direction and oversight to the maintenance and improvement of facilities system-wide; (b) leadership for long-range planning for facility renovations, acquisition of additional real estate, and fund raising for new buildings or remodeling of existing facilities; (c) the selection and hiring of external architects and/or contractors and for guiding their work during projects involving the renovation or construction of district facilities.

(Purcell, 2017, p. 44-45)

Purcell (2017), citing Olivarez (2013), reported that an important role of the superintendent in the facilities' planning process is to "continually address the learner-centered values and ethics and maintain the district culture and vision with community support in relationship to facilities planning and plant management." Olivarez's model indicated that

The district must have advisory structures to actively incorporate community voices in the design and implementation of facilities maintenance, renovation, and construction projects. The superintendent shares the vision of the district's and the community's learner-centered values that is reflected in the design and use of facilities system-wide. (Purcell, 2017, p. 45)

Facilities Planning and Plant Service is the function that seems most directly and obviously related to, and supported by, the passage of school bond referendum elections.

The superintendent must ensure processes and procedures are in place to procure support for capital improvement funds, and also must establish decision-making processes regarding all aspects of facilities planning in order to avoid challenges regarding site selection, facilities design, or construction management (Olivárez, 2013). Based on prior research into school bond referendum passage, additional functions that are indicated to be related to facilities planning and successful school bond passage include Governance & Operations; Curriculum & Instruction; Elementary & Secondary Campus Operations; Administrative, Finance, and Business Operations; and Internal/External Communications.

Governance and operations. The Governance & Operations function ensures the appropriate implementation of the duties and responsibilities of school board members and superintendents as delineated in the Texas Education Code (TEC). This function includes the structure and organization of school boards and the formal processes necessary to carry out the management oversight and policy development responsibilities of the superintendent and school board as they deliver the state-required instructional school program, including facilities (Olivárez, 2013). This includes guidance and support in the development of the district's comprehensive plan of operation and the corresponding allocation of financial resources. Long-range facilities planning and school bond referendum election planning is a part of this comprehensive plan of operation. The governance operations function of the school district is carried out by the superintendent, the school board, and the district leadership team. The school board hires the superintendent and the superintendent administers all district operations and school

programs. All aspects of school bond referenda are heavily impacted in the Governance and Operations function, including the facilities planning process and the bond planning process, including bond timing. Roles and responsibilities of the school board, as well as roles and responsibilities of the superintendent, the school district leadership team, and district employees must be carefully understood and communicated to all stakeholders. In Texas, there are specific and strict legal requirements regarding the role of the school board versus the role of the superintendent and the school district leadership team and employees regarding school bond referenda. This function also includes intergovernmental coordination with other government agencies regarding bond elections, such as cities or institutions of higher education, which may be seeking bond funding during the same election as the school district (Olivárez, 2017, direct communication).

Curriculum and instruction. This function is designed to ensure the schools are provided the state-adopted curriculum in a timely and efficient manner, as well as ensure that the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all learners despite differences in learning styles or cultural backgrounds. School facilities' maintenance, renovations, and construction must take into account the implementation of the overall academic vision, as well as support the needs of effective instructional programs and practices (Filardo, 2016). "Facilities should be more sensitively designed to the new needs of education in a period of rapid, indeed revolutionary, change in education and social conditions (Tanner & Lackney, 2006, p. 83). Ultimately the superintendent must continually address learner-

centered values as well as maintain the district culture and vision with community support in relationship to facilities planning and plant management (Olivárez, 2013).

Elementary and secondary campus operations. This function is focused on the systemic coordination and integrated focus on the overall educational mission of the campus. This involves both long- and short-range planning processes and monitoring on an ongoing basis to ensure excellence in learning at all campuses. Research suggests that as school and campus leaders consider facilities improvements, consideration of the day-to-day functioning of the campus and classroom learning environments is critical. National recommendations suggest “effective learning environments are designed to: enhance teaching and learning and accommodate the needs of all learners; serve as centers of the community; result from a planning and design process involving all stakeholders; provide for health, safety, and security; make effective use of all resources; and allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing needs” (Bingler, Quinn, & Sullivan, 2003, as cited in Tanner & Lackney, 2006, p. 101). School buildings are some of the most prominent buildings in the community, well known to parents, business members, and community members. Facilities planning and bond planning processes should involve stakeholders from the campuses, including principals, teachers, staff, parents, and business and community members (Purcell, 2017).

Administrative, finance, and business operations. This function involves all aspects of the leadership, management, and oversight of the district’s finances (Olivárez, 2011). Fiscal planning is a major part of the facilities planning process, as well as the school bond referendum process. As previously discussed, “school districts may use a

variety of means for raising revenue and for acquiring funds to construct school facilities” (Ortiz, 1994, p. 39). The school board, superintendent, school district leadership, and community must fully understand the costs associated with school facilities’ maintenance, renovation, and new construction as a part of a school bond referendum process (Olivárez, 2011).

Internal/external communications. Ongoing internal communication must occur at the campus-level, at central office, and at the level of superintendent/school board in order to keep all internal staff informed of important activities. External communication informs parents and community members of campus and district activities, events, performance results, and other critical information such as board meeting schedules and construction proposals (Olivárez, 2011). Advisory structures are recommended to actively incorporate community voices in the design and implementation of facilities maintenance, renovation, and construction projects (Purcell, 2017). A major role of the superintendent is to share the district and the community’s vision of learner-centered values that are reflected in the design and use of facilities system-wide (Olivárez, 2013).

Bolman & Deal Framework for Analyzing Organizational Behavior

A robust theoretical framework is needed when seeking to investigate the complex work and interrelationships of school district and community stakeholders inherent in the school bond process. Bolman and Deal (2008) presented a Framework for Analyzing Organizational Behavior that utilizes four lenses or “frames” to analyze and understand complex behavior within and between organizations: (a) structural, (b) human resources, (c) political, and (d) symbolic. Bolman and Deal (2008) argued these frames

offer leaders in today's organizations a sophisticated tool for making effective decisions in fast-paced organizational environments. Therefore, for this discussion the four frames represent a robust, yet flexible, framework to understand and analyze organizational behavior in complex situations, such as in the school bond passage process. The four frames are reviewed in turn, while Appendix H contains a tabular formation of the adaptation of the actions of the bond election process based on the frames outlined by Bolman and Deal (2008).

Structural frame. The first frame, the structural frame, focuses on “the architecture of the organization --- the design of units and subunits, rules and roles, goals and policies” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 21). The metaphor for the structural frame is a factory or machine, or the skeleton in a body. The structural frame is based upon a “belief of rationality, and a faith that a suitable array of formal roles and responsibilities will minimize distracting personal static and maximize people's performance on the job” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 47). Groups can be organized on the basis of a variety of dimensions: by function; knowledge or skill; units of time (e.g. shifts); by product; by customers or clients; by place or geography; or by process. Factors that affect the choice and success of an organizing frame are the size and age of the organization; core processes; environment; strategy and goals; information technology; and nature of the workforce. Bolman and Deal summarize, “At the heart of organizational design are the twin issues of differentiation and integration. Organizations must divide work by creating a variety of specialized roles, functions, and units. They must then use both vertical and horizontal procedures to lash the many elements together” (2008, p. 68).

“Leaders who make change using this approach focus on structural elements within the organization as well as strategy, implementation, and adaptation. Changing institutional structures works well when goals are clear, when cause-and-effect relationships are well understood, and when there is little conflict, uncertainty, or ambiguity” (McCleod, n. d.).

Human resources frame. As opposed to the structural frame where the organization is like a machine, the analogy for the human resources frame is the family. This frame “emphasizes understanding people, their strengths and foibles, reason and emotion, and desires and fears” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 21). As opposed to the structural frame, which focuses on goals, strategies, and systems, this frame focuses on “the relationship between people and organizations. Organizations need people (for their energy, effort, and talent) and people need organizations (for the many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer)” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 137). This theory addresses developing and implementing a human resources philosophy, hiring the right people, keeping employees, rewarding performance, protecting jobs, promoting, sharing the wealth, investing in, and empowering employees.

Leaders who approach change from a Human Resource Frame focus on people. This approach emphasizes support, empowerment (perhaps through distributed leadership mechanisms), staff development, and responsiveness to employee needs. A focus on people works well when employee morale is a consideration and when there is relatively little conflict. (McCleod, n. d.)

Political frame. The political frame focuses intensely on the power aspects of organizational life. Bolman and Deal (2008) found the major political skills needed by

leaders to be agenda setting, mapping the political terrain, networking and forming coalitions, and bargaining and negotiating. They quoted Kotter (1995) who said, “Organizational excellence . . . demands a sophisticated type of social skill: a leadership skill that can mobilize people and accomplish important objectives despite dozens of obstacles; a skill that can pull people together for meaningful purposes despite the thousands of forces that push us apart; a skill that can keep our corporations and public institutions from descending into a mediocrity characterized by bureaucratic infighting, parochial politics, and vicious power struggles” (p. 213).

Leaders who use a political approach to facilitate change focus on the political realities that exist within and outside organizations. This approach emphasizes dealing with interest groups (and their varying agendas), building power bases, coalition-building, negotiating conflicts over limited resources, and creating compromises. The political approach is appropriate when resources are scarce or diminishing as well as when goals or values are in conflict. (McCleod, n. d.)

Symbolic frame. The symbolic frame puts “ritual, ceremony, story, play, and culture at the heart of organizational life” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 21). Rituals and ceremonies offer direction, faith, and hope (Bolman & Deal, 2008). “Managers who understand the significance of symbols and know how to evoke spirit and soul can shape more cohesive and effective organizations” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 269).

Leaders who make change using a symbolic approach focus on vision and inspiration. Symbolic leaders feel that people need to believe that their personal work, and the work of the organization, is important and meaningful. Traditions,

ceremonies, and rituals are very important to the symbolic approach, which is most appropriate when goals and/or cause-and-effect relationships are unclear.

(McLeod, n.d., para. 5)

Research on School Facilities Bond Passage

Prior research in the field of school bond referenda passage can be classified into two main categories: empirical research and normative research that consisted mainly of dissertation articles as well as procedural advice found in professional/trade journals for school and district administrators on “lessons learned” and suggestions on “how to pass your bond” (Bowers et al., 2010b).

Empirical research over the past 45 years has focused on factors that impact the likelihood of bond passage, including voter preferences, district and community characteristics, bond characteristics, and election characteristics (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010a, 2010b; Gong & Rogers, 2014; Hickey, 2008; Ingle, Johnson, et al., 2013; Piele & Hall, 1973; Theobald & Meier, 2002; Zimmer et al., 2011). Normative models have consisted mainly of unpublished dissertation articles as well as procedural advice tactical campaign strategies consisting mainly of procedural advice found in professional/trade journals for school and district administrators on “lessons learned” and suggestions on “how to pass your bond” (Bowers et al., 2010b).

There is also an additional line of related research that has explored the factors in passing school levy referenda (Ehrenberg et al., 2004; Ingle & Johnson, 2009; Ingle, Petroff, & Johnson, 2011; Ingle, Johnson, & Petroff, 2013; Ingle, Johnson, et al., 2013; Johnson & Ingle, 2009; O’Connor, 2011). The following section reviews the literature of

empirical models of bond passage, additional literature regarding school bond passage, and related literature on school levy passage.

Seminal Research on Bond Passage

Piele and Hall (1973a, 1973b) conducted some of the most influential research on the factors related to school bond passage almost 50 years ago. Utilizing a meta-analysis of over 100 studies from the 1950s and 1960s, they produced seminal theories on how school district characteristics, election characteristics, voter demographic characteristics, voter psychological characteristics, information factors, and political characteristics impact school bond-elections. While Piele and Hall (1973) looked at various factors, including district and community demographics and bond and election characteristics, their longest-lasting contribution to the field was their work on voter impact on school bond elections. Piele and Hall concluded that “there were two major determinants the outcome of a school bond referendum: who was most likely to participate versus who was most likely to vote ‘yes’” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 734).

Piele and Hall (1973) found that voter participation and voter characteristics, such as voter age, economic status (SES), education, and ethnicity were the most significant factors affecting the outcome of school bond elections. In terms of voter participation, they found that increased voter turnout decreased the chances of passing a school bond. “Although the use of these ‘get out the vote’ techniques represents an admirable faith in the ‘democratic model’, they may well cause a net increase in negative voting” (Piele & Hall, 1973a, p. 87). They found that voter age, economic status (SES), education, and ethnicity all impact election results (Piele & Hall, 1973). They found that middle- to

older-aged voters were more likely to participate, but also more likely to vote against the bond, partly due to not having children enrolled in school and in general being opposed to new taxes. The found that both higher socioeconomic status and higher education levels of voters resulted in increased participation in the election as well as the likelihood of voting yes. While White voters were more likely to participate, African American voters were more likely to vote yes.

While this research was significant both to the research field and school practitioners, the conclusion for districts was ultimately disheartening regarding the ability of school district leaders to significantly impact school bond elections.

Piele and Hall set forth an apparent paradox for school districts looking to pass their bond. They theorized that community support for a local bond election in a school district is constant, with fairly intact groups that will vote yes or no, based mostly on demographics, while at the same time there was little evidence to show that factors under the influence of the district (election timing, bond amount, purpose, and wording) were associated with final bond outcomes. (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 735)

Recent research has confirmed Piele and Hall's (1973) research on voter turnout. Gong & Roger's (2014) recent research on role of voter turnout in school bond election outcomes that looked at 662 school bond elections held in 17 (of 77) Oklahoma counties between 1997 and 2009 found that "change in turnout has a negative and significant influence on change in approval share and probability of bond success" (p. 247), supporting previous research that "higher-than-expected turnout is associated with lower

bond approval shares and lower chances of passing” (p. 260). Bowers et al.’s (2010b) research on 789 bond elections in Michigan from 1998-2006 also confirmed a negative and significant relationship between voter turnout and bond passage.

However, current researchers cited several issues with the Piele and Hall (1973) research. Although Piele and Hall’s (1973) work has been extremely influential and was exhaustive at the time, the study is now dated. Most of the studies they analyzed came from the 1950s and 1960s and are over 70 years old; there have been significant demographic, social, and political changes in the past 70 years. The second issue researchers have with their analysis is that the original studies in the Piele and Hall (1973) meta-analysis “focused almost exclusively on descriptive statistics only, with few studies using inferential statistics.” In addition, “sample sizes were relatively small, intact, and cross-sectional across the vast majority of their studies reviewed, hampering the ability to generalize across contexts and into the present” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 735).

Recent Research on Bond Passage

While a relatively large amount of research on the empirical factors related to passing or failing a school bond was conducted in the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s during periods of high birth rates, most recent researchers concluded that research in the field of school bond elections since the early 1970s has been sparse (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010a, 2010b; Hickey, 2006, 2008; Ingle, Johnson, et al., 2013; Johnson & Ingle, 2008; Zimmer et al., 2011). A “small and growing body of research has begun to focus on updating this research

domain on facility bonds” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 735). Recent research efforts have shifted from the *voter* as the primary unit of analysis, to the *bond* as the primary unit of analysis. Bowers and Lee (2013) explained the shift to focus on bonds as the primary unit of analysis allowed the following for recent researchers:

Focus on the factors most associated with passing or failing a school bond, rather than focus on theories around school district median voter behavior . . . in an attempt to build theory specifically associated with school bonds and to inform administrator practice to help schools find the funding they need to build adequate facilities for their students. (p. 736)

Researchers over the past 15 years have been able to examine data-rich, complete databases containing data for entire states to analyze factors quantitatively thought to be significant for predicting the passage or failure of school bonds. As a result, these researchers have “identified bond and election characteristics that can be tailored by the school administration” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 753). Integrating the results of earlier work on voter preferences, as well as more recent research on district and community characteristics, as well as on bond and election characteristics, Bowers and Lee (2013) concluded that “there are significant malleable factors in a bond election that are under the control of school district administrators” (p. 759).

A review of the literature below provides a review of the studies over the past 20 years that have investigated voter preferences, district and community characteristics, bond characteristics, and election characteristics as factors that impact the likelihood of school bond passage (see Appendix A). Sielke (1998) looked at the amount of debt a

district already had on the effect of bond passage and found that “those who are already paying debt mills or high amounts of debt mills are willing to tax themselves even more in support of their schools” (p. 321).

In 2008, Hickey found that “little research on socioeconomic trends in bond elections” (p. 22) had been completed. This research explored the relationship between successful bond passage in Texas bond elections in 2006 and following district and community factors: the city population percentage of white, African-American, and Hispanic groups; district percentage of white, African American and Hispanic students; city poverty percentages; district socioeconomic percentages; median city household income; median age; senior citizen population percentage; and city percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree. Hickey (2008) found that “the highest positive correlations existed with Hispanic city and district populations, as well of the factor of population percentage who hold a bachelor’s degree” (p. 26). Level of education was strongly positive, consistent with previous research. Age trends, which showed a “slightly negative correlation for senior citizen percentage” (p. 25) was also consistent with previous research. The White and African American demographics both showed negative trends with the correlations regarding socioeconomic level being inconsistent. Socioeconomic factors were inconsistent: Low socioeconomic status at the district level had a slightly positive correlation, whereas poverty levels in the city were negative correlated with bond success.

Bowers et al. (2010a) studied four parameters related to the likelihood of passing school bonds by local district and examined statewide data school bond data for 505

school districts in Michigan that held school facilities bond elections from 2000 to 2005. They found four variables that were significant in predicting either success or failure of school bonds: bond amount, number of students enrolled, the number of times the bond was attempted, and district urbanicity (the size of city the district was located in: urban, suburban, small town, and rural). Bowers et al. found that bond amount is a “significant negative predictor of bond passage” (that is, as the amount goes up, the odds of passing a bond go down). Second, they found that enrollment is a “significant positive predictor (as enrollment goes up, chances of passing a bond go up)” (Bowers et al., 2010a, p. 410). Their analysis found that “rural districts have worse chances of passing bond elections than urban and suburban districts and that small-town districts have the worst chances of all” (p. 398). They also found that the bond timing matters: “the first time a bond request is floated has the best chance of being passed, whereas second and third floats return precipitously lower chances” (p. 415).

Bowers et al. (2010b) performed a second study, in which they investigated the outcome of 789 bond elections from 1998 to 2006 in Michigan to analyze ten variables: amount of the bond request; district enrollment; district locale; percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches; percentage of the district’s population with only a high school degree; the district’s long-term debt; voter turnout; the day of the calendar year on which the election was held; the number of the bond proposal on the ballot; and the inclusion of technology in the ballot proposal’s wording (Bowers et al., 2010b). This follow-up study confirmed the previous finding that bond amount is a significant negative predictor of bond passage and confirmed Piele and Hall’s (1973) finding that voter

turnout has a significant and negative impact on bond passage. In addition, they found that the percentage of students receiving free lunches, percentage of the district population with only a high school degree, and bond placement further down the ballot were all significant and negative factors. That is, the higher the percentage of students receiving free lunch in the district, the lower the odds of passing the bond. The higher the percentage of the district population with only a high school degree, the lower the odds of bond passage. Bond placement looked at the order in which the bond wording was placed on the ballot; the further down the ballot, the less likely the bond was to pass (Bowers et al., 2010b).

Furthermore, Bowers et al. (2010b) began to compile the major types of variables that had been tested in the past and recommended to be researched in the future to lay the foundation for building a coherent model of factors impacting bond passage. These factors included:

1. *SES and education levels of the community:* Are the percentages of students in poverty in the district or the district's overall education levels associated with bond election outcome?
2. *Debt-load parameters:* Is the district's overall long-term debt a significant predictor of bond election outcomes
3. *Technology:* Is inclusion of wording to fund technology improvements in a bond proposal associated with the outcome of bond elections?
4. *Bond Amount:* Is the amount of money requested in the bond associated with the outcome of bond elections?

5. *Number of bond attempts and locale:* Do the number of “floats” or district type predict the outcome of bond elections?
6. *District enrollment:* Is student enrollment associated with the outcome of bond elections?
7. *Voter turnout:* To what extent is voter turnout associated with the outcome of bond elections?
8. *Day of year and proposal number on the ballot?* Is the proposal’s position on the ballot or when the election is held during the year associated with the outcome of bond elections? Is it best for a capital request to appear as the first or only issue or to be listed among many funding requests on an election ballot?

Zimmer et al. (2011) looked at an entirely new factor which was the type of capital project that voters were willing to support. They studied the “likelihood of bonds passing for maintenance of existing buildings versus construction of new buildings or additions” (p. 38). They examined the outcomes of 248 local bond referenda in the state of Michigan between 1999 and 2001. They found that maintenance of existing structures received more support from voters than construction of new facilities and additions. “The coefficient of estimates for the percent yes models suggest that ‘maintenance’ of existing capital receives nearly 6 percent more yes votes. Similarly, maintenance and operations referenda are about 37 percent more likely to pass than other referenda” (p. 51). They also created an important typology for future research on types of proposed facilities changes: new academic buildings; additions; operation or maintenance of existing

facilities (purchasing of equipment, remodeling, re-equipping, refurbishing); athletic facilities; band/art facilities; buses; and parking facilities.

Gong and Roger (2014) researched the role of voter turnout in school bond election outcomes using a sample of 662 school bond elections held in 17 of the 77 Oklahoma counties between 1997 and 2009. They found that “change in turnout has a negative and significant influence on change in approval share and probability of bond success” (p. 247). This research confirmed prior research by Piele and Hall (1973a) that showed that a higher voter turnout is associated with lower bond passage rates.

Bowers and Chen (2015) followed up on previous research regarding factors that impact bond passage, by investigating the effective of bond wording (content of the bond) on bond passage. Using automated text mining, a new data mining technique, they looked at 1,210 bond election ballot proposals over a 16-year period from 1998 to 2014 and identified “nine different latent topics across the bonds, including requests to purchase new buildings, renovations, and athletics facilities, and then analyzed the “independent effect of bond topics on the probability of passing the bond and voter turnout. Their findings showed how bonds for athletic facilities only “were 4.35 times less likely to pass than bonds that request new construction or omnibus ballot proposals” (p. 164). They argued their research showed “that capital facility bond proposals that pass the most often include all facility needs in a single ballot proposal, are the first attempt at the polls, are at the top of the ballot, and request lower amounts of spending” (p. 164).

Comparisons between studies can be made using Bower and Lee's (2013) categorization of factors impacting the likelihood of school bond election outcomes, including: (a) bond characteristics: including, number of float, and bond amount; (b) bond wording: renovations, debt refinance, athletics, technology, art, other; (c) district characteristics, meaning district locale (using NCES CCD codes city, suburb, town, and rural), district enrollment, and change in district enrollment (growth); (d) community characteristics: population over 65, population with a college degree, percent free lunch of students, and ethnicity of students: Native American, Asian, African American, and Hispanic; (e) election characteristics included: tax rate, percentage of the residential assessed value, election date and time of year, location of the bond on the ballot on election day. The factors that quantitative researchers indicated were correlated with school bond referendum election results included the following: bond characteristics, bond wording, district characteristics, community characteristics, and election characteristics.

Bond characteristics. These were bond amount, float attempt, and long-term debt. First, for bond amount, numerous studies consistently found that the bond amount or size of the bond is negatively related to school bond referendum election success; that is, the larger the bond, the less the likelihood of success (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers, Metzger, & Militello, 2010a, 2010b; Theobald & Meier, 2002). Second, for float attempt, passing a school bond on the first "float" or attempt was positively associated with bond passage; second or third attempts were not as effective. Several studies found a negative correlation for second and third bond attempts (Bowers

& Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010a, 2010b). Third, long-term debt by districts produced mixed results (Bowers, 2010b; Theobold & Meier, 2002).

Bond wording (bond content). The content of the bond wording includes renovations, athletics, and arts/technology categories. In two studies, researchers determined that renovations were positively related to school bond referendum election success; that is, school bond referenda for renovations had a greater likelihood of passage (Bowers & Lee, 2013; Zimmer et al., 2011). Second, athletics was negatively correlated with school bond referendum election passage (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013). Bowers and Chen (2015) found “bonds that focused exclusively on athletic facilities were 4.35 times less likely to pass than bonds that request new construction or omnibus ballot proposals” (p. 164). Finally, arts or technology showed no correlation with school bond referenda including affecting the likelihood of school bond passage. (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers et al., 2010b).

District characteristics. These characteristics include size of town, enrollment, and growth. First, research on the impact of the size of the town on the likelihood of school bond referendum election passage was mixed, but several studies found that small towns and rural towns had a negative correlation with bond passage. Bowers et al. (2010a) found that “rural districts have worse chances of passing bond elections than urban and suburban districts and that small-town districts have the worst chances of all” (p. 398). Second, researchers produced mixed results on the impact of the size of enrollment on the correlation with the likelihood of school bond election passage results. One study found a positive correlation (Bowers et al., 2010a), another study found a

negative correlation (Theobold & Meier, 2002), and several studies found no correlation (Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010b). Third, the one study that looked at district growth found a positive correlation between district growth and likelihood of school bond referendum election passage (Bowers & Leek, 2013).

Community characteristics. The community characteristics included senior citizens, community demographics, and low-socioeconomic composition of the district. First, recent quantitative research findings confirmed prior research that senior citizen voting had a negative correlation with school bond referendum success (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Hickey, 2008). Second, mixed results for correlations between ethnic/racial groups in the community and the district have been found. Bowers and Lee (2013) and Hickey (2008) found a positive correlation between number of Hispanics in the district and likelihood of school bond referendum passage. Other studies produced mixed results (Bowers & Lee, 2013; Hickey, 2008; Zimmer et al., 2011). Third, mixed results have been found regarding the percent of low-socioeconomic students in the district and likelihood of school bond passage. Hickey (2008) and Theobold and Meier (2002) found a positive correlation; while Bowers et al. (2010b) and Zimmer et al. (2011) found a negative correlation; Bowers and Lee (2013) found no correlation.

Election characteristics. The final group of variables for election characteristics include voter turnout, tax rate, position of proposition(s) on the ballot, timing of the election, and single versus multiple propositions on the ballot. First, recent quantitative studies on voter turnout confirmed earlier research in which increased voter turnout was negatively correlated with the likelihood of school bond referendum passage (Bowers &

Chen, 2015; Bowers et al., 2010b; Gong & Rogers, 2014). Second, in the one study of impact of the local tax rate, the local tax rate was “not significantly related to the likelihood of bond passage” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 757). Third, in several studies, the positions of the propositions on the ballot were significant, because the lower the proposition(s) were on the ballot, the less likely they were to pass (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers et al., 2010b). Fourth, results for the timing of the school bond election were mixed.

Bowers et al. (2010b) and Bowers and Chen (2015) indicated that the timing was significant because bond elections held later in the year were more likely to pass in their studies, but Bowers and Lee (2013) found no effect from timing of the election within the calendar year. Finally, Bowers and Chen noted that Bowers and Lee had “proposed a theory of *voter fatigue* in which community voters are more willing to vote for a single omnibus ballot measure that includes all requests when it’s at the top of the ballot” (p. 171). Even though no studies of single versus multiple propositions were conducted by this group of researchers, Bowers and Lee postulated that the single bond proposition would be preferred by voters over the multiple propositions bond based on the factors of bond placement and bond wording.

The Bowers and Lee (2013) Mediated Model of Facility Bond Passage

Research by Bowers and Lee in 2013 is the largest and most sophisticated recent quantitative study analyzing factors impacting the likelihood of school bond passage. The Bowers and Lee (2013) study analyzed all public school capital facility bonds ($n = 2,224$) in Texas between 1997 and 2009. Based on the findings of this and previous quantitative

studies identifying factors correlated with the likelihood of school bond passage, Bowers and Lee (2013) created what they labeled as the *mediated model of school bond passage* and explained that their study:

Factors replicate and extend the findings from the past literature across state contexts using a direct effects model, focusing here on Texas using the longest time span to date, 1997-2009. We then move to reexamining the theory from Piele and Hall (1973), informing the model using our findings and the findings across the studies to date in which we postulate a mediated model of school bond passage. (p. 742)

In the 2013 study, Bowers and Lee addressed several significant limitations they had identified that existed in the most recent prior empirical research on bond passage. First, because most of the recent facility bond studies had been almost exclusively focused in Michigan, there had been a “lack of evidence demonstrating which factors associated with bond passage generalize across state contexts and multiple years of data” (p. 742). The second issue they had identified was a lack of a generalizable theory developed from previous empirical findings. They concluded that “there is a need in the literature to study these models and effects in other state contexts” (p. 740), in order to generalize results and create a coherent theory for the field.

Out of this new research on factors, Bowers and Lee (2013) produced a new “mediated model of bond passage” based upon the last two decades of research as seen in Figure 3. This new model unified prior work on voter preferences, district and community characteristics, bond characteristics, and election characteristics, and

explained between 33.2% and 44.3% of the variance in the likelihood of passing a school bond election. The variance accounted for was the “largest reported variance explained to date” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 751). However, while this range is extremely high for a study involving human variables, the variance not accounted for of 56% includes variables heretofore unidentified as affecting bond election outcomes.

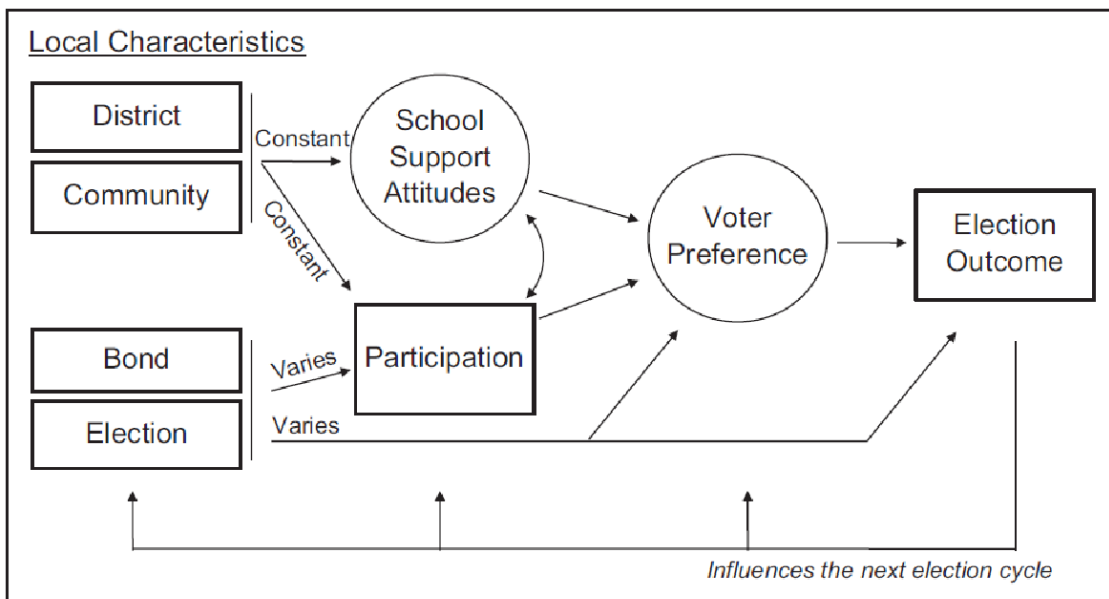


Figure 3. Bowers and Lee (2013) alternative mediated model of school bond passage (p. 751).

Bowers and Lee (2013) based their quantitative analysis on prior theory, literature, and the availability of data for relevant variables, with the dependent variable being school bond passage or failure. The independent variables were “separated into five categories that represent the main themes from the literature” as follows: (a) bond characteristics: including, number of float, and bond amount; (b) bond wording: renovations, debt refinance, athletics, technology, art, other; (c) district characteristics, meaning district locale (using NCES CCD codes city, suburb, town, and rural), district

enrollment, and change in district enrollment (growth); (d) community characteristics: population over 65, population with a college degree, percent free lunch of students, and ethnicity of students: Native American, Asian, African American, and Hispanic; (e) election characteristics included: tax rate, percentage of the residential assessed value, election date and time of year, location of the bond on the ballot on election day.

Bowers and Lee (2013) found first that Texas bond passage rate is high, at 77%. Similar to prior research results, first floats had the highest likelihood of passing. In addition, school bonds requesting renovations or refinancing of debt were more likely to pass than other types of bonds, confirming Zimmer et al.'s (2011) work. In addition, bond requests for athletics (such as stadiums and fields) or art (such as performance halls or auditoriums) seemed to pass much less often. District locale did not appear to be significant, as it was in the Michigan studies. District enrollment, percentage of population of with a college degree, or percent students with free lunch, also were not significant, which differs from prior findings. However, average percentage annual change rate of the school district was positive and significant. Percentage of population age 65 or over had a strong negative correlation, more so than other variables in the model (Bowers & Lee, 2013). In addition, the “percent of students from different ethnic groups was tested in the model as a proxy for community demographics, and [the results] indicated percentage of Asian and Hispanic student had a significant and positive relationship with passing a school bond” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 9). The Hispanic results concur with the results found by Hickey (2008). For election characteristics, proposition number was significant and strongly negative. “Each successive lower

placement down the ballot experienced increase negative odds of passage, with bonds that were in position four or lower being 5.71 times less likely to pass than bonds in the reference group” (Bowers & Lee, 2013, p. 75).

Chapter 3: Methodology & Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to investigate and analyze the perceptions of a representative group of district and community stakeholders regarding variables that contributed to the failure or successful passage of school bond referenda. Using qualitative methods, this study was conducted to update, enhance, elaborate, and clarify previous bond passage models developed by recent quantitative and qualitative studies, and to illuminate issues and factors influencing school bond passage. This in-depth qualitative case study of a representative school district that experienced success after a prior bond election failure was used to develop a greater understanding of the variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment. This study examined the participants' views to establish what the variables were that affected the outcome of bond elections that “statistical analysis alone cannot capture” (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 417).

Research Questions

1. What variables contributed to the failure of a school bond election?
2. What variables contributed to the success of a school bond election?
3. What relationships existed among these variables with regard to selected characteristics of the school district?

Research Design

The overarching research paradigm is a qualitative single case study. Patton (2002) indicated that qualitative methods are appropriate in the following three situations: (a) the researcher focuses on the process or implementation of a program; (b) the purpose of the study is to understand the nature of the problem being addressed and how actions

led to desired or undesired outcomes; and (c) the researcher seeks to add depth to quantitative work. Case-oriented research “looks at the complexity of a phenomenon within its context” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 265). Case studies within the qualitative tradition “allows the researcher to study individual(s), events, activities, or processes of a bounded system,” in this case the school bond election process. “The emphasis in the case study is on examining a phenomenon as it exists in its natural context” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 44).

Qualitative methods involve techniques “associated with the gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of narrative information” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 6). Qualitative methods such as interviews and document reviews are predominant in this paradigm (Mertens, 2010). The researcher utilized documents related to school bond passage. These included, but were not limited to, district strategic planning documents related to school facilities planning; school district bond referendum information documents; professional documents from school facilities professional consulting firms; newspaper articles on the school bond election; internal and external communication documents related to the school bond election; meeting minutes or notes from school bond advisory group meetings; documents from a school bond consultant; board meeting minutes regarding the school bond election topic; and any relevant school bond referenda documents.

This qualitative study investigated the perceptions of a representative group of key stakeholders, including the superintendent, selected school board member(s), key district personnel, such as the chief financial officer and the chief communications

officer, parents, and community members through semi-structured interviews. Hogue (2012) pointed out that interviews enable the ability to attain a deeper understanding of the variables of study. In addition, Merriam (1998) indicated that interviews are important for gaining data that cannot be gathered with observations or artifact review. Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright (2004) explained the purpose of the semi-structured interview is the following:

Interviewing is a particularly useful tool when one wants to understand the meaning of events and actions to the actors. It stresses the informant's definition of the situation, encourages the informant to structure the account of the situation, and allows the informant to reveal his or her notions of what is relevant. (p. 60)

Site and Participant Selection

The participants from the study were selected using the criteria and methods below and interview sites were selected accordingly.

Site Selection

One public school district/community in Texas served as the site for the study. The initial population of sites for this study were all Texas school districts that held a bond election from November 2013 to May 2017 based on bond election information from the Texas Comptroller's Office. An analysis of the bond data between May 2013 and May 2017 showed 444 districts held local bond elections during this time period. Further analysis produced to a subset of 35 districts with failed bond elections followed by a successful school bond referendum (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 2017).

A case study district was chosen using purposive sampling from the subset of 35 school districts that had failed bond elections followed by a successful school bond referendum. Purposive sampling is “typically designed to pick a small number of cases that will yield the most information about a particular phenomenon” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 178). Criteria for the purposive sampling included: 1) District which failed and then subsequently passed a bond; 2) District in Texas; 3) District with superintendent consistency between the failed and successful bond; 4) District that was *Meets Standard* according to state accountability criteria. The third and fourth criteria eliminated several additional districts who either were not *Meets Standard* through state accountability system or whose superintendent had changed after the initial school bond election failure.

A single case study was chosen to increase the depth of investigation in the target district. Research generated a significant amount of data from school bond referenda documents and as well as rich interview data from a representative group of stakeholders in the target district and community. The goal of this single case study was to increase the strength of the study by generating a wealth of detail from an intensive sample and to create an information-rich documentation of a single case study. Embedded case. As data was collected and analyzed it became apparent that this was an embedded case study: with the 2013 school bond data and 2015 school bonds acting as separate but connected “embedded units of analysis.” This resulted in data collection and analysis for both “embedded units of analysis” (two school bond elections) (Yin, R. K., 2012, p. 8). An

expert in the field (former superintendent) helped identify and secure a final school district that met the research study criteria and that was willing to participate in the study.

Interviews were held where it was most convenient for participating stakeholders. For superintendents, school district administrators, and board members, the interviews were held at the school district central office location. Parents and community members were interviewed either at the school district central office location or at a convenient, private location. Interviews were scheduled according to the convenience of participants. The researcher was provided extensive access to internal and external key documents for both school bond referenda process, both online and in digital format.

Sampling and Participants

Participants in key district positions were selected by purposive sampling based on their positions. The superintendent, chief financial officer, and chief communications officer were central office staff interviewed. The chief facilities officer was not in the district at the time of either school bond election and was not interviewed. The current school board member was based on recommendation by the superintendent. One parent and one community member were interviewed based upon the recommendation of the superintendent. Additional parents, community members, and former school board president were selected through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to the researcher choosing a participant and then asking that participant for additional participants who meet the criteria of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). Snowball sampling provides quick access to participants. The total number of study interview participants was 11.

Using the selection method just described, personal interview data was gathered from the named respondents in the selected school district. As the purpose of this study is to gain information about critical factors in bond referenda success or failure, named respondents to interviews were deliberately chosen based on their likelihood to have substantial knowledge about the phenomenon in question. The selected actual respondents were: the school district superintendent, chief financial officer, chief communications officer, current school board member, former school board member, parents, and community members. The superintendent of the selected district was contacted to request participation in the study. The superintendent secured participation in the study from five additional representative stakeholders: chief financial officer, chief communications officer, school board member, parent, and community member. The superintendent indicated the district executive director of facilities was a new hire and had not experienced either the 2013 or 2015 school bond elections, so was not interviewed. Five additional interview participants were secured through a snowball sampling process. It was requested that each of these individuals was knowledgeable about the impact of various election strategies on the result of the election in their respective communities. Each person who agreed to participate received a letter describing the purpose of the study and the assurance of complete confidentiality (the cover letters and requisite forms relating to approval to conduct research involving human subjects are included in Appendices B, C, D, and E). All interview participants signed the Waiver to Consent in Appendix E for the study.

Sources of Data

Four sources of data were triangulated for analysis: semi-structured interviews, archival documents, field notes, and reflective journals were triangulated to ensure accuracy of findings.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews, document review, and reflective memo-ing provided data sources for the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the superintendent, current and former school board members, chief financial officer, chief communication officer, parents, and community members. The “role as the researcher [is] to develop quality questions and guide the interview in a way that would lead to valuable information” (Hogue, 2012, p. 73).

Documents

Documents were collected and reviewed, such as: district strategic planning documents related to school facilities planning; school district bond referendum information documents; professional documents from school facilities professional consulting firms; newspaper articles on the school bond election; internal and external communication documents related to the school bond election; meeting minutes or notes from school bond advisory group meetings; documents from a school bond consultant; and any relevant school bond referenda documents. The list of document reviewed for the data analysis appears in Appendix G.

Field Notes

As Bogden and Biklen (2003) recommended, the researcher kept reflective field notes of observations during interviews to capture “assumptions, impressions, attitudes, and ideas (as cited in, Mertens, 2010, p. 228). Field notes help the researcher “keep track of any follow up questions as well as describing . . . preliminary impressions” (Hogue, 2012, p. 9). Stance, intended audience, and point of view were included (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 229).

Reflective Journaling

The researcher’s reflective journals served as an additional data source. Reflective journaling assisted the researcher in pre-planning for the interviews, reflecting on the content of the interviews, and anticipating possible options to “make decisions on where to continue to lead the interview” (Hogue, 2012, p. 73). As Bogden and Biklen (2003) recommended, the researcher engaged in reflective journaling during interviews to capture “assumptions, impressions, attitudes, and ideas (as cited in, Mertens, 2010, p. 228). Reflective journaling helped the researcher “keep track of any follow up questions” and to explain all “preliminary impressions” (Hogue, 2012, p. 9), such as stance, intended audience, and point of view (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Methods of Data Collection

Data collection for this single-case study included 11 semi-structured interviews (one in-depth interview with each of the participants, with member checks including a review of transcripts), documents related to the study, and reflective memoing.

Institutional Approval

To ensure that appropriate steps have been taken to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of participants, the researcher completed the steps to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Austin. Appendix B contains the approval letter. The researcher contacted the selected district and completed any required application processes to conduct external research.

Interviews

After receiving IRB approval to conduct research by the University and participating district, the researcher requested interviews from the participating stakeholders, based on purposive sampling for the superintendent, chief financial officer, and chief communications officer; intentional sampling for the school board member, parent, and community member (recommendation by the superintendent); and snowball sampling for additional parent and community member participants. As previously stated, the researcher met with study participants at a time and location of their preference, either at the district central office, or other convenient location. All interviews were digitally-recorded and transcribed in full. A professional transcription service was utilized to expedite transcript production and to create consistency in transcription techniques. This afforded the researcher an opportunity to deeply interact with the participant responses.

All participants signed the waiver to consent form prior to conducting the interview. During the interviews, participants were asked a set of standard questions as well as questions uniquely related to their role in the election process. The semi-structured nature of the interview process allowed for the inclusion of clarifying

questions and follow-up questions based on the real-time process of the interview. The questions (seen in Appendix F) were designed to prompt in-depth responses about factors critical to the failure of one bond and the success of a second bond, as well as to garner useful advice for other districts preparing for a bond election. Interviews were used to discover new data, further develop existing data, and assist in organizing all data sources to construct a ‘story’ describing bond election experiences. Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s (2006) step-by-step process for qualitative data was used for data analysis. This includes preparing the data for analysis, data exploration, and data reduction or coding. The qualitative data analysis approach was “recursive . . . findings are generated and systematically built as successive pieces of data are gathered” (Mertens, 2010, p. 424).

Coding

Interview transcripts were coded using categories from the theoretical frameworks and categories that emerge through the interview and data analysis process. Charmaz (2007) provided a coding strategy that utilizes an initial coding phase where the researcher coded “individual words, lines, segments, and incidents” (as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 426). Corbin and Strauss also called this “open coding” (as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 426). The researcher then used “focused coding” to test the initial codes against the more extensive body of data to determine how resilient the codes are in the bigger picture that emerges from the analysis” (Mertens, 2010, p. 426). A priori codes were determined ahead of time due to what the literature claims to be characteristics of successful school bond elections (Austin, 2003; Bennett & Thompson, 2011). The a

priori codes from the literature review were used as a framework from which to compare emerging codes.

Identifying information from participant responses was assigned codes to ensure that respondents' privacy was ensured. The researcher organized all notes and files of data to ensure ease of data analysis and ensure accurate reporting of results. Data obtained from the study were stored in a locked file. All participant data and coding information were stored in separate locked files to safeguard the data privacy and confidentiality.

Strategies to Promote Trustworthiness

This study used the member checking, peer debriefing, field notes and reflective journaling, and thick, rich descriptions to promote trustworthiness of research findings.

Member Checking

Member checking is the cyclical discourse with participants to verify that the data analysis accurately represents their intended meanings. Guba and Lincoln (1989) described this strategy as an important tool in establishing trustworthiness. The researcher sent transcripts to all stakeholders interviewed to provide interviewees that opportunity to check the transcripts for accuracy and completeness. Member checking gave the participants the opportunity to respond to the information gathered and ensured that their input was portrayed correctly (Abowitz, 2000).

Field Notes and Reflective Journaling

This researcher wrote field notes and entries into a reflective journal as another form of data collection to ensure trustworthiness. It was essential for the researcher to

keep adequate notes and reflections throughout the research process. The reflective component of theoretical journaling involved the recording of “feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses” (Merriam, 2009). Hays and Singh (2012) wrote: “Given that the role of the researcher is an integral part of the qualitative inquiry, keeping adequate notes and reflections throughout the research process is imperative” (p. 205). Reflective journaling was used to improve the “active self-reflection” of the researcher in the research process to improve the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative research, and include “reactions to participants and settings involved in the research, thoughts about data collection and analysis procedures” as well as “hunches about potential findings, and descriptions of how data method, source, and analysis plans may need to change” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 205). Field notes and reflective journal notes were kept electronically and on paper. These notes also were used as reminders as to why specific questions were asked and why themes were coded in a specific way (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing was used to calibrate findings with a third party. Peer debriefing allowed for a cross-check of findings with other researchers. The researcher engaged “in an extended discussion with a peer of findings, conclusions, analysis, and hypothesis” (Mertens, 2010, p. 257). Peer debriefing allowed for posing probing questions and enabled the researcher to confront her “own values and to guide the next steps in the study” (Mertens, 2010, p. 257). Peer debriefing established a method for obtaining

ongoing, peer feedback in addition to the self-reflection in reflective journaling. Peer debriefing was used to ensure the researcher's conclusions were validated.

Thick, Rich Descriptions

The researcher used thick, rich descriptions to support trustworthiness and transferability. "Thick description is a detailed account of your research process and outcome" that "goes beyond the basics of facts, feelings, observations, and occurrences, to include inferences into the meaning of present data" (Hays & Singh, 2012, pp. 212-213). The researcher captured numerous, salient details of the case under study to allow readers to determine whether or not the research findings might be applicable in their situations. Denzin's (1989) four elements of thick description were utilized in this study: "(1) it gives the context of an act; (2) it states the intentions and meanings that organize the action; (3) it traces the evolution and development of the act; [and] [sic] (4) it presents the action as a text that can then be interpreted" (as cited in Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 213).

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design, procedures for data collection, the process for data analysis, strategies employed to promote trustworthiness of the study, and the need for a qualitative research study. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion and recommendations.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to investigate and analyze the perceptions of a representative group of district and community stakeholders regarding variables that contributed to the failure or successful passage of school bond referenda. Using qualitative methods, this study was conducted to update, enhance, elaborate, and clarify previous bond passage models developed by recent quantitative and qualitative studies, and to illuminate issues and factors influencing school bond passage. An in-depth qualitative case study of a representative school district that experienced success after a prior bond election failure had the potential to allow researchers to develop a greater understanding of the variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment. This study examined the participants' views to establish what the variables were that affected the outcome of bond elections that "statistical analysis alone cannot capture" (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 417). The overarching research paradigm was a qualitative single-case study in which artifacts and interviews were the primary data analyzed. The research questions were the following:

1. What variables contributed to the failure of a school bond election?
2. What variables contributed to the success of a school bond election?
3. What relationships existed among these variables with regard to selected characteristics of the school district?

Chapter 4 presents the findings about the variables that impacted the failure of a school bond election in Town-Fringe in 2013, as well as the variables that contributed to the success of a school bond election in Town-Fringe in 2015. Findings are based upon

document review as well as interview data from the superintendent, central office administrators, former and current school board members, parents, and community members.

Description of the Participants

In total for both the 2013 and 2015 bond elections, 11 stakeholders were interviewed. The superintendent was the first participant to be interviewed. This participant provided the bulk of artifacts used in the analysis, as well as additional artifacts found online. Table 1 provides the description of the sample. Multiple participants (6 of 11) were parents and explicitly indicated that they had at some point in the past or present had children who were students in the school district.

2013 School Bond Election

In 2013, Town-Fringe², Texas was gaining population and had begun to experience the opportunities and challenges of growth that many towns in Texas faced during the late 1990s and 2000s. Town-Fringe was located 10 miles outside of the city limits of and about 25 miles from the nearest urban metropolitan area. Town-Fringe was once a small town, had enjoyed a strong local history, and had long served as an independent presence and hub of activity for its surrounding smaller rural communities.

² The National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) defined its locale codes based on a school district's location ranging from *City, Large* to *Rural, Remote*. The *Town-Fringe* classification referred to a "territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area" (NCES, n.d., p. 1). By 2017, the NCES classified the case study locale as Town-Fringe. Consequently, the pseudonym of Town-Fringe was chosen.

Much like the rest of Texas, Town-Fringe experienced double-digit population growth over the past 20 years, growing from classification as a *small town* to a *large town*.³

Between 2000 and 2008, the community grew from 20,793 residents in 2000 to 26,686 residents in 2008, a 40.5% growth rate. The community only continued to grow over the succeeding decade, with the population rising to 27,403 residents in 2013, 29,043 residents in 2015, and 29,969 in 2016 (the latest statistics available). Census projections showed a 3.5% increase in population per year between 2010 and 2035, with projected population at 31,726 in 2025 and 37,865 in 2035.

Population growth over the past 5 years outpaced projected increases, with the community reaching the projected 2020 population of 29,646 residents in 2016, 4 years earlier than expected.⁴ Double-digit population growth was projected in the succeeding 25 years in Town-Fringe's county as well as in the 10 surrounding counties. The county in which Town-Fringe was located projected a 66% household population change between 2010 and 2035, with surrounding counties projected to have population growth ranging from a minimum of 32% to a high of 120%.⁵ The population in Town-Fringe was 89% White, 13% Hispanic, 4% Other, 2% Black, 2% Two or More, < 1% Asian, and < 1% American Indian. The median age in Town-Fringe was 35 years old.

³ Prior to 2006, Town-Fringe would have been considered a *Small Town* according to the NCES's (n.d.) locale designations, but by 2013, Town-Fringe was considered a *Large Town* by pre-2006 NCES locale designations.

⁴ Data found in 2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation showed the population growth projections and current district website showed Town-Fringe's current population.

⁵ Data found in 2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample in Relation to the 2013 and 2015 Bond Elections

Interviewee(s)	Role in Bond(s)	Length of Time in Community	Location of Previous Residence	Relationship to District, If any
Superintendent	Superintendent	7 years (2 years before 2013 elections)	Central Texas	Superintendent
Administrator 1 (A1)	Chief Financial Officer	Not available	Not available	Central Office Staff
Administrator 2 (A2)	Communications Officer	Not available	Not available	Central Office Staff
School Board Member (SBM)	2013 School Board Candidate; 2015 School Board Member; Parent; Voter	Not available	Northeast US	School Board Member; Wife was a teacher; Children in district
Former School Board President (FSBP)	1999 Bond Committee; 2013 Board President; 2015 Community Member; Voter	18 years (13 years before 2013 election)	Not available	Former School Board Member; No children in district; Small business in the community
Community Member (CM)	1999 Bond Treasurer; 2013 Committee Member; 2015 FACTS Committee-Co-chair; 2015 Bond Treasurer; Voter	50+ years	Not available	Wife is former teacher; Daughter teachers in district; Grandchildren attend school in district
P1 (P1)	2015 FACTS Committee Member; 2015 Political Action Committee (PAC) member; Parent; Voter	12 years (7 years before 2013 bond election)	Nearby metropolitan area	Wife taught in district's Middle School #2; Daughter graduated from high school; Two sons currently attending schools in district
P2 (P2)	Parent; Voter	Approximately 25 years	Nearby small town	Children attended district schools for 3 years, but currently in same district for which parent works; Worked for a nearby school district
P3 (P3)	Parent; Voter	2 years (1 year after 2015 bond election)	Maine (rural area)	Parent of current Grade 6 student in newly renovated Middle School #1
P4 (P4, also married to P5)	PTA President (P4); School volunteer; Parent; Voter	15 years (10 years before 2013 bond election) Family lived in town since 1800s Parents owned local business for 15 years	Suburb on another side of nearby metropolitan area	Daughter attended & graduated high school in district schools; Son attended schools through middle school as of interview attended school in a different district
P5 (P5, also Married to P4)	School volunteer; District Health Advisory Committee; Parent; Voter	15 years (10 years before 2013 bond election)	Suburb on another side of nearby metropolitan area	See P4

Along with the community, the school district experienced significant growth over the past 20 years as families the community had children or new families with school-aged children moved into the community. P5 reported moving “back out there so our kids could go to school there. I mean, we moved out there specifically for the school. That was the purpose of moving there.” P3 had recently moved to the community and indicated that the school district was the primary reason for moving to the community.

Demographic projections showed increases in school-aged children living in the Town-Fringe Independent School District (TFISD) between the 1999-2000 and the 2013-2014 school year. TFISD had 6,774 students in the 1999-2000 school year with 420 teachers. By the 2013-2014 school year, TFISD had 7,710 students and 504 teachers (TEA TAPR Report, 2013-2014). Between 1999-2000 and 2013-2014, the district had added almost 1,000 students, a 14% increase. During this time, the demographic makeup of the students in the district changed. The district began serving increasing numbers of economically-disadvantaged, minority, and English Learning students.

In 1999-2000, 85.2% of students were White; 12.1% were Hispanic; 1.7% were African American; and < 1% were Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American. Among other categories, 31.6% of students were economically disadvantaged. During that same school year, 4.3% of students were English Learners, and 12.4% of students were enrolled in special education. By the 2013-2014 school year, 71.2% of students were White, 23.1% were Hispanic, 2.3% were African American, and 2.8% were Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American. Nearly 45% of students were economically disadvantaged,

and the percent of students considered at-risk was 46.1%.⁶ The percent of English Learners doubled to 8.1% by the 2013-2014 school year. In that school year, 8.6% of students were identified for special education eligibility.

Pressure on Elementary School Facilities

Aging facilities, as well as growth in the school-aged population put pressure on school facilities, especially at the elementary grade levels. The growth of student population and the pressure it put on school facilities was mentioned by the superintendent, district central office staff, school board members, parents, and community members during interviews. The superintendent, while talking about the reasons for pursuing a school bond election in 2013 said the following:

One, it was population. TFISD is fairly close proximity to [major urban area], and we're experiencing growth, and continue to experience growth. So, capacity of our school buildings was being stretched. . . . We have seven elementary campuses in our district, and all of them were experiencing pressures from growth. So, how can you relieve that pressure across the district and address some aging facilities and infrastructure that's out there at the same time?

Information from school bond election documents corroborated the pressure on school facilities discussed by the participants. The original district presentation slide about overcrowding in the district as used by the Citizen's Advisory Committee in its presentation for the 2013 bond included is Figure 4.

⁶ Note that the 1999-2000 percentage of students classified as at-risk was not available.

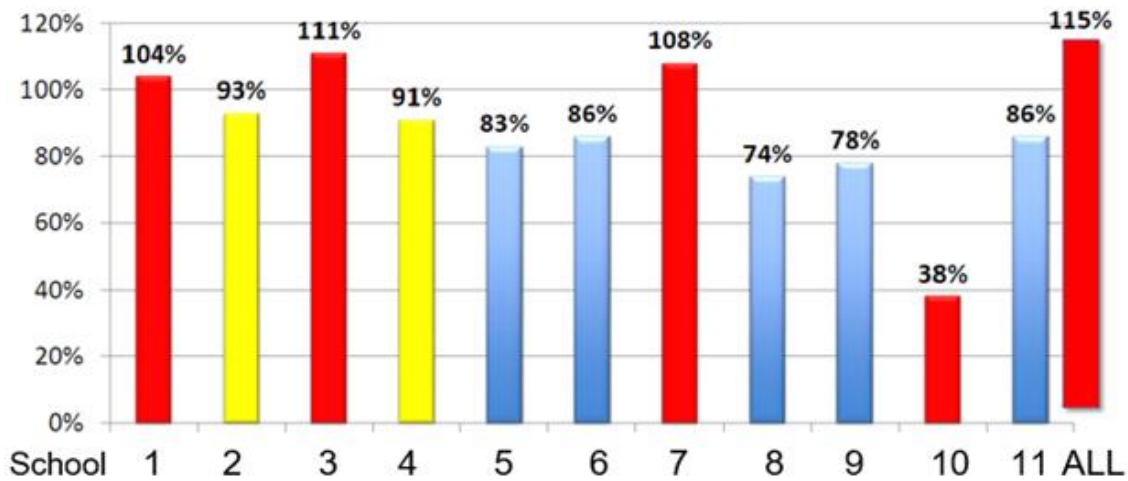


Figure 4. 2013 Bond election presentation bar chart indicating each school’s and all schools combined capacity levels.

2013 Decision to Pursue a School Bond Election

This growth in the district student population and pressure on school facilities led to the pursuit of a school bond referendum election by the TFISD school board in 2013. Participant FSBP discussed the need for more school facilities to accommodate the growth in student population as the reason the school board pursued a school bond election in 2013 as follows:

[Central administration] came to the board and said, “Look, we’re probably look at overcrowding in the elementary schools. We’re either going to have to do portable buildings or we’re going to have to look at a bond.” . . . We [the school board] started a workshop and information gathering type of meetings that we needed to have in order to determine what would work. . . . It was time. I mean, we’d outgrown our facilities and what our long-range plan looked like was that we were going to keep growing . . . And so, it was time to have another bond.

CM echoed the concerns about this growth in the school-aged population as the main factor in pursuing a school bond election in 2013 as follows:

Space. I think that's always the thing, here. You're running out of space and you're trying to figure out how you're going to accommodate the community when the community is growing. You can't keep the community from growing and this community is growing. When I first come here . . . 46 years ago, we had 6[000], 7[000], 8,000 people in the town area. As far as in the district, I don't remember what that was. Now we're probably at about 40,000 inside TFISD. You can't keep going without building buildings and redoing buildings. That's the main thing.

2013 School Bond Election Bond Proposal

Review of the 2013 Bond Presentation Documents revealed four published bond priorities that included Safety and Security, Capacity, Technology, and Capital Improvements. P2 characterized the 2013 bond proposal as supporting safety and security, as well as technology and athletics, which matched closely with the campaign materials. P2 said the following:

They were updating facilities to try to modernize the schools that they had. They had a heavy emphasis on security, a really heavy emphasis on security. . . . There was a big technology component built into it that they were trying to keep up with as well. Then, there was a mention of athletics facilities.

The 2013 school bond presentation documents included a graphic of the bond priorities. Figure 5 displays the graphic used in the 2013 bond presentations. Additionally, those priorities were packaged to the TFISD voters as seen in Table 2.

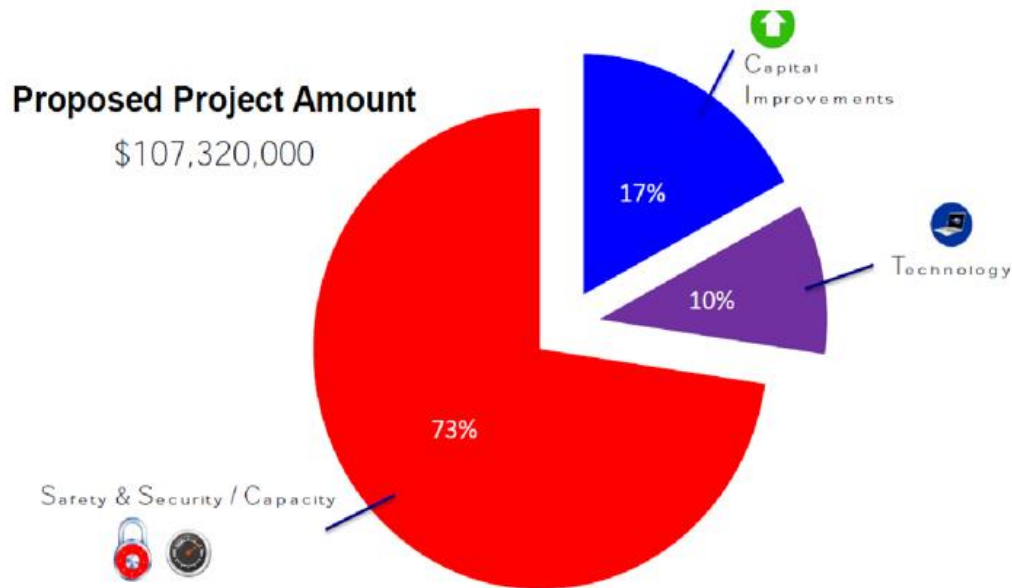


Figure 5. 2013 school bond presentation pie chart indicating categories for bond funding.

2013 School Bond Election Failure as a Shock

Based on this need, the school board and central administration went out to the community with a school bond referendum election in May of 2013. The election results were a resounding defeat, with “yes” votes at 31.06% and “no” votes at 68.94% (Election Results May 11 2013). P1, a parent supportive of the bond efforts, referred to the results as a “stinging defeat.” A2 discussed as follows:

In the 2013 election, I knew that we weren’t going to pass it. I knew we weren’t, because I could see the demeanor of people walking in to vote, and they were real obvious. Some of them were flat out rude to us. It was just miserable that day. But when I saw the earlier voting returns, and I think the early voting even was about

75/25. . . . It didn't matter how many people showed up to vote that day, because I'd watched their demeanor, and I knew we weren't going to win.

Table 2

2013 Bond Priorities Included in the 2013 Bond Presentation as part of TFISD Bond

2013 Bond Priority	Items Included in Bond Priority	Total Amount Allocated
Safety & Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constructing secure entries into all campuses ● Creating a self-contained high school campus ● Developing keyless entry systems ● Upgrading classroom door locking systems ● Placing additional parking lot lighting, including additional cameras/surveillance equipment ● Adding perimeter fencing 	73% x \$107,320,000 = \$78,343,600 (Safety & Security Combined with Capacity)
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adding a Career & Technology Center to the high school (\$13.5 million) ● Adding a Grade 9 academic wing to the high school in order to move ninth graders out of a separate Grade 9 Center into the high school (\$13.2 million) ● Reconfiguring all elementary campuses to PK-4 facilities (extend building capacity out 10+ years) ● Reconfiguring two existing middle schools to become Intermediate Schools (Grades 5-6) and redesigning the Grade 9 Center to become a middle school (Grades 7-8) to relieve pressure on elementary campuses ● Athletics facilities at the high school (\$11.4 million). 	73% of \$107,320,000 = \$78,343,600 (Safety & Security Combined with Capacity)
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “State of the art” technology, e.g., digital interactive whiteboards, teacher workstations, wireless Internet access, and document camera 	\$10.7 million (10% of total budget)
Capital Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parking lot lighting ● Roofing upgrades ● Energy efficiency upgrades (HVAC replacements and lighting/fixture upgrades) ● Classroom and hallway enhancements ● Restroom renovations ● Perimeter fencing 	\$18.2 million (17% of total budget)

It was a huge shock to the school board and school district administration when the school bond referendum did not pass, according to A2. It was also devastating to some parents whose children were in school at that time as discussed by P5:

Yeah, and there is a need for facilities and that's why it was very . . . It's kind of devastating when that didn't pass because the school our son and daughter went to, the elementary school, was already overcrowded, even when that [the 2013 school bond] was happening.

2013 Bond Election Failure Impact on School Board Election

Debate over the proposed school bond referendum impacted local school board elections that year. Anti-bond efforts ignited by school bond election referendum also catalyzed new candidates for the local school board election who ran on an anti-bond platform. "I think there was deliberate attempt, which I appreciate, to make over the board. To include some dissenting voices" [P1]. A1 recalled:

Our board president lost his seat that year, and we lost at least one of our good members that chose not to continue with this, a rerun, and it caused great anguish to the board and our superintendent. They took it very personally, and they knew they were just trying to do the right thing for kids.

One candidate running on an anti-bond platform was successful in being elected to the school board. SBM reported:

These two other gentlemen decided to run for two other seats. When it came down to it, I had won, and I think to date it's the largest number of voters for a school board seat in [Name of County] to date. That has not been surpassed in the

last elections I've done. There was a big turnout. The turnout just wasn't the way I originally thought it was going to be. There were a lot more folks in the town that felt like I did than I realized. It wasn't close. The bond got destroyed.

Participant FSBP said:

Yeah. I was President of the Board and because of its [the school bond] failure, I also didn't get re-elected to the board. The guy that ran against me was a Tea Party kind of guy. Made me out to be a real liberal who you know, just wanted to create debt and spend tax payer money.

The question is: What happened? Why did the school bond referendum not pass in the 2013 school bond referendum election? What were the variables that caused failure in the school bond referendum election in 2013?

Variables in 2013 School Bond Failure: Traditional Bond Process

Eleven major variables characterized the 2013 school bond failure in TFISD, TX. These variables included: (a) the school board and school district used existing processes; (b) an assumption of community support and lack of awareness of changes in stakeholder perceptions and community context by the school board and school district; (c) a lack of expert capacity to support bond election processes; (d) a lack of community needs assessment & pre-planning; (e) a lack of overall comprehensive school bond election planning process (f) poor leadership recruitment and development; (g) a lack of input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders, especially parents, teachers, and the opposition; (h) poor communication and lack of trust; (i) a weak bond proposal, including high bond amount, bond content, and single proposition; (j) lack of

consideration of structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process; and, (k) significant and effective anti-bond efforts.

The Superintendent and the two central office administrators (A1 and A2) described the 2013 bond process as a *traditional* or *old school bond process* that included a facilities needs assessment, a district Citizens' Advisory Committee that worked on bond proposal development, and marketing efforts, such as presentations, to sell the school bond proposal to the community. The Superintendent explained:

I would say it was very traditional. It's what schools had always done. And, by that, I mean, we identified key stakeholder groups, and we put together a PowerPoint presentation that identified the need, and then we went out and tried to sell that on our soapbox, and made like 50-something presentations. From anything from the Rotary Club to Aunt Judy's house down the street with the neighbors. Whoever we could meet with that would give us the time, we sat down and presented to them. And I did, I literally made presentations in people's living rooms to do that. Or, in front of a hundred-plus people in a large auditorium.

School Board and School District Used Existing Processes

Facilities needs assessment. One part of the planning process was securing an architectural firm to do the needs assessment for the district's facilities. CM knew there had been "a [facilities] needs assessment of what the district needed." The Superintendent described this process:

First, we had had an architectural firm in the district for, at that time, for about 28 years or so. Same firm. So, we contacted them and engaged them to come in and

do a facility assessment, work with us. . . . It took a significant time for them to look at facilities and assess. And they, having had a pretty deep history with the district, they knew our facilities, and in fact, had designed most of the district's facilities at that time.

Established a bond committee. The district began a bond committee as a part of the school bond election planning process. The Superintendent added “as a result of that [doing a facilities needs assessment], we created a facilities committee.” The artifact review of the TFISD Bond Social Media Informational Plan for 2013 revealed that this facilities committee was called the Citizens Advisory Committee and was listed as consisting of “local citizens, business leaders, community leaders, parents, and TFISD staff members.” FSBP provided additional information about which groups from the community were recruited to serve on the facilities committee:

The main committee, which you might call it the executive committee, we wanted to make sure it was people that we had two or three bankers on there. We had a pastor on there, we wanted people that could give an honest opinion about if this was something that was needed.

Marketing and communications. Once the school board had the bond proposal, and voted to seek a bond election, the school board and school district administration proceeded to communicate the bond proposal plan to the community in legally-appropriate manners. In addition, pro-bond political action groups and parent-community member groups actively promoted the school bond proposal to the community through a wide variety of marketing strategies and activities. District administrators, parents, and

community members remembered a wide variety of communications strategies and activities employed by the district to share factual information about the school bond proposal and upcoming school bond referendum election.

Communications activities. The district used tried-and-true communications methods such as presentations, flyers, and the district website to share factual information about the school bond proposal and election with the community. District A2 stated that there was “a communications plan going into that 2013 bond election. We did have a communications plan.” However, A2 characterized the communication plan in 2013 as old school and explained as follows:

I guess we thought we would go the “old school” way. You know, “We know that what we’re doing is right.” We’re going to put up all the information on our website. We’re going to create a presentation. We’re going to take it to every place in the community we can possibly think of, and we did.

Presentations were reported by multiple respondents as a key communications strategy used in the 2013 school bond referendum election. The artifact 2013 Bond Presentation Schedule corroborated the information the participants provided. The Superintendent mentioned presentations as the “campaigning aspect of it, which was all the presentations and the development, and the design of that.” A2 mentioned that the district administrators and school board members did about 50 presentations to parents and community members:

In our community, I think that in [20]13, I want to say we did about 50 presentations in the community, at schools, for parent meetings. You know, all the different civic clubs that you go to, that kind of thing.

FSBP referenced presentations to the community by “the superintendent and some of his administrators,” in addition to “some board members,” who “set up meetings with churches and your social [organizations like] Rotary, Lion’s club, anybody that would listen, PTAs, anybody that would let” them give a presentation.

The district also utilized the district website and social media to share legally-appropriate, factual information about the school bond proposal and school bond referendum election. Document review revealed a 1-page social media plan for 4 days during the school bond election campaign timeframe.

Marketing activities. A pro-bond political action committee (PAC) supported the school bond referendum election efforts through a variety of marketing strategies and activities. Multiple parents and community members mentioned receiving a school bond election flyer in the mail (i.e., SBM1, P2). P2 said, “The first I heard about it was actually a mailer that they had sent out. It was front and back little three panel mailer detailing the rough overview of how the monies were going to be spent and where.” The pro-bond PAC also put posters and signs around town. P2 described the marketing: “It was about the same week [that I got the flyer] when I started seeing a handful of the bond posters appear across town.”

On the positive side, the traditional bond process included conducting a facilities’ needs assessment, establishing a bond committee, and engaging in school bond election

marketing and communications activities. However, on the negative side, interview participants indicated that the traditional bond process in the 2013 school bond election had numerous issues that led to the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum election.

Lack of Awareness of Change in Stakeholder Perceptions and Community Context

The first variable that played a significant role in the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum election was the lack of awareness of stakeholder perceptions and the community context by the school district and school board. The school board and school district administrators' lack of awareness included: (a) an overall assumption of community support; (b) a lack of awareness of stakeholder issues with the school district that eroded stakeholder trust and long-term relationship with the district; (c) a lack of awareness of negative stakeholder perceptions of prior bonds; (d) a lack of awareness of the impact of the current political and economic context on stakeholder support for a school bond referendum, and (e) a lack of awareness of the impact of community growth on school support beliefs among stakeholders and voters.

Based on interview data, there were serious misperceptions of overall community support and relationship with stakeholders with school board and school district, as well as a lack of awareness of the impact of prior bonds, the political and economic environment, and community change on stakeholder support for a potential school bond referendum. The superintendent summarized the impact of this lack of awareness:

It's kind of easy to preach a sermon when we're all saved, and that's kind of what was going on, is we were standing up there and delivering this great message to advocates for the program, and had no idea what the ground swell was like

underneath. So, we go to the polls, thinking that it will be close, and it's absolutely a massacre.

Assumption of community support. Multiple respondents indicated there was a reliance on traditional school bond election and campaign methods based on an overall assumption of support from the community. The Superintendent said:

And I will tell you this, and this was a quote by one of my board members. And he said, “[Superintendent Name], we were arrogant in our 2013 bond. We thought that we could put it out there and explain what the need was to our community, and they would just blindly follow us.” That was a pretty powerful statement to me, for them to say that . . . And, really, that's how things had typically been done in the community. You showed the need, you put it out there.

A2 echoed this theme when she said:

We hadn't called a bond election since 1999. So, I think that in 2013, we assumed . . . because . . . we operate ethically, we have integrity . . . we believed that if we went out and said, “Y'all, we need these things” to our community, that they would all rise up and support us.

CM concurred with this assessment:

I think everybody just thought we'll put this out there, and everybody knows we'll need it, so it will happen. That was not right. We worked so much harder because it was still out there that so many people did not want it to happen.

P1 agreed that there was an assumption of community support:

I perceive that there was an assumption that it would pass. . . . And the assumption was “people will see the information.” Somebody like me would look at it and say, “Yeah, that's a good idea.” *Not everybody's like me, of course* [italics added for emphasis].

Belief that school district had strong reputation with community. At the time of the 2013 bond election, the school board and school district administration thought that they had strong reputation and were a school district that was in touch with the community and its needs. The FSBP reported that:

We were, in 2009, voted school board of the year for the State of Texas. That means that the administration felt that we were the best school board in the whole state. . . Yeah, it was a big deal. So, it wasn't a board that didn't have knowledge of how a district ought to be run.

P2, a long-time community member and parent indicated that he thought the school district had a good relationship to the community: “The district I've felt has always maintained a pretty good relationship with the community. They have been in pretty close to it.”

Lack of awareness of stakeholder issues with the school district. While school board members and district administrators believed that they had a strong relationship with the community, other parents and community respondents indicated there was a distrust of the school district for several reasons: (a) a general perception that the school board and school district did not want parent and community input, at the school board, district, and campus-levels; (b) a perception of unresponsiveness to parent issues; (c) a

perception of the rejection of offers of support from parents and the community; (d) a general perception that the school district was unresponsive, uncaring, and inconsiderate towards parent and community member wants and needs; and (e) a lack of awareness that parents and community members were voters. This impression that the school district did not care about parent and community wants and needs led to an overall lack of trust in the school district and a long-term erosion of the relationship with campuses and the school district in general, negatively impacting support for a school bond referendum election.

General perception school district did not want parent and community input.

There was a perception from parents and community members that the school district did not want input in general. P4 summed this idea up: “If it wasn't their idea, they didn't want that help.” P5 elaborated on this theme:

It's when you, kind of, set off parents . . . That's what I felt in [Town-Fringe] at that time, in 2013 especially, is that it was very difficult to communicate with administration. They didn't want your input. I have a doctorate in education. I've worked for a long time in higher education, state of Texas. I understand and asked to get involved, and it was very difficult to even get engaged and involved until I made some other connections. It's almost like they don't want you to get [involved] . . . “We want to control information a little bit more” [referring to the school district], and when you do that, you create distrust.

Lack of parent representation on school board. There was a perception by parents that there was a lack of parent representation in school board and district planning, due to a lack of parent representation on the school board itself. There was a

sense from parents who were interviewed that there was lack of parent representation on the school board that negatively impacted the 2013 school bond referendum election results. P4 mentioned this as one of the issues with the 2013 school bond failure, “We also have [in 2013] a school board full of grandparents. I think there was only one person on the school board at that point that had a kid in school.”

District-level negative experiences regarding input. P5 gave a district-level example of an experience of the district not wanting input:

Instead of working with the community, they work against the community many times. That's why I say one thing about TFISD is, even working inside the health advisory board, they [district administration] would push an agenda to the board and they really didn't want your opinion too much. They wanted you to “vote yes” because the health advisory board's a requirement by the state to have. They do it as a formality to have you there, but they didn't really want your opinion unless your opinion agreed with the direction they wanted to go as administration.

Small incidents gave parents the impression that their input was not wanted or valued. P4 recalled her experience serving on a district-level school improvement committee, where for her the small number of “post-its” she was given communicated a lack of value for her input:

They brought forward all the stuff that we were supposed to agree to and I was like, “I'm not agreeing to that.” “What would you do different?” I go, “Here, here, here, and here.” We were supposed to do post-it notes and put post-it notes on all the different things, and I was sitting there with [Name of Another Parent], who's

the county attorney, and he has kids in school. He goes, “What do you mean you’re out of post-it notes?” I go, “Give me your post-it notes.” He goes, “What are you doing?” I said, “They need some help, [Name]. You’re educated; I’m educated; we care about our kids. Get your . . . post-it notes and start getting busy.” He was like, “Oh, okay,” ‘cause he was on his phone. *But they didn’t want our input ‘cause they gave us three post-it notes* [italics added for emphasis].

Campus-level negative issues. P4 and P5 gave numerous examples of unresolved campus-level issues that impacted their overall level of trust and support for their campus, the school district, and school bond planning efforts. These issues included: issues with the academic needs of their own children being met; issues with the academic needs of other children in the school being met; the time of the daily driveline; misuse of campus fundraising funds; lack of children being able to access community resources; negative relationships with the campus principal; and rejection of financial and volunteer support from the community.

P4 and P5 indicated that although they were significantly involved at their children’s school in various volunteer and fundraising capacities, and had an overall commitment and support for public education, that they believed they were not recruited to serve on the school bond committee because of issues with the campus principal:

P4: Our principal didn't particularly care for us, so we would not have been asked to be on [the bond committee, 2013].

P5: Yeah, I'm a little outspoken about education and things, too. Even though I was involved, at the time the principal then was still [Name of Principal].

P4: She hated us.

Parent 5: I don't know about "hated." That's a little strong, but . . . we saw things differently. We have two very gifted kids and . . . I spoke up about the sunburn thing during that same time when they were starting gifted and talented. So, she never was selected, and I was like, "Well . . ." It was a bad deal, but that's a whole different story. Those are the kind of things.

District perceived as unresponsive to stakeholder issues. Parents reported that parent and community efforts to provide support to the campus or make changes regarding issues that significantly impacted their personal and family lives were often rejected by the campus and district.

One of these issues was a serious issue with the amount of time involved with the daily pickup and drop-off lines. This issue reportedly caused significant parent dissatisfaction and anger, and certainly could have caused negative sentiment that impacted a bond election. Parent 4 indicated the significant and negative impact this experience had on her and other parents. She also said that she had tried to offer input and expert consulting to the campus in order to try to help all parents by decreasing the time needed each day. P4's efforts at support were rejected as she said, "Yeah, almost 13 years I sat out in front of [Name of Elementary] with a screwed up parking situation," and "Everybody out here is mad every day." P5 confirmed, "Yeah, the pick-up was just. . ." P4 added, "Every single day, and I sat there and thought about it. I think I figured out, doing the math; I had sat out in front of that school for 2 1/2 weeks, 24 hours a day for 2 1/2 weeks." As a results, P4 "told 'em, I said, 'I'll find you a traffic engineer who will

look at this parking issue and figure out a better way.” P5 clarified, “A better way to flow the traffic” but the district or campus response received was “no, we’ve always done it this way.” P5 said elaborated:

The funny thing is they built the new junior high. Now, we’re not there, but a lot of our friends and their kids are there. They said they’ve moved now from the elementary to the junior high, and they said the brand new junior high school, the pickup and drop off, it takes an hour to get through the line to pick up your kid.

P4 agreed, “*And they don’t care*” [italics added for emphasis]. P5 added the following:

They [parent friends] said it’s insane. All this, why couldn’t they have designed a better [pick up and drop off area]. . . . They built this whole brand-new school and the new driveway. All these things that they’re doing, but they can’t figure out a way to pick up the kids efficiently. That’s crazy.

District perceived as rejecting offers of stakeholder support. Parents 4 and 5 shared an example where the campus rejected parent and community efforts to beautify their school building at no cost to the school district and how this could have impacted parent and community motivation to support school bond efforts. P5 explained:

Actually, the funny thing is, we actually had a group of people that were willing to all come in, donate resources, shrubberies, concrete, everything to redo the entire front of the school . . . At no cost to the school district, but they wouldn’t do it because something about the handicap ramp on that side of the building. I was like, “We can make all that work.” It was crazy because all these people were

willing to do all this free work and they said, “Nope. We’re not gonna do it.”

They left a dirt walkway instead of paving it.

P4 surmised the school’s excuse was because, “We need a \$10,000 ramp.”

However, P5 noted that “the handicap doors are all right there, already. The ramps are there; they’re here. That’s where the buses are, and all we’re talking about is doing the front part of the school where the kids walk from the street. They have to walk through dirt paths and we wanted to pave those paths.” And they said, “No, we’re not gonna do any of that.” It’s crazy. *It’s like when the community will come together to try to do things, if they weren’t a part of it, they didn’t want that done* [italics added for emphasis].

P5 explained the negative impact this type of district response had on support for school bond election efforts because the campus and district rejected parent and community help:

Yeah, so I think those are some of the things. When you have that kind of a back and forth, *it’s gonna be very difficult to pass a bond election because people feel like you don’t need the money* [italics added for emphasis] ‘cause here we’re offering you free stuff to do it. We had contractors, and all these people that were willing to donate the stuff, and they wouldn’t do it. I said, “That’s crazy.”

District perceived as unresponsive, uncaring, and inconsiderate. Parents gave examples at the campus and district-level where the school district was perceived as unresponsive, uncaring, and inconsiderate.

Campus drive-line issue. Parents 4 and 5 referred again to the drive-time issue, and the principal’s lack of responsiveness to their concern:

P4: I talked to the principal and she's like, "Well I don't know how it is. *I don't have to sit out there.*"

P5: That's the [Name of Town], yeah. Anyway, so I think part of that is just how responsive-

P4: It's about customer service.

District bond meeting scheduling inconsiderate. There was a perception of district inconsideration of parent schedules and availability in scheduling bond meetings in the 2013 school bond election. P4 said, "Like they knew what was going on and they waited until the 11 1/2 hour before they even started. Did things like meetings at the schools at 10:00 in the morning." P5 indicated the difficulty in scheduling: "That's convenient for you and the administrators. It's not convenient for the community."

Distrust negatively impacted long-term relationship with district and support for bond election efforts. Parents gave numerous examples of having their input and offers of support ignored at the campus and district level over many years. This lack of ability to impact their children's education, their campus, and district planning eroded their trust over campus and district leadership over time. P5 shared how this negatively impacted the 2013 school bond referendum election:

I think that ties into the whole bond thing, too [2013 bond]. As they're going through this, a lot of them felt: "The less we tell people, the better off we are because we don't want everybody to know what we want to do." Then the community became suspect.

P4 believed the district's mentality was "We don't want 'em to ask questions. We don't want any questions." P5 added:

I think 'cause of all the things that have happened in these kind of experiences, the community started becoming very suspect of the intentions of the school board. The intentions of the district administration, and say, "You know? We're not really gonna support this because we don't believe that you're gonna do things the right way. We want some assurances, or we want to know exactly what the money's gonna go to before we just allocate money."

Lack of district awareness that parents and community members are voters.

Parents suggested that the campuses and school district forgot that parents also were voters in the community. P5 noted the district didn't recognize, "it's about customer service. It is. It's about being responsive, being engaged." P4 said the district failed to recall that "I'm not just a parent; I'm a tax payer." P5 added that the district didn't show "caring."

Negative impact of prior bond election. Responses from interviewees indicated that stakeholder perceptions and issues from prior school bond referenda negatively impacted the 2013 school bond election. Based on school district information documenting the history of school bond elections over the past 50 years, TFISD held school bond elections about every 8 to 10 years between 1968 and 1999. The district had run five school bond elections in this time frame as follows: (a) 1968 for \$1.6 million; (b) 1977 for \$2 million; (c) 1986 for \$16.7 million; (d) 1994 for \$14.5 million; (d) 1999 for

\$97 million. The community passed all five of these bond elections, although with increasingly slim margins in the past 20 years.⁷

Length of time since the prior bond. Several respondents mentioned the length of time since the prior bond as an issue. The prior bond passed in 1999 occurred 14 years before the 2013 bond election. P2 shared that not having a bond for a long time produced complacency in the community and a lack of community awareness of school district needs:

Well, that community involvement is super key, and status quo is so dangerous. When people think things are running great, there's a big amount of complacency. They assume it's fine. You don't need to put more money into it or deal with it or anything like that.

In addition, P2 shared that new parents and community members may not realize the importance of a school bond election:

I think a lot of people move into the community and . . . don't necessarily disrupt [sic] status quo. They moved in because things are already working in a certain way and they just assume it's gonna work in that way, and they don't get involved quick enough basically.

High amount of prior bond. One of the perceptions of the prior bond from 1999 that was a variable in the 2013 school bond election was the high dollar amount of the 1999 school bond. The 1999 represented a substantial financial investment for the community at that time and a massive increase from any prior bond. Prior to the 1999

⁷ Artifact data: TFISD Bond Election History 1968-2015.

bond of \$97 million, the largest bond had only been around \$15 or \$16 million dollars, making the 1999 bond six times larger than the previous largest bond. The

Superintendent noted that the nearly \$100 million bond package was:

A big number at that time. Now, it seems almost insignificant, but at that time, that was big. And so, especially for this community hadn't grown like it's growing now, and so, it was a big investment for [Town-Fringe], Texas, to put that into it.

Community perception of waste and extravagance in the prior bond. Whereas the district perception of the 1999 bond was one of success in building a premier new high school for the community, multiple respondents consistently painted a different picture of the community perception of the new high school built with 1999 school bond funds. P1 said, "Well there's still people who are upset that they built a new high school. They built that extravagant new school out there on the highway." The Superintendent also acknowledged the community perception of the 1999 bond being wasteful:

In 2002, TFISD opened a new high school down on [Street Name], that was still being referred to as the "Taj Mahal" in the community, and seen as having, being this grandiose kind of structure with a lot of waste in it. If you go into the building, it does. It has a large, high foyer, high hallways, things like that, but the rest of it is really very economical and functioning. But that one component of the building has given it this kind of . . . symbol in the community, and the new high school that is the "Taj Mahal." So, that idea of, "Well, the last time we trusted you

to build something, you put a lot of waste in it.” And that was a \$100-million bond at that time, back in 2000.

From document review of the voter survey conducted before the 2015 school bond, a young adult in the community (who was a former student and also a current staff member) said,

Being a young adult, I went to TFISD High School and I remember all the false promises that came with the building of the high school. It was supposed to be this great building that would hold all the students plus have more room being the fact freshmen were not in the building. This turned out to not be the case at all, we were crammed in like sardines from the beginning. The fact that [Town-Fringe] chose a design that was glamorous on the outside but has so much wasted space on the inside baffles me. My parent’s taxes were raised and what was promised to them was a load of lies in my opinion. The fact that [Town-Fringe] was offered to have a stadium built for them and the board refused and chose to take out of savings for a football field that was never completed is another reason why I do not trust [Town-Fringe] with money! If you asked to raise my taxes to better pay our low paid teachers I might feel differently on the bond, but to build more buildings or renovate buildings the only thing I see in the bond is promises never kept by TFISD!! (2015 TFISD Voter Survey Staff Verbatims).

Perception of school district raising taxes. Although P2 indicated that the school district had an overall good reputation in the community, he mentioned that the district might have had an issue with a community perception of rising taxes from the 1999 bond

which built the “new” high school. “The biggest stigma is the rising taxes in between the two. That was after the new high school was built wasn't it?” [P2]

Distrust of district stewardship of prior bond funds. School district central office A1 and A2 thought that the district had a strong record of stewardship of public funds from the prior school bond election. District chief financial officer A1 addressed this topic:

Since I've been here, [this district] has the highest rating you can get in the School FIRST Accountability [rating] of superior. You can't get anything higher. I've restored [the fund] balance through prudent stewardship of the funds, and I have never in my career, and certainly not any of the time that I've been here, had anything less than a blemish-free external audit.

However, responses from parent and community members indicated that there was a distrust of the stewardship of funds from the prior bond referendum in the community. The Superintendent articulated this distrust from the community, specifically referencing carryover from the prior bond, as community members saying:

“I don't trust administration to spend the money the way that we say to spend it.”

Well, they don't know me from Adam at that time, you know. I'm new in the district and had never had the opportunity to spend their money the way they wanted to, or not. So, it makes you wonder, “Okay, that's carry-over from a past project that we're having to end that at this point”

P4, a long-time and very involved parent and community member, indicated concern with spending from the prior bond:

It seems like there had been one before and we weren't sure that we were all spending the money the way that it should've been spent. I'm not sure there were enough controls on that money. There was still bond money left over as I remember.

The FSBP indicated that the school board perception was that the school board and administration had been good stewards of public money, but that the community might not recognize this.

I don't think people remembered that the bond we had before, we did it on time, under budget. . . . Because I was on the tail end of them, they were in the middle of building the high school when I was elected to the board. So, you think, "We're great stewards of the tax payer's money. We give teacher raises. We have to be competitive with other school districts." We felt that we're doing all the right things.

P1 summed up this sentiment:

The other observation that I have is that the default response just in our culture in general seems to be that the school district wastes money, it's ineffective, it doesn't do a good job, and that it wastes money. And it is hard to overcome that narrative sometimes.

Negative impact of the economic context. Interviews suggested that stakeholder perceptions of the economic context of the community impacted the outcome of the school bond referendum election in 2013. While information from district bond documentation did not include an analysis of economic indicators in 2013-2014,

comments from several respondents indicated that the 2008-2009 recession was fresh in people's minds. Many people were still reeling from the impact of the 2008 Great Recession in 2013. SBM, a parent who became a school board member in the 2013 school board election, described his perspective in 2013:

The economy, I watched the stock market cut in half . . . I was a big Rand Paul fan. I would take a bullet for him. I love him and his son too. I like them, and I listen to their podcasts 24/7. Everyday, I'm mowing the grass, or riding to work, and the state of the economy's not good. "You should start buying gold and silver." I was really into this . . . I don't know what's going to happen with the economy. I don't know what's going to happen. I bought food stores. We had water. I was kind of a "prepper."

A1 compared the economic environment to the last time the district had gone out for school bond, which was 1999: "Yeah, and the economy was different in 1999, if you think about it too."

Conservative political environment. Based on responses from interviews, the political environment and stakeholder political beliefs and perceptions played a role in lack of stakeholder support for the 2013 school bond referendum election. The political environment in the county where the school district is located had always been conservative. The Superintendent identified elements in the political environment that created a more challenging environment for the school district to be successful in a school bond election:

And I'm gonna tell you, [Name of County] is a strong, conservative community. It's about as red as you get. So, there's this small government kind of movement out there, there's this strongly conservative, and there's just all kinds of stuff that's working against us.

P1 described the predominant political values of the area as anti-tax and anti-government:

We have two political parties in [Name of County]. It's Republican and Conservative Republican. And so all of our elections are decided in the Republican primary. You're talking about somebody who's not from here, so this is just . . . you see campaign signs for somebody says "so and so for this office, Conservative Republican," which to me is . . . redundant. . . . It's who can out conservative the other. . . . You're in that context where there's already a bias against institutional growth, taxation, all those kinds of things.

Existing anti-tax, anti-government sentiment. Numerous respondents talked about the "anti-tax" and "anti-government" sentiment that had always existed in the community.

We have people in this town, if it's a vote for anything - not necessarily TFISD or any school bond - if it's to promote something that they want, they'll vote against it because they don't want to pay an extra tax. Even if it will benefit them, they'll vote against it just to keep the taxes down [CM].

P1 indicated something similar when he said:

I think there is a contingent in the community of “no, we don't need to spend more money.” It seems that people move to the area to get away from higher taxes. And so the default response is “we don't want to pay more taxes.”

A1 indicated that this wasn't just a faction in the community, but “it didn't matter whether we're talking community, state or nationally, the entire overall population is anti-tax right now, even if it is a public school, because people feel over-taxed in general.” P1 recognized a general distrust of governmental institutions that transferred to include the school district: “I think there is a contingent in our community, and it's in our larger culture of a distrust of any institution. And so there's a distrust of the school district.”

Rise of the Tea Party anti-government and anti-tax movement. As a result of the country's economic woes, 2013 saw the emergence of the Tea Party nationally and locally. Numerous respondents indicated the rise of the Tea Party as a critical variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond election, including its influence on local politics, stakeholder beliefs about government and taxes, and the recruitment and development of new political leaders in the community. SBM articulated the impact of the economic recession and the rise of the Tea Party nationally and locally, as well as personal involvement in political efforts.

It was right at that time in 2010, there was a presidential election coming up. We were at crashes in the economy, and things weren't necessarily good. That's kind of where the Tea Party started to rise up a little bit. I got involved very heavily

with the local group . . . I liked the Tea Party in the beginning, and I was a big part of it.

The FSBP confirmed that the Tea Party became very active at that time.

I mean, the Tea Party was very, very active. That was when they . . . were just getting started. So, their big thing is “no taxes, no debt.” And it doesn’t matter to them whether you have to put school kids in portable buildings.

Increase in distrust in government & anti-tax sentiment. Multiple respondents indicated that there was a significant increase at the time in the distrust of government, institutional growth, and anti-tax sentiment, and that these perceptions transferred to the school district, negatively impacting the 2013 school bond election outcome. The Superintendent reflected this when he said, “There was certainly just, ‘It’s anti-debt, too much government debt, lump schools into ‘government’. You know, a specific entity within that, and we felt it within our bond election. It was definitely a significant factor.”

A1 referenced this same general distrust of government institutions that transferred to include the school district said, “but we didn’t recognize soon enough the new anti-tax environment, and [Name of County] is an ultra, anti-tax, conservative community.” The SBM also indicated that the school district was “lumped in” as a tax collector:

I think that was a problem in the first time [2013 bond], is that the district allowed itself to just be lumped in as the big, bad tax collector. You're the government you're the governor, in a town that's 80 to 90% Republican, [and] you don't want to be the government in any way, shape, or form.

Impact of community change on school support. Interview responses indicated that community change also impacted the mix of school support beliefs and attitudes in the community, affecting the 2013 school bond referendum election outcome. Unlike what research suggested, district and community characteristics did not remain constant. As new parents and community members moved into the community, school support beliefs and support for the school district changed. These changes impacted the 2013 school bond referendum election.

Existing school support beliefs. Several parents and community members indicated that there were community members who supported increased taxes for education because it supported the economic growth of the community. CM, who was in his 70's, remembered the one-room school building that he went to school in and appreciated the investments others had made to improve his educational circumstances:

Whenever I went to school, it was a one-room building for my first and second grade. Just an old, wooden building. Somebody had to buy that, and somebody has to buy the buildings for the kids that go to school now and I'm a strong believer that that's what happened.

He acknowledged those in the community who would be against a bond due to tax reasons, but indicated that he supported paying more taxes for schools as a good investment for the economic health of the community:

We had five different businesses on the north side of town, the poorer side of town. I would say, predominantly, that it would be the people that would be against the bond . . . Typically, that's the way it goes. The one thing I stated: "I'm

gonna have to pay more for school district to be a good school district, I understand that. That's part of doing business. If you don't do that, you don't have a business, because if you don't keep your schools up, your businesses are not going to prosper.”

The following Community Member (CM, who also was the Bond Treasurer in 1999 and 2015) recognized the need for improvement of school facilities due growth of the community and school district.

The people moving to [Town-Fringe] are not my age, by any means. They're young people that are raising families and need a good education. They can stay in the [major urban area], they don't wanna do that . . . They come here and get a good education. We had to provide the buildings and . . . whatever else we need for them to be here. If we don't do that, they're still going to come, but still they're not going to get educated as well. That's part of the process.

P1 described another voting perspective.

I was talking to [an individual] from church, and he's a very conservative individual, and he on one hand would want to support the district, kids being educated. He would not want waste. So, he said he was driving by the new [Name of Middle School #1] and on the school in the brick it's inlaid [with the initials of the school]. I don't know if you've seen the building. He said, “I drove by there, and I wonder ‘well, how much extra did that cost?’” And so, it gets to that kind of level of questioning. There's no frill that should be allowed. Everything needs to

be bare bones and basic. I think there's that component in the community. And I think it's there. I don't think it's a majority.

Changing stakeholder school support beliefs due to community growth. Based upon interview responses, the infusion of newcomers also brought changes in stakeholder beliefs and attitudes about public education and support for schools, taxation, and expectations of the school board and school district. Respondents indicated that this changing mix of school support attitudes impacted the 2013 school bond election.

P1 indicated that one group moving to the community increased the anti-tax sentiment: "It seems that people move to the area to get away from higher taxes. And so, the default response is 'we don't want to pay more taxes.'" However, P1 also indicated that other community members moving into the community might support increased taxes to support education:

People are moving here from larger places who don't have the idea of "let's do the least that we can do." My perspective is "how much can we do? How much do we need to do? And how much of that can we do now?"

P3, a parent new to the community, indicated an overall attitude of support for education and school bonds to support high-quality school facilities:

I don't mind an increase in my taxes if it goes to education, ever. You're not gonna hear that from many people, especially not in Texas, but to me, an increase of \$100 or whatever in my taxes, I think that's well worth it. Our children deserve a good education.

However, P3 also indicated that any school bond referendum would be critically evaluated to gain a “yes vote”:

I guess I would have to see what the long-term goals were, how much of an increase in taxes it would be, if there would be programs affected by it, like things taken away from, say, arts, chorus, music, and going toward sports, because I'm against that. I'm all for athletics, but I'm also all for the arts. I think it should be an equal thing. So, it would have to be an all-around bill for me, and then just weigh pros and cons. . . . So, I would have to look at it on the whole and really look at it. . . . I'd have to know what was in it, and *there would have to be lots of pluses and not taking away from their education as it is* [italics added for emphasis].

Stakeholder attitudes towards change impact support for schools. In addition, interview respondents indicated that parent and community attitudes towards community growth impacted school support beliefs and the 2013 school bond election outcome. P2 suggested that some community members simply may not have been aware of the need for facilities' improvements due to growth:

It's almost like nostalgia gets in the way of . . . I hate to say progress, because it's not like they [the school district] are actively trying to change everything. It's more like maintenance. You're trying to keep up with the changes that are happening. You're not promoting it, you're just dealing with it essentially. I don't think the community as a whole recognizes the degree to which it's growing.

P2 added there might also have been active resistance towards change, and how these attitudes might have negatively impacted support for a school bond referendum

election. He explained the attitude of long-time residents opposed to any infrastructure improvements in a direct attempt to hold back change in the community:

[Town-Fringe] is a weird mixed town where there's a lot of old school inhabitants and then this massive influx of people coming to [Town-Fringe]. For the old timers that live in [Town-Fringe], they do not want anything to change or to grow and part of their means of holding back the tide is not voting for anything that comes up . . . The school bonds are kind of similar in my opinion. They said, "No, they don't want their taxes to go up. If we just stop people will quit flooding in here."

Others suggested that some community members resisted change in order to preserve long-held school traditions, as exemplified by P2:

The old high school, the old stadium and all that, they want to keep it small, keep it built that way. . . . Then there's the old-time community that it's always just been [Town-Fringe] High School. We're a team; we're one. It needs to be one place. We love that stadium half way down [Name of Street]. We have to keep that. That's where I played. That's where my kids are gonna play.

The school board and school district administration lack of awareness of changes in the community context and stakeholder support beliefs created gaps in areas where the district might have mitigated negative sentiment, such as: securing expert capacity in school bond elections, pre-bond planning and community needs assessment, overall bond coordination and planning, leadership recruitment for key bond roles, stakeholder input and involvement, development of the bond proposal itself, and communication.

Lack of Expert Capacity to Support Bond Election Processes

Multiple interview participants mentioned the lack of specific school bond election expertise from the architectural firm during the 2013 school bond election process. The Superintendent reflected on the learning from the 2013 school bond failure that the school board and school district needed specific bond expertise and services, and stated that the lack of bond expertise and services from the architectural firm was one of the most important variables in the 2013 school bond referendum election failure.

Most schools in the state . . . in a superintendent's career, you do one or two, and that's probably all you do. So, we're certainly not the experts on it. So, those people that are providing insight, and a lot of times, a lot of direction, are the architectural firms, because they have, one, a very vested interest in that and them being successful, but two, they're engaged in those [school bond elections] constantly. Multiple ones, each and every year, . . . [and] we relied heavily on the direction and advice that our architect provided to us on how to approach and organize the 2013 bond. I had a lot of trust in them, like I said, they'd been in the district for a long time, had been our people, and had great relationships with them, but yet, they brought nothing new to the table, and it was reflected in the outcome there. . . . We really thought that the methodology that they brought to us was very archaic.

The Superintendent explained that excellent facilities' expertise was no longer sufficient support for supporting a school bond referendum election.

What we know is that all of the architectural firms that are major players in the state can design great buildings. They can do beautiful work and do great work. They all know MEP, they all know civil, they all know all those different things. Building codes, all that stuff. What they don't all do is on the front end of the bond.

Whereas some architectural consulting firms offered specific expertise and extra capacity to support a school bond referendum election planning and implementation process (which could include a comprehensive school bond election planning process; bond election pre-planning support; bond proposal facilitation and support; and bond campaign implementation expertise), respondents indicated that this type of bond election expertise and services were not provided in 2013. The FSBP referenced the lack of expertise and support from the architectural consulting firm in the 2013 school bond referendum election:

I think when you looked at [Name of Architectural Firm], they really didn't have that piece in their organization to help a school district pass a bond. Now . . . another architectural firm, they have a division that just deals with school bonds. And if you look at their record of districts that they helped bonds, they win every time. They win every time.

CM indicated that there was a gap in training and support during the process from the architectural consulting firm in 2013 as follows:

We went to [Architectural Firm Bravo in 2015]. They were so good at helping us get to a point, and they were very proactive in saying, “We will help you get there.” I don’t remember seeing that in the bond in 2013.

Lack of Community Needs Assessment and Pre-Bond Planning Activities

Another variable that respondents indicated was connected to the failure of the 2013 school bond election was the lack of a community needs assessment and pre-bond planning activities. Based on document review and interview responses, the district administration and school board gathered limited information about district and community context in the 2013 school bond referendum election process. There was little awareness of a need for a more extensive community needs assessment process that would provide information about the current political, economic, and demographic contexts of the community and school district from multiple data sources. The Superintendent concluded that “there was no analysis of the community, not in 2013. Really, no regard given to the ‘no’ opinion.”

Community needs assessment processes seemed to be informal and with data gathered from limited sources and few stakeholder groups. For example, the FSBP described gathering information regarding voter tolerance for the bond amount as occurring in an informal manner:

Once we determined that a bond was going to be needed and the amount that we were going to need to have, of course, *we had feelers out with the community* [italics added for emphasis] and committees and looked at what we felt that the community would approve. Because initially we thought about, when we looked

at the cost, we were looking at \$120 million. And we knew that that would probably not fly. . . . We came down to, I think, \$108 million. I think is what we finally went out for.

Limited community demographic and economic growth data. Document review found little document information about district and community context that was available to leadership, or shared with the bond committee and voters, including: economic development data; community growth data and demographics; no real estate growth data, including business and commercial growth; or more extensive information on tax rate implications and tax impact based upon more than one bond scenario. Some district demographic and overcrowding data were found in 2013 school bond documents, as well as tax impact data on one school bond scenario.

Little information on voter preferences. No statistical data on voter preferences regarding bond proposal content, bond amount, potential bond passage rates, and likelihood of bond passage were found in the 2013 bond document review. What needs assessment regarding voter preferences did occur seemed to be informal and from limited sources. Although the FSBM reference did mention gathering information from community members, there no data-informed needs assessment was found. There was no information regarding the number of people that were asked regarding their opinions regarding a potential bond, which groups they came from, or how well they matched the demographic profile of the community.

Lack of input from key influencers. In the 2013 school bond election, respondents reported limited meetings with key influencers, especially those with

opposing views. If they were interviewed, their input was not factored into bond planning, The FSBP mentioned a key meeting with a local influential state legislator, who indicated his opposition to the school bond election, which seemed to be ignored:

When we first thought about doing this, we had lunch with . . . our state representative [Name of Representative]. And during the lunch, we mentioned to him that we were thinking about a bond, and [he didn't ask] "Why do you need a bond," nothing. He said, "I'm against it." And didn't know anything about it.

When asked specifically if there was a strategy for engaging key influencers in 2013, A2 said, "Not as much as we did in 2015."

Little information from other school district bond election efforts. In 2013 there was also no mention of school district administrators or board members learning from school bond elections in other school districts in the area in order to see the impact of community and voter preferences on bond elections.

Effective use of data by anti-bond opposition. Instead, anti-bond opposition groups effectively utilized state and local data to create an anti-bond, anti-district narrative. A1 indicated that the anti-bond opposition efforts used district data to argue that there was not a need for facilities improvements in the school district:

And the other thing that I remember that they did, when I say our data, they took our . . . [data]. All of us, any building, any public building has a fire code number of occupancy. So, I by law can put X number of people in any campus out there, and the fire marshal will not come and say, "I'm going to shut this down." But because of children with disabilities, because of a unique class that may only have

15 students in it, because of some advanced classes that may have [a need for smaller class size], . . . I don't have data that show that I'm using those buildings every day to that headcount and that it's accurate . . . And they used that [against us], and so I realized really quick [sic] that the average American citizen out there that is going to read this; they're not going to know that. They're not going to know that I can't have 22 special children with severe disabilities in the same classroom. They're not going to know that advanced physics, I may not have 22, but I still should be able to offer that to the elite group that actually can take that course and are trying to achieve. They used things like that, and it shocked us because we were all so ethical.

District central administrators referred to the anti-bond opposition using district data in a way that they referred to as "misinformation." A1 said:

They would take some of our own data and take it out of context and use it against us . . . I mean, I looked at that website at least twice a day, and was just stunned at what they would do. It was . . . what's the word, salacious? . . . it's like what I've always said about new. If it bleeds, it reads. You couldn't stop reading it. So, I knew that if others were looking at that . . . they were going to believe it, too, because of how it was [presented].

Lack of School Bond Election Plan and Processes

Respondents indicated that lack of organization affected the outcome of the 2013 school bond election. CM admitted, "We were just disorganized. That's the bottom line. I

think everybody just thought ‘we’ll put this out there, and everybody knows we’ll need it, so it will happen.’” P1 echoed this sentiment and added the following:

I would guess that there was not that organized effort. I would guess that what happened was the information was just put out there. And the assumption was “people will see the information.” Somebody like me would look at it and say, “Yeah, that’s a good idea.”

Lack of a comprehensive bond planning process. These disorganized efforts were consistent with the absence of an overall school bond election strategy and coordinated plan. Review of the documents provided no evidence that an overarching school bond election coordination strategy had been developed or was available to guide the school board, school district administrators, and stakeholders through a school bond election process. No overall plan for the entire bond election process was located, including a delineation of all the steps of the process.

Lack of clear decision-making and communications structures. One strategy in a successful change process involves building culture by setting clear roles and responsibilities for leaders and participants in the group (Bolman & Deal, 2008). However, there was little evidence of decision-making and communications structures, such as role descriptions, procedures, and protocols used as a part of the bond process between district leaders, school board leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members.

From both the artifact review and interview data, no specific information appeared regarding the role of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee. No evidence of the

committee's purpose, objectives, responsibilities, guiding principles, or values could be found or inferred. No written documentation of leadership roles within the Citizens' Advisory Committee was located.

The only information regarding facilitation procedures included the committee's division into subcommittees, as indicated earlier. Additionally, no written information on committee facilitation procedures or protocols was available. There was no historical evidence of Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting agendas, presentations, minutes, or outcomes, meeting dates and times, meeting locations, or names of committee members in the artifacts. No information was found about the process by which the bond proposal was developed and given to the school board for its final decision. The Citizen's Advisory Committee's role in making a bond proposal recommendation to the school board was unclear.

Anti-bond opposition utilized effective planning and decision-making structures. Whereas school board and school district efforts were disorganized, respondents indicated that anti-bond opposition leaders developed a coordinated strategy and used local political decision-making and communications structures to defeat the school bond referendum election. The anti-bond PAC relied on local political structures to organize decision-making and communication, and to offer new roles and responsibilities to emerging community leaders. The anti-bond PAC also used school board election processes, protocols, and procedures to advance their leaders and messages. SBM discussed how the anti-bond PAC built its platform and plan:

There's three of us that we decided . . . [to be] just against [the 2013 bond proposal]. There were others that were more strongly [against the bond proposal]. On a scale of one to five, I'm like a four; I don't like it. There's others that are a zero; they're like a negative one. They hate it with a capital H. They said, "This is the type of thing that's going to be put out. Let's get rid of this board and make sure it doesn't happen again." I've always, as an educator, I always thought, I'd run for school board someday, rather than city council.

Poor Leadership Recruitment and Development

Interview responses and review of the documents also suggested that poor leadership development and training of both school district staff and parent and community volunteers had a negative impact on the 2013 school bond election results.

Poor recruiting of influential, experienced community leaders for key roles.

First, the school board and school district administrators failed to significantly involve influential, experienced community leaders. CM, who was also the treasurer of the 1999 bond, implied he was not approached regarding a leadership role in the 2013 bond:

"Well, 2013, I was just asked to be a part of the 'rah-rah' group, I guess." There seemed to be a lack influential parent and community leaders who served in roles critical to the school bond referendum process. P5 summarized this succinctly: "There was no champions." There was no evidence that bond leadership used opportunities to reward and incentivize parents and community members with leadership roles and opportunities available through the school bond election process, such as bond committee chair or PAC

leadership. Document review revealed no listing of members or leaders for the Citizens' Advisory Committee or the pro-bond PAC.

Haphazard recruiting for the Citizens' Advisory Committee. The Superintendent recalled that recruiting for parents for the Citizens' Advisory Committee was haphazard. The Superintendent reported:

We just kind of made a list of people that are involved in school. It could be parents, we might say, "Campus principals, we need some parents off your campus that you think are supportive of the school, that would serve on this committee."

Paradoxically, this process may have excluded active, engaged parents and community members who were not considered "supportive of the school" even though they might have been supportive of school bond election efforts. Parents 4 and 5 thought that they were not asked to be on the school bond committee due to disagreements they had with their children's campus principal, despite having strong ties to the community and strongly stated support for public education and school bond election efforts.

Lack of parent and community training for school bond election efforts. There is little reference to training for school district staff or parent and community member volunteers. The 2013 parent community had changed significantly since the 1999 bond passage, leaving a gap in parents and community members who might have previously participated in or led school bond election activities. There were many new parents and community members in the school district and community for the 2013 school bond referendum election that had never participated in a school bond election

before, due to community growth as well as the length of time that had passed since the prior 1999 school bond. Parents who might have been involved in 1999 had children who had most likely graduated from the school district by 2013, leaving a gap in parent leadership for school bond efforts in 2013. Only parents with children in kindergarten or younger in 1999 would have still even had children in the school district in 2013. FSBP provided confirmation of this assertion by saying that “a lot of those folks that were in high school at the [1999] time . . . aren’t involved anymore.”

CM suggested that recruiting parents and the younger generation as community leaders for bond and future bonds was a gap in the 2013 school bond election efforts, as well as the lack of time to train parents and community members on bond proposal development processes and campaign activities needed to be successful in the 2013 school bond referendum election. CM explained:

I’m talking about young people. I’m talking people that are in their, . . . I don’t know how old these kids are, I don’t want to get them too old, probably in their 20s and 30s and maybe even into their early 40s. They have not participated, especially in the bond that I worked with in [19]99. . . . It didn’t need to be the older ones who were retired. It needed to be some of the ones that still had children in school. We did get them started [but didn’t have time to fully train them like in 2015].

Effective “anti-bond” opposition leadership recruiting and development.

Bolman and Deal (2008) indicated that “Stack[ing] the team with credible, influential team members to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process” supported

political success in the change process, and that “Provid[ing] training, resources, and support” supported the human resources aspects of the change process.

The anti-bond opposition utilized both of these strategies effectively. A significant anti-bond movement identified “credible, influential” parents and community members to serve in key roles in the anti-bond PAC and campaign (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395). Relying on local political structures, including the school board election process, the anti-bond movement leveraged the school bond election process as an opportunity to provide individual leadership advancement opportunities to influential community members. In addition, the anti-bond PAC leaders provided training and leadership advancement opportunities to influential parents and community members through anti-bond campaign activities and school board candidate support.

The SBM who was recruited to run for school board talked about being attracted to the leadership opportunity inherent in the school board election process based on the anti-bond platform provided him:

In 2013, that group [Tea Party] reached out to me and said, “Did you see the bond mailer? Would you like to maybe run? We want to try to defeat this. Would you like to run against it?” My initial answer was kind of “no,” but it inflates your ego when people ask you to run for politics. I said, “Let me think about it” . . . Then it was that same day, that afternoon that I got a call, and they said, “Well, did you see this flyer?” I said, “Yeah.” They said, “Well what do you think?” I started listing the things, and the person on the other end of the phone [said], “Well that’s exactly what we think. We need to do two things. We need to stop this bond from

happening, and then we need to get you in there so that if we do this again it'll be done a different way, or it's 'the right way' was what they were wording it as." I agreed. I said, "Okay, I'm up for that." . . . I was elected in 2013. I served on the board for 3 years and then had no opposition in 2016, so now I'm serving my second and final [term].

Lack of Input and Involvement from Representative Group of Stakeholders

Interview responses from district administrators, school board members, parents, and community members who were interviewed consistently indicated that the lack of stakeholder input and involvement in the school bond referendum process was a major variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond election process. Respondents indicated that the school bond proposal process was 'administratively-driven', with little true input from staff, parents, or community members.

The consistent perception from district administrators, current school board member, parents, and community members interviewed was that stakeholder involvement in the development of the 2013 bond proposal was minimal. The Superintendent said, "I think in 2013 [stakeholders were involved], in a minimal way. Again, I got back to that board member's quote, there was a lot of arrogance in that." P5 said, "there wasn't a whole lot of involvement. There wasn't a whole lot of community involvement in the [2013] bond election." A1 noted that "our oversight on that was we didn't ask. We didn't ask others."

Respondents indicated that the school board and school district administration had decided the bond proposal. P2 said, "I'm not so sure that [the bond proposal] came from

community involvement. A matter of opinion, I kind of feel like it came from internally.” The Superintendent referenced existing board priorities that likely drove the bond proposal because the school board “had an eye to maybe accomplish, or maybe a common idea of what needed to be done, is maybe what our board or trustees had at the time.” P4 said, “I think it was the school board and very few who decided ‘This is what we need’.”

In fact, P2 thought that lack of early community input and involvement in the bond conversation was one of the biggest variables that contributed to the 2013 school bond referendum failure:

[One of] the biggest ones [variables that contributed to the failure of that school bond election], they probably didn’t have the community on board beforehand. The community involvement was late. After they’d already built their plan out and everything else they brought them in.

Minimal engagement of key influencers. In the 2013 school bond election, respondents reported limited meetings with key influencers, especially those with opposing views. If they were interviewed, their input was not factored into bond planning. As referenced earlier, the FSBP mentioned a key meeting with a local influential state legislator, who indicated his opposition to the school bond election, which seemed to be ignored.

Lack of representation from all stakeholder groups. Participant interviews indicated that there was a lack of input from a representative group of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community members, and students, especially opposition

views. Although document review indicated that the Citizens' Advisory Committee was supposed to represent a diverse cross-section of the community, including local citizens, business leaders, community leaders, parents, and staff members, interview respondents indicated a lack of representation from teachers, parents, community members, and students on the Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Interview responses from board members, parents, and community members indicated participant perceptions that the Citizens' Advisory Committee had limited parent, community member, teacher, staff, and student representation. P5 indicated the lack of parent representation on the 2013 bond committee:

The people that they picked to be on the advisory committee also didn't have kids in school. They were business leaders or they had a lot of property. That's all well and good, but you've got to put some parents on there.

The FSBP seemed to confirm this when sharing about the Citizens' Advisory Committee as an "executive committee" and recalled the membership as being "bankers" and "pastors," and did not reference teachers, parents, other community members, or students as committee members.

Stakeholders not aware of the Citizens' Advisory Committee. Parents and community members indicated that they were not aware of the Citizens' Advisory Committee in 2013. Parent 4 said about the 2013 bond election, "But I don't even think there was a support group . . . I don't think there was a citizen's group. I don't think there was anything." In fact, not one interviewed participant remembered the actual name of

the 2013 bond committee, even district central office staff. SBM said that he was not aware of the Citizens Advisory Committee existing in 2013:

Because leading up to it [the 2013 bond election], again, there was no knowledge of was there a community selection committee? There may or may not have been. I didn't know about it. Was there a demographic study? I didn't know about it. Was there a financial review? Didn't know about it.

Interview responses indicated that the number of Citizens' Advisory Committee meetings was limited and had a small number of participants. Although a larger number of people were invited to participate, the Citizens' Advisory Committee was fairly small. FSBP offered a guess: "I would probably think somewhere around 100 folks all together [were invited to participate] . . . 10 or 15 [served on the committee]. People were invited; people were asked to volunteer. Again, most parent or community member respondents were not aware of these meetings, and recalled a small number of meetings.

The superintendent indicated that the 2013 Citizens' Advisory Committee included mainly pro-bond perspectives, and did not include any bond opposition people or perspectives as a part of the process. The superintendent concluded that this led to a bias in the committee. The Superintendent recalled:

They were led by community people, and really, people who were very connected to the school in ways that, not that it was necessarily biased, but you look back in hindsight, possibly there was a built-in bias there, because they were all 'pro' people. People that were 'pro' for the ISD.

The Superintendent graphically described the impact this one-sided planning had on the school bond referendum election:

It's kind of easy to preach a sermon when we're all saved, and that's kind of what was going on, is we were standing up there and delivering this great message to advocates for the program, and had no idea what the ground swell was like underneath. So, we go to the polls, thinking that it will be close, and it's absolutely a massacre.

Community forums provided little opportunity for input or feedback. In the 2013 school bond election process, the school board held community forums to tell the community about the bond referendum proposal. However, at these meetings there was little opportunity for teachers, parents, or community members to provide feedback. The feedback indicated that there were few community forums/public meetings to share the school bond referendum proposal in 2013. P1 referenced the small number of community meetings as not enough “public meetings, or at least I wasn't aware of the public meetings . . . A lot of times in our community getting the news out about those kinds of things . . . has been difficult.” In addition, district administrators, current board member, parents, and community members described the community forums that the district held to communicate the bond proposal as forums with only one-way communication and little to no opportunity for stakeholders to provide input or feedback. The Superintendent explained:

We had stakeholder meetings where the committee that developed the plan or the recommendation to the board, they developed that and put the components

together and made a recommendation to the board, and then the board had several community forums that were really one way. Where the board told the community what they intended to do.

The Superintendent characterized the approach as “we’re just telling you what we’re gonna do” and admitted the Board said essentially, “Here’s the plan; it’s all we’re gonna do; come vote for it; and we’ll build you a nice building.”

Stakeholders did not understand facilities’ needs. As a result, parents and community members who were interviewed indicated that they did not have an understanding for the need for a school bond referendum. As indicated earlier, many new parents had moved into the district or had become parents since the previous school bond election in 1999. The SBM, who was also a parent, elucidated:

I didn’t see overcrowding. I didn’t see lack of budget monies. I didn’t see anything bursting at the seam, and now, I see a flyer in the mail that says, “We need, need, need, need, need, need, need, need, need, and then we need some more. You got to trust us, and it’s just all or nothing.”

P2 mentioned “not establishing the need” as one of the biggest variables in the 2013 school bond failure, behind only “lack of input.” P2 added the problem lay “probably [in] the fact they didn’t establish their need heavy enough with the people that needed to vote in the first place, which would be the parents.”

Poor Framing of the 2013 Bond Proposal

Due to the lack of involvement and input during the school bond referendum proposal planning process, teachers, parents, and community members did not understand

school district facilities' needs, were surprised by the bond referendum election announcement, and ultimately, had significant issues with the final school bond proposal. Several parents mentioned that the framing of the bond proposal was poor. P2 discussed reasons why the 2013 bond failed and homed in on the belief that "the framing of the bond was poor." SBM expressed dislike of the model:

The district needs something, but I don't know if it needs this exact bond. That was kind of my angle. Wasn't necessarily the angle of everyone who supported me. Many of them were no bond, ever, never. I'm a teacher; my wife's a teacher; we just didn't like the 2013, the shape and size and scope. We didn't like that current model.

Parents and community members expressed confusion that the 2013 school bond proposal focused on expansions at the junior high and high school when stated need was overcrowding in elementary schools. P5 reported that the people in the community:

Knew that the population was growing and that there's a need for additional schools at the elementary school level, but you weren't feeling that at the junior high or high school level. I mean, the high school had this beautiful campus and it's not full. It wasn't then. The junior highs, there's two junior highs. They were getting close to capacity, but they still weren't at capacity.

Teachers, parents, and community members were confused about the agenda of the school bond proposal itself. The Superintendent and FSBP agreed that the 2013 school bond proposal was complicated by the many moving parts that involved moving kids from one campus to another and from one grade configuration to another with the

admission of “moving kids from one campus all the way up to another and creating new space on that campus. There was just a lot of movement . . . very complicated.”

The bond proposal was perceived as “not strategic.” A1 observed the board had tried: “To put something for athletics, for band, for every elementary. Trying to put something for everybody inside the district, instead of focusing on a set of needs and then prioritizing what exactly [was needed].” SBM summarized the lack of connection to the voters, community, parents, etc.:

What was going on with the school? I'm a teacher. I don't know, schools are good in America. I'm actually a big fan of them, but it was \$109 million bond with front and back pages of the flyer with tons of items listed. Some of those items were athletic items . . . I looked at it, and I kind of said, “Okay.” Didn't really sit right, but I can't say I was angry when I first got the mailer. It seemed high, it seemed big, kind of threw up some red flags. Didn't really love it, but it really wasn't awful. It just didn't really excite me in any way. There was something I didn't like about it.

Bond amount was too high. Almost all of parent and community members who participated in interviews talked about the large size of the school bond proposal amount impacting the negative election results, even those supportive of the school bond election efforts. SBM stated:

It was over \$100 million, so there's, I'm sure, as an ignorant American there's something in my subconscious. \$100 million is a lot worse than \$99 million.

There's something about a gas price, that's why they put a nine at the end. It's not \$1.02; it's \$1 or \$1.09; \$100 million was a big number.

P1 had indicated strong support for education and for both school bonds but called the bond "ambitious" as follows:

I feel the 2013 bond was very ambitious . . . we moved to [Town-Fringe] in 2006, so I know it sounds strange to say that we were new, but in [Town-Fringe] terms, we were still relatively new. And so, I knew about the bond. So, for someone who would take the time to try to learn about it, I know that the facts were there . . .

I've recognized it was ambitious, it was big, it made sense to me as . . . we moved here from [Nearby Suburb in Urban Center], and so from the perspective of what I had known, and the idea of wanting to combine, to move the ninth grade to that campus and to combine the campus to build a CTE Center, all those things, that made sense to me.

However, P5, also a highly-involved parent and community member, thought the bond amount in 2013 was "unreasonable," especially without having had stakeholder input and discussion because "a lot of parents knew we needed new facilities but not at the price tag that they were talking about. That seemed just not reasonable. We need to have a better discussion."

P1 indicated that the community perception that the bond was "bloated" was a key variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum election:

Yeah, it's easy to . . . that's an easy narrative [district waste] to portray. It's easy to say, "Well, they could get along with less money. There's waste in spending.

And they're too top heavy," all those kinds of things. And it's difficult to overcome that narrative I think. . . . So, my perception is in the 2013 bond they were unsuccessful in overcoming the narrative that it was a bloated bond.

Dislike of single-proposition bond. Stakeholders almost universally indicated that the single proposition approach to the bond referendum proposal negatively impacted school bond election results. School district administrators characterized the 2013 bond as an "old school" approach to try to give "something to everyone." A1 exemplified this thinking as follows:

We administratively worked on it, and we . . . did with I would call old school.

They tried to put something in it for every group out there. We tried to provide every entity something that would hopefully make them want to pass the bond.

The Superintendent characterized this effort as a "kitchen sink" approach because "it was everything under the sun that had been identified in the needs assessment that would fit into what was logical and would create the kind of plan that we had."

A1 indicated that the strategy to use a single proposition was a very typical strategy school districts had used for years to woo multiple groups in the community to support a school bond referendum:

The first one [in 2013] they tried to do, they tried to entice. If you're a baseball fan, if you're a football fan, if you're an elementary parent . . . They tried to put something in there that would maybe cause each individual to say, "Oh, yeah, I like that," and they put it one great big [proposition] . . . and hoped it would go.

That was very old school, because it used to work that way. I've been doing this for 29 years. That's how everybody did it.

SBM indicated that the anti-bond perspective was different. They saw the single bond proposition as "If you don't like one thing, vote no," rather than "something for everyone."

It was 50/50, but you lump it altogether, and it the train of thought is, and they might be right, the marketing folks, when you lump something together, they say, "Well, now you're going to have something for everybody." I saw it almost a total opposite. I saw it, "If there's just one thing they don't like in there, now they got a reason to vote against it, at least in our community."

Many respondents also the problem with one bond proposition that left voters with no choice. "The bond was an all or nothing bond" [SBM]. P5 said, "if they'd have split it out, it probably would have more success in some areas, but since it was all lumped together" it was difficult to get all voters interested in the entire bond. P4 recalled:

I don't think they gave you several different options. It was all or nothing. That never goes well. No school district bond election I've ever been involved in, that went well. People don't like to do that. Not at the city level, not at the school district level, at all.

A1 said, "The first one [bond in 2013] was just one proposition, and . . . people don't like that in today's world." Respondents indicated that voters wanted to have

choices. P4 said that voters “want to be able to think you can pick and choose” and noted the following about how TFISD voters viewed this bond such as:

“I don’t want to vote for athletics, I think we have plenty.” Or “I don’t want to vote for [the bond] because I hate the teacher that my kid had.” I mean, some of it becomes very personal. You want to be able to just vote for the parts that you want to vote for. If you look at the percentages, they don’t all pass at the same percentage. The percentages can vary wildly and some pass and some don’t.

P4 also said, “I think there was one [school bond election] in [another nearby town], they passed everything but the stadium. Nobody wants to build another freaking football stadium.”

Perception that bond proposal content was not supported by teachers. While teachers were not interviewed in the study, respondents indicated having a perception of teacher support of the bond and other respondents like P1 indicated that the perception was that teachers did not support the 2013 school bond referendum: “I’m told that a lot of the teachers did not even support it [the 2013 bond].” The school bond referendum proposal had significant changes for teachers, including grade reconfigurations and relocation that would have impacted their working environment, curriculum and instruction, and teaching responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. Several respondents reported that because teachers were not involved in the early planning, these changes were perceived as a loss and negative by them. A2 said the following:

The other thing is, talking about staff, we were going to relocate a significant number of staff in the 2013 bond election, where they would have to move into

different campuses, and because they weren't included in the beginning in the front side of that process, I think that their reaction was [negative] . . . It's about change, and change is hard for most people.

Parents did not support due to perceived losses. Parents were perceived to oppose the school bond proposal for numerous reasons but were particularly opposed to new grade configurations perceived as moving elementary students to middle school too early; potential loss of opportunities at middle school due to a proposed middle school consolidation; and dislike of a perceived creation of a “mega” high school. Part of the bond proposal created new grade configurations: the bond proposal moved ninth grade to the high school to create a Grades 9 to 12 configuration; consolidated two middle schools into one middle school for Grades 7 and 8; and created a new kind of “Intermediate School” for Grades 5 and 6. Parents did not like the plan of moving fifth graders into an intermediate or middle school. SBM recalled:

That's right, people were up in arms, moms and dads, they weren't a hard sell for me because they're like, “You're going to take my fifth grader? She was just a fourth grader. She was just a little fourth grader last summer and now two months later she's going to be in like an intermediate school or a middle school type setting?” That was not a hard sell to convince people to ‘vote no’ on that part of it.

The Superintendent described how the plan to consolidate two middle schools into one middle school was also perceived as a potential loss of benefits to their child(ren):

Maybe the one thing that parents were displeased with most in that 2013 plan was . . . consolidating the two middle schools into one. ‘Cause we have an old high school down here, that can accommodate 1,500 kids or so, that we only had one grade level on right now, which is wasted space. So, the idea was move that one grade level up to the high school, which is 10 through 12, make it 9 through 12, bring all those kids, and then take the two middle schools, and pull your elementary top two grade levels off of that [i.e., fifth and sixth grade]. So, think about all that movement that was going on. And then, you’re making a mega kind of campus, and part of the comments there, and the mega middle school, it wouldn’t have been that big, but it’s pretty good sized, there were a lot of concerns about competitions. Athletics being significant in that, in that, “Currently you have, for example, three 7th grade teams in football at each campus, so the total is six. Are you gonna just have three whenever you bring them together? Now my kid has half the chance to [participate] . . .”

Staff and parents did not support the new grade configuration to locate a new consolidated middle school of 800 students in an existing Ninth Grade Center. A1 noted, “We were going to put all middle school students in the ninth grade center down on Main Street, which is the center of the town, and parents and staff did not approve of that.” A2 added “it would have been about 800 kiddos in one campus.” A1 concluded, “They just did not approve of it, particularly where it was.”

Part of the plan was to move the ninth graders into the high school, which parents perceived as creating a “mega” high school, which they did not want. While district

administrators believed that they were addressing academic and safety issues caused by the separation of the ninth grade from the high school (where students from both campuses have to take shuttles or drive multiple times daily causing loss of instructional time and safety issues), A2 reflected that parents perceived the issued differently:

I think the shuttle doesn't bother the community as much as it bothers us. We run shuttles all day long between high school and ninth grade for current tech classes or for ninth grade kiddos who are in choir or band or football, or Bluebells. And there's lots of instructional time for those kids every day [lost] . . . it doesn't raise the red flags or concerns. They [parents] were more concerned that it would be a mega high school and that there would be . . . 2,400 kids . . . and how would we keep the ninth graders segregated. That was more concerning to the community than it was to us [district administration].

Dislike of perceived athletics inclusion. Numerous respondents indicated that the inclusion, or the perceived inclusion, of a large portion of the bond for athletics, was problematic for many voters. P5 said, "There was automatic assumption that that is a lot of athletics, a lot of stuff, and people were like, 'Nope. We're not gonna do that without knowing more details.'" P5 continued noting the presence of "a lot of unknowns that everyone believed that it was gonna be about more athletic facilities and things, and no one really wanted that. They wanted their focus on the education."

There was a lot of confusion about the amount of athletics included in the bond. P1's perception was that misinformation was deliberately disseminated about an incorrect amount dedicated to athletics in the school bond proposal:

I know there was a lot of misinformation about the bond that was spread. There were some people who on social media spread some information about . . . for example I think there was \$50 million in there for upgrades at the high school for CTE. And part of that was to, I seem to remember, to build a softball field and those kinds of things. But the accusation was made that those sports things were the sum of that \$50 million. So, there's a lot of misinformation about that.

In addition, SBM noted the athletics plan was perceived as destroying long-term efforts by athletics boosters to improve the baseball fields as follows.

There was a big athletic component. They were going to move the baseball, they were going to tear down or move or get rid of the baseball field over here, and move it up to the high school. The baseball boosters and parents were like, "We've spent the last 40 years blood, sweat, and tears, mowing that grass, putting up stone, building, rake and shovel, and fundraising."

District's Poor Communication and Lack of Trust

District administrators, parents, school board member, and community members indicated that communication and lack of trust was a major problem in the 2013 school bond referendum election process. P5 remarked:

Things happen all the time, but in that bond election, what I remember is, the communication wasn't there . . . I think in 2013, there really was very little communication. It was, "We need this. This is how much we need and boom, there it is." Just expected everybody to vote yes.

CM said that one of the major factors of bond failure of the 2013 election was that, “That we did not communicate as well. We did not communicate as well, and a lot of that was because of the leadership of the group that was working with us.” P5 agreed that the lack of communication was an important variable in the failure of the school bond election, “Communication was not great, as I remember, as a parent who was at the school every day. . . . Things happen all the time, but in that bond election, what I remember is, the communication wasn’t there.”

The Superintendent reflected on having:

A lot of support for the bond, but I think we were talking to school-friendly. So, we were talking to the crowd that we wanted to talk to, that was easy to talk to, and those that were likely to vote against us, we weren’t [giving] them any attention at all.

Due to lack of communication, the announcement of the school bond referendum election was a surprise. SBM characterized himself as an involved citizen and was surprised when he received the school bond election flyer because when he received “the flyer in the mail. It was the first I’d heard about it. I’m not your average voter. I’d like to think I was fairly involved.” SBM did not provide a unique response. Even teachers and district staff were surprised by the announcement of the school bond referendum election. District leader A2 said:

In fact, the school board . . . [voted] for the bond election at a special meeting on a Saturday, and it came out in the newspaper on Sunday . . . and that’s how the majority of our staff found out that we were having a bond election.

A2 had the perception that the plan was a secret and noted:

Our staff reacted more strongly to that than anybody else, but I think that's because in the process of that bond election, if it had passed, we were going to be moving a whole lot of staff members, you know, a whole lot of different campuses.

Parents 4 and 5 specifically mentioned that there was a lack of information at the campus level, one of the most critical places for parents to receive information. They were used to having important information about the campus and school district sent home with their children (in their folders) but could not recall school bond information being sent home from the campus during the 2013 school bond referendum election. P4 recalled:

There wasn't a lot of information. There wasn't a lot of information at the school level. There wasn't any [information at the school level] . . . The schools can't vote for, but they can give you the information about it . . . they never even did that [send home factual information about the school bond election with the students] that I remember.

P5 observed that "communication was not great, as I remember, at as a parent who was the school every day. Nobody really knew what the money was for."

The opposition group had a well-organized, well-funded anti-bond PAC that utilized significant anti-bond communications and marketing strategies against the bond election. A1 remarked, "We did have a very intentional anti-bond campaign that was very

convincing, because I fully believe that people’s perception is their reality, regardless of whether the facts are true or not.”

Anti-bond groups provided funding that supported marketing and communications efforts for the opposition, including political ads, flyers, posters, and signs, and social media. “A couple of other groups that put money in that created advertising that was walked through neighborhoods and hung on doors and things of that nature” [Superintendent]. The Superintendent talked about seeing the “political ad paid for by Citizens Against TFISD Bond.” P2 mentioned an item that indicated how intense the anti-bond sentiment was:

That was kind of weird. I remember [pro-bond] signs being graffitied around town with the word ‘no’ on them, that would be ‘vote’ and then whatever would be spray painted a big ‘no’ on the sign. It was pretty much a day or two after any sign that went up, it had been graffitied to read vote no. So, there was something there, but I don’t know where it was coming from.

More importantly, the anti-bond opposition accessed and effectively utilized powerful, informal social communications networks. The SBM talked about informal communication between friends and community members in discussing the school bond proposal. This influential person talked about discussing the school bond proposal within his social circle:

Well, I asked around to my social network, my circle of friends, who are fairly like-minded. We are all on the same page that this probably isn't the right time or place to be doing something like this.

A part of these informal networks was social media, mentioned by several respondents, including the superintendent and parents, as significant in building a community around the anti-bond efforts. The Superintendent recalled:

Were very adept in social media, which was a new medium really. At least in my experience. 2013, Facebook is really just getting popular, there were tweets and information like that and all that is relatively new media at that time. And, it was used effectively.

The anti-bond opposition was able to effectively use anti-tax and anti-government narratives to portray the school board and school district as a “bad tax collector” and “ineffective and wasteful” government institution. A2 reflected:

In 2013, they said, “use the national perception of government mismanagement of funds and government being unethical or not truthful, or sliding something under the carpet,” and they brought it down to a community level and used it against us, and people were very quick to believe that.

The anti-bond opposition used themes of government ineffectiveness and waste that were already a significant part of the context in the community to create a story of the district as wasteful. District administrators A1 and A2 recalled a story that was used by the anti-bond proponents to create a narrative of the district as a wasteful spender with lavish tastes, based upon a school board trip to the state capital where they stayed at a well-known, high-dollar hotel. While the trip was at negotiated rates, anti-bond supporters were able to effectively use this story to create an impression in the community the school board and school district as a wasteful and spendthrift government

institution. A1 and A2 talked about this story and how damaging it was to the school district's reputation. A1 recalled remembering the situation "so well" in the following:

Our annual school board conference that's in Austin, they wrote and put out there that our school board stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel in Austin and made a big deal about that it was the Four Seasons, I guess, instead of Super 8 Hotel. But all of those were conference hotels, so they had conference rates, and I felt so bad for our board about that, because board members, this is not a paid position. They do countless hours . . . They rarely get a thank you. They get a lot of complaints: "I want this," and "I don't think this teacher did that," and "I don't like this," and "I want this." . . . Not only did they state all that, but they failed to say that it was a conference rate of \$150. They also showed a picture of two women in bikinis lounging by the pool. It was just a random picture. It wasn't any of our people.

A2 noted how damaging this story was to the image of the district:

By that point, we knew that we couldn't refute what was going on out there, and by the time that [story] came out . . . it was too much, and it was too little too late, for us really.

Stories like this Four Seasons episode only fed into the community's perception of the negative impact of the narrative of the prior bond building of a new high school as being an extravagant "Taj Mahal High School" and an "extravagant new school." District administrators reported negative messaging influencing the bond election outcomes.

Within this context, it was difficult for the district to "create a hopeful vision of the future rooted in organizational history," a strategy that Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested can

be used to support the symbolic aspects of a change process. Rather than the district having “short-term benchmarks or victories,” the school board and district school bond election campaign was continually in reactive mode, with the anti-bond campaign scoring short-term victories (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395). A2 discussed the school district’s ineffectiveness with counteracting the anti-bond messages:

Their communication messages beat ours every time. We very quickly got on the defense. Instead of telling our story, we were trying to respond to their accusations. I’m not saying that we weren’t trying to tell our story while it was happening, of course we were, and we were doing all the presentations and had all the information on our website. We did all those standard things that you always do, but it just felt like the whole time that our community was very quick to believe the opposition messages, no matter how outrageous they were, and very reluctant to believe our responses.

A2 indicated how damaging this was to the district’s effort to build trust with the community: “But once that’s out there, I don’t care what you do and how carefully you crack your story, you can’t refute, you can’t overcome the belief that has already been ingrained by that first message.”

District administrator A2 indicated that the district became after the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum election that they community did not trust the district:

To have lost by that landslide, it was unbelievable. It was unbelievable. It really did say to me, “people don’t trust us” . . . I don’t know if I was shocked. I don’t

think I knew what to think, but the part that shocked me is it failed three to one.

That is a beating. That is a message that is screaming at you.

The 2013 school bond referendum election proposal had significant changes in school configurations, impacting almost students, teachers, and parents at every grade level. Respondents mentioned the strong impact of these changes to teachers and parents but made no mention of strategies or activities designed to “acknowledge losses or changes,” strategies Bolman and Deal (2008) indicated create trust in a change process (p. 395). The FSBP acknowledged the significant concerns of teachers as well as the impact teachers votes could have on the school bond election outcome, while implying the school board and district administration were unable to address teacher concerns:

You had a lot of teachers that weren't for the bond just for that particular reason, that this [the bond proposal] means change. And “I love my school, I love my principal.” The thought of them moving fifth and sixth graders to a solo campus means that “we're going to have to move. I'm going to have to do things different.” They weren't in favor of that . . . And there's no way to tell them, “No, you won't be affected. Because they will be.”

The FSBP observed the significant impact teachers could have on the school bond referendum election results “when you have 700 or 800 staff and you have 2[000] or 3,000 people that vote on a bond in a district like TFISD, they could be easily the factor that changes the course of a bond.” FSBP implied that teachers' concerns may have been a significant factor in the 2013 school bond election failure when he said:

A funny thing about it is that the staff, the teachers, those people that if they voted . . . They could pass the bond easily. The fear with the teachers is they're going to have to move their classrooms. They're going to be put into different settings. They don't want change. They want to keep everything [the same].

FBSP also recognized the impact of the 2013 bond on parents but did not indicate strategies or actions to address parent concerns:

When you build new elementary schools, your school boundaries change. Sometimes that's more important to parents and families than the 3¢ per 100 value that it's gonna cost you. Just the whole idea of having to change your routine. I think that that's a bigger deal than anything; [it] is just that whole idea that everything's gonna change. You know? The kids are gonna have to get to the bus station earlier or they're not gonna get home as early. That's a big deal to voters, parents.

Bolman and Deal (2008) indicated that organizational leaders can utilize key political strategies that create trust and help ensure the success of a change process. These strategies to negotiate the political realm and create trust, included: "creating a map of the political terrain, including determining the informal channels of communication, identifying principal agents of political influence, and analyzing the possibilities for mobilizing internal and external players; networking with key players; stacking the team with credible and influential team members to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process; and creating arenas for the discussion and negotiation of political issues, building alliances, and resolving opposition (p. 395). The lack of attention to these

variables caused distrust with teachers, parents, and community members, and enabled the anti-bond forces to prevail in the bond election.

Mapping the political terrain is one of the strategies that can be used to effectively navigate the political domain during a change process (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395). However, during the 2013, there was little evidence of the school board or district administration mapping the political terrain. There were limited meetings with key influencers whose inputs were not factored into bond planning, especially opposition views. In addition, key stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community members had little opportunity to provide input into the facilities' needs assessment or school bond proposal planning process.

As mentioned previously, during 2013, there was little evidence of the school board members or district administrators networking with key influencers. This offered school board members and district administrators little opportunity to build trust with key influencers in the community. One meeting was referenced as occurring with the local state legislator who stated his opposition to the bond. In addition, the 2013 school board and district administrators appeared not to network with the key influencers and players of prior school bonds, including the PAC treasurer of the successful 1999 bond election.

As indicated earlier, limited attention was given to recruiting “credible, influential team members to serve in key roles” in the school bond referendum process (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395). No data about the leaders of the Citizens' Advisory Committee or the PAC were found. Although there seemed to be an attempt to identify “credible, influential team members to serve in key roles,” respondents indicated numerous gaps in

this process. The 2013 school board and district leadership did not recruit the community member who had chaired the 1999 PAC or the bond treasurer of the 1999 bond to serve in a meaningful role. Recruiting for the Citizens' Advisory Committee was haphazard, recruiting mainly pro-bond committee members via principals' recommendations. Moreover, recruiting efforts did not include members from the opposition.

The school board and school district administration did not seem to be aware of the need to build alliances during the 2013 school bond election efforts, missing another opportunity to build trust with parents, teachers, and community members. As indicated earlier, school board members and district administrators believed that the community would be in support of school bond efforts. There was a lack of understanding of the significant anti-bond, anti-tax, and anti-government sentiment in the community that would need to be addressed, as well as potential parent and teachers concerns with any specific school bond proposal. As a result, the school board and school district administration were not focused on building alliances in the 2013 school bond election process.

Although there was Citizens' Advisory Committee, the committee was divided into subcommittees, which then reported back to the larger committee and finally the school board with final recommendations for the school bond election proposal. This essentially left the committee with no "arena" to discuss and debate critical issues, suggested by Bolman and Deal (2008) as a strategy to address political issues in a change process. As a result, the final bond proposal ended up as a kitchen sink proposal. The Superintendent admitted:

And we divided them up into [subcommittees] . . . there was like a safety and security group; there was a population group; and then, there was a group that looked at maintenance-type items that needed to be addressed, and one that looked at just straight facilities, and if you needed to add a new facility or an addition to an existing facility. So, they each took their own component, kind of did their own study, and that was the design of the committee.

The Superintendent labeled the final bond proposal to be a non-strategic kitchen sink approach:

And it was a kitchen-sink approach, too. It was everything under the sun that had been identified in the needs assessment that would fit into what was logical and would create the kind of plan that we had.

The kitchen sink approach to the bond package was mentioned by numerous participants as having a negative impact on 2013 school bond election results.

The tone and content of interview responses from school board members and school district administrators in the 2013 school bond election indicated that they were shocked by the opposition to the school bond in the 2013 school bond election. School district administrators mentioned significant difficulties defusing the opposition.

Interview responses from the superintendent and central office administrators indicated a lack of ability of the school district to defuse the opposition, and an inability to counter the anti-bond PAC's messages and anticipate the anti-bond PAC's counterstrategies. The Superintendent explicated:

We were upset that there was that anti-PAC out there, and we couldn't believe they were telling all those lies . . . we had no idea how to combat it, how to respond to that, how to manage that, if it could be managed, or rebut it, so [it] grew legs. People want to believe the bad stuff.

Organized Anti-bond Opposition

District administrators uniformly described significant, organized opposition to the school bond referendum as a major variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond election. The Superintendent reported that “there was very organized opposition [to the bond proposal/bond election] . . . it was just a very well-orchestrated anti-movement.” A2 concluded that the “most vivid memory of 2013 was that we had a pretty strong opposition group.”

Statewide opposition. District central office staff characterized much of the anti-bond sentiment as outside influence from statewide political groups. “Fast forward to 2013, and we have significant outside influence from groups like [Statewide Advocacy Organization] out of Austin . . .” [Superintendent]. The Superintendent continued:

None of those funds came from local sources. So, there was very much a statewide effort that targeted local public school bonds in communities across the state to put out what I would call “misinformation” and “detractors” from these local school bonds, to encourage the voter to vote in a negative way towards those bonds . . . We could look at what was being published, and know that it was not local authorship, that it was coming from an organized [statewide group] . . . even

though they would localize it to the specifics of our bond, a lot of the statistics were very statewide.

A1, in a separate interview, concurred: “I think it came from the [Name of Organization] at Austin . . . I think it came from a larger organization overall, not just grassroots here in [Name of County].”

Local opposition. However, P1 referenced local opposition that funded and supported the anti-bond efforts:

. . . there is a very active default “no” contingent in the area. It seems to be led by and individual who owns a lot of rental property, and he funds the “no group” . . . this time I saw himself more involved. I saw how it worked. He funds the no group, and through social media it’s very easy to activate that.

2015 School Bond Election

By 2014-2015, numerous economic indicators signaled that Town-Fringe was experiencing a rebound after the 2008-2009 Great Recession. The community was projected to continue to experience significant economic growth over the next 25 years, as shown by indicators such as: industry employment; city and area annual sales & tax use trends; hotel and motel growth; new residential and commercial building permits; existing home sales; home values; oil prices; and business expansion in the area (2015 TFISC FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation). In fact, the town was labelled a “gateway business center” to the larger metropolitan area.

Continued Community and Economic Growth

In 2015, community growth trends seen in 2013 were expected to continue in the future, with a 3.5% annual growth rate and projected population of 40,667 in 2040 based on NCTCOG 2013 Estimates (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation). [Name of Local County] was expected to have a 66% growth rate between 2010 and 2035, and Town-Fringe was projected to have a 50% growth rate between 2010 and 2035 (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation). These growth estimates were conservative: the city had already surpassed the 2013 projections with a population of 29,969 in 2016 versus the projected population at 29,646 in 2020 (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation).

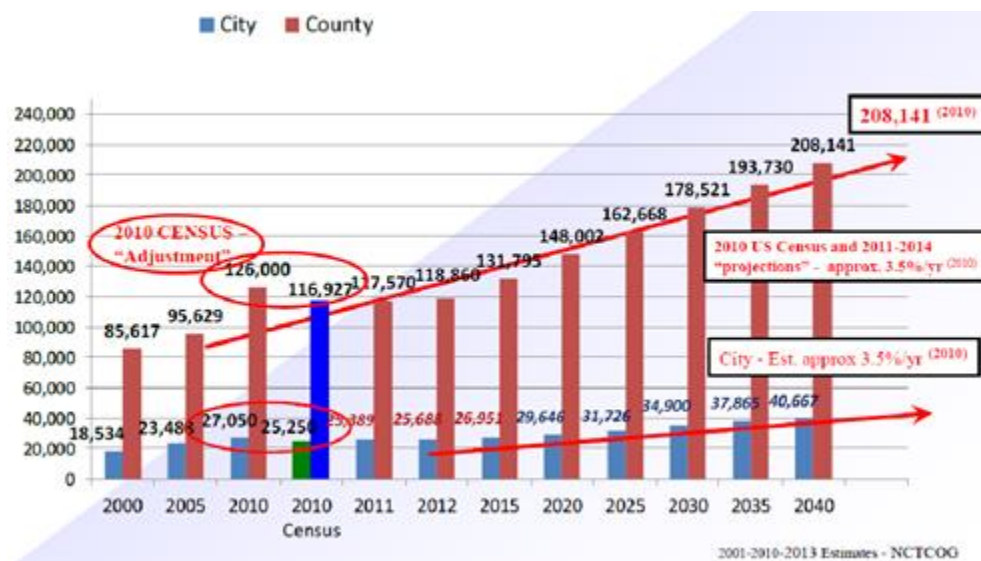


Figure 6. Population and demographic trends and forecasts for the city and county housing the school district 2000-2040.

Growth of School-aged Children Continued

Growth of school-aged children also continued from 2013 to 2015. In the 2015-2016 school year, TFISD had 7,840 students and 521 teachers. In the 2015-2016 school

year, 68.1% of students were White, 24.5% were Hispanic, 2.4% were African American, 2.9% were Two or more Races, and <1% of students were Asian, <1% were American Indian, and <1% were Pacific Islander. 41.7% of district students were economically disadvantaged, 8.2% of students were English Learners, 43.9% were considered at-risk, and 9.1% Special Education (TEA TAPR Report, 15-16).

Demographic projections shared with the 2015 TFISD bond committee projected that district growth trends would continue. As seen in Figure 7, TFISD would reach more than 8,000 students by the fall of 2018, with a projected enrollment of 8,517 by the year 2024/25. Total middle school enrollment was projected to grow by 5.86% in 2016. TFISD High School was projected to have 1,800 students by 2022 (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #2 Presentation).

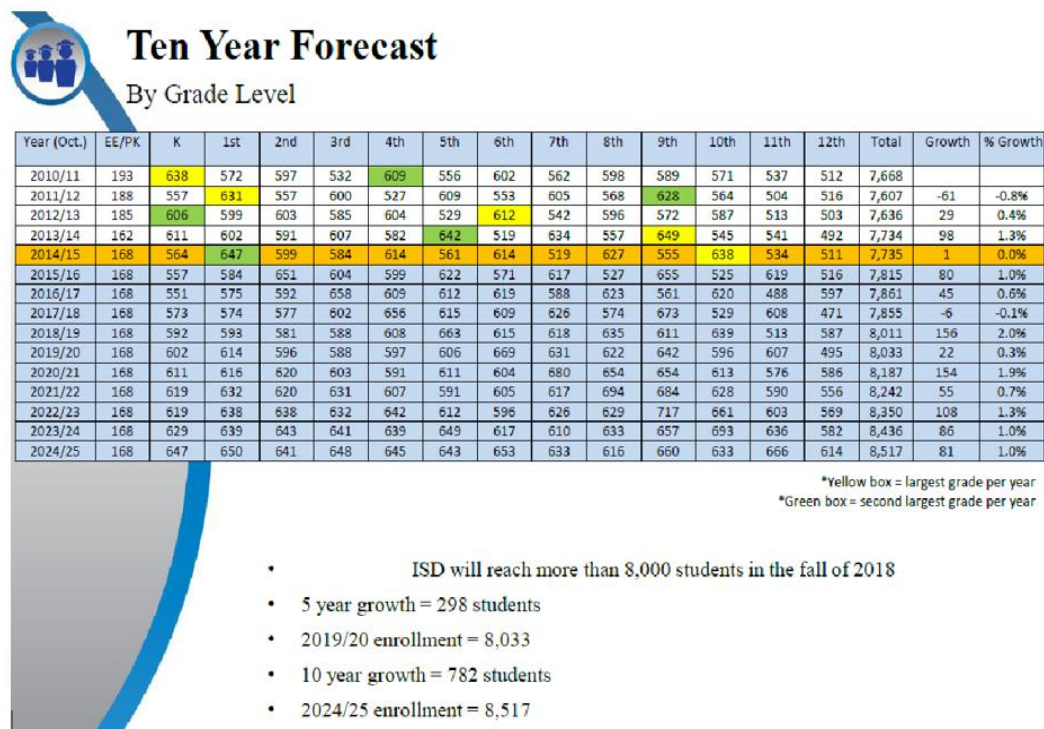


Figure 7. Student population trends and projections by grade from 2010 to 2025.

Continued Pressure on Elementary School Facilities

The school district continued to feel the effects of aging facilities and community growth, especially overcrowding at the elementary level. The Superintendent said that in 2015 the school district was:

Still feeling the pressures of overcrowding. In fact, we've just grown another 2 years from that time to this time, so the factor's even greater than it was . . . after the 2013 bond failed, we did end up putting up eight portables in the district to help us with that [overcrowding].

A1's feedback confirmed that "none of those needs went away, from 2013 to 2015. They only increased, actually."

2015 School Bond Election Bond Proposals

The 2015 school bond referendum proposal was called when the TFISD's Board of Trustees voted unanimously to call a \$74.9 million bond election to be held in May of 2015 to address three main areas: 1) Existing Facility Improvements for \$18.8 million; 2) Grade Level Realignment and Growth for \$49.5 million; and 3) Safety and Security for \$6.6 million. The bond proposal was split into three (3) separate bond propositions:

Proposition 1. Proposition 1 for Existing Facilities Improvement included upgrades and improvements for \$18.8 million to: 1) Comply with current codes and standards; 2) Increase safety and security; 3) Make schools more energy efficient; 4) Extend the life of each facility. This included funding for district-wide upgrades to major building systems that exceeded the limits of the district's operational budget, like heating and air conditioning, lighting and electrical; improvements to exterior issues, including:

masonry, concrete and site drainage; renovations to aging facilities for compliance with building code and the Americans with Disabilities Act; and safety and security upgrades: including, fire alarm replacements, access control systems, classroom intruder function door hardware and security cameras.

Proposition 2. Proposition 2 for was for \$49.5 million to realign elementary schools to K-5 and middle schools to 6-8 by replacing an outdated middle school, renovating a second middle school, and moving sixth graders from elementary schools into the new middle schools. The benefits of this plan was to provide better alignment with age-appropriate curriculum and state accountability standards; eliminate the need to transport sixth graders to middle schools for advanced classes and fine arts; provide space for student growth over the next decade at the elementary school level; and remove students from portable buildings. Funding was to support the demolition and construction of [New Middle School #1 serving Grades 6-8] for \$41.1 million and for \$8.4 million to renovate [Middle School #22 serving Grades 6-8]. The reason that complete replacement was proposed for [Middle School #11], was because Addition/Renovation would cost \$31.3 million with only a 20-year lifespan, whereas New Construction would cost \$41.1 million and provide a 50 years or more lifespan.

Proposition 3. Proposition 3 was for \$6.6 million for Safety and Security included the construction of controlled entrances to improve security at all campuses throughout the school district.

2015 School Bond Election Success

In the 2015 school bond referendum election, all three propositions passed, with a very close margin. Proposition 1 passed with 52.52% (2,281 votes) to 47.48% (2,062) with 4,343 votes cast (passed by 219 votes). Proposition 2 passed with 50.08% (2,169 votes) to 49.92% (2,162 votes), with 4,331 votes cast – a difference of 7 votes (school administrators reported that 4 ballots were invalidated, so the total difference was actually 3 votes). Proposition 3 passed with 51.9% (2,252 votes) to 48.1% (2,087 votes) with 4,339 total votes, a difference of 165 votes. These vote outcomes matched very closely to the pre-bond voter likelihood of bond passage projections.

Variables in 2015 School Bond Success – Modern School Bond Election

Eleven major variables characterized the 2015 school bond success in TFISD, TX: (a) changed attitude and approach to the community and school bond election process; (b) increased awareness of stakeholder perceptions and the community context; (c) expert capacity to support new school bond processes; (d) extensive community needs assessment & pre-bond planning activities; (e) comprehensive bond election planning process; (f) effective leadership recruitment and training; (g) substantive input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders; (h) clear, appealing bond proposals, including low bond amount, bond content, and multiple propositions; (i) improved communication and increased trust; (i) effectively addressed multiple structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process; (k) no “anti-bond”/opposition efforts.

Changed Attitude and a Modern Approach

As a result of the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum election, the school board and school district administration completely changed their attitude to the community and subsequent approach to the school bond referendum process. Interview respondents reported an immediate and dramatic change of the attitudes of the school board and school district administration in the 2015 school bond referendum election. This new attitude included being humble, listening to the community, and actively soliciting input and diverse perspectives. The SBM indicated the humble nature of the school board after the 2013 election:

[The next steps of the school board] . . . was to immediately say, “We screwed up” . . . “Hey, we don’t want to screw up like this again. The district is very humble. The district is not angry.” Behind closed doors they might’ve been, but they were very, “Man, we screwed up. That was an embarrassment. I can’t believe we did that.”

Another attitude of the school board and school district administration switched from one of “telling” to “listening.” The school board and school district began to reach out and listen in multiple ways. The Superintendent said:

So, I think the board did a great job. First, they had to eat that crow, and say, “We were arrogant in how we approached the first one. We need to stop and listen, and we need to move through our community.”

P1 concurred when he noted, “I think that there was an attitude among the administration that ‘we need to do what we need to do. We need to do it well and build trust with the community.’”

The school board and school district administration changed their approach to every part of the school bond election process. The Superintendent characterized this new approach as a modern bond election:

We learned a hard lesson, and then we tried to begin taking in all those other variables and factors that certainly play into what I would call, “A modern bond election,” because it’s very different than the way you would run a bond election 10 years ago, probably even 8 years ago.

A1 summarized: “We changed processes, [and] we changed people to help us with that process, and that made all the difference”

Increased Awareness of Stakeholder Perceptions and Community Context

Awareness of need for voter approval. In the 2015 school bond referendum election process, there was a new recognition of the need to gain voter/taxpayer approval for a school bond referendum. A1 summed it up this way: “And a governmental entity such as public school district, you have all your constituents, and you have to ask a taxpayer, ‘Will you or will you not approve this?’” As P4 proclaimed: “I’m a tax payer. I’m not just a parent; I’m a tax payer. I’m gonna be a tax payer for decades.”

The school board and district administration recognized that the community would not simply “blindly support” a school district initiative. The Superintendent concluded “people want to support their schools, that came across. But people don’t want

to just blindly trust that entity, government, or however we're being viewed." The school board and school administrators recognized that the environment had changed, and that support of school district did not necessarily mean support of school bonds or vice versa:

School bond elections have changed significantly in the last few years, and they all love your school, even those that vote against you, and that's not what it's about. So, we gotta get over ourselves about, "We're a great ISD, and our community loves us, and we do great things." You do, but that doesn't mean that they're willing to send more monies to do certain things for you.

Changes in school funding laws increased need for voter approval. A part of this new environment was precipitated by a 2005 change in Texas facilities' funding law that had gone unrecognized in the 2013 school bond referendum election. A1 explained a Texas facilities' funding law that had changed in 2005, requiring school districts to go out for school bond elections to secure additional facilities' funding, where school boards might have previously been able to increase the tax rate a small amount without voter approval.

The other critical thing to be said about addressing facilities in the environment that we're in, ever since the buy down of the tax rate in 2005, no school board has the ability to go above \$1.04 without a rollback election, and even when you do that, you still can't go above \$1.17. Our school board did that in 2010. So, we have been at the maximum tax rate allowed by law since 2010, and we can't go up any further, and so the only way TFISD, or any other district receives additional funds if they've exercised that and their community approved it, is by

additional student growth and/or property value. We're blessed at TFISD, that we have both . . . increasing ADA (Average Daily Attendance) and increasing property value, [but] that can never rake off \$75 million to do a brand new school and the needed renovations. So, the only way any district can address this [facilities needs] big time, is through a bond election, and that's new since 2005, because back in the day, if you needed to do a renovation on a building or if you needed to put a new roof on priority 2005, you could speak with your school board, see if they were willing to raise the tax rate a penny or two, and then they could take it back down after they did their project if they so desire[d]. They don't have that ability anymore.

Recognition that voter preferences impacted school bond election success. There was a new recognition by the school board and school district administrators that parent/community member preferences as voters and taxpayers figured significantly into the success or failure of a school bond referendum election. The FSBP expressed it this way:

I mean, in order to meet the needs of the community, they [the school district] have to pass bonds. There's no other way of building facilities. The state has it that way and you know, it's a battle . . . if the community says that we want to have the biggest dad gum [sic] stadium in the state of Texas and they're willing to pay for it tax-wise, then that's what you'll have . . . a small community like . . . [Name of Another Nearby Town] tried to get football passed on this last bond.

They rejected it. *And that's the community's prerogative that they can do that* [italics added for emphasis].

The SBM emphasized the importance of understanding and meeting voters' wants and needs:

[As a new board member] Every time there was questions or things brought up, there was six chairs that turned down and my seat was at the very end. "[Name of SBM], what do you think?" They brought me on quick, and they just picked my brain. They said, "Why didn't you . . . [support the previous bond]. Why? What can we do different[ly]?" Ultimately it was, "Well, I know the district has its own needs, but really we shouldn't put anything out there to the voter that they don't want."

The SBM indicated that there might be a wide range of parents and community (voter) preferences and expectations for education and educational facilities:

We had a dinner conversation like three days after I was sworn in when we had a school board meeting . . . They asked me, they started grilling me. Everybody had a couple beers, you know. Now no one's trying to be polite to [Name of SBM] anymore. Now they're like, "Why the heck did you vote against this? What were you thinking? Why did you . . . You don't like the kids? What are you against?" At one point, one of them said, "It's the best for the children. That's why we're here."

I said to him, I said, "Well, you know the word 'best' is very subjective. The best thing we could have for the kids is to put a dome over that football

stadium. That would be the absolute best. Hands down. If you want the best for kids, then we got to put a dome over that stadium. But of course you don't want a dome over the stadium because that's ridiculous. You see that it's subjective, right? What's 'your best' might not be 'the best', might not be 'my best'. Yes, we all want what's 'best' for kids, but what's 'best'?"

Oftentimes, that's subjective and that's what you have to find out. What is the subjective consensus of your community? Your community wants what's best for kids. Nobody wants kids in jail, kids failing. Just look at how they yell at the district when you do bad on a standardized test score, right? Everyone wants your district to be great. But what's 'great' is subjective. Some people think it's great if the kids can go to school and write on a chalkboard, learn some arithmetic. They don't call it math, you know the old-timers, learn some arithmetic, learn some science. You know they're not bullied, they're safe, then they get a job or they go to college. That's the best we can ask for. That's 'great'. Other people are like, "Well, do they have tablets? Do they have wireless internet? Do they have access to international studies? How many field trips are there per semester? What's the degree level of the faculty members?" Best is subjective.

Acknowledged need to build trust through increased communication and transparency. After the shocking failure of the school bond election in 2013, school district administrators recognized the need to improve communication and build trust with parents, teachers, and community members.

Need to build trust. A2 recognized the need to build trust and better communication with the community, as evidenced by the results of the 2013 school bond election:

My take after the 2013 bond election was our community does not trust our school district. That was from a communications department, that's the message that I took. So then how do you start in all of your communication messages to build trust in what's happening in the school district?

Need to improve communication. The school board and school district recognized a need to improve communication with stakeholders and voters. A1 recalled:

But you know, I'm a taxpayer too, but I'm inside this one, and so I really know and understand and believe. But there's only a few of us that have access to all that, right, and so the rest, we have to be able to communicate it in a way that they're like, "Okay, I think I understand the need and I believe I can support that."

Awareness of the impact of prior bond. The prior bond in the 2015 school bond referendum election was the failed 2013 school bond referendum attempt. Although some of the concerns about the prior bond proposal remained a concern for teachers, parents, and community members in the 2015 school bond election, other concerns had diminished or were more effectively addressed by the school board and school district during the 2015 school bond proposal development process.

The length of time since the prior bond in 2013 actually proved to be a positive variable in the 2015 school bond election. The 2013 was close enough for the issues to be fresh in the community's memory, but a long enough time for the community to feel like

there had been a substantive planning process that was not rushed. P2 indicated this when he said:

It just seemed like it moved at a slower [pace]. It went on for a longer period. I guess you could say it moved at a slower pace, but it was because they started campaigning earlier. They took more time into getting it out there than the first time. I remember the first bond it seemed like beginning to end it was a pretty short period. You are advertising voting within a month or so. The second time, it seemed like it was more of a 2 or 3 month campaign. It was a lot more involved. Actually, if I think really hard back to it, it was almost like the campaign started the day after the first one failed [2015 bond].

The voter survey results showed that bond amount was still a significant concern in the 2015 school bond election. This held true even for teachers and staff members. A report from a staff member from the staff member survey of the voter survey said, “That is a lot of money for any school district to have control of. I don’t think that the community is ready to see that kind of dollar amount in a bond” (TFISD Staff Verbatims, [Name of Survey Firm]).

The possibility for district waste and poor stewardship of bond fund remained a concern in the 2015 school bond election campaign environment. District administrators suggested that the district improving trust regarding the district stewardship of bond funds in the 2015 was still an important variable. The Superintendent said:

That was another factor that was in it, and that came out in that survey as kind of a trust thing. “You’re gonna have to show us that you’re gonna do what you say within reason, and do it on time, and within the budget that we give you.”

Respondents specifically mentioned a distrust of the motive of the architectural firm’s potential “mixed motives” in guiding the process. Both a parent who was very supportive of the school district and both bond efforts (P1), as well as a parent who was more critical of bond efforts talked about the concern of cost overestimation (SBM). [P1] said:

You never really know [about how much things really cost]. They tell you it’s going to cost \$46 million dollars to build a building. I don’t have the capacity to go through a detailed analysis of that and know whether they’ve padded that or not.

[SBM] also indicated a lack of trust for the architectural firm to accurately represent facilities’ needs, and felt this created an urgency to negotiate a savvy business deal:

Another piece of advice is, in this day and age I think probably throughout the state, is your marketing arm unless you’re an enormous district and have your own huge PR department, but your marketing arm is going to be that of the architecture firm. Use them, but do not . . . not subjugate. What would be the word? Do not release or relinquish power to them. They’re for-profit entities. They’re in it to make money. Ultimately, there will be an overlap where there’s goodness that happens, but there’s money that they’re trying to do too. We’re

trying to save money. This Venn diagram, kind of weird thing, but the overlap is we're trying to do good, and we're going to meet in the middle, but the sacrifice is we might want to save some money so they got to lose profit, or maybe they won't even make profit. *You can't just trust the architecture firm to tell you what your needs are. They're going to tell you what their wants are.* [italics added for emphasis]. They might be some of your needs, ironically, happily, hopefully if you've got the right architecture firm. You need to tell them what your needs are, and you got to filter out their wants from your needs.

A1 also mentioned this risk as a natural part of the facilities construction process, but also that it was a valid concern:

Some of those things all look small and insignificant, but that's no different than when you and I go to Walmart, we're going to go in there, we're just going to get a couple of things, and we come back out \$150 later.

Responses from the voter survey indicated that stakeholders wanted a detailed bond plan. A teacher responded in the voter survey, "I need more details on where and how the money will be utilized to see if I personally agree that it would be a need for the district or simply cosmetic" (2015 TFISD Voter Survey Staff Verbatims).

Addressed concern through detailed facilities needs assessment and facilities' tours. Interview reports suggested that the school board and school district more effectively addressed this concern in the 2015 school bond referendum election. One of the ways that the school board and school district administrators more effectively addressed this concern was through the detailed facilities' needs assessment that provided

assurance regarding accuracy of bond facilities' estimated costs. The facilities' needs assessment was also "tiered," which provided reassurance to stakeholders regarding the prioritization and equity of facilities' costs and projects. A specific facility needs assessment report was created for each and every school building and facility in the district, in order to achieve equitable treatment. The facilities' needs assessments were extensive: respondents reported large binders of information and summaries of the needs assessments were available online. This provided information that led to stakeholder trust that estimated bond costs were accurate.

In addition, the school board and school district held facilities' tours during the school bond proposal development process, where parents and community members could "see and feel" facilities' issues directly, so that they could verify that facilities' issues were real. The Superintendent shared the purpose of meeting at different schools and giving facilities' tours was to give teachers, parents, and community members exposure to facilities across the school district:

If you're in a community that has seven elementaries, you might never go across town to that one elementary. If I live over here in this neighborhood, why would I go over there? . . . So, we intentionally met at a number of different campuses that we knew had needs, so that they could look at that, and live it, and see, and really rationalize or justify to themselves that, "Yeah, it is a need, and we need to address that."

In addition, the final bond plan provided a detailed facilities' plan for each facility in the district, so that stakeholders could see the plan for proposed facilities' renovations

at every building in the school district. These plans were available throughout the process on the district website. In addition, the architectural firm provided multiple versions of bond proposal options throughout the process, so that stakeholders could see that a thorough financial analysis had occurred.

In addition, long-term financial planning was prioritized in the planning process, to provide voters with options that cost more initially, but were long-term more fiscally conservative. For example, a compelling argument for the replacement (rather than renovation) of the middle school was the long-term financial benefits. P1 recalled:

To refurbish it and bring it [the old middle school] up to speed was like \$36M. So when people heard that. When you say “we can refurbish this and it will last 20 years. You can build a new building and it’ll last 50 years,” that was point in favor for most people.

The concern about increased taxes remained an important variable impacting the potential success or failure of the 2015 school bond election. This concern about increased taxes included parents, community members, and staff members. “I also would need to see how it would affect my personal costs, because let’s face it, I’m a teacher and finances are always rather tight” (2015 TFISD Voter Survey Staff Verbatims). However, in 2015, there was district acknowledgement of the validity of personal concerns with higher taxes. A1 showed a shift in perspective from the 2013 school bond election, acknowledging the validity of real financial pressures on community members that increased taxes might show:

People feel taxed. To me, they were getting a brand new . . . beautiful, shiny building, and it passed by three votes, and I believe it's because it was the biggest number on the page . . . I think it comes down to money and the world that we're all living in today. I don't believe people don't care about kids, they do. It's their own lives . . . they'd like to have a new house too, but maybe they can't.

Awareness of the impact of the economic context. By 2015, the economic context had improved markedly, and this was not mentioned by respondents as an important variable in the passage of the school bond referendum in 2015.

However, this may also have been because the concern was better addressed in the 2015 school bond election process. School board and school district, parents, teachers, and community members were provided extensive information on community and economic growth that may have forestalled concerns in this area. During the FACTS Committee process, committee members were provided extensive community growth and economic development information, including: population growth of the city; population growth of the surrounding county; industry employment; city and area annual sales and tax use trends; hotel and motel growth; new residential and commercial building permits; existing home sales; home values; oil prices; and business expansion in the area. This information shared with large, diverse, representative community group, as well as was available online for all community members to access. All of the community economic development indicators showed massive economic growth in the surrounding area and town over the next 20 years. In addition, extensive district demographic growth and change data, including district enrollment history and cohort analysis and district 10-year

forecast was provided to the FACTS committee. Extensive information on the tax rate and tax impact based upon multiple bond proposal scenarios was also shared. This information included: I & S tax rate projections, district comparisons, and debt service requirements. All of this information was available to any voter on the district website.

Awareness of conservative political environment. The political environment remained largely the same in the 2015 school bond election environment. Significant anti-tax, anti-government sentiment remained, impacting the environment for the school bond referendum election in 2015. P2 shared this perspective of the community:

I really felt like it all came down to taxes. I feel like that's how everything moves in [Town-Fringe], if I don't want my taxes to go up vote no. It could be anything really. We're going to put in a shuttle service that's gonna take you everywhere you want to be, for free. They're gonna raise my taxes, yes. "No. I don't go anywhere. No."

CM concurred with this assessment:

It was all about money, it was not about serving the kids. If it cost 20 million dollars to do one thing, and then that was too much, "Can we do it for half a million?" . . . It's all about money when you get into these things.

There was also a recognition of the need to activate the "pro-bond" contingent in the community that would support increased taxes to support schools. P1 referenced the need to activate the pro-bond community to counteract the "anti-tax" group in the community:

I think there's that component in the community [vote no contingent]. And I think it's there. I don't think it's a majority. So the question then is "how do you activate the rest of the community to rally around something."

Awareness of changes in school support attitudes within the community.

There was a recognition that voter/taxpayer school support attitudes may have changed, and that the new mix of voter perspectives would play an important role in the outcome of the school bond referendum election. A2 talked about the change in community support for school bond initiatives:

We had one person on our FACTS Committee who also was on the PAC, and he said, "I'm going to always vote for a school bond, because it's right thing to do for kids. Someone took care of me when I was growing up. The community voted and approved bonds so that I had good schools and good facilities to go to, so I'm always going to do that." *But he is the outlier. People don't feel that way anymore* [italics added for emphasis].

However, in 2015 there was a heightened awareness among parents and community members of the need for facilities' renovations and school bond referendum, as well as the need for parent and community involvement to support passage of a school bond referendum. P2 talked indicated the loss of the 2013 school bond election increased urgency and the level of parent and community involvement in 2015 as a variable that supported the success of the school bond referendum in 2015:

I also think, too that by not passing the first time, the groups who were voting for it initially, because they had investments into it, students in the schools, and

whatnot, things that they wanted to take care of. They probably got a lot more involved and got out and brought more community members in, too.

Awareness of resistance to change leading to use of symbolic, ceremonial events. In 2015, Town-Fringe still contained those resistant to change, as well as those who wanted to preserve long-held school traditions. In addition, the bond proposals still contained significant potential changes in grade configurations and school district buildings. However, the school board and school district were able to honor these changes more effectively through the use of symbolic and ceremonial activities (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Ceremonies and activities that acknowledged these changes were mentioned by respondents as supportive to the passage of the 2015 school bond referendum.

Part of the potential bond proposal included completely replacing [Middle School #1] that had been named after a local champion and longtime proponent of education. The Superintendent recalled that:

We had to assure people that the [Name of Person Middle School/Middle School #1], name would live on, and it was amazing, that was an eye-opener. Whenever we ever started talking about replacement of [Name of Person Middle School/Middle School #1], how quickly that issue came to light, that, “Well, wait a minute, you can’t do that. She provided service.” . . . And even to the point where in the presentation that was made we took pains to say that it would still be named [Name of Person Middle School #1]. In our FACTS Committee meeting, there was a comment made that [Name of Person] was a venerated person in this

community, and people would not stand for her school to be torn down. And she's still alive in a nursing home in [nearby urban city]. And I said, "Well, bring her over here and roll her in a wheel chair through that school, and I bet you, she'll be the biggest proponent of building a new one." She would be horrified to see what represents her name. But we took pains to say this is still going to be [Name of Person Middle School #1].

The Superintendent indicated the importance of this gesture when he said that this was "something they did right:"

We were trying to close it, so we could get on to the new. And really, the community has embraced the new building, they love the fact that we've carried on the name, and I think that might be one thing we did right.

Ground-breaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies for new middle school. The Superintendent explained that the school board and district administrators used multiple ceremonial activities to celebrate this venerated community member:

So, as we planned, the name, [Name of Person Middle School #1], we involved her family in the ground-breaking ceremony, in the ribbon-cutting ceremony. I think three different times we had significant events that had her family there, so that we could assure our community that we were going to continue to *honor her legacy* [italics added for emphasis].

Ceremonies to acknowledge and celebrate changes of the middle school. A significant part of the bond proposal(s) was to replace one of the district's middle schools [Name of Middle School #1]. As a way to acknowledge and celebrate this change, the

school district planned and held a very successful ceremonial “One Last Stroll Down the Hall” vent to close old building. This event attracted former students, teachers, and principals, and community members. It became like a “mini-reunion” for community members, and even attracted those who didn’t normally attend school events. The success of this event surprised the Superintendent who reflected that:

But, in my simple mind, that never crossed my mind that that was going to be a huge issue for people. We held a “One Last Stroll Down the Hall” event at [Name of Middle School #1], for ex-students who went to [Name of Middle School #1], and we had people who went there in the 70s and 80s show up to go. They could go to their locker, and say, “This is where we used to do this,” it was just all this romanticized, probably bigger than it really was in their mind, though, remembrances of what life like at [Name of Middle School #1], and they were great memories for these people. And we invited principals that were still around that had been principal at that campus over time, and they were there. . . . You might have a 45-year old walking the building, and “There’s my principal,” and he’s 80, you know? Yeah, it was an interesting thing.

He talked about the symbolic significance that the demolition of the old middle school had for community members:

So, you really learned that you are tearing down, ‘cause we demolished that building, *you were tearing down these memories that these people had*, [italics added for emphasis], and they had to go and say good bye to it, which just still kinda blows me away. We had to do that. And, I thought it was a very smart move

on the district's part to have an event like that, 'cause I didn't need people out there bashing the school . . . Because asbestos abatement and all the other things, they all wanted a brick, or they wanted something, and I couldn't let 'em get in the construction zone to get that, so we gave them one last chance to walk down. It was amazing. I had people trying to steal lockers out of the building, I had, I mean, you name it, they were trying to do it.

Secured Expert Capacity to Support New School Bond Processes

One of the first steps the school board and school district took was to re-assess the services needed from an architectural consulting firm to secure the expert capacity needed to support a successful school bond referendum election process. Prior to the 2015 school bond referendum election, the school board and district administration went through an RFP process to identify an architectural firm to work with for a potential future school bond referendum election. The Superintendent said, "In 2015, we had a very different approach. I said, 'Let's go look at some others. Let's, at least, make the guys compete,' whenever we go out and do an RFP. So, we did." The SBM stated it like this:

We fired our architecture firm at the next board meeting. Well, maybe not the next board meeting; it was Christmastime, I think. We put out an RFQ for a new one. That was the first thing we did after the bond.

As a part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the school board and school district were exposed to different kinds of school bond election planning expertise and services from potential architectural consulting firms. One of the first things the

Superintendent mentioned during his interview was discovering the extensive bond election “pre-bond advising and planning” expertise some architectural firms offered:

So, go to 2015, and the approach is entirely different. We do an RFP for architectural firms . . . do a great job interviewing those, and we discovered something in that process. What we know is that all of the architectural firms that are major players in the state can design great buildings. They can do beautiful work, and do great work. They all know MEP, they all know civil, they all know all those different things. Building codes, all that stuff. What they don’t all do is on the front end of the bond. They don’t all do the pre-bond advising and planning . . . at the time, [Name of Firm] was the firm that we chose, and the reason they were chosen was because of the pre-bond services that they had.

The Superintendent went on to explain the power of a pre-bond needs assessment and voter survey in being able to predict the potential likelihood of a potential school bond referendum election success:

So, when they come in and do their pitch to the board of trustees, they’re talking to them about [Voter Survey Firm], and their surveys that they can do, and climate surveys, and how they will test, and they came just that short of guaranteeing whatever the outcome would be, based on the outcome of this survey. So, they said, “We’ll tell you, once we conduct this study, whether or not you can have success with this or not.” And their belief was, “We wouldn’t be talking to you right now if we didn’t think it could happen, but we’ll tell you with a pretty high degree of certainty that it will after we do this survey.”

Hired architectural firm with extensive bond election expertise. As a result of the RFP process (Figure 8), the school board and school district increased capacity and support for the overall school bond election process by hiring an architectural firm that had both facilities and school bond election expertise. Document review indicated that the new architectural consulting firm utilized a comprehensive school bond election planning process that included: bond election pre-planning, bond election facilitation and planning processes, and bond campaign implementation expertise (2015 TFISD Bond Presentation).



Figure 8. Background on 2015 school bond election process.

Bond consulting services key variable in school bond success. Respondents indicated that the bond consulting expertise played a significant role in the success of the school bond referendum election success. CM listed bond consulting support as one of the most important variables in the success of the 2015 school bond election efforts because it increased his effectiveness as a community leader [as FACTS Committee Co-Chair and PAC Treasurer]:

The architects. The [Name of Firm] group. I think they were so proactive. It's their livelihood, too. If the bond fails, they don't gain a thing. They have people

set just to help us promote things. They did. They helped us. They had one lady, I can't remember who . . . I talked to her almost every day. She'd call me or text me, have you done this today, has your group done this? I'd say, "I'm working, I don't have time . . . Would you text the other people on the committee?" I didn't have the time to do that, because I was still employed.

CM reiterated that the bond consulting staff from the architectural firm not only provided outstanding support during the bond planning and facilitation process but increased support from other parent and community members:

This second group [in 2015], they had one or two ladies that's all they did was help us, help us from local community. They had other people, the architects and all that type of people. They were the ones who helped the community people, which we are, to learn how to present it to the community and how to get the young kids, the high school kids, involved and wanting to be a part of it.

The Superintendent referenced the impact on support for bond election communications:

. . . but their communications department . . . the people that they have working in that are amazing. They can craft hefty messages, and interpret data, and they work with us, where our prior architectural firm didn't even have, they didn't even have an understanding that that was going on.

Extensive Community Needs Assessment and Pre-Bond Planning Activities

Interview responses and document review indicated that the school board and school district administrators utilized several pre-bond planning and needs assessment methods to solicit input from key influencers and stakeholders (voters). Respondents

identified these as key strategies that led to the successful outcome of the 2015 school bond election. Early input from key stakeholders and potential voters allowed the school board and school district administration to better understand voter and taxpayer preferences regarding bond proposal content, bond amount tolerance, and likelihood of passage --- before a decision to pursue a school bond referendum even occurred.

The Superintendent emphasized: “You can’t just gather data on your facilities. You have to gather data on the community too.” The Superintendent explained the two methods that were most critical in the 2015 school bond election success were (a) face-to-face interviews with 100 key influencers and (b) a pre-bond voter survey:

I’m telling you, really, I think the two key things that we did differently [in 2015], were [1] having those face-to-face meetings with those key stakeholders, and key stakeholders being . . . could be the guy that has all the rental property in town that didn’t want his property taxes going up, so he’s against it. So, gotta hear that voice, and you gotta make sure that you hear the opposition. Don’t just stack your back with those guys that are for you. You better go out and seek that opposing voice . . . And then, [2] the pre-bond survey that was done, I think was invaluable too. That’d be my two. If I ever do another one, and I certainly hope I don’t, but if I ever do another one, that’s what I will make sure that I do.

Extensive input from face-to-face interviews with 100 key influencers.

Respondents mentioned that face-to-face meetings between school board members and 100 key influencers in the community was an important variable in gaining key information leading to the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election. The

Superintendent explained that one of the first things that the school board and school district did after the failed 2013 school bond election was to have the school board members hold face-to-face interviews with 100 key influencers in the community to understand their opinions about the failed school bond election, on the recommendation of a prominent state legislator in the area.

The purpose of these conversations was to (a) gain feedback on the last bond election; (b) gain information about what a successful bond proposal might look like; and (c) determine whether or not to pursue a future bond election. The Superintendent recalled:

[Name of State Rep] maybe had the best advice, and I don't know that [Name of State Rep]'s a huge supporter of TFISD, I don't know that he works for us or against us, he's just [Name of State Rep]. But, his advice was, "You need to target. Make you a list of about a hundred people and go talk to them one-on-one. Face-to-face. Don't email 'em. Don't have a big meeting. Go visit with them face-to-face and talk to them about what they liked about the last bond, what they didn't like about the last bond, what they would do different. And, you need to have, in that group, people that voted for and people that voted against. You need to hear both sides of the argument. And, take the time to do that, and *then come back and then use that information to determine whether or not you go forward and maybe even what this might look like as you do that.* [italics added for emphasis].

In the 2015 election, the school board followed the advice of the state legislator. The Superintendent described the process:

So, the board and I created a list, asked each board member to submit 12 names, and we kinda merged all that together, and where we had overlap, we would go ahead and get others, and we really targeted a hundred people in the community. And assigned each board member those folks to and interview, and kind of gave them an outline of an interview, but didn't dictate what the question was, just kind of generally kept it to, "What'd you like? What'd you not like?" That sort of thing, and, "Let's just have a conversation about it."

The Superintendent reported that these face-to-face interviews with key influencers provided valuable information from key influencers in the community, including how to structure a future school bond referendum proposal:

And we got valuable information back from that. And maybe, most especially from those people who were in opposition. The guys that were being funded by the outside resources, or that were being supplemented by the outside resources. A lot of it was this kind of anti-government spending kind of thing, but it was also things like, "Well, you asked for a \$100 million, and the economy's in a downturn, and we're struggling to pay the grocery bill, and you're wanting more monies out of us, and you could have asked for something smaller to get you started, and that's what you should've done." *So, they're telling you how to structure the next bond, if you choose to go out and do that* [italics added for emphasis].

Document review indicated that the interviews represented a structured “Face to Face Conversations Process,” with specific staffing support and expertise for conducting this kind of interview. Board members received a written packet outlining the interview process, including background and interview questions to use, listening tips, key messages, scripts, and a feedback form to record responses. Interview responses were recorded and compiled for use by the school board (2015 Board F2F (Face-to-Face) Binder Contents).

Document review revealed interview participants included a wide variety of business and community leaders and executives including: realtors, insurance agents, landlords, doctors and dentists, ministers, business and retired business owners, police and public safety, bankers, judges and lawyers, city council members and city government leadership, higher education, former school board members, state legislators, non-profit leaders, media, and marketing firms.

Substantial information obtained about voter preferences through a voter survey. The second pre-bond needs assessment strategy used in 2015 was to gain input from stakeholders and potential voters through a professional, scientifically-designed pre-bond voter survey, which provided input on community thinking on broad parameters for the bond proposal including, such as bond amount tolerance and preferred bond proposal content.

The reason the pre-bond voter survey was so critical is that it provided predictive capability for the likelihood of success of a potential school bond election. The Superintendent described the significance of the pre-bond voter survey:

And then, the use of the firm, [Name of Voter Survey Firm] which does that public opinion polling as part of the pre-bond services that were offered there. That gave us . . . They were very spot-on, it doesn't get much closer than seven votes. And when they said, "It's gonna be very difficult to pass this bond, but it can be done, but it's gonna be extremely close," they were as accurate as you could be, and I don't think I would ever run another bond elections without having that kind of information in advance of calling an election.

Numerous respondents interviewed mentioned the pre-bond voter survey as a variable in the successful outcome of the 2015 school bond election. P1 recalled being a part of the voter survey:

Well there was a survey done . . . I got the call of the survey, so I participated in it. And then I know that data was used in our discussions. It was used by the board . . . There was a telephone survey. I forget the details of how many people were surveyed. So that data was collected, and I think that that was all parents and community members.

SBM also mentioned the survey:

But I've not done research on it. Actually, we did, I think. We did poll people after the fact on "What did you like about it? What did you not like about it? What did you want to see? Would you rather see one with options or not options?"

The voter survey was a random sample telephone survey of a representative sample of 400 voters in the community conducted by an outside research firm during November of 2014, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9%. Survey respondents

were distributed across the city as North and West at 21%; Central at 38%; and South and East at 41%. The survey was composed of 30 questions regarding tolerance for various bond amounts (\$50 million, \$75 million, \$100 million); school configuration preferences; and preferences regarding athletics (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation). The objectives of the survey were “to assess support and opposition to a \$100 million bond proposal, as well as various amounts of bond proposals with the associated tax impacts; determine preference for various options for schools; and to measure the correlation of informative statements on support/opposition to a bond proposal” (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation).

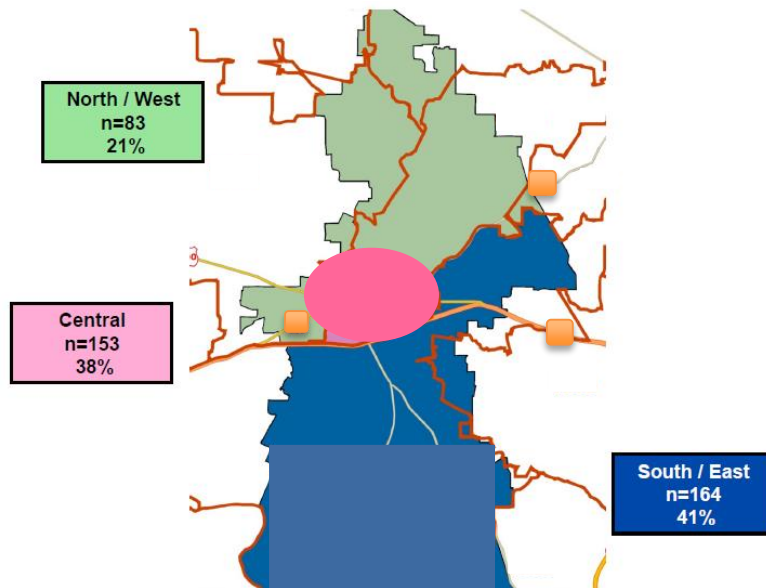


Figure 9. Distribution of telephone survey interviews.

Interestingly, 74% of survey respondents indicated that they voted in all or most of the “local elections dealing with bond issues, taxes and local development projects.”

Race/ethnicity of survey participants was 87% Anglo or White; 1% African-American or

Black; 4% Hispanic or Latino; 1% American Indian; 4% Other; 1% Unsure; 2% Refused. Regarding income levels, 16% of survey participants were below \$30,000; 18% between \$30,000-\$59,999; 22% between \$60,000-\$99,999; 29% \$100,000 and above; and 14% Income Unknown. Regarding political party affiliation, voters identified themselves as 63% Republican; 12% Democrat; 20% voting independent of party; 4% unsure or refused to answer. Genders of survey participants were 48% male and 52% female (2015 TFISD Voter Survey Top-Lines). Voter survey results suggested that, with an informed electorate, the district might reach a slim margin to have a successful school bond election result. Voter survey results projected a close scenario with 49% in favor; 44% against; with 7% depends or unsure.

Overall results from the voter survey regarding the success or failure for a potential school bond referendum indicated that for an Initial Ballot (survey respondents not having additional information, asked about a \$100-million bond), 35% were in favor (20% strongly in favor, 15% somewhat in favor); 47% were opposed (32% strongly opposed, 15% somewhat opposed); with 18% depends or unsure. With extrapolated results moving the depends or unsure into yes or no categories, the results were projected to be 43% in favor with 57% against. After survey respondents were provided additional information (Informed Ballot); 49% were in favor; 44% against; with 7% depends/unsure as seen in Figure 10.

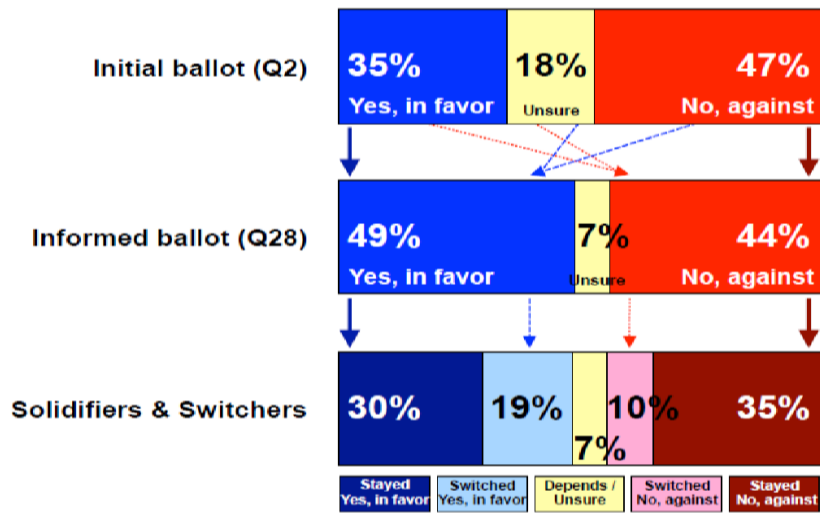


Figure 10. Comparison of initial and informed ballots.

The pre-bond 2015 voter survey results gave the school board and school district administration an overall potential for success or failure of a future school bond referendum election as seen in Figure 11. The Superintendent shared the importance of these results for the school board and school district administration in pursuing the 2015 school bond referendum election:

Just, there's some good information from that, but what we got, or what the board got out of that, was a sense that it was gonna be a very difficult thing to do. The climate, at the time, was that it would be difficult, but not impossible.

The results of the 2015 voter survey provided data about the reasons voters might vote against a future school bond referendum election as seen in Figure 12.

- 1 → If an election on school bonds were held today, 35% would vote for and 47% would vote against while 18% are unsure. This indicates a steep hill to climb.
- 2 → Open-ended responses show that leading reasons for opposing the bond are concerns about taxes, the feeling that the bond is not needed, and criticisms of spending. However some of those who are not initially supportive say they just need more information.
- 3 → After hearing more information about the possible bond, 49% would vote in favor and 44% would vote against. However, intensity of the informed ballot favors the no side, and a majority of non-parents are still opposed. This indicates that passage is possible with more information and high parent turnout, but it is not a given.
- 4 → The most important elements to communicate are found on the summary of correlation scores page.

Figure 11. Four major conclusions to the 2015 voter survey.



Figure 12. Why voters would not be in favor of bond in 2015.

The survey revealed key voter tolerances regarding total amount of a proposed school bond referendum as seen in Figure 13. For a \$50 million bond, voter tolerances showed 43% in favor; 45% against; with 11% depends unsure. For a \$75-million bond, 33% were in favor; 56% opposed, with 11% depends/unsure. For a \$100-million bond, 24% were in favor, with 66% opposed; with 11% depends/unsure. P1, a parent very supportive of the school district and both school bonds said this about bond amount:

I think it was interesting in the survey that was done, when I got the call, one of the questions early on was what level would you support? And it was \$50 million,

\$75 million, \$100 million . . . the report that we got was that most people responded saying they would not support a bond that went over \$100 million. But then they started asking specific things. “Would you support this? Would you support this?” And the collective answers were yes. And if I recall they asked if this put the bond over \$100 million would you still support it? And I think what got lost in the conversation was that when you say to somebody “would you accept a \$100-million bond?” Well, that’s overwhelming for everybody.

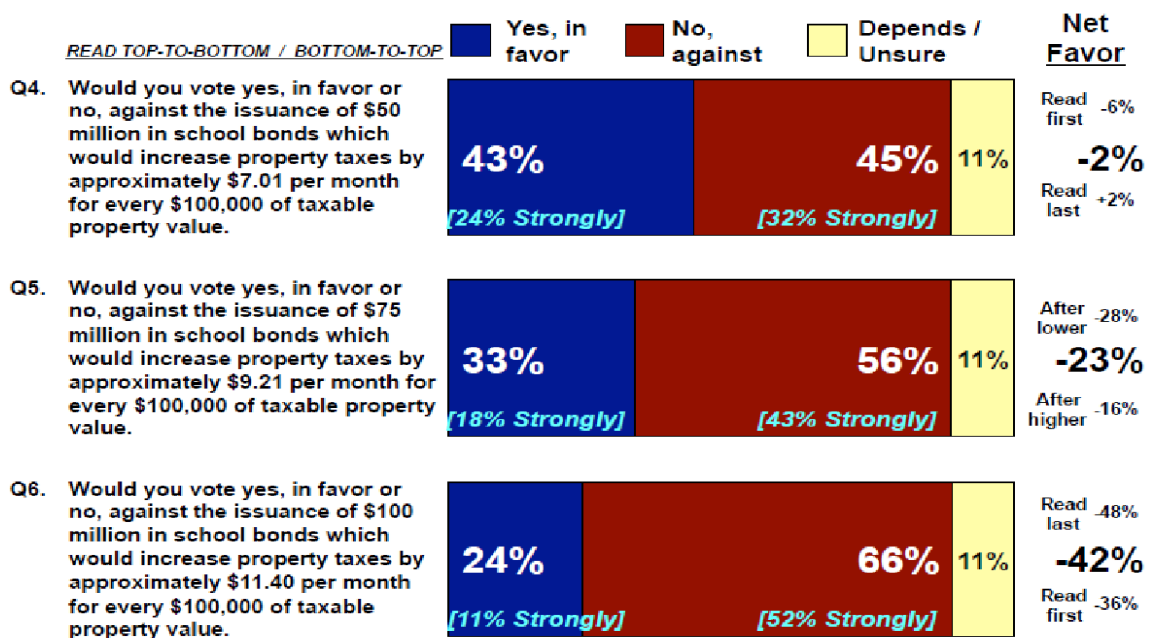


Figure 13. Results for three potential bond referenda amounts.

These data matched with district administrator, school board member, parent, and community interview feedback from the 2013 school bond. The 2015 voter survey predicted the potential school bond amount that would potentially have success in passing. Having needs assessment data on the potential amount the community would be willing to fund was an important variable in the success of the 2015 school bond election.

What the results of the 2015 voter survey told the Superintendent is that the school board and administration “had to be very smart and strategic about dollar amounts on the bond.” A2 relayed the value of the voter survey in the success of the 2015 school bond election:

So, for the 2015, the [Name of Survey Firm]’s Community Survey was invaluable on a whole lot of levels, because not only did it tell us what needs our community thought we had, it told us what threshold they would support in a dollar amount. I think that was probably the most critical piece of that.

A1 said, “Yeah, we kind of knew where the break was” and agreed that this reasoning led to the eventual 2015 school bond election proposals totaling under \$75 million. A1 agreed that the \$10-million proposal that the 2015 school bond committee recommended was not viable: “Yes, we knew it wasn’t passable in the environment we’re in.” In addition, the results of the 2015 voter survey showed voters more likely to support the following:

- Bond packages that will save taxpayers money because it is less expensive to expand and renovate existing facilities now than to wait and do it 5 or 10 years from now
- Improvements that will make schools more energy efficient and save on utility costs in the long run
- Bond that will allow for improvements to technology within the district in order to provide better instructional tools that expand 21st Century learning opportunities for students;

- Efforts to show that senior citizens who file their exemption will not have to pay any additional property taxes associated with this bond proposal. (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation)

The Superintendent highlighted feedback from the voter survey that indicated not to use a “single proposition” approach and to give voters choices:

Don’t come at them with a kitchen-sink approach like you did the last time, and that you need to do propositions. In 2013, it was an all-or-none kind of effort. In 2015, there were three propositions. So, people wanted choices.

The survey asked multiple questions about voter preferences regarding potential grade configurations. This provided information to the school board, school district administrators, and the future bond committee about the likelihood of school bond passage with various grade configuration alterations. Figure 14 displays the voter survey results in 2015.

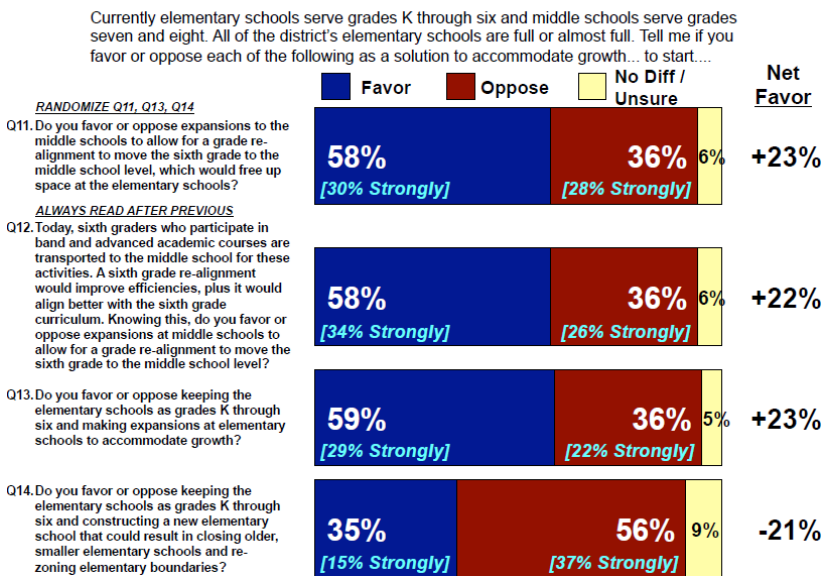


Figure 14. Exhibit provided regarding solutions for Kindergarten through Grade 8 configurations based on 2015 voter survey results.

The results of the 2015 voter survey showed that including athletics in a facilities bond would lead to very close in an election as seen in Figure 15. At 40%, voters indicated that they would only vote for school bond referenda that improved school buildings and did not include athletics facilities; 37% indicated they would vote in favor of bonds that improved both school buildings and athletic fields. Information from participants indicated that athletics was difficult for parents and non-parents in the community to stomach. The Superintendent stated, “People did not want athletic facilities.” A2 agreed: “They [voters] don’t want to use bond dollars to fund athletic improvements generally.” A staff member surveyed said, “How are the funds to be used. I don’t want to see the addition of any athletic purchases or improvements. I am tired of my classroom leaking while we have nice turf” (TFISD – Staff Verbatims – [Name of Survey Firm]).

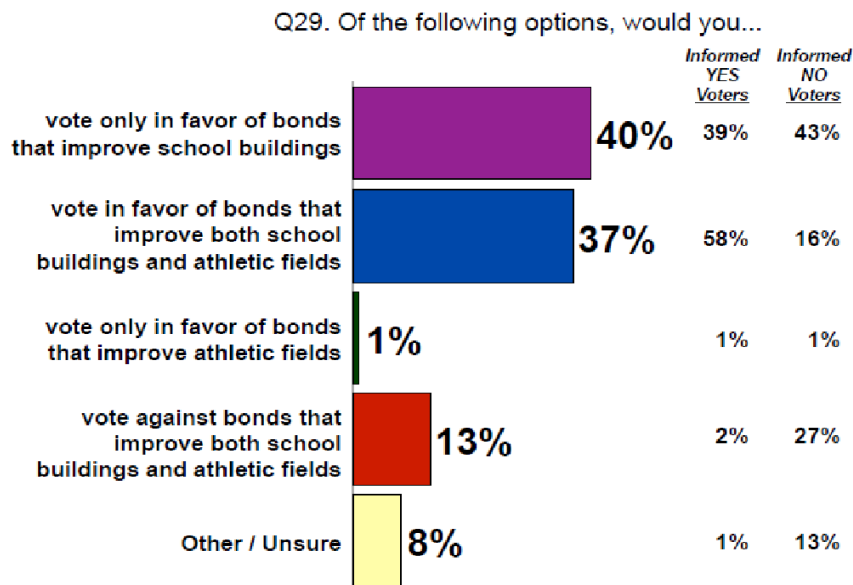


Figure 15. Data regarding favorability of funding for school buildings versus athletic fields in 2015.

Information obtained from staff responses to voter survey. The voter survey also specifically surveyed staff members, which provided the school board and school district administration detailed information from their teachers and staff regarding support for a potential school bond referendum election. Comments from staff echoed themes previously identified as significant to voting preferences, including: bond amount and concern about high property taxes/increase in taxation and the economic context; need for a specific proposed bond plan, including athletics and grade configurations; preference for multiple propositions and choice in bond propositions; and equitable distribution of fund between schools.

Extensive community demographics and economic growth data. As indicated earlier, the bond proposal development process included:

- **Community growth and economic development data**, including: population growth of city, population growth of surrounding county, industry employment, city and area annual sales and tax use trends, hotel and motel growth, new residential and commercial building permits, existing home sales, home values, oil prices, and business expansion in the area;
- **Real estate growth data**, including: housing market, new home ranking report, active and future subdivisions and townhomes;
- **District demographic growth and change data**, including: district enrollment history and cohort analysis and district 10-year forecast;

- **Tax rate and tax impact data**, including interest and sinking tax rate projections, district comparisons, and debt service requirements based upon multiple bond proposal scenarios.

Facilities needs assessment. An extensive facilities needs assessment was also an important part of the pre-bond planning process. A review of the documents revealed the goals of the needs assessment:

- to provide the basis for the ongoing planning for the operation and maintenance of district facilities;
- to evaluate and establish a detailed report card for each facility in the district based on 25 component areas; and,
- to provide the necessary data that will support decisions about future facility additions, renovations and new construction at every building in the district in both educational and adequacy and facility integrity. (BoardF2F Binder Contents)

The A1 talked about the detailed facilities needs assessment that the architect conducted, and that it took some time to do this.

We changed architectural firms. They had a complete department that came out and it took a period of time to do a needs assessment on every facility in this district, every building in our district, and that's how we started with our FACTS Committee by presenting that and helping them understand where the needs are and organizing the end to things that needed to be renovated, versus things that

were archaic, such as our old [Name of Middle School #1] that we've now demoted.

“Tiered” set of facilities’ needs. The facilities needs assessment was divided into “tiers” of needs in order to facilitate project prioritization. The Superintendent talked about how the facilities needs assessment laid a factual foundation for proposed projects in the bond proposals.

As soon as we hired [Name of Architectural Firm], . . . they began a detailed facility assessment of every facility . . . we had three tiers . . . Tier One was things that you really needed to address, Tier Two were if you could, then it would be nice, and Tier Three, your more cosmetic kind of things. So, they identified everything . . . under the sun that might could be improved upon facility-wise, they documented it and have a record of it. So, that’s kinda what drove the big number to begin with [total amount of facilities’ needs], knowing that we wouldn’t address all of that, but that’s what we started with, with the facts. The assessment has been done, you all go through this, and you look at this information, and then let’s start working our way back.

Extensive review of every school building in the school district. The facilities needs assessment included an extensive review of every school building in the school district, which laid the foundation for “equity” in school facilities’ projects in the school bond proposal. A1 remarked on the extensive nature of the school facilities’ needs assessment:

Because our new architect firm has a complete department dedicated to that and an entire team. It took months to go through that assessment, and there was a binder built, both electronically and a paper binder. It took two huge binders for that to get assembled, and there's one on every campus and every building. It talks about capacity, and of course, the condition of everything from HVACS to your roof, all the way down to the concrete joints in your parking lot and your sidewalk and things of that nature.

The wealth of accurate data on school facilities' needs created transparency in the process and built trust with stakeholders. The SBM said:

Yeah, the second time it was an information campaign . . . There was not a lot of, "Vote yes," on my Facebook page, or a lot of, "We need this," or "It's for the kids," there was no pictures of children. I wasn't going to placate anybody. I understood the people who follow me and who listen to me, they're very skeptical of the district and almost all of them voted no the last time. What my mission on Facebook, and a lot of what the architects did a good job this time also, it was a lot of just, "Hey, here's a graph. Look at how much our income has gone up, but look how much our usage has gone [up]." . . . Or, "Here's some photos of the schools." It was very quantitative. . . . We were trying to go after hard, irrefutable, "You can't argue with this. You cannot argue with this. This is how much we have to spend and this is how much is devoted to teachers."

Information from other school district bond election efforts. In addition, district administrators mentioned intentionally learning from the school bond referendum

elections in nearby school districts. It was apparent in the 2015 school bond election that district administrators paid close attention to school bond election referenda dynamics in surrounding communities to inform their approach. A2 referenced other nearby opposition to a single proposition approach:

[Name of Nearby Town] is a very small school district nearby. I think their bond election was about \$13 million. The majority of that was for a football stadium. When I went and read comments . . . when it didn't pass, [I] went and read and searched out comments and kind of made a mental note, people were saying, "We understood the facility and safety needs that were presented, but it was all packaged into one bond, so one proposition, and I voted against it because I didn't support the football stadium."

This confirmed [Name of School District] learnings that indicated against a single bond proposition and against inclusion of athletics in the bond proposal(s).

A2 indicated that this change in the environment was not an anomaly, but a sea-change for surrounding districts as well, calling it "a new time for bond elections."

We watch all those schools' bond elections that happen [in nearby communities], and so we've just had some that didn't fail, near us, and of course, one of things we do in the communication office is we go look at it, and we explore. We look and listen to the reasons why. So, I think it goes back to reinforce what [A1] said.

It's a new time for our communities with bond elections [italics added for emphasis].

Comprehensive Bond Election Planning Process

Responses from interviews as well as document review indicated that the school board and school district adopted a transparent planning process for the 2015 school bond referendum election with the support of the architectural consulting firm. The process was a coordinated and comprehensive process that included all aspects of school bond election planning and implementation, including: pre-bond assessment planning and demographic review; an extensive facilities needs assessment process; bond proposal development support and planning; bond committee facilitation support; and support for bond campaign marketing and communications activities (2015 TFISD Bond Presentation; 2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation). Figure 16 highlights the process.

Coordinated school bond planning process. Review of the documents provided evidence that a comprehensive school bond election coordination plan was put into place. It was clear there was an overall plan for the entire bond election process, including a delineation of all the steps of the process. These steps included pre-bond needs assessment planning and demographic review; a facilities needs assessment process; bond proposal development support and planning; bond committee facilitation support; and bond campaign marketing and communications activities (2015 TFISD Bond Presentation; 2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation). This presence of a coordinated school bond election plan and processes laid the foundation for organized and effective pro-bond efforts.

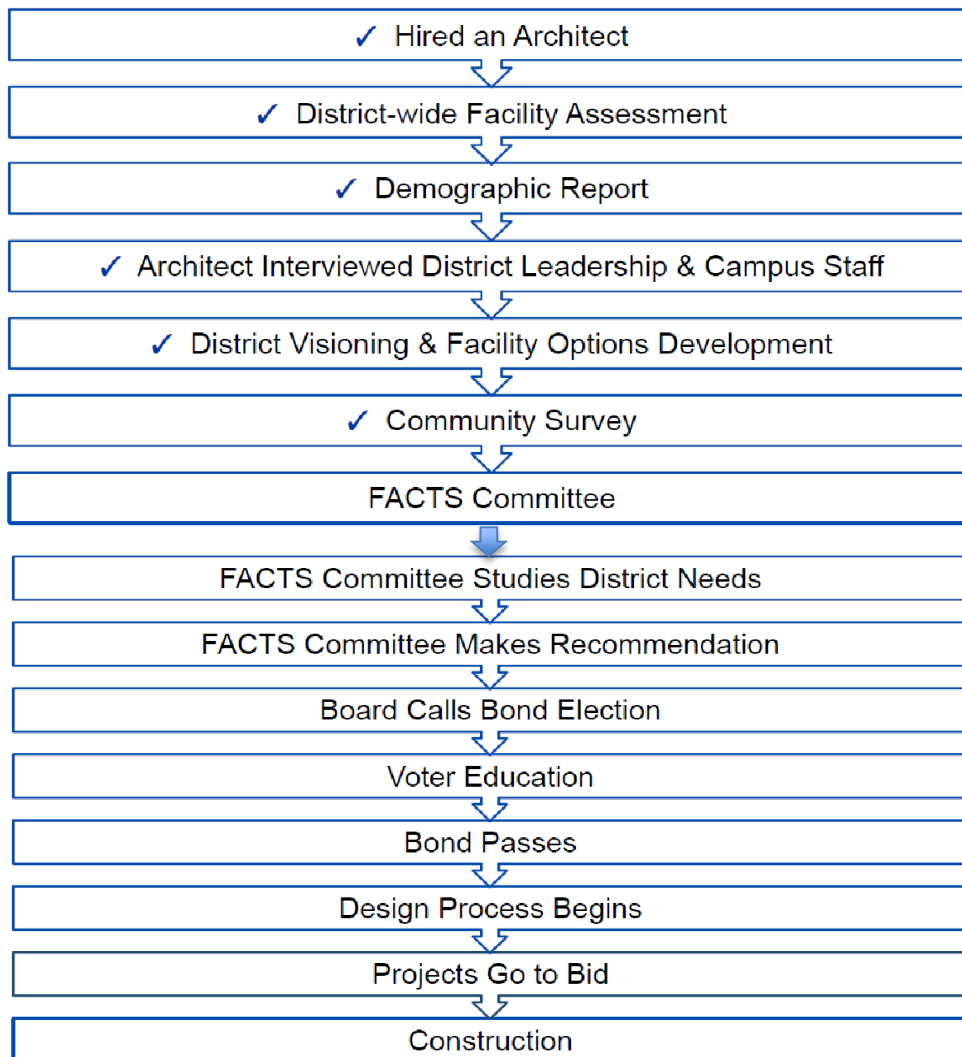


Figure 16. Bond process flow chart provided at TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation in 2015.

Clear decision-making and communications structures. There was strong evidence of a comprehensive school bond election plan, as noted earlier. There were also clearly established decision-making and communications structures between district leaders, school board leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members through the FACTS Committee and PAC. There was a clearly delineated process for the FACTS Committee to develop and provide a bond proposal recommendation to the school board.

Written information documenting meeting dates and times, meeting locations, and names of committee members was readily available. Meeting agendas, presentation information, and meeting minutes were also readily available online, and were available throughout the 2015 school bond referendum election process (TFISD FACTS Committee Meetings #1-#7). The committee was facilitated in a large group [Superintendent]. The “Objectives & Responsibilities of the FACTS Committee” defined the bond recommendation process:

- Represent the entire community in the bond planning process;
- Review and prioritize the facility needs of TFISD;
- Bring forward a plan to the TFISD Board of Trustees that will include recommendations as to what should be included and how much money should be requested in a possible May 2015 bond election. (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation)

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the FACTS committee. There were clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the FACTS Committee, which were communicated at the first and subsequent committee meetings to develop a shared understanding of decision-making structures and roles and responsibilities. The committee was defined as: “A group of community members that come together to study the facility needs of the school district and recommend a package to the TFISD Board of Trustees to put before voters in a bond election.” A key purpose of the committee was stated as input: “We want you to have input. FACTS participants reflect larger community values, needs, and desires – YOU are TFISD!” (TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1).

The FACTS Committee also had clearly established policies and procedures, including Purpose, Objectives & Responsibilities; Guiding Principles; Values; and delineation of the Bond Process & How School Finance Works. The Guiding Principles were established at the first meeting as: Growth, Safety & Security, Aging Facilities & Campus Equity, Technology, Career & Technical Education (Vocational), and Grade Alignment (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation).

In addition, information about the district's finances and taxes were defined and explained from the first meeting, including the overview of maintenance and operations versus interest and sinking spending; district's budget; need for a bond election; capital debt funding; and TFISD tax rate and history. Detailed information was also provided about district academic requirements and how to build a bond budget to the FACTS Committee (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #4).

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for committee leadership. The FACTS Committee had clearly delineated community co-chair leadership roles and responsibilities. The FACTS Committee was led by two community co-chairs. The role of each of the FACTS Committee co-chairs was to:

- Lead each committee meeting according to the agenda provided by TFISD Administration;
- Make adjustments to meeting agendas when needed;
- Facilitate large group discussion on all information provided;
- Make sure that all ideas and/or positions are heard and given equal time;
- Make sure group stays focused and on track;

- Give formal presentation to Board of Trustees with FACTS Committee’s final recommendations. (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation)

Effective Leadership Recruitment and Training

Interview data and review of the documents suggested that effective leadership recruitment and training of parent and community volunteers had a positive impact on the 2015 school bond election results.

Strong recruiting of influential, experienced parent and community leaders for key bond leadership roles. Bolman and Deal (2008) found that “identifying and recruiting credible, influential team members to serve in key roles” can significantly support a change process (p. 395). Interview data and document reviewed showed that considerable attention was given to identifying and recruiting “credible, influential team members” to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process, including: (a) the intentional recruiting of credible, influential community members to serve as FACTS Committee Co-Chairs; (b) purposeful recruiting of a diverse, cross-section of FACTS Committee Members, including representation from teachers, staff, parents, community members, students, and the opposition; and (c) deliberate recruitment of key community leaders to serve as leaders for the pro-bond PAC and other parents/community pro-bond support groups. Importantly, recruiting also included involving key community bond leaders who had significant experience and expertise with prior bond referendum elections.

Recruitment of FACTS committee community co-chairs. District administrators recruited the former Treasurer of the 1999 school bond referendum as one of the

community co-chairs of the FACTS Committee, ensuring his experience and expertise would be brought to bear on the bond election efforts. CM, who was the former Treasurer of the 1999 school bond, reported:

When we got to the next bond [2015], I was actually asked to be the chairman of the group that when we had our meetings, when we brought the community of people in to be a part of that, I was a co-chair with [name of another community member].

Recruitment of influential community members reassured and motivated other parents.

P1 explained:

I was so excited when [Name of Treasurer] was here. That's really not my specialty. I feel like a fish out of water most of the time when we had our meetings. I think it was a lot to process in a short amount of time. I never felt like I was even in the curve. Every meeting we had I felt like I was still processing the information from the previous meeting. So, it was a huge undertaking.

Document review confirmed intentional recruiting of credible, influential community members to serve as FACTS Committee Co-Chairs. Document review revealed clear and readily available names of the community co-chairs for the 2015 school bond election, as well as their roles and responsibilities within the FACTS Committee (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation).

Their role was clearly communicated to the FACTS Committee at the first meeting:

- Lead each committee meeting according to the agenda provided by TFISD Administration

- Make adjustments to meeting agendas when needed
- Facilitate large group discussion on all information provided
- Make sure that all ideas and/or positions are heard and given equal time
- Make sure group stays focused and on track
- Give formal presentation to Board of Trustees with FACTS Committee’s final recommendations” (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation).

The Superintendent mentioned the effectiveness of the FACTS Committee Co-Chairs:

We had co-chairs for that committee, and they would ask the architect or the district for specific information, and we would provide that. We would assist them in presenting it if they needed it, or they would present it themselves. So, they did a great job of walking through that, leading that [process].

Recruitment of PAC leadership. A1 described PAC committee involvement as improved in the 2015 school bond election:

The one last thing I will say is we had a lot of very active parent involvement in the 2015, through the PAC. You know the PAC can do what we [the school district] can’t. We had active parent participation in 2013, but the PAC itself was so much more organized in 2015, and I think they had lessons learned from it as well. Just having gone through, and I think we all thought, I think the whole community thought the same thing, that people just show up and vote because it’s the right thing to do for kids. So, I think we were all shocked into reality and into the new way of thinking, parents included.

Recruitment of the PAC Treasurer. CM highlighted the unique and important role of the school bond election Treasurer. He described the significance of the role, as well as the characteristics needed in strong bond treasurer.

The only name out there anywhere on anything, even in your advertisement, it's not [Name of Superintendent]. It's the Treasurer's name, which is my name.

Whoever is the Treasurer has to have a tough skin and has to be prepared to answer the questions truthfully and honestly. Give a reason why you think it's so important. If your treasurer is not positive, that's another key thing. The Treasurer has to be a very positive person because every sign that's there, every advertisement in the paper or magazine, or wherever it's out there, it has nobody's name except the treasurer's name. There's a way of them to find out your phone number, even though your phone number might not be there, or your address may not be there, but your name is there. They will call you and they will tell you what you think. You have to be very diplomatic at times. I think that's so important . . . They have to be a positive person for the bond, period. They have to be educated or at least, understand what you're trying to do. They have to have a real good knowledge of every aspect . . . [of] whatever you're building, if you're building a building or whatever you're doing, they have to have a pretty good knowledge of what you're doing. If it's building a ramp or building all of the security stuff that we did, you have to understand it so that if someone calls you, you can give them a truthful, positive answers towards the bond. That may be the most positive thing that you get.

You've got to have a lot of common sense. I was in business here for a long time. Every time we had a bond of any kind, if it's city, if it's county, when we did the transportation bond and we put the loop in, it affected me, bottom line, every time we did that . . . I don't care what it is, the people that are putting that on are most normally not doing it for themselves, they're doing it to help the community.

CM indicated that the strength of the bond treasurer was a major deciding element in the success of school bond elections.

I've done this twice, and the two times I did it, we had passing bonds. That has nothing to do with me, but I think it's still important that who the board chooses to be the treasurer is so important . . . truly believe that. I watch all these towns around us. Whenever it comes out, I look and see who their [bond treasurer is]. I know too many people in the county, not necessarily just this community, and see who their treasurer is and see why they were chosen. If I know them, that's fine. If I don't, then why . . . Are they somebody new? Like [Name of Person], when [Nearby District] went in and got the bond to build the new high school, then came in and built the new football stadium and then they got the football and all that. I knew, nearly every time, who that person was that was [the treasurer for the school bond election].

Intentional recruiting for FACTS committee members. There was deliberate recruiting of a diverse, cross-section of community members to become FACTS Committee Members, including representation from teachers, staff, parents, community

members, students, and the opposition. Document review revealed readily available names of committee members (2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting #1 Presentation). The Superintendent reference this intentional recruiting as a variable impacting the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election: “On that committee we did, we had a great cross-section, where the last one was probably 20 people, this was closer to 80 people. It was a big, big group.”

Numerous respondents mentioned the importance of purposeful inclusion of the opposition to the bond planning committee. Recruitment for the committee deliberately included influential members of opposition to the prior school bond referendum. P1 mentioned the inclusion of influential members of the opposition being recruited to the FACTS Committee:

The chairman of the Republican Party was on the FACTS Committee. She only came to one or two meetings to my knowledge. But there were some people . . . there were places on that FACTS Committee that would be seen as dissenting voices.

Recruitment of retired community members and educators. CM indicated that there was a large group of retired community members and educators in the area that he recruited to support 2015 school bond referendum election efforts to positively impact the election results. He said that the retired community members group had time, and that they could be persuaded to support bond efforts to support grandchildren and get younger people out to vote:

I know I was much younger then [1999], but still the ones that worked on it, basically, are in their 60s and 70s. They have time. We persuaded them that if you have time, you need to be a part of it. It may not affect any of your children. By the time we get it built, they may be already out. It's gonna affect your grandchildren or some of your nieces, nephews, or your neighbor's kids. You have to be a part of it because you have to be the ones to get these young people out to vote.

CM also suggested that recruiting retired educators was a key leadership group for the 2015 school bond efforts because of their commitment and expertise:

The older group is gonna be here, and they're gonna help you. Especially the retired teachers, they're so good at helping and we have a lot of retired teachers living in this community. They're a very strong group. They meet once a month, and they talk about [TFISD]. Even though that's a county-wide retired teacher's group, they talk about all the communities and how they're trying to get buildings built and things done. The teachers are such an asset, especially the retired teachers.

Training for school bond election efforts. Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested that training efforts support integration of human resources factors in a change process (p. 395). There was also evidence of training of district leaders and parents and community members in the 2015 school bond election process. From document review, the pre-bond process included leadership development and building exercises for the guiding team that included district visioning and facility options development, as indicated by visioning and

“designing change” agendas (2015 Designing Transformation Meeting Debrief; 2015 TFISD Visioning Agenda). These discussions, led by the architectural firm, included early discussions and research on best school structures, grade alignments and building capacities as well as the strategic planning process (2015 TFISD Visioning Agenda). CM had a keen awareness of the need to train new parents and community members in the school bond referendum election process:

Mainly with the young people. I’m talking about young people. I’m talking people that are in their . . . I don’t know how old these kids are, I don’t want to get them too old. Probably in their 20s and 30s and maybe even into their early 40s. They have not participated, especially in the bond that I worked with in [19]99.

CM said that others began to see this need after the 2013 school bond failure, and began to try to bring up younger parents and community members in the 2015 school bond election:

I think after that bond failed in 2013, they wanted it to happen but they didn’t want to put the time in. Once they saw that happen [the bond fail in 2013], then some of the meetings we had trying to organize some of these kids . . . whatever they are. They’re 30, 40 years younger than me, 50 years younger. They begin to realize that it’s going to take the younger group to get this done.

Numerous respondents saw the strong support from the bond election planning consultants from the architectural firm as a variable positively impacting bond pre-planning and planning efforts. Specialized bond election staff from the architectural firm

provided extensive resources and support to FACTS Committee and community leadership. The Superintendent said:

Well, they helped us tremendously, and they, again, we have to understand that we may know our community, or think we do, but these people are, you know, they may be engaged in 10 different bond elections across the state, and are managing all these different things. They know. They're doing 100 to our 1.

Substantive Input and Involvement from Representative Group of Stakeholders

Interview respondents indicated that significant stakeholder input and involvement in the school bond referendum planning process was a key variable in the success of the 2015 school bond election. As mentioned earlier, the school board and school district administrators had a new commitment to listening to the community and actively soliciting input and diverse perspectives. The school board and school district administrators adopted multiple pre-bond strategies to gain community input, including: extensive interviews with key influencers and surveying a representative, random sample cross-section of voters through a voter survey. In addition, the school board and school district added FACTS Committee meetings that solicited input from teachers, staff, parents, community members, students, and the opposition and held well-publicized Community Meetings to share bond proposal and gain teacher, parent, and community input on proposed plan (2-way communication).

Multiple interview respondents indicated that increased stakeholder input and involvement was one of the main reasons the 2015 school bond election succeeded:

The community had better input on it. That was what led to it getting through. I also think, too that by not passing the first time, the groups who were voting for it initially, because they had investments into it, students in the schools, and whatnot, things that they wanted to take care of. They probably got a lot more involved and got out and brought more community members in, too [P2].

The perception from the community was that they had meaningful input in 2015. P2 described that stakeholders were willing to support and promote the bond if first, they understood the need, and second, if they had input on the bond proposals. As a result, they were willing to support and promote the bond proposals because they had helped “decide what was important.”

I do remember a general consensus being a feeling like “well, we helped them decide what was important.” Then, people admitted that “yes, there was a need,” and then, they went and passed [the bond]. “There was a need, and we helped them make sense of how to spend the money.” I guess was kind of this weird idea that had come out of it.

SBM referred to inclusion of the opposition being important in unifying the community: “Yeah, well in the second [2015] one, I think we did a lot better job of including the community even those that were against us rather than making it an ‘us versus them.’”

Only after the extensive community needs assessment and facilities’ needs assessment process did the school board and school district administration begin a formal bond proposal planning process with the community. The school board and school district administration began a public, transparent facilitated process to develop a

potential school bond referendum election proposal recommendation for the school board that involved substantive input and involvement through a large, representative, highly-visible bond committee. Based on feedback from the 2013 bond failure, the school board and district administration created a large, diverse, highly-visible bond planning committee. The Superintendent reported “then, the board created what we ended up calling the FACTS Committee . . . Facility Assessment of Citizens, Teachers, and Students. F-A-C-T-S. Is what the acronym was.”

The FACTS Committee in 2015 was mentioned by numerous respondents as a strategy that supported the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election by intentionally seeking input and soliciting diverse perspectives from teachers, staff, parents, community members, and students, as well as providing what Bolman and Deal (2008) call an “arena for discussion and negotiation of school bond priorities and final projects” (p. 395).

Intentional recruiting of large, diverse stakeholder group. Intentional recruiting of diverse, cross-section of FACTS Committee Members, including representation from teachers, staff, parents, community members, students, and the opposition, improved input into the bond proposal development process that respondents indicated positively impacted the bond outcome in 2015. A1 recalled, “When we got to the 2015 [school bond election], we focused in on ‘all right, we’re going to pull in staff, teachers, community members, we’re going to see what those voices say.’”

The committee had a very clearly branded name that intentionally represented the inclusiveness of the committee, as well as the commitment to work from the “facts” of

facilities' needs. Most of the participants interviewed remembered the name of the committee. Document review revealed readily available names of committee members.

The Superintendent recalled:

On that committee we did, we had a great cross-section, where the last one [2013 bond] was probably 20 people, this was closer to 80 people. It was a big, big group. And they didn't stay with us all throughout the whole process, but initially, when we met, it was a large, large group.

A2 seconded the importance of this committee:

The other piece that I think was real significant in the 2015 bond election was that from the get-go we had a FACTS Committee. It was Facilities Advisory Committee of . . . Citizens, Teachers, and Students. We had two high school students on there. They actually went through all of our facility needs . . . [and] the [Name of Survey Firm] survey. [Committee members] looked at that very thoroughly, looked at demographics, and then tried to blend all of that together into a proposal that they submitted to the school board, and ultimately the school board determined what they would take forward to a bond election. But because we had communities so heavily involved in the process from the beginning, it was a little different in the 2013 bond election, that process. I think that really it gave about . . . I think there were about 25 people on that committee.

SBM reported that the FACTS Committee was highly visible in the 2015 school bond election efforts:

The second time, you would've had to have really been under a rock to get that flyer in the mail like [SBM] did 2013 and not know there was going to be a bond. It was the buzz around town. We didn't try to hide it or anything. It was just, "Everybody, we want your input. Show up at this meeting. Show up at that meeting . . . We'll also have phone interviews."

Impact on the bond proposal development process. Several respondents mentioned that the FACTS committee process created transparency by communicating key information to the community along the way. The Superintendent communicated this priority by keeping "the community involved all along the way, by putting information out on the website from pictures to progress reports." P1 also mentioned that information from the FACTS Committee resulted in transparency:

There was a website that was dedicated to the appropriate information and a very transparent understanding of the entire process. And so all of our deliberation on the FACTS Committee were on that website. All of our decisions on the board deliberations were on that website. A full run through of the entire process was on the website.

A2 also mentioned how the FACTS Committee contributed to transparency through the process:

So, we've tried to be real transparent. That bond wing on our website . . . I haven't looked at analytics on it, I'm not sure how often or frequently it's clicked, but it's there. So you can't say we're not being transparent with this whole process. You can go back to the very first FACTS Committee agenda,

presentation and minutes on that. You can take it all the way back, and it's really kind of nice for us that that history is there, too.

Symbolic shift in leadership role of school board members to 'listening' role.

The board of trustees, rather than leading the bond proposal development process, was involved in the facilities needs assessment and bond proposal development process but played a "listening" rather than a "leading" role. The Superintendent said the following:

On that we also assigned three of the board members to be kind of just "flies on the wall" [on the FACTS Committee]. They were there, they weren't to participate unless asked a question. They weren't certainly there to influence or anything. They stayed back, and it was really driven by [the community co-chairs].

School board member and superintendent attendance provided visibility for the school board and superintendent, as well as allowing them to hear discussions and key concerns, without losing community direction and leadership. CM explained:

The board was able to be there at those, especially the superintendent [Name of Superintendent]. He was there. Most of the school board members were there. I think some of the school board members, when we started out needed some persuading, too.

Stakeholders understood school facilities' needs. An important variable in gaining support from stakeholders was having them understand the school district facilities' needs. The school board and school district intentionally used multiple strategies to demonstrate the facilities' needs to teachers, parents, and community

members. Respondents indicated that there was improved stakeholder understanding of district needs in the 2015 school bond referendum election, and that this positively impacted the school bond referendum election outcomes. P2 said, “Then people admitted that ‘yes there was a need’ and then they went and passed [the bond]. ‘There was a need and we helped them make sense of how to spend the money.’”

The architectural firm conducted an exhaustive facilities’ needs assessment of every building in the district, which led to data on facilities’ needs for each and every building in the school district. In addition, an important component mentioned by several interview respondents were the facilities’ tours that were held during bond proposal development process. Facilities’ tours were held during the FACTS Committee process for teachers, parents, community members to “see and feel’ facilities” needs. In addition, FACTS Committee meetings held at different school buildings so that teachers, parents, and community members would be able to experience the needs at different buildings across the district that they might not normally access.

Facilities tours and holding FACTS Meetings at different schools. One of the issues of the 2013 school bond was that parents and community members were unaware of district facilities’ needs. In 2015, one of the strategies that the school board and school district administrators used to show the need to teachers, parents, and community members was by holding FACTS Committee meetings at different schools across the district, as well as facility tours. A review of the FACTS Committee planning presentations and agendas showed that these meetings were held at different schools across the district. CM noted, “We had meetings in every school in this last election.” In

addition, the school district hosted tours of all the districts' facilities, and as said by the Superintendent, "We toured every facility." CM also mentioned tours of the buildings:

When we got it going . . . We took all the tours. We invited the community to come in and do the tours of every place that was going to be affected by the bond. We brought the community in, the ones that would come, and the people from [Name of Architectural Firm] would show us the things that they saw that was wrong with the stuff or that could be updated or needed to be.

Showed specific needs, e. g. accessibility. Holding FACTS Committee meetings at different schools and having facilities' tours was a way to have parents, teachers, and community members "see, feel, and touch" facilities needs in order to establish facilities' needs in the district. The Superintendent related a significant story about accessibility and access as an example of how important it was for community members to experience school facilities' issues, and the impact that had on support for the school bond efforts:

This campus right down the hill from us, it's [Name of Elementary], it's on a hill, and there's a series of steps that go up to the front door, but there was no wheelchair access. And so, children in wheelchairs, or that have ambulatory issues that they're dealing with, all had to come around to the back to come into the building. So, that was one of the significant views, or lenses, I guess, that maybe that committee looked at whenever they started touring buildings. And, that's why we met at different campuses, so that they could live it, for at least that short period of time.

Issues with old middle school. Numerous respondents mentioned the significant issues with the Middle School #1 that eventually were included in the bond proposal.

[Name of Middle School #1] was really the one that was . . . A blind man could see what was wrong there. You could smell it. It was a building that had outlived its usefulness. I've been in the new one, probably half-a-dozen times during the process of building and since it's been open. The kids are going to get so much more out of it [CM].

P1 addressed the issues affecting Middle School #1:

And anyone who had anything to do with [Name of Middle School #1] knew the state of that school. They knew that the band flooded. They knew that the back of it flooded. They knew all that. Now they might complain that the school district hadn't kept up maintenance with it. That was a common complaint. But they knew.

Even P3, a parent new to the community who was not there before the school bond election, said:

But none of the parents that I kind of know in passing have really said much about it. . . . It was time. I mean, I went into [Name of Middle School #1], the old one, last year for something, and that place was old. It needed to be torn down. It had a lower level, but it wasn't two levels, if that makes sense. It had stairs going down to something, and they were from the 50s. I mean, the place was old. And it smelled bad. It smelled really bad. So, yeah, I mean, I don't even want to know what was going on in there.

P1 added that parents in the district were ready to move their children out of the district if the middle school wasn't fixed:

I knew people who said, "If this doesn't pass to build a new [Name of Middle School #1], then I'm going to put my kids in private school." Cause they weren't going to send their children to [Name of Middle School #1]. So because they knew what the state of it was, they could afford to put their kids in private school. They just weren't going to put [their child into the school] . . . well, this individual had already put one child through [Name of Middle School #1]. The next child's coming up. And he said, "I'll just put her in private school," because of the state of the building. Now the faculty, everybody agreed that everything about [Name of Middle School #1] is good; it's just the building was horrible.

Bond committee addressed multiple political variables. Bolman and Deal (2008) indicated that key strategies in a successful change process involve negotiating the political environment, including "creating arenas [where political issues can be discussed and negotiated]; building alliances; and defusing opposition (p. 395). Interview responses from participants indicated that the FACTS Committee was significant in building alliances, creating an arena where political issues could be discussed, as well as a place to defuse opposition.

Deliberate efforts to build alliances in the school bond referendum process. The school board and school district administration had become aware of the need to build alliances during the 2015 school bond election efforts in order to overcome negative sentiment. There was a deep understanding of the significant anti-bond, anti-tax, and anti-

government sentiment in the community that would need to be addressed, as well as potential parent and teacher concerns with any specific school bond proposal. Inclusion of “opposition” perspectives was a deliberate attempt to build alliances throughout the bond planning process.

Recruitment for the committee deliberately included members of opposition to the prior school bond referendum. The Superintendent conveyed that this reflected the district’s new commitment to listening to diverse perspectives in the community:

That included those folks that were outwardly opposed to the last bond election. They wanted a voice at the table, and that’s what it was. We brought them in and gave them a chance to go through the entire process, and we really wanted that voice in there. We wanted to hear it. The board wanted to hear it. So, we had that large group.

The SBM shared that inclusion of the opposition worked in multiple ways. First, opposition members could say they were invited to the table.

Then we invited the FACTS Committee, of which was mostly . . . Well, you know, I say we invited a lot of “vote no-ers,” not a ton showed up. I think there was probably up to . . . How many people are on the FACTS Committee? 12, 26, 18, something like that? I think maybe we had five or six, but that’s not how many we invited. We did try to invite a lot. Even by just doing that, the ones that didn’t show up, we now had a little bit of a, “Hey, we invited you. We tried to bring you in on the process.” That quieted them. [Invited opposition members would say:] “Eh, I just couldn’t make it this time, but I understand. I heard some

good things about what you're doing. Yeah, I'm okay with it this time around."

We got a lot of that.

Second, the SBM shared how including opposition members on the FACTS Committee was a way of showing respect for the oppositions' viewpoints, an important part of building alliances:

The other thing that we did, another piece of advice for future groups is, our FACTS Committee, or our groups that we had in the beginning, we invited as many, or very many, a lot of the recognized "vote no" people. We put them right on the committee and we let them have the loudest, largest mic to just rip apart everything. And then, we had people in the room that could say, "Well, I respect that you just said that. Do you mind if I show you something?" They pull up a big slide that says, "Your taxes have actually gone, [down]. Now, I know that's the perception [that they have gone up]. I'm glad you're here, [Name]. I'm glad you're here, but the taxes have gone down. Do you think if we marketed this better maybe people would understand?" You could see the "vote no-er" be like, "Yeah, I didn't really know that. Can you email that to me? I don't know if I trust that, but if that's true, that does change my opinion." Now you've got them softer.

FACTS committee created an arena to discuss and negotiate. The FACTS Committee created a natural arena to discuss and negotiate a wide variety of options in the school bond proposal. Meeting presentations show numerous options that were costed out and discussed by the committee, before the FACTS Committee provided a final

recommendation to the school board (TFISD FACTS Committee Meeting Presentations #3-#7).

CM shared the positive impacts that the inclusion of the opposition had on the bond planning process. First, it allowed committee members to address opposition concerns that could have derailed school bond election success:

We had community people come in, mainly school parents, and it was about a 50-50 deal where the parents would ask negative questions or would want a negative answer. Most of the time, we had enough people there to isolate some of them and talk to them and really give them more information. I think that was really important. I don't know if we persuaded them, but we tried to. . . . Every meeting we had with the community, we had people there that would sit down and talk to groups. Sometimes there would be several in a group, sometimes it would be just one individual. We'd have our meetings, they'd get loud and say that's wrong, you're doing this wrong. You overcome that and try to talk to them as individuals and try to explain the outbursts and try to explain the questions and the answers, so everybody will understand.

CM expressed that opposition members may have changed their beliefs and become more positive about the school bond referendum as they participated in the process:

I think through the process of what we went through, I know that some of them became very positive about it. Starting out, they may not have been as positive but as we went along, I think they got more positive about it.

This encouraged opposition members to communicate bond planning efforts back to their social networks, as said by CM:

Not all of them were for the bond. That was a positive thing, too, that you don't go in and just fill your committee with everybody that says "yes." You had to have some negative, so you can help persuade some of the negative voters through that committee. I think we did that, I think we took some of the people that were on that committee and persuaded them that this is the right thing to do. They went back and told their people that, "yeah, they're going the right way. They're trying to do this right."

Ability to defuse opposition and anticipating counterstrategies. Interview responses also suggested that the school board and school district were able to significantly "defuse opposition and anticipate counterstrategies" as opposition concerns were heard and addressed throughout the FACTS Committee bond development process (Bolman & Deal, 2008, -. 395). The SBM explained:

The main mission was not to turn the "vote nos." It was just to soften them, quiet them, or turn them into a maybe just nothing, just a "not vote." Let sleeping dogs lie. You're not going to go out there and get the angry person. When I say we invited a lot of the "vote no-ers," it was strategic, but we wanted some in there that we felt would be helpful and that would let us know. They learned a lot I think from me, like, "Why did you vote against it?" "Oh, I never even thought of that."

Community forums offered opportunities for two-way communication. In addition to the FACTS Committee, the school board members held community forums regarding the school bond referendum in 2015 once the bond election had been declared. Parents, teachers, and community members were able to hear about the bond, as well as provided input and engaged in in two-way communication about the school bond proposal at these meetings. P1 said:

Then there were several public presentations made that were open to the community. Community members could come and hear the presentation. The one that I attended was done by the school board president and then he entertained the questions, so people were able to ask questions.

Appealing Bond Proposals

Respondents consistently referenced “reframed” school bond proposal(s) as an important variable in the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election. A1 indicated that a restructuring of the bond proposal made the bond referendum more “appealing and palatable” to individual voters:

The other thing that was very different is we restructured what we packaged in the bond fund from 2013 to 2015, and I do believe that made it more appealing and palatable to individual taxpayers, and we had a significant committee group, a PAC group, that helped us lead the community through that. It made all the difference in the world.

Reflecting stakeholder input. P2 described that stakeholder input and involvement resulted in a more appealing set of bond proposals:

It was different the second time around that I recall (2015 versus 2013). . . . When it failed the first time, they didn't really ask for the money because they just wanted to improve these things. You ask out of need basically. When it failed the first time, they were put in a pinch. Then they came back, they developed, they *actually had a lot more community involvement* [italics added for emphasis] and sort of reframed and rebuilt it and decided what was important and ran it again.

SBM expressed the restructuring as follows:

You can tell by the bonds, in theory, the idea of the bond, and this is because the district has any idea, the bond didn't really change. Let's try to relieve capacity issues at the elementary schools. But the execution, how are you going to do that was much more palatable to the people because we asked them what they could digest. "Okay, well maybe sixth graders can move up, but you're not taking my fifth-grade baby." "Well, the district needs some athletic improvements up at the high school. Okay, well let's address that through fund balance. Let's remove it from the bond because that's what the people think." . . . We need to improve Career and Tech: "Alright, well let's put that on a 5-year plan, and let's just not really worry about that right now." . . . The district needs improvements and upgrades. . . . Then let's do safety and security.

P2 called reframing a "better expression of meaning" that "was definitely better community involvement, better expression of meaning, and then sort of a means of showing that the funds that are being asked for are being spent wisely."

Bond proposal met the identified need of elementary overcrowding. CM

stressed that the bond proposals met the district's greatest need of elementary overcrowding:

By also doing that, and taking and re-doing [Name of Middle School #2] so we can bring the sixth grades up into the junior high level and opening up our elementary, so we can buy some time on elementary. To me, that was a key thing. We have to have elementaries, probably in the next . . . 5 to 7 years. If we don't have elementaries, we're going to be right back in the same boat, even with the first through five [grades] or kindergarten through five [grades], we're going to have to have the portables back in. I think that's so key that we're buying a little time.

Community-driven priorities. A1 explicated:

It became a very prioritized list, and it really wasn't driven by administration, because if you compare the two bond packages you can see the differences of what we would have probably chosen to do versus what the group as a whole shows as priority.

The SBM indicated how the new 2015 bond proposals addressed the major concerns that had caused the bond election failure in 2013:

The second time it really wasn't about the kids. It wasn't about, "Do this for your children." No, it was more like, "Our bricks are falling down on this one building. Look what's going on at some of these schools as far as safety and security. We know we can't stop it all, but let's at least change the entryway so we get

somebody going to the office rather than entering Ms. Jones' kindergarten class the first thing when they go in the building." As far as the new middle school, it's like, "Well, yeah you told us you didn't want a brand new wing on the high school, and you didn't want all this combination, so let's not move anybody except let's just get the sixth graders aligned with their academic performance. Let's do very little. You didn't want a lot of stuff, so how about we just move one grade? You didn't want two grades, and two middle schools, but would you be okay with, . . . what if we told you we could just move one and accomplish the same exact thing?" You saw on social media, and in person, people go, "*I can take that. That's palatable. I can do one move*" [italics added for emphasis].

Parents and teachers accepted proposed grade configurations. The change in grade configurations to include only sixth grade into middle school was still a concern, but a re-configuration that most parents could approve. The SBM recalled that only changing one grade level was an important factor for parents: "The theory is let's get one grade out of the elementary schools. Actually, we changed it to only one grade out of the elementary schools. That was a big factor . . . [for] parents."

P3 reflected on perceived teacher reaction to the change: "They [the teachers] seemed receptive. They seemed positive. Nobody seemed apprehensive about it, to my understanding." Human resource issues due to changes had been addressed through providing additional training and benefits to sixth grade teachers who would move into a middle school environment. P3 continued, "The teachers were all for it. My understanding was they had all had lots and lots of training about how this integration

was gonna work. Workshop days and that kind of stuff. And so they were looking forward to it.”

Parent 5 summarized the impact of teachers support on parent support for the school bond election:

And it has to come from the inside out, too. If the teachers don't believe there's value in it, the parents aren't gonna believe there's value in it and there's no way it's gonna pass. *Your biggest sales force is really word-of-mouth through the teachers initially and then back to the parents* [italics added for emphasis].

No athletics. Respondents consistently mentioned that an important variable of successful bond passage in 2015 was that athletics were taken out of the bond proposals. P1 said, “It didn't include anything related to sports.” P2 recalled: “Seems like there was an athletic chunk that they cut between the first and the second if I recall. A big one.” P2 surmised about why including athletics might have been a difficult option to include:

I think there are a couple of different groups in every single district really; it's not just a [Town-Fringe] thing that feels like athletics is a luxury, not a necessity to the school district. I also feel like that nostalgic group in [Town-Fringe] thinks that, “That stadium's perfect, don't touch it, don't change it.” There's something there that holds it up. So there's two different motivations. They'll both have the same reasons basically: “Don't spend money on this.” One [person/community member thinks] “It's extra.” One [person/community member thinks] “It's great the way it is.” I don't necessarily agree all the time. I think you gotta grow to

meet the needs. That said you don't have to go build an \$18-million stadium either for your high school football team.

Lower bond amount. The lower bond amount was listed as an important variable in the passage of the 2015 bond by multiple respondents. The total of all three bond proposals in the 2015 was a significantly lower bond amount than in the 2013 school bond referendum election. The total for the 2015 school bond proposals was \$74.9 million, just under the \$75-million level that the voter survey indicated would still be possible to pass a school bond referendum. The FACTS Committee recommendation came in at around \$100 million dollars, but the school board went with a revised final set of bond proposals that came in at \$74.9 million dollars. The Superintendent recounted this process:

Then they [the FACTS Committee] made a recommendation to the board of, and I think it was somewhere over . . . a \$100 million . . . as far as a recommendation for that 2015 bond, and they had a lot in there. And, the board said, "Thank you, but no thank you," which I thought was interesting. "We don't think that, after what we've been through, and after what we've learned in our conversations, we don't think we can pass that bond in [Town-Fringe], Texas, in this climate. Not right now." So, they backed it down, and the target was something less than \$75 million, and so they passed a \$74.9 million bond. And, according to the [Voter Survey Firm] study, that had a slim chance of passing. It had a chance, but it was slim.

P2 said regarding variables that were important in the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election:

The biggest was the reduction of the funds I'm sure . . . I remember the budget numbers - the bond shrank if I remember right, too. The original was about 25 to 30% higher than the second one. Then in the second one it was a slimmed down version that still covered things that they were wanting, technology updates, some security bits, and a hand full of other facilities things that had to be taken care of, and it did a lot better.

The Superintendent said:

The board looked at it and said, "We can't do all of that." . . . I think the last one was like [\$]109 or [\$]107 or something like that, we know there's no tolerance for that. We know that. So, let's don't even talk about that. We will use this [\$]200 million that you've identified as, "Okay, that's the long-range plan, that's how we need to eke this elephant, now what do we think we'll do?" We had some board members saying, "\$50 million," we had some that said, "Somewhere north of [\$]75," and they finally worked it back to something less than [\$]75 million.

Multiple propositions offered choice to stakeholders. Offering voters choice through multiple propositions was also mentioned by respondents as an important variable in the success of the 2015 school bond election. SBM attributed the success of the school bond referendum election to both a lower amount and multiple propositions:

The architect and their marketing arm, which was very smart, real nice people, they said, "Well, that doesn't give us as good a chance to pass it." I said, "That's

regardless. That doesn't mean anything to me. They [voters] already said no to this style [single proposition]. They said no to a large bond, all encompassing, no options, no choices, athletics included. Let's do it differently. Let's see if the citizens are going to support the district but do it in a way that's maybe more comfortable." We reduced the size by about 40 million. We broke it up into three propositions. It almost didn't [pass], . . . one passed by three votes.

SBM described multiple propositions as "a la carte" options for voters:

In the second time around, the vibe in the community was very like "a la carte." People were talking about, "You know, I'm not voting for that stupid security thing, but yeah, let's get a new middle school up there." There were actually people on the west side of town, were like, "Yeah, let's get a new school. I don't know if we need all these upgrades in security measures." Even when the bond passed, I had arguments, discussions, some pleasant some not, with our architect, with the board members. I said, "I'm not putting my hand up for a yay unless this is at least divided up. I don't even care if you try to go out for the same exact size. These people, they want to be able to have a choice and a say in what it is. If you want to put athletics on there, you need to isolate it."

Several district and community respondents listed the idea of multiple propositions as important to increasing the likelihood of school bond referendum passage in 2015. A1 said:

So, in the new world of 2015, we gathered all this feedback . . . everybody was highly involved, and we broke it up into three props, knowing full well we might

get one, two or none. I think all of us were thrilled that we got all three, but one of them by the . . . by three votes.

A2 also agreed that multiple propositions was important. “The other thing that helped us was breaking it into propositions.”

SBM indicated that he believed this structure was one of the most important variables in the passage of the 2015 school bond referendum:

I’d like to believe, and I’ll take it to my dying day that that was the reason why it did pass is because they had the options . . . To the average voter, I don’t really think there was much different from bond [2013] to bond [2015]. It was the size, and it was the fact they got to be in there an a la carte it, and pick and choose.

That’s the anecdotal feedback I got from lots and lots of folks. By separating that one [safety & security], that was a big thing too. It was telling the community, “Alright, if you want it, you want it. If you don’t, you don’t. It’s here. It’s on the side. It’s a little cup of mayonnaise. You don’t want to dip in your mayonnaise? Maybe you do, maybe you don’t. It’s on the side. We’ll let you do that.” I think that went a long way. We got very good feedback on that. I think the safety and security one passed by the highest margin. The middle school was only three votes.

P4 said the following:

I would allow people to vote for the things that they cared about. You don’t want somebody to vote no for the whole thing if they just have some sort of axe to

grind about FFA [Future Farmers of America] or football or whatever. If you want to vote against that part, then you can vote for the parts that we really need.

Improved Communication and Trust

Interview respondents indicated that improved communication played a key role in the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election. P4 commented on several aspects of the improved communication:

I remember there were lots of meetings. They had lots of, “This is what’s going on.” They did a lot better informationally and it may have been ‘cause our daughter was older at that point. It may have been ‘cause I was on the PTA board.

It may have been a lot of reasons, but I do think they did a better job.

P2 also commented on the increased level of communication in 2015: “It [school bond planning and campaigning] was heavier the second time around. There were more community meetings. There were still the flyers and the advertising.”

In the 2015 school bond election, districts communications efforts were embedded throughout the process during the pre-bond planning and needs assessment process, FACTS Committee meetings, and Community Meetings. The FACTS Committee participation created natural ambassadors who could spread the word about bond election issues. A detailed District Bond Election Communications Plan was developed & implemented by district administration, including a specific Social Media Plan. This plan provided clear and focused messaging about the bond proposal; the benefits of the bond proposal to every student, parent, and school; clear bond amounts and tax impacts shared. Messaging was supported by architectural firm’s bond election

planning team, and social media efforts to disseminate information and “Get Out the Vote” efforts were effective. The school bond efforts utilized targeted school bond campaign plan used specific “Get Out the Vote” strategies; focused on people most likely to vote, and focused on the “over-65” age group. PAC support was also significantly increased from 2013 bond efforts.

Reflected voter preferences. Improved communication resulted from understanding stakeholder and voter preferences. A1 stated:

In [20]15, there was a very intentional process put in place to where we really paid attention, studied and understood who are the people that actually do come and vote, and those were certainly very targeted communications to those folks, and then trying to get our parents, which we were very successful at.

Long-term district communications and community engagement strategies.

After the 2013 school bond election failure, A2 believed that increasing long-term communications activities to reach parents and community members with positive messages about the school district on an on-going basis was important. She began new communications strategies and activities to build better communication immediately following the failure of the 2013 school bond election and believed that this foundation of communication built trust and positively impacted bond election outcomes in 2015.

A2 indicated the communications plan was much more detailed in the 2015 school bond election.

I think that what I would say for the communications plan, we had one both times.

The second one was much more developed, much more targeted to voters. People

who were likely to vote, we were much more . . . instead of blanket-mailing our community, we focused on those people who are most likely to vote, and that's only . . . it's less than 10% of your community.

A2 also indicated the importance of the district staying “on message” during the school bond referendum election campaign:

The overall difference for the communications department in 2015 was that no matter what was said, we stuck to our message. We didn't get in the weeds of trying to fight an opposition message. We stuck with our message, and we had a very clear, specific message that we gave.

A1 concurred with A2 indicating the district “didn't go off on the rabbit trails. We stayed with our very focused mission and spoke to who we knew were our voters and not just the one naysayer over there that was making a lot of loud noise.” Several respondents indicated that an improved use of social media positively impacted the 2015 school bond referendum election results, by reaching teachers, parents, and community members. A2 discussed the following:

We had a more developed social media plan for messaging. Really, just as an aside to all of the bond election, what we have seen over the last, probably, 3 or 4 years is that people go to our Facebook page. We reach more people with our Facebook page than we do with any other medium, so it was really important to have a well-developed plan of communication in 2015 for Facebook. I mean, we get on Twitter, but Twitter, our audience is different. Our community and our parents and our staff are all on Facebook.

Presentations were also used in the 2015 school bond referendum election communications efforts, but the perception was that it was a better presentation.

The presentation that was made, I thought, was very good . . . It was very convincing. I made it twice to faculty groups. I watched it presented a couple of times. At the Rotary club, and then at the ministerial alliance. I think it laid out the case very well [P1].

Social media effectiveness. CM talked about using social media during last-minute “Get Out the Vote” efforts:

At the time of the election, my daughter. . . living in the [Another Town in the Area] area and was not able to vote. She was on Facebook, trying to help promote that [the 2015 school bond election]. Facebook was a big thing. . . . This new media stuff, which I’m not a part of . . . I know the younger group, that’s what they live off of. They’re not going to come to me, necessarily, but they live off of that media stuff. I think that was so important that you include that.

The school district website was also used much more effectively in 2015 to share FACTS Committee information throughout the bond proposal process, which created transparency in the process. P1 shared that:

There was a website that was dedicated to the appropriate information and a very transparent understanding of the entire process. And so, all of our deliberation on the FACTS Committee were on that website. All of our decisions on the board deliberations were on that website. A full run through of the entire process was on the website.

The online presence was intentional on the part of the school district administration. The Superintendent recalled that:

So, board settled on that [the bond proposal and amount], and we kept the community involved all along the way by putting information out on the website, from pictures to progress reports.

P2 mentioned the increased effectiveness of the communications materials, like the flyers:

They did a great job advertising those bonds with promotional flyers and all that came out. The extent of the growth and the problems that were presenting themselves that they need to deal with.

Improved PAC advocacy and marketing. A1 talked about the increased parent and community involvement through the pro-bond PAC. A1 said:

The one last thing I will say is we had a lot of very active parent involvement in the 2015, through the PAC. You know the PAC can do what we can't. We had active parent participation in 2013, but the PAC itself was so much more organized in 2015, and I think they had lessons learned from it as well.

P1 talked about how organized the PAC marketing and communications activities were, especially in regard to "Get Out the Vote Efforts":

It was well organized. The movement was well organized in terms of getting people to make phone calls, putting out signs, letters to the editor. I feel like that piece of it was well organized . . . Well, we were asked to take sheets, lists of potential voters and make phone calls asking people to vote for the bond. I don't

know how many people did that. The consulting group we worked with helped organize that. And then the chairs of the campaign would distribute those. And we would be given a list and we would make as many calls as we could. Encourage people to vote for the bond.

A2 and CM mentioned that communications and marketing efforts were targeted to “Get Out the Vote” and to an “Over 65” group. A2 recalled:

We focused on our over-65 group more heavily. Not that we didn’t focus on that in [20]13, we did, but more heavily, because in our community that’s the population that has the greatest number of turnouts at the polls. So, we focused a little more on that.

CM indicated that efforts were targeted to Get Out the Vote:

Well, people coming out to vote. When you win an election by three votes, that is so important that the people that you have spoken to, that they say they’re for it, you make sure they’re going to be there. I know the groups that are against it are doing the same thing. They’re talking to their people. We talk to everybody that we knew, as far as just me and my family making sure that they got there and voted.

The Get Out the Vote campaign was regarded positively. “I went to the kick off where they had signs that were given out” [P1]. “Seems like the popular hot spots to eat around town had postings up. It was pretty well covered” [P2].

Increased trust. [P1] suggested that the school board and school district did a better job of building trust in the 2015 school bond election:

There is a contingent in our community, and it's in our larger culture of a distrust of any institution. And so there's a distrust of the school district. When the district asked for a bond the default response is "well I wonder how much of that they really don't need?" And so, I think institutions need to work harder to build trust. It may be that in the 2015 bond we did a better job of building trust.

Although communications and marketing was a part of this, there were numerous activities throughout the process that built this trust, including: an attitude of listening on the part of the school board and school district administrators; significant efforts to understand stakeholder preferences; active efforts to ensure input and involvement of a diverse group of parents, community members, teachers, and students; clear planning and decision-making processes; strong parent and community leadership; information-sharing throughout the process; showing stakeholders facilities' needs; incorporating stakeholder input into the bond proposals during the planning process; and providing the community detailed information on facilities' needs and providing detailed bond proposals.

No Anti-bond Opposition Efforts

Due to the significant efforts to involve the community in the 2015 school bond election, especially the opposition, an anti-bond/opposition group never formed in the 2015 school bond election process. The Superintendent talked about the lack of an opposition in the 2015 school bond election process:

Of course, there was a political action committee that formed, there was a "pro" PAC, and we did not have an "anti" PAC form in 2015, and I just kept waiting and waiting, for that to develop, and it never did.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to investigate and analyze the perceptions of a representative group of district and community stakeholders regarding variables that contributed to the failure or successful passage of school bond referenda in Texas. Using qualitative methods, this study was conducted to update, enhance, elaborate, and clarify previous bond passage models developed by recent quantitative and qualitative studies, and to illuminate issues and factors influencing school bond passage. This in-depth qualitative case study of a representative school district that experienced success after a prior bond election failure was used to develop a greater understanding of the variables associated with overcoming negative sentiment. Document review, as well as the perceptions of a representative group of stakeholders including the superintendent, current and former school board members, chief financial officer, chief communication officer, parents, and community members in the target district and community, were analyzed. This chapter concludes the study and addresses the summary of the study and findings, discussion, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study and Findings

The data gathered for this research study addressed the perceptions of a diverse group of district and community stakeholders in the target district and community including: the superintendent, current and former school board members, chief financial officer, chief communication officer, parents, and community members. Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews with 11 district and community stakeholders.

Additional data were gained from a review of documents from the 2013 and 2015 school bond referendum elections in the selected district and community, including: district strategic planning documents related to school facilities and bond planning; school district bond referendum information documents; newspaper articles on the school bond election; internal and external communication documents related to the school bond election; meeting minutes or notes from school bond advisory group meetings; and any relevant school bond referenda documents.

2013 School Bond Failure: Research Question 1

This question asked: What variables contributed to the failure of a school bond election? Eleven major variables characterized the 2013 school bond failure in Town-Fringe Independent School District (TFISD), TX. Eleven major variables characterized the 2013 school bond failure in TFISD, TX. These variables included: (a) the school board and school district used existing processes; (b) an assumption of community support and lack of awareness of changes in stakeholder perceptions and community context by the school board and school district; (c) a lack of expert capacity to support bond election processes; (d) a lack of community needs assessment & pre-planning; (e) a lack of overall comprehensive school bond election planning process (f) poor leadership recruitment and development; (g) a lack of input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders, especially parents, teachers, and the opposition; (h) poor communication and lack of trust; (i) a weak bond proposal, including high bond amount, bond content, and single proposition; (j) lack of consideration of structural, human

resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process; and, (k) significant and effective anti-bond efforts.

The first major variable that impacted the 2013 bond election failure was the school board members and school district administrators used existing processes. The Superintendent and central office administrators (A1 and A2) described the 2013 bond process as a traditional or old school bond process that included the facilities needs assessment; a district Citizens' Advisory Committee to work on bond proposal development; and communications and marketing activities that included presentations, flyers, and signs/posters to sell the school bond proposal to the community. Bolman and Deal (2008) indicated an effective strategy from the structural frame for leaders to use to support a change process was to "remove or alter structures and procedures that support the old ways"; TFISD did not do this in the 2013 school bond election (p. 395).

The second variable in the 2013 school bond election failure was an assumption of community support and lack of awareness of changes in stakeholder perceptions and community context by the school board and school district. Multiple respondents indicated that there was a general assumption of community support by the school board and school district administration that did not accurately stakeholder support in the school district and community. The school board and school district were unaware of parent and community member distrust and dissatisfaction with the school board and school district. The school board and school district administrators also were unaware of important factors in the political and economic environment, including a sudden increase of anti-tax and anti-government sentiment that made passing a school bond referendum in 2013

difficult. In addition, school board members and school district administrators were unaware of perceptions of school district waste and high bond amount of prior bond efforts, as well as the negative impacts of the long length of time since the previous school bond election had been held. Moreover, the school board and school district administrators were unaware of the impact that community growth and change had on parent and community member support for a potential school bond election referendum. The findings showed school board and school district lack of awareness of the changes within the district and community context was an important variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum election.

The third variable that negatively impacted the outcome of the 2013 school bond election was a lack of expert capacity to support bond election processes. In the traditional bond process, the district secured an architectural firm with strong facilities expertise and deep history with the district, but the architectural firm lacked the capacity to effectively provide bond election expertise and support throughout the school bond election process. Numerous respondents mentioned the lack of school bond election expertise from the architectural firm as a variable that negatively impacted the outcome of the 2013 school bond election. This lack of expertise included lack of expertise in pre-bond planning processes; lack of a comprehensive bond process to structure the process for the community; a less detailed facilities needs assessment; and insufficient support to parent and community volunteers during the bond proposal development process.

The fourth variable represented in the 2013 school bond election failure was a lack of community needs assessment and pre-planning on the part of the school board and

school district administration. Based on document review and interview responses, the district administration and school board gathered limited information about district and community context in the 2013 school bond referendum election process. There was a lack of input from key influencers in the community prior to bond planning efforts, and input that was given was ignored. The 2013 bond election process was characterized by a lack of a community needs assessment or voter survey to assess voter preferences for bond proposal content or voter tolerances regarding potential bond amounts. The 2013 school bond election process used only limited community demographic and economic growth data. School board members and school district administration did not utilize information from other school district bond election efforts. Instead, anti-bond opposition groups effectively utilized state and local data to create an anti-bond, anti-district narrative.

The fifth variable of the 2013 school bond election failure was the lack of an overall comprehensive school bond election planning process. The 2013 school bond referendum election findings showed the lack of an overall coordinated school bond strategy, lack of clear decision-making processes and structures, and failure to clarify roles and responsibilities explicitly negatively impacted the effectiveness of the 2013 school bond process. Respondents indicated that lack of organization negatively affected the outcome of the 2013 school bond election, and these disorganized efforts were connected to the lack of an overall school bond election strategy and coordinated plan. There also was little evidence of decision-making and communications structures, such as role descriptions, procedures, and protocols used as a part of the 2013 bond process,

indicated by Bolman and Deal (2008) as a strategy from the structural frame necessary in successful change processes (p. 395). In this environment, motivated anti-bond group leaders generated and implemented a coordinated strategy that had decision-making and communications structures. The anti-bond group also used local political and school board election leadership roles and responsibilities to their advantage. The “anti-bond” PAC relied on local political structures to organize, provide decision-making and communication structures, and offer new roles and responsibilities for emerging leaders. Finally, the anti-bond group utilized the school board’s election processes, protocols, and procedures to advance its leaders and messages.

The sixth variable of the 2013 school bond election failure was poor leadership recruitment and development. The district’s lack of attention to leadership development and training had a negative impact on the 2013 school bond election results. There was an overall lack of attention to recruiting strong leaders and to developing individuals for key roles in the school bond election process, including for the pro-bond committee. Parents reported that the “champion” for the bond effort was missing, and multiple participants reported a lack of parent and community leadership in the 2013 school bond efforts. The lack of attention to leadership recruiting included failing to involve key individuals from the prior 1999 bond who had significant expertise in the bond process in an environment where most parents were new to the process without any experience or training in leading and supporting a school bond election process. In addition, the 2013 bond lacked involvement of a competent expert consultant who could fill in the gaps of knowledge that parent and community volunteers might have lacked.

The seventh variable impacting the 2013 school bond election failure was the a lack of input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders, especially parents, teachers, and the opposition. Interview responses from district administrators, school board members, parents, and community members who were interviewed consistently indicated that the lack of stakeholder input and involvement in the school bond referendum process was a major variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond election process. Respondents indicated that the school bond proposal process was “administratively-driven,” with little true input from staff, parents, or community members. In the 2013 school bond election, respondents reported limited meetings with key influencers, especially those with opposing views. Participant interviews indicated that there was a lack of input from a representative group of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community members, and students, especially opposition views. Community forums that the district held to communicate the bond proposal provided only one-way communication with little to no opportunity for teachers, parents, or community members to provide input or feedback. As a result, parents and community members who were interviewed indicated that they did not have an understanding for the need for a school bond referendum.

The eighth variable that negatively impacted the 2013 school bond election was a weak bond proposal, including high bond amount, bond content, and single proposition. Due to the lack of involvement and input during the school bond referendum proposal planning process, teachers, parents, and community members did not understand school district facilities’ needs, were surprised by the bond referendum election announcement,

and ultimately, had significant issues with the final school bond proposal. Respondents mentioned that the framing of the bond proposal was poor, not strategic, did not match the stated need, was complicated, and did not connect emotionally with stakeholders. In addition, the bond amount was too high. Voters disliked a single proposition bond proposal, feeling that it left them [voters] no choices. The anti-bond opposition efforts turned the single proposition message into: “If you don’t like one thing, vote no.” In addition, teachers and parents did not like new grade configurations in the 2013 school bond proposal. Teachers were reported to dislike proposed grade reconfigurations and relocation that would have impacted their work environment, curriculum, and teaching responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. Parents opposed the school bond proposal due to new grade configurations perceived as moving elementary students to middle school too early; potential loss of opportunities for students at the middle school level due to a proposed middle school consolidation; and dislike of a perceived creation of a “mega” high school. Numerous respondents indicated that the inclusion, or the perceived inclusion, of a large portion of the bond for athletics, was problematic for many voters.

The ninth variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond referendum was poor communication and lack of trust. District administrators, parents, school board members, and community members indicated that communication and lack of trust was a major problem in the 2013 school bond referendum election process. Due to lack of communication, the announcement of the school bond referendum election was a surprise to district administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. There was a lack of information at the campus level, one of the most critical places for parents to receive

information, and an overall sense that teachers and campus staff were uninformed about the school bond. Instead, the opposition group had a well-organized, well-funded anti-bond anti-bond PAC that utilized significant anti-bond communications and marketing strategies against the bond election, including political ads, flyers, posters, and signs. More importantly, the anti-bond opposition accessed and effectively utilized powerful, informal social communications networks, including social media, to build a community around the anti-bond efforts. The anti-bond opposition was able to effectively use anti-tax and anti-government narratives and found stories to portray the school board and school district as a “bad tax collector” and “ineffective and wasteful” government institution. Interview responses indicated a lack of ability of the school district to defuse the opposition, and an inability to counter the anti-bond PAC’s messages and anticipate the anti-bond PAC’s counterstrategies. District administrators reported this negative messaging decreased trust in the school district, negatively affecting the 2013 bond election outcome. Within this context, it was difficult for the district to “create a hopeful vision of the future rooted in organizational history” as a strategy that Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested can be used to support the symbolic aspects of a change process.

The tenth variable was an overall lack of consideration of structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process. The lack of attention to these variables caused distrust with teachers, parents, and community members, and enabled the anti-bond forces to prevail in the bond election. Structurally, the school board and school district used existing processes, did not use a comprehensive bond planning process, and had a lack of decision-making and communications structures. The lack of a

defined process and communications structures created a lack of transparency in the process and decreased stakeholder trust. In a combination of the human resources and symbolic frames, the 2013 school bond referendum election proposal had numerous significant changes in school configurations, impacting students, teachers, and parents at every grade level. Parents, teachers, and community members had little opportunity to provide input into the facilities' needs assessment or school bond proposal planning process. As a result, parents, teachers, and community members did not like the 2013 school bond referendum proposal and the impact it would have on their children, families, and work environments and voted against the 2013 school bond referendum (human resources frame). While the school board was aware of some of these perceived losses, the findings suggested that little was done to acknowledge or ameliorate these issues among the voters and parents (symbolic frame). Politically, school board members and district administrators failed to map the political terrain, network with key players, or recruit credible and influential team members to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process. The failure to create arenas for the discussion and negotiation of political issues meant there was a lack of opportunity to build alliances, negotiate issues, and resolve opposition concerns (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395).

The eleventh variable was significant use of effective anti-bond efforts. District administrators uniformly described significant, organized opposition to the school bond referendum as a major variable in the failure of the 2013 school bond election, as described earlier. Lack of transparency led to this effort.

2015 School Bond Success: Research Question 2

This research question asked: What variables contributed to the success of a school bond election? Eleven major variables characterized the 2015 school bond success in TFISD, TX: (a) changed attitude and approach to the community and school bond election process; (b) increased awareness of stakeholder perceptions and the community context; (c) expert capacity to support new school bond processes; (d) extensive community needs assessment and pre-bond planning activities; (e) comprehensive bond election planning process; (f) effective leadership recruitment and training; (g) substantive input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders; (h) clear, appealing bond proposals, including low bond amount, bond content, and multiple propositions; (i) improved communication and increased trust; (i) effectively addressed multiple structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process; (k) no “anti-bond”/opposition efforts.

The first major variable that impacted the 2015 bond election success was a changed attitude and approach to the community and school bond election process. The 2015 operated as a “modern” school bond process, with a completely changed bond approach and process. Interview respondents reported an immediate and dramatic change of the attitudes of the school board and school district administration in the 2015 school bond referendum election. This new attitude included being humble, listening to the community, and actively soliciting input and diverse perspectives. Another attitude of the school board and school district administration switched from one of “telling” to “listening.”

The second major variable that impacted the 2015 bond election success was an increased awareness of stakeholder perceptions and the community context. In the 2015 school bond referendum election process, there was a new recognition of the need to gain voter/taxpayer approval for a school bond referendum. The school board and district administration recognized that the community would not simply ‘blindly support’ a school district initiative, and there was a recognition by the school board and school district administrators that parent/community member preferences as voters and taxpayers figured significantly into the success or failure of a school bond referendum election. After the shocking failure of the school bond election in 2013, school district administrators recognized the need to improve communication and build trust with parents, teachers, and community members.

The school board and school district administrators became aware of important factors in the political and economic environment, including the impact of anti-tax and anti-government sentiment. In addition, school board members and school district administrators became aware of perceptions of school district waste and high bond amount of prior bond efforts and used multiple strategies to address stakeholder dissatisfaction and distrust. Findings indicated that the school board and school district adopted new practices that positively impacted the likelihood of the 2015 school bond election success, including: (a) an overall recognition of the need to gain voter approval in a changed environment; (b) a commitment to listening to the community; (c) actively soliciting input and seeking diverse perspectives; (d) using multiple methods to gain awareness of stakeholder preferences of stakeholder perceptions of prior bonds, changing

school support beliefs due to the political and economic environment, and the diversification of school support beliefs due to community growth; (e) intentionally building trust through increased communication and transparency.

The third major variable that impacted the 2015 bond election success was expert capacity to support new bond processes. Respondents indicated that the bond consulting expertise played a significant role in the success of the school bond referendum election success. The school board and district administrators secured expert capacity for school bond processes early on in the process by hiring a new architectural firm that had extensive school bond election planning expertise in addition to school facilities' expertise. The school board and district administration utilized an RFP process to identify an architectural firm to work with for a potential future school bond referendum election. As a part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the school board and school district discovered different kinds of school bond election planning expertise and services from potential architectural consulting firms. As a result of the RFP process, the school board and school district increased capacity and support for the overall school bond election process by hiring an architectural firm that had both facilities and school bond election expertise.

Document review indicated that the new architectural consulting firm utilized a comprehensive school bond election planning process that included: bond election pre-planning, bond election facilitation and planning processes, and bond campaign implementation expertise (2015 TFISD Bond Presentation). Numerous respondents saw the strong support from the bond election planning consultants from the architectural firm

as a variable positively impacting bond pre-planning and planning efforts. Specialized Bond Election Staff from the architectural firm provided extensive resources and support to FACTS Committee and community leadership. Respondents indicated that the bond consulting staff from the architectural firm provided outstanding support during the bond planning and facilitation process and increased support from other parent and community members. The architectural firm also conducted an exhaustive study of all school district facilities and provided a report with “tiered” sets of needs.

The fourth major variable important in the 2015 bond election success was an extensive community needs assessment and pre-bond planning activities. Interview responses and document review indicated that the school board and school district administrators utilized several pre-bond planning and needs assessment methods to solicit input from key influencers and stakeholders (voters). Respondents identified these as key strategies that led to the successful outcome of the 2015 school bond election. Early input from key stakeholders and potential voters allowed the school board and school district administration to better understand voter and taxpayer preferences regarding bond proposal content, bond amount tolerance, and likelihood of passage before a decision to pursue a school bond referendum even occurred. The community needs assessment included a voter survey and face-to-face interview with 100 key influencers. The voter survey documented voter preferences regarding potential bond content, voter tolerances for bond amount, and likelihood of school bond passage. Voter survey results suggested that, with an informed electorate, the district might reach a slim margin to have a successful school bond election result. Voter survey results projected a close scenario

with: 49% in favor; 44% against; with 7% depends/unsure. Numerous respondents interviewed mentioned the pre-bond voter survey as a variable in the successful outcome of the 2015 school bond election. Face-to-face interviews with over 100 key influencers provided feedback on the last bond election; information about what a successful bond proposal might look like; and whether or not to pursue a future bond election.

Extensive community and district growth and demographic information was utilized in the bond planning process, including community and economic development growth; real estate growth data; district demographic growth and change, and tax rate and tax impact reports. In addition, during the bond proposal development process, multiple bond proposal options and combinations were costed out and returned to the committee before a final recommendation was made, allowing the committee to compare and contrast possible bond options. An extensive facilities needs assessment was also an important part of the pre-bond planning process. The facilities needs assessment included an extensive review of every school building in the school district and was divided into “tiers” of needs in order to facilitate project prioritization. The wealth of accurate data on school facilities’ needs created transparency in the process and built trust with stakeholders. This laid the foundation for transparency of proposed costs and “equity” in school facilities’ projects in the school bond proposals.

In addition, district administrators mentioned intentionally learning from the school bond referendum elections in nearby school districts. It was apparent in the 2015 school bond election that district administrators paid close attention to school bond election referenda dynamics in surrounding communities to inform their approach. The

pre-bond needs assessment and planning process allowed the school board and school administration to gain an understanding of voter preferences and the community context. This understanding significantly informed the bond planning process and led to school bond election success.

The fifth major variable affecting the success of the 2015 school bond election process was the comprehensive bond election planning process. Responses from interviews as well as document review indicated that the school board and school district adopted a transparent planning process for the 2015 school bond referendum election with the support of the architectural consulting firm. The process was a coordinated and comprehensive process that included all aspects of school bond election planning and implementation, including: pre-bond assessment planning and demographic review; an extensive facilities needs assessment process; bond proposal development support and planning; bond committee facilitation support; and support for bond campaign marketing and communications activities.

This presence of an overall school bond election strategy and coordinated plan seemed to result in organized and effective pro-bond efforts. There were also clearly established decision-making and communications structures between district leaders, school board leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members through the FACTS Committee and PAC. There was a clearly delineated process for the FACTS Committee to develop and provide a bond proposal recommendation to the school board. Written information documenting meeting dates and times, meeting locations, and names of committee members was readily available. Meeting agendas, presentation information,

and meeting minutes were also readily available online, and were available throughout the 2015 school bond referendum election process. There were clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the FACTS Committee, which were communicated at the first and subsequent committee meetings. The FACTS Committee also had clearly established policies and procedures. The FACTS Committee also had clearly delineated community co-chair leadership roles and responsibilities.

The sixth variable positively impacting the outcome of the 2015 school bond election was effective leadership recruitment and training. Significant to attention leadership development and training of school district staff and parent and community volunteers had a positive impact on the 2015 school bond election results. Considerable attention was given to identifying and recruiting credible, influential team members to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process, including: the intentional recruiting of credible, influential community members to serve as FACTS Committee Co-Chairs; purposeful recruiting of diverse, cross-section of FACTS Committee Members, including representation from teachers, staff, parents, community members, students, and the opposition; and deliberate recruitment of key community leaders to serve as leaders for the pro-bond PAC. Importantly, recruiting also included involving key community bond leaders who had significant experience and expertise with prior bond referendum elections. By installing strong school bond parent and community leadership, these leaders were able to network and recruit other parents and community leaders, such as retired educators, to support school bond referendum election efforts. Training for district administration as well as parent and community volunteers was

important in the 2015 school bond election process. The pre-bond process included leadership development and building exercises for the guiding team that included district visioning and facility options development. Experienced community volunteers, such as the FACT Committee Co-Chair and PAC Treasurer, intentionally focused on developing and training new parent and community leaders as a part of the school bond referendum election process.

The seventh variable that impacted the success of the 2015 school bond election was substantive input and involvement from a representative group of stakeholders. Interview respondents indicated that significant stakeholder input and involvement in the school bond referendum planning process was a key variable in the success of the 2015 school bond election. Respondents also indicated that the 2015 school bond proposal process was a community-driven process, with multiple opportunities for meaningful input and involvement from a diverse group of representative stakeholders, including from teachers, parents, community members, and students, and that this was an important variable in the 2015 school bond referendum success. Based on feedback from the 2013 bond failure, the school board and district administration created a large, diverse, highly-visible bond planning committee in order to create substantial stakeholder involvement in the bond development process. Intentional recruiting of diverse, cross-section of FACTS Committee Members, including representation from teachers, staff, parents, community members, students, and the opposition, improved input into the bond proposal development process that respondents indicated positively impacted the bond outcome in 2015. FACTS Committee meetings were an opportunity to build a shared understanding

of school facilities' needs, and the school district utilized multiple strategies to for teachers, parents, community members to "see and feel" facilities' needs, such as facilities' tours and holding each FACTS Committee meeting at a different school in the district. Respondents mentioned that the FACTS committee process created transparency by communicating key information to the community along the way. In addition to the FACTS Committee, the school board members held community forums regarding the school bond referendum in 2015 once the bond election had been declared. Parents, teachers, and community members were able to hear about the bond, as well as provided input and engaged in in two-way communication about the school bond proposal at these meetings.

The eighth variable that impacted the success of the 2015 school bond election was clear, appealing bond proposals, including low bond amount, bond content, and multiple propositions. As a result of significant parent and community input and involvement in the 2015 school bond referendum election process, the bond proposals that were developed were clear and appealing bond referendum proposal. The bond was split into multiple proposals to offer voters choices, and the total bond amount was significantly lower. The bond proposals were restructured to meet parent and community needs, as well as the stated needs of overcrowding at the elementary level, safety and security, and overall facilities' renovations needs. Proposed new grade configurations were palatable to both parents and teachers. Athletics was removed from any bond proposition.

The ninth variable in the 2015 school bond referendum election success was improved communication and increased trust. Not surprisingly, communication was significantly improved in the 2015 school bond election efforts. Interview respondents indicated that improved communication played a key role in the success of the 2015 school bond referendum election. Improved communication resulted from understanding stakeholder and voter preferences, as well as ongoing district communications activities to build long-term relationships with parents and community members. Marketing and communications efforts were embedded throughout the process during the pre-bond planning and needs assessment process, FACTS Committee meetings, and Community Meetings. The FACTS Committee participation created natural ambassadors who could spread the word about bond election issues. A detailed District Bond Election Communications Plan was developed & implemented by district administration, including a specific Social Media Plan. This plan provided clear and focused messaging about the bond proposal; the benefits of the bond proposal to every student, parent, and school; clear bond amounts and tax impacts shared. The district Communications Officer indicated that the school district focused on key messages and stuck to them. The school district website was also used much more effectively in 2015 to share FACTS Committee information throughout the bond proposal process, which created transparency in the process. Messaging was supported by architectural firm's bond election planning team, and social media efforts to disseminate information and "Get Out the Vote" efforts were effective. The school bond efforts utilized a targeted school bond campaign plan and specific "Get Out the Vote" strategies; focused on people most likely to vote, and focused

on the “Over-65” group. PAC support was also significantly increased from 2013 bond efforts.

Respondents also indicated that the school board and school district did a better job of building trust in the 2015 school bond election. Although communications and marketing was a part of this, there were numerous activities throughout the process that built this trust, including: an attitude of listening on the part of the school board and school district administrators; significant efforts to understand stakeholder preferences; active efforts to ensure input and involvement of a diverse group of parents, community members, teachers, and students; clear planning and decision-making processes; strong parent and community leadership; information-sharing throughout the process; showing stakeholders facilities’ needs; incorporating stakeholder input into the bond proposals during the planning process; and providing the community detailed information on facilities’ needs and providing detailed bond proposals.

The 10th variable impacting the successful outcomes of the 2015 school bond referendum election was that the school board and school district administrators effectively addressed multiple structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of the change process. In terms of the structural frame, the school board and school district adopted new systems and processes to meet the new environment, including adding pre-bond planning and community needs assessment processes. The school board and school district adopted a comprehensive planning process, as well as decision-making and communications structures that resulted in organized and effective pro-bond efforts. Regarding the symbolic frame, the school board and district

administrators incorporated a number of ceremonies that “acknowledged and celebrated losses or changes” in the community, such as the demolition of the old middle school (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395).

School district administrators admitted they were surprised that ceremonial activities that honored the legacy community champions and school district traditions were so important, but indicated that they were “something they did right.” Numerous strategies from the political frame were utilized to increase success in the 2015 school bond election. As indicated earlier, mapping the political terrain is one of the strategies that can be used to effectively navigate the political domain during a change process. During the 2015 school bond election, the school board and district administration did extensive mapping of the political terrain through meetings with key influencers, voter survey, and input through the FACTS Committee process.

Deliberate attention was given to recruiting credible, influential team members to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process, and the school board and school district administrators effectively recruited credible, influential team members to serve in key roles. The school board and school district administration had become aware of the need to build alliances during the 2015 school bond election efforts in order to overcome negative sentiment, and inclusion of “opposition” perspectives was a deliberate attempt to build alliances throughout the bond planning process. The school board and school district were able to significantly defuse opposition and anticipate counterstrategies through several strategies. The FACTS Committee was significant in

building alliances, creating an arena where political issues could be discussed, as well as a place to defuse opposition.

The 11th variable in the 2015 school bond referendum election success was the lack of opposition efforts. Due to the significant efforts to involve the community in the 2015 school bond election, especially the opposition, an anti-bond/opposition group never formed in the 2015 school bond election process. Inclusiveness and transparency benefitted the election's success.

2013 vs. 2015 School Bond: Research Question 3

This research question asked: What relationships existed among these variables with regard to selected characteristics of the school district? Rather than find relationships between the variables in the two bond referenda to answer the research question, contradictions between the two bond referenda emerged instead. Table 3 provides the characteristics of each bond education side-by-side for ease of understanding.

Table 3

2013 versus 2015 Bonds' Variables

2013 School Bond Key Variables	2015 School Bond Key Variables
✘ Used existing bond processes	✓ Changed attitude and approach to community and bond process
✘ District assumption of community support; lack of awareness of stakeholder perceptions and changes in community context	✓ Increased district awareness of stakeholder perceptions and community context
✘ Lack of expert capacity to support bond election processes	✓ Secured expert capacity to support new school bond processes
✘ Lack of community needs assessment & pre-planning	✓ Extensive community needs assessment & pre-planning, including 1-1 interviews and voter survey
✘ Lack of overall comprehensive school bond election planning process	✓ Comprehensive school bond election planning process
✘ Poor leadership recruitment and development	✓ Effective leadership recruitment and development
✘ Lack of input and involvement from representative group of stakeholders, esp. opposition	✓ Substantive input and involvement from representative group of stakeholders, esp. opposition
✘ Weak bond proposal – bond amount, bond content, number of propositions, athletics	✓ Clear, appealing bond proposal – bond amount, bond content, number of propositions
✘ Poor communication and lack of trust	✓ Increased communication and trust
✘ Lack of consideration of structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process	✓ Effectively addressed multiple structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of change process
✘ Significant and effective anti-bond opposition efforts	✓ No “anti-bond”/opposition efforts

Discussion of the Findings

Research findings in this study were consistent with many of the bond and election characteristics and some of the district and community characteristics identified

as impacting the likelihood of school bond election success in prior quantitative research. Findings of this study were consistent for the Bond Characteristics: (a) bond amount and (b) long-term debt. Findings were also consistent for Election Characteristics: (a) tax rate, (b) voter turnout, and (c) timing. Findings were consistent with District Characteristics for: (a) district locale (town/rural), and consistent with Community Characteristics: senior citizens.

However, this study's findings also had important differences from prior quantitative research in Bond Wording: athletics and Election Characteristics: number of propositions. Findings suggested that a single proposition bond was a negative variable in the school bond referendum success, as opposed to earlier quantitative research which recommended single proposition referenda (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013). Bowers and Lee (2013) specifically recommended the use of a single proposition; whereas, respondents in this study heavily cautioned against the use of a single proposition. In addition, inclusion of athletics was perceived as a variable negatively impacting the likelihood of success of a school bond referendum election. This finding for athletics differs from prior quantitative findings in which athletics was included in early statistical models but eliminated as a statistically-significant negative factor (Bowers & Lee, 2013). Table 4 shows a detailed comparison of prior quantitative research into factors influencing the likelihood of school bond passage compared with findings from this study.

Table 4

Case Study Findings in Relation to Prior Researchers' Quantitative Factors

Variable(s)	2013	2015
<u>Bond Characteristics</u>		
Bond Amount (Consistent Negative Correlation)	Research Finding: Consistently reported as a significant and negative variable ✓ Confirmed Quantitative Factors Research (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010a, 2010b; Theobald & Meier, 2002)	Research Finding: Consistently reported as a significant and negative variable ✓ Confirmed Quantitative Factors Research (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010a, 2010b; Theobald & Meier, 2002)
Long-Term Debt (Mixed Findings)	Research Finding: Mentioned as a potential negative factor by respondents ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research showing Long-Term Debt as a Negative Factor (Theobald & Meier, 2002) ✗ Inconsistent with Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010b)	Research Finding: Mentioned as a potential negative factor by respondents ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research showing Long-Term Debt as a Negative Factor (Theobald & Meier, 2002) ✗ Inconsistent with Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010b)
<u>Bond Wording</u>		
Athletics (Negative Correlation)	Research Finding: Consistently reported as a significant and negative variable ❖ New Information to Quantitative Model which did not find Athletics significant in final model (Bowers & Lee, 2013)	Research Finding: Consistently reported as a significant and negative variable ❖ New Information to Quantitative Model which did not find Athletics significant in final model (Bowers & Lee, 2013)
<u>District Characteristics</u>		
District Local: Town/Rural (Mixed; Negative Correlation)	Research Finding: Respondents consistently reported small town locale as a negative variable due to anti-government/anti-tax sentiment ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research (Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010a, 2010b)	Research Finding: Respondents consistently reported small town locale as a negative variable due to anti-government/anti-tax sentiment ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research (Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010a, 2010b)

table continues

Table continued.

Variable(s)	2013	2015
<u>Community Characteristics</u>		
Senior Citizens (65+)	Research Finding: Mentioned as a negative variable by respondents ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Hickey, 2008).	Research Finding: Mentioned as a negative variable by respondents ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013; Hickey, 2008).
<u>Election Characteristics</u>		
Number of Propositions	Research Finding: Single proposition Consistently reported as a significant and negative variable ❖ New Information - Opposite of Quantitative Research (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013)	Research Finding: Multiple propositions Consistently reported as a significant and positive variable ❖ New Information - Opposite of Quantitative Research (Bowers & Chen, 2015; Bowers & Lee, 2013)
Voter Turnout	Research Finding: Bond failure and mention of high voter turnout by respondents ✓ Consistent with Quantitative Research (Bowers & Chen 2015; Bowers, Metzger & Militello, 2010b; Gong & Rogers, 2014)	Research Finding: No findings in this area in the 2015 school bond election.

Note. ✓ indicates that this study's findings were consistent with prior research. ✗ indicates that this study's findings were inconsistent with prior research. ❖ indicates this study's findings revealed new information.

Discussion of Theoretical Models Application to Findings

Three theoretical models guided this study. The findings in relation to their application to those models are discussed in this section. First, Olivárez's (2011) 10 Functions of the School District Model will be discussed. Second, Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames are connected to the findings. Third, Bowers and Lee's (2013) mediated model is addressed.

10 Functions of the School District

Dr. Olivárez at the University of Texas at Austin developed the 10 Functions of the School District Model to provide an administrative, instructional, and political

leadership theory for superintendents and school district leaders seeking to more effectively perform executive leadership roles in public schools. In the 10 Functions of the School District Model, the leadership responsibilities of the superintendent:

encompass ten distinct but overlapping functions that provide definition to the ongoing activities of school districts: 1) governance & operations; 2) curriculum and instruction; 3) elementary and secondary campus operations; 4) instructional support services; 5) human resources; 6) administrative, finance, and business operations; 7) facilities planning and plant services; 8) accountability, information management, and technology services; 9) external and internal communications; and 10) operational support systems: safety and security, food services, and transportation. (Olivárez, 2011, p. 5)

Findings from the study indicated that Facilities Planning and Plant Services; Governance & Operations; Administrative, Finance, and Business Operations played important roles in the failure or passage of school bond referenda. Particularly significant to the success of the school bond referendum election was the connection between Curriculum and Instruction and Facilities Planning and Plant Services in the role of the superintendent and school board members to “continually address the learner-centered values and ethics and maintain the district culture and vision with community support in relationship to facilities planning and plant management (Olivárez, 2013, Purcell, 2017).

In addition, Internal/External Communications was an important variable in the success of school bond passage, particularly to have structures to incorporate community input:

The district must have advisory structures to actively incorporate community voices in the design and implementation of facilities maintenance, renovation, and construction projects. The superintendent shares the vision of the district's and the community's learner-centered values that is reflected in the design and use of facilities system-wide. (Purcell, 2017, p. 45)

Elementary and Secondary Operations was also mentioned as a key variable impacting the failure or success of the school bond referendum election. In the 2013 school bond election, participants mentioned the lack of knowledge of campus staff regarding the school bond election. Parent perception that staff viewed the 2013 bond proposal negatively significantly impacted parent views of the bond proposal. This confirms Hickey (2006)'s findings that teacher and campus support is a significant variable in school bond referendum election success.

The Bolman and Deal (2008) Four Frames Offers Substantive Bond Process Insights

Findings from the study indicated that Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames provide significant insight about the variables that influence the success and failure of school bond elections. Bolman and Deal provided a method to "match frames to situations" (p. 317). By applying the four frames to the school bond referendum, all four frames could be seen in operation in the data about a school bond election as seen in Appendix H. For example, the following characteristics of a bond process could be matched to the frames: (a) individual commitment and motivation are essential to success (VOTER); (b) the technical quality of the decision is important (FACILITIES); (c) there are high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty in a school bond referendum planning

process (MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS); (d) conflict and scarce resources are significant in the school bond referendum planning process (TAX DOLLARS); and (e) the process is working from the bottom up (COMMUNITY PROCESS). Table 5 displays the connection between the bond process and the four frames.

Table 5

Matching Frames to Situations by Applying Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 317) with

Permission from the Authors

Question Applied to Four Frames	Yes	No
Are individual commitment and motivation essential to success? (VOTER - YES)	Human Resource Symbolic	Structural Political
Is the technical quality of the decision important? (FACILITIES - YES)	Structural	Human resource Political Symbolic
Are there high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty? (MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS - YES)	Political Symbolic	Structural Human Resource
Are conflict and scarce resources significant? (TAX DOLLARS - YES)	Political Symbolic	Structural Human Resource
Are you working from the bottom up? (COMMUNITY PROCESS - YES)	Political	Structural Human Resource Symbolic

Insights into the success and failure of school bond elections via Bolman and Deal's four frames appear in Tables 6 and 7. First, the 2013 failed school bond election reflected an overall lack of consideration of structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of the change process. Second, the 2015 school bond election incorporated multiple elements from each of the four frames with a successful outcome.

Table 6

2013 School Bond Election via Four Frames Analysis from Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 395) with Permission from the Authors

Structural	Political	Symbolic	Human Resource
Lack of coordinated strategy	Lack of mapping the political environment	Lack of a compelling story	Lack of input & involvement
Lack of decision-making structures to support change	Lack of networking with key players	Failed to address losses and change	Poor leadership recruitment & training
Did not align structure to new culture	Lack of an arena for negotiation	Failed to install commanding officer on guiding team	Lack of consideration of human resource impacts on parents & teachers
Lack of expert capacity			
Data-poor			

Table 7

2015 School Bond Election via Four Frames Analysis from Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 395) with Permission from the Authors

Structural	Political	Symbolic	Human Resource
Secured expert capacity early	Extensive mapping of the political environment	Told a compelling story	Substantive input & involvement
Overall coordination strategy	Deliberate networking with key players	Acknowledge and celebrated losses and change	Effective leadership recruitment
Decision-making structures supported change process	Highly-visible arena for negotiation	Installed commanding officer on guiding team	Attention to human resource impacts on parents & teachers
Re-aligned structure to new culture			
Data-rich			

The Bowers and Lee (2013) Mediated Model of School Bond Passage is Insufficient

Based on a synthesis of results of earlier work on voter preferences as well as on recent work on district and bond characteristics, Bowers and Lee (2013) proposed a mediated model of school bond passage with district, community, bond, and election characteristics as key factors that impacted school bond election outcomes. Bowers and Lee (2013) provided a mediated model of school bond passage that is the most comprehensive theoretical model to date and indicated their model still only accounted for up to 44% of the variation in bond outcomes, leaving a significant amount of variation as due to other, unnamed factors. In fact, Bowers et al. (2010b), recommended conducting additional qualitative research “to describe and understand the complex work and interrelationships of district and community actors during the bond election phases” (p. 394). Bowers and Lee (2013) believed “significant malleable factors in a bond election” to be “under the control of school district administrators” (p. 759), but they also placed these areas of impact under bond and election characteristics.

The findings from this case study of a district with a failed 2013 bond and a passed 2015 bond show the weaknesses in the Bowers and Lee (2013) mediated model of school bond passage, specifically in relation to district and community characteristics, school support beliefs, and voter preferences. Two issues of discussion include examples about how the complex interrelationships found in this case study were missing from the mediated model and should be considered in developing the next iteration of a comprehensive theoretical model on school bond referendum elections. First is a contrast of the factors described as constant by Bowers and Lee. Second is the concern that factors

identified by Bowers and Lee as isolated represent in reality systems of relationships that affect bond passage.

Constant Factors vs. Change Over Time

First, the Bowers and Lee (2013) mediated model showed district and community characteristics as *constant factors* [italics added for emphasis], or rather factors unchanging over time. This case study's findings suggest that district and community characteristics experience significant *change over time* [italics added for emphasis] and between bond referenda. The district and community changes in Town-Fringe represented a significant set of variables impacting school support beliefs and voter preferences. P2 articulated this changing nature of district and community characteristics as follows:

A weird mixed town where there's a lot of old school inhabitants and then this massive influx of people coming to [Town-Fringe]. For the old timers that live in [Town-Fringe], they do not want anything to change or to grow and part of their means of holding back the tide is not voting for anything that comes up . . . The school bonds are kind of similar in my opinion. They said, "No." They don't want their taxes to go up. If we just stop, people will quit flooding in here.

As discussed earlier, changes in the district and community as new people moved into the community created a constantly shifting environment of school support beliefs with parents, community members, and teachers and district staff. One of the key variables in the 2013 school bond failure was due to school board members and school district administrators assuming that the district and community environment had

remained constant. Only when the school board and school district administrators gained an awareness of changes in voter preferences using a variety of data-driven methods in 2015 were they successful in passing a school bond referendum.

Isolated Factors vs. System of Relationships

The Bowers and Lee (2013) model depicted a series of linear and *isolated factors* [italics added for emphasis] that operated sequentially. The case study data revealed that the school bond processes and the development of an individual voter's school support beliefs and voter perceptions developed "within a complete *system of relationships* [italics added for emphasis] affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment" as described in *ecological systems theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 513). These included, but were not limited to, national, state, and local political and economic environments; state and local educational contexts and requirements; parent and community member relationships; parent and community perceptions of the school board, school district, and school campuses; parent and community perceptions of prior school bond election efforts; parent and community communications networks; and changes in parental, community member, and teacher school support beliefs due to community growth. For example, during the 2015 successful school bond referendum election parent and community stakeholders shared two-way communication with the school district and the pro-bond PAC. The 2013 failed bond election showed communication through informal social networks as significantly and negatively impacting the bond election's results.

The case study's findings clearly demonstrated that, while demographic and community demographic information was necessary to begin to understand the community context, as indicated in the Bowers and Lee (2013) model, static demographic information was not sufficient to understand the development of school support beliefs and voter preferences that impact bond election outcomes. The case study findings suggest that social interactions across multiple contexts significantly impact the development of an individual stakeholder's and voter's school support beliefs and perceptions.

As Neal and Neal (2013) suggested in their work on *networked ecological systems theory*, "it is individuals' patterns of social interactions with another that determine how systems relate to one another" (p. 727). For example, parent-teacher interactions, parent-campus interactions, and parent-district interactions significantly impacted school support beliefs, voter preferences, and the election outcomes in both the 2013 and 2015 school bond referendum elections. The case study's findings suggest that an understanding of the complex dynamics in the school bond election process may necessitate:

Going beyond the direct observation of behavior on the part of one or two persons in the same place; it requires examination of multiperson systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account as aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. (Neal & Neal, 2013, p. 514)

The weaknesses of the Bowers and Lee model became evident in this case study because of the model's fixed nature and inability to show the interrelationships of people,

processes, contexts, and time factors in enough detail. The Bowers and Lee (2013) mediated school bond passage model did not “address how or why each of the significant variables in the model act in district attempting to pass bonds” (Bowers et al., 2010b, p. 394). As such the mediated model is insufficient to explain the myriad of critical variables that impact the likelihood of a school bond referendum’s passage. These weaknesses in the Bowers and Lee (2013) mediated model suggest that a more powerful theoretical model may be needed to “portray the complex work and interrelationships of district and community actors during the bond election phases” (Bowers et al., 2010b, p. 394).

Implications for Practice

There are a wide array of implications for practice for school bond referendum election efforts for school boards, superintendents, community leaders, and researchers alike. Based on this study, school boards and school districts should recognize that economic and political factors and community growth may significantly change school support attitudes and voter preferences between bond elections, even in communities that have supported school bond elections for a long time. Parents, teachers, and community members new to a community may need education to understand school district facilities’ needs and how those needs impact children. There may be a need to develop school bond leadership expertise in parents and community members prior to a future school bond election, especially if there has been a long gap, such as 10 or more years, between school bond elections.

Recognizing the need for voter approval and an authentic commitment to listening to parents and community members is essential to building trust with stakeholders. Pre-bond planning and needs assessment efforts, such as voter surveys, are critical to school bond election efforts, because they help understand voter preferences in terms of bond content, voter tolerances regarding bond amount, and overall likelihood of bond passage in the community. Additional methods of gaining input from key influencers, such as face-to-face interviews, are important in mapping the political environment, networking with key players, and identifying potential parent and community leaders for school bond election leadership positions. Employing multiple methods to gain stakeholder input throughout the process is critical in developing a school bond proposal that is appealing to parents, teachers, and community members and meets stakeholder needs. Use of accurate data about community development and economic growth, community demographics, district demographics and growth, tax rates, and tax implications helps build a common understanding of the community and district context with its stakeholders. Additionally, accurate portrayal of data supports the development of compelling messages that can overcome voter resistance. Communication is an important element throughout the process.

Securing expert capacity early, potentially prior to contracting with an architectural firm, is important to provide effective support for an overall coordinated school bond election strategy with pre-bond development facilities and stakeholder needs assessments and planning activities, bond proposal development and facilitation, bond campaign marketing, and multidirectional communications activities. Clear decision-

making processes and protocols form the foundation for development of an attractive bond proposal, create a common culture between a diverse group of stakeholders, and provide transparency to the greater community. Leadership recruitment and training of parents and community volunteers are essential components of a successful school bond referendum election process. Finally, providing opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the losses and changes that may occur because of a school bond referendum proposal are important and may be used to recognize community heroes, traditions, and legacies.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative single-case study produced a number of variables that impacted the success or failure of a school bond election. There are several areas of potential future research that are indicated by the findings of the study. As the research study did not directly interview teachers, principals, or campus staff about their perspectives on key variables in a school bond referendum election, the first recommendation is to conduct research with teachers, principals, and other campus staff regarding school bond referendum election dynamics from the perspectives of campus-level staff. As parents and community members participating in this case study indicated that teachers and principals played key roles in the school bond election process, but no direct information was available, further research on campus-level perspectives on key variables in school bond referendum elections is recommended.

In addition, non-parent community members were another group not interviewed in any great number in this case study. Thus, another productive line of research could be

to gain the perspectives of non-parent community members regarding school bond referendum election dynamics. Non-parents also represent voters within a community and may generate new insight into their decisions about whether to vote for or against any bond referendum.

Interview respondents hinted at the key role that parents and community members played in supporting school bond election efforts through a PAC. Both the findings and the literature also revealed little specifics about a PAC campaign's organizational and leadership roles and responsibilities, PAC school bond election planning and campaign activities, and on leadership recruiting and development for the PAC. Future research to elucidate PAC campaign organizational and leadership roles and responsibilities; PAC school bond election planning and campaign activities; and on leadership recruiting and development for the PAC may better inform a comprehensive model of school bond referendum success.

Bolman and Deal (2008) recognized that the four frames offer a “checklist of issues that change agents must recognize and respond to” but do not necessarily provide a model that shows how to integrate those elements into a change process that moves through time (p. 393). However, Bolman and Deal (2009) integrated the four frames into John Kotter's foundational work of an eight stage change process that is “repeatedly found in successful change initiatives” (p. 394), and argued that the four frames when integrated into an overall theory of change provide a dynamic model of a change process over time. Findings from this case study lead suggest that testing the conceptual model of Bolman and Deal's four frames as integrated with Kotter's Eight Stages of Change to the

school bond election process could be a productive avenue of research in the future. Such research could enable the development of a useful comprehensive model of bond development and passage.

Further research on the *system of relationships* between and among internal and external stakeholders is recommended. Theoretical models from other genres of study not previously applied to school bond election processes, such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST), may be helpful "to address how or why each of the significant variables in the model act in district attempting to pass bonds" (Bower, Metzger & Militello, 2010b, p. 294) and to inform a new theoretical model of school bond referenda passage. EST is typically applied to classroom instruction and centers on the child in the microsystem of a classroom; however, the findings suggest this theory has applications if centered on the parents when enacting a bond referendum. The model could be used to address how or why each of the significant variables found in this case study affect a district attempting to pass a bond and to describe and understand the complex work and non-linear interrelationships of district and community actors during the bond election phases.

Numerous conditions in the community, including economic growth, tax rates, and district growth impacted stakeholder perceptions regarding the successful passage of school bond referenda. Property wealth is an additional contextual variable to be considered for future research. Future research may also want to investigate the varying influences of property tax conditions in different communities on the impact of the passage of school bond referendum elections.

Appendix B



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 09/21/17

PI: Ruben D Olivarez

Dept: Educational Administration

Title:

Variables Influencing the Successful Passage of School Bond
Referenda as Identified by Selected Stakeholders in Texas

Re: IRB Exempt Determination for Protocol Number 2017-08-0106

Dear Ruben D Olivarez:

Recognition of Exempt status based on 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Qualifying Period: 09/21/2017 to 09/20/2020 . *Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date.*
A continuing review report must be submitted in three years if the research is ongoing.

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

Research that is determined to be Exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is not exempt from ensuring protection of human subjects. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the following throughout the conduct of the research study:

1. Assuring that all investigators and co-principal investigators are trained in the ethical principles, relevant federal regulations, and institutional policies governing human subject research.
2. Disclosing to the subjects that the activities involve research and that participation is voluntary during the informed consent process.
3. Providing subjects with pertinent information (e.g., risks and benefits, contact information for investigators and ORS) and ensuring that human subjects will voluntarily consent to participate in the research when appropriate (e.g., surveys, interviews).
4. Assuring the subjects will be selected equitably, so that the risks and benefits of the research are justly distributed.
5. Assuring that the IRB will be immediately informed of any information or unanticipated problems that may increase the risk to the subjects and cause the category of review to be reclassified to expedited or full board review.

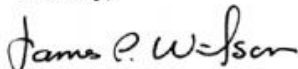
6. Assuring that the IRB will be immediately informed of any complaints from subjects regarding their risks and benefits.
7. Assuring that the privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the research data will be maintained appropriately to ensure minimal risks to subjects.
8. Reporting, by submission of an amendment request, any changes in the research study that alter the level of risk to subjects.

These criteria are specified in the PI Assurance Statement that was signed before determination of exempt status was granted. The PI's signature acknowledges that they understand and accept these conditions. Refer to the Office of Research Support (ORS) website www.utexas.edu/irb for specific information on training, voluntary informed consent, privacy, and how to notify the IRB of unanticipated problems.

1. Closure: Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the ORS.
2. Unanticipated Problems: Any unanticipated problems or complaints must be reported to the IRB/ORS immediately. Further information concerning unanticipated problems can be found in the IRB Policies and Procedure Manual.
3. Continuing Review: A Continuing Review Report must be submitted if the study will continue beyond the three year qualifying period.
4. Amendments: Modifications that affect the exempt category or the criteria for exempt determination must be submitted as an amendment. Investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the IRB Program Coordinator(s) to describe any changes prior to submitting an amendment. The IRB Program Coordinator(s) can help investigators determine if a formal amendment is necessary or if the modification does not require a formal amendment process.

If you have any questions contact the ORS by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,



James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

Appendix C

DRAFT Letter to Superintendents/School Districts Requesting Permission for Study

Superintendent of Schools
School District
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Superintendent:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as a part of my Doctoral degree in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin under the supervision of Dr. Rubén Olivárez. I am requesting the participation of your school district, including yourself and a selected group of district stakeholders, in this study. This letter provides information about this project and what the district's involvement would entail if the district decides to take part.

As you are aware, passing a school bond issue can be a challenge in any community. Surprisingly, there is little guidance for school leaders and communities on the issues involved in successfully passing a school bond referendum that includes the perspectives of all stakeholders. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the issues involved in the successful passage of school bond referenda, from the perspective of a representative group of district and community stakeholders in school districts in Texas.

This study has the potential to help school districts across the state of Texas better understand the needs of all stakeholders in their communities and the issues involved in successfully passing a school bond referendum. The results of this study will be disseminated in a variety of formats to enable educators, researchers, and board members the benefit of the experience, knowledge, and expertise of you and your district stakeholders regarding successful bond referendum passage.

If your district participates, your district will be included as a part of this study. Your district has been selected as a district that first failed a bond and then subsequently passed a bond between May 2013 and May 2017.

District study participation will include:

Superintendent Participation

- Individual Interview: Your participation in an individual interview (60 minutes);
- Review of your interview transcript to ensure interview accuracy and validity of the study;
- Recommendations for additional Interview Participants: I am asking participating superintendents to recommend additional interview participants, including school board member or members, the chief financial officer, chief communications officer, the chief facilities officer, a principal, parents, and community members to be interviewed in their community, as you know those individuals who would probably be able to provide the most relevant information.

Stakeholder Interviews

- Stakeholder Interviews: I am seeking interviews or focus group interviews with a school board member or members, the chief financial officer, chief communications officer, the chief facilities officer, school principal, parents, and community members, in order to gain the perspectives of a representative group of stakeholders.

- Individual interviews will be held with a school board member or members, the chief financial officer, chief facilities officer, chief communications officer, and a principal.
- Separate focus group interviews with 2-3 parents and 2-3 community members will be held.
- Individual interviews and focus group interviews are expected to take 60 minutes each.
- Participants will also be asked to review their interview transcript to ensure the validity of the study.

Document Review

- I will review documents relevant to recent school bond elections in your district and community, and that elaborate the goals, strategies and implementation details of your district’s recent school bond elections.
- These documents may include: district strategic planning documents related to school facilities planning and school bond elections in your district; school board meeting minutes related to school bond elections; communication documents related to the school bond election to staff and/or the community in your district; meeting minutes from school bond advisory group meetings; professional documents from school facilities professional consulting firms; newspaper articles on the school bond election; documents from a school bond consultant; and any relevant school bond referenda documents.
- Input from you, your staff, or other stakeholders on relevant material is desired and would be extremely helpful.

There will be no risks to the district or to any interview participants. Neither you, nor any participant interviewed, nor your school district, will be identified or identifiable in the research in connection with any specific reports or publications. All interviews will be conducted to maintain participant privacy and confidentiality. Participation in interviews will be completely voluntary, and a participant decision about whether or not to participate will not affect any relationship with the University of Texas at Austin or with the school district. All participant data will be de-identified and coded with a pseudonym to protect the district and participants’ confidentiality, kept in a secure location during the study, and destroyed after the mandated period for record-keeping.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at [REDACTED] 4818 or by e-mail at [REDACTED]@[REDACTED].org. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Rubén Olivárez via e-mail rolivarez@austin.utexas.edu.

The information gathered will assist administrators and leaders in public schools systems seeking to pass school bond referenda and support communities in making effective decisions regarding school bond elections. I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Shirley M. Heitzman
Executive Director of Development,
[REDACTED]

Dr. Rubén Olivárez,
L. D. Haskew Centennial Professor in Public School
Administration &
Executive Director, Cooperative Superintendency
Program, University of Texas at Austin

Appendix D

Stakeholder Participation Request Letter

This letter is an invitation to **participate in a doctoral dissertation study** I am conducting as a part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin under the supervision of Dr. Rubén Olivárez.

I am requesting **your participation** as well as the participation of a representative group of **community and district stakeholders**, such as central office administrators, principals, board members, parents, and community members **in communities where a school bond election first failed and then passed**. This letter provides information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the issues involved in the **successful passage of school bond referenda** from the perspectives of district and community stakeholders in school districts in Texas. **With your input**, this study has the potential to **help school districts and communities across the state of Texas** better understand the issues involved in **successfully passing a school bond referendum**.

Benefits of Participation

- If you choose to participate, you will be among a select group of stakeholders in Texas that will be included in this study. The study will gain perspectives from stakeholders from communities where a school bond election first failed, and then subsequently passed since 2013.
- A summary of this knowledge and expertise will be shared in future written papers and presentations to help educators, researchers, and community members in other Texas communities **benefit from your experience, knowledge, and expertise** regarding successful bond referendum passage.
- In addition, you and your community may benefit from reflective analysis of the school bond election process.

Stakeholder Interviews

- I am requesting either an individual or focus group interview with the superintendent, parents, community members, school board members, and central office staff.
- Individual interviews and/or focus group interviews are expected to take 60-75 minutes each.
- Participants will also be asked to review their interview transcript to ensure the validity of the study.

Confidentiality There are no risks to any interview participants or to the district. Neither you, nor any participant interviewed, nor your school district/community, will be identified or identifiable in the research in connection with any specific reports or publications. All interviews will be conducted to maintain participant privacy and confidentiality. Participation in interviews will be completely voluntary, and a participant decision about whether or not to participate will not affect any relationship with the University of Texas at Austin or with the school district. All participant data will be de-identified and coded with a pseudonym to protect the district and participants' confidentiality, kept in a secure location during the study, and destroyed after the mandated period for record-keeping.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at [REDACTED] 4818 or by e-mail at [REDACTED]@ [REDACTED].org. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Rubén Olivárez via e-mail rolivarez@austin.utexas.edu.

The information gathered will assist administrators and leaders in public schools systems seeking to pass school bond referenda and support communities in making effective decisions regarding school bond elections. I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Appendix E

Waiver of Consent Script
Shirley M. Heitzman
The University of Texas at Austin
IRB # 2017-08-0106

Thank you for agreeing to speak to me regarding your possible participation in my research study. Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of this research is to determine the variables that influence the passage of school bond referendum in Texas school districts. I am seeking school districts superintendents, administrative leaders, and principals as well as school board members, parents, and community members to provide their perspectives on school bond elections. Following one 60-minute individual or focus group interview, and the sharing of this transcript with you for your review for credibility, your participation will be complete.

The research study will include:

A 60-minute individual or focus group interview with you to gain your perspective about the bond elections in the past several years in your school district (both failed and successful);

With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

All data collected will occur in a private office or school room or a public library to ensure interview privacy and confidentiality based on convenience for you, the participant.

You will not be identified or identifiable in any reports of this research. For the analysis phase, you will be assigned a code identifier, which will be removed in the final document. Pseudonyms will be used to mask participants' and districts' identities. Therefore, you and your district will not be identified or identifiable.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be kept in a secure location during the study and destroyed after the mandated period for record-keeping. Only researchers associated with this project will have access.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

The results will be disseminated in a variety of formats to enable educators, researchers, and board members the benefit of your experience, knowledge, and expertise regarding school bond elections. You may benefit from participation in this research through your personal reflection on your experience with school bond elections. Your fellow community members and educators may benefit from the recommendations that emerge from the results of the study.

Please be aware that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time. Your decision about whether or not to participate will not affect any relationship with the University of Texas at Austin or with the school district. Should you elect not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please e-mail me at sheitzman@faithfamilyacademy.org, or my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Rubén Olivárez at rolivarez@austin.utexas.edu. Any questions about the research can also be directed to the University of Texas at Austin's Office of Research Support at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participant's Printed Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Semi-Structured Interview Questions with Possible Follow-Up Prompts

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The information gathered from this interview will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation for the University of Texas at Austin. I will be recording the interview so that the data will be accurate. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point in the interview. I'm going to ask you a set of questions about your experiences with the past school bond elections your school district, both failed and successful. When I ask you to questions from your experience, think of the school bond election experience with respect to the district and the community in its entirety. The entire interview will last approximately an hour. Do you have any questions? (Answer any questions.)

Time of interview: _____
Date of interview: _____
Location: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

1. What is your role in the district or community?
Prompt: How long have you been in this role in this school district or community?
Prompt: Were you in this role during the during the bond election that failed? During the bond election that passed?

I am going to ask questions about two (2) bond elections in your district. I am first going to ask you questions about the bond election that failed (give date). Then I am going to ask you a few questions about the school bond election that passed.

2. What was your involvement or role in the school bond referendum election that *failed*? That *passed*?

Bond Failure Questions

3. What was the overall context of the district and community for the bond election that *failed*?
Prompts:
District Strategic Plan & Educational Vision
School Facilities' Condition
District Relationship with Community
Prior Bond Election Results
Prior Facilities Construction Outcomes
District Demographics
Community Demographics
Existing Property Values and Tax Rates
4. For the school bond election that *failed*, why was there a need to have a school bond referendum?
Prompts:
Were there facilities changes that were needed?
Were there changes in the needs of instructional programming or accessibility issues in the district?
What were the enrollment trends in the district at the time?

5. What kind of school bond election planning and campaign activities were undertaken to pass the first bond election that *failed* (Structural Variables)?
Prompts:
How was an overall *facilities plan* developed? Did the plan include detailed information on educational need and financial impact?
How was the *bond referendum plan* developed?
What *organizational structures*, if any, were used to coordinate *communications* and/or *decision-making processes* between district leaders, school board leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members? Were new structures needed? (Structural)
What specific *role descriptions, procedures, protocols, or rules* were developed or used for the varying roles of district leaders, school board leaders, and community leadership as a part of the bond process?
What kind of *communications plan* and communications activities were developed?
6. How were stakeholders, including school board members, school district leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members involved in the first bond election that *failed* (Human Resource Variables)?
Prompts:
In what ways was input solicited from board members? parents? community members? campus staff? teachers? and district staff?
In what ways did school bond election efforts seek to meet the needs of individuals in the district and community?
In what ways were parents and community members actively involved in contributing to and running the school bond election campaign?
In what ways were training, resources, and support provided to district leaders, school board leaders, school staff, and community members regarding the bond development process?
8. What political variables affected the outcome of the first bond election that *failed*? (Political Variables)
Prompts:
How was an overall agenda effectively developed and communicated during the school bond referendum(a) process?
Were there key players, individuals or groups that impacted the outcome of the bond election? (Political)
In what ways, if any, did credible, influential team members serve in key roles in the bond referendum process? (Political)
Were there key issues or events that affected the outcome of the bond passage?
In what ways were key issues negotiated during the school bond election process?
In what ways was it necessary to defuse opposition? How did you anticipate counterstrategies?
What strategies did you utilize to defuse opposition? (Political)
Prompt for School District Leaders: In what ways did the district work to map the political environment?
 - In what ways were informal channels of communication used?
 - In what ways were influential individuals or groups identified?
 - In what ways were possibilities for mobilizing internal and external players analyzed?
8. How were school bond efforts communicated and shared, for the school bond election that *failed*? (Symbolic Variables)
Prompts:
In what ways was a “compelling story” developed and told in the bond referendum(a) process?
How were ceremonial activities used during in the bond referendum(a) process?
How were early signs of progress communicated and celebrated?
How were losses or changes acknowledged and/or celebrated (mourned?) (Symbolic)

9. What do you think were the most important variables that contributed to the failure of the school bond election that failed?
10. What were the missing elements in the bond election campaign that failed?

Bond Success Questions

11. What was the context of the district and community at the time of the second bond election (that passed)?
Prompts:
Were there changes in any of these areas?
District Strategic Plan & Educational Vision
School Facilities' Condition
District Relationship with Community
Prior Bond Election Results
Prior Facilities Construction Outcomes
District Demographics
Community Demographics
Existing Property Values and Tax Rates
12. For the school bond election that *succeeded*, why was there a need to have a school bond referendum? Were there significant differences between the context of the bond election that failed and the successful bond election?
Prompts:
Were there facilities changes that were needed?
Were there changes in the needs of instructional programming or accessibility issues in the district?
What were the enrollment trends in the district at the time?
13. What school bond planning and campaign activities were taken to pass the second bond election that succeeded? (Structural Variables)
How was an overall *facilities plan* developed? Did the plan include detailed information on educational need and financial impact?
How was the *bond referendum plan* developed?
What *organizational structures*, if any, were used to coordinate *communications* and/or *decision-making processes* between district leaders, school board leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members? Were new structures needed? (Structural)
What specific *role descriptions, procedures, protocols, or rules* were developed or used for the varying roles of district leaders, school board leaders, and community leadership as a part of the bond process?
What kind of *communications plan* and communications activities were developed?
14. How were stakeholders, including school board members, school district leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members involved in the first bond election that *succeeded* (Human Resource Variables)?
Prompts:
In what ways was input solicited from board members? parents? community members? campus staff? teachers? and district staff?
In what ways did school bond election efforts seek to meet the needs of individuals in the district and community?
In what ways were parents and community members actively involved in contributing to and running the school bond election campaign?

In what ways were training, resources, and support provided to district leaders, school board leaders, school staff, and community members regarding the bond development process?

15. What political variables affected the outcome of the first bond election that *succeeded*? (Political Variables)

Prompts:

How was an overall agenda effectively developed and communicated during the school bond referendum(a) process?

Were there key players, individuals or groups that impacted the outcome of the bond election? (Political)

In what ways, if any, did credible, influential team members serve in key roles in the bond referendum process? (Political)

Were there key issues or events that affected the outcome of the bond passage?

In what ways were key issues negotiated during the school bond election process?

In what ways was it necessary to defuse opposition? How did you anticipate counterstrategies?

What strategies did you utilize to defuse opposition? (Political)

Prompt for School District Leaders: In what ways did the district work to map the political environment?

- In what ways were informal channels of communication used?
- In what ways were influential individuals or groups identified?
- In what ways were possibilities for mobilizing internal and external players analyzed?

16. How were school bond efforts communicated and shared, for the school bond election that *succeeded*? (Symbolic Variables)

Prompts:

In what ways was a “compelling story” developed and told in the bond referendum(a) process?

How were ceremonial activities used during in the bond referendum(a) process?

How were early signs of progress communicated and celebrated?

How were losses or changes acknowledged and/or celebrated (mourned?) (Symbolic)

17. What do you think were the most important variables that contributed to the success of the second school bond referendum?

18. What were the biggest differences between the school bond election that failed and the school bond election that succeeded?

19. Looking back over the entire bond election process, what advice would you give another district that was preparing for a bond issue campaign?

Prompt: What would you advise them to avoid a fail/pass scenario?

Conclusion of Interview

I will be using a pseudonym for you when I write up the transcripts for the interview. I will listen to your interview and write up the transcripts. Once this is completed, I will send the transcript to your email address and ask that you read it over. I will also ask for your response to a few reflection questions about reading the transcripts, such as:

1. Does the transcription attached accurately reflect your experience with the districtwide strategic compensation plan?
2. Is there anything you feel I should add or clarify about your experience with the school district bond elections?

Appendix G

List of Documents Reviewed by the Researcher

2013 Bond Presentation
2013 Bond Presentation Schedule
2013 Bond Social Media Informational Plan – Week One
2013 Election Results May 2013
2013 Email from Opposition to Staff
2013 Parent Letter April 2013
2013 TFISD Chart Technology Funding
2013 TFISD Short Life Principal Amortization
2013 TFISD Bond 2103 Information Brochure
2013 Texas School District Bond Election Results May 2013
2013 Town Newspaper Article on School Bond Election April 2013

2015 Board F2F (Face-to-Face) Binder Contents
2015 Board F2F Communications
2015 Board F2F Summary of Board F2F Visits
2015 Board F2F Summary of Board Feedback
2015 Bond Presentation Schedule
2015 Designing Transformation Meeting Debrief
2015 TFISD Bond Presentation
2015 TFISD FACTS Committee
2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meetings #1-#7 Agendas
2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meetings #1-#7 Minutes
2015 TFISD FACTS Committee Meetings #1-#7 Presentations
2015 TFISD FACTS Recommendation
2015 TFISD Social Media Posts
2015 TFISD Visioning Agenda
2015 TFISD Voter Survey
2015 TFISD Voter Survey Staff Verbatims
2015 TFISD Voter Survey Top-Lines

District TAPR Reports
District Website
Newspaper articles
TFISD Bond Election History 1968-2015

Appendix H

Adapted from Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 395, with permission

<u>Structural Frame</u>	<u>Human Resources Frame</u>
<p>-Develop a coordination strategy</p> <p>Comprehensive Bond Election Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bond Election Needs Assessment ○ Bond Proposal Development Plan ○ Bond Election Campaign Plan ○ Bond Campaign Plan (Marketing the Bond) <p>-Build implementation plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilities Needs Assessment & Plan ○ Bond Proposal <p>-Create structures to support change process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decision-making and/or communications structures between district leaders, school board leaders, campus leaders, parents, and community members ○ -Role descriptions, procedures, protocols used as a part of the bond process <p>-Remove or alter structures and procedures that support the old ways</p> <p>- Plan for short term benchmarks or “victories” during the school bond referendum(a) process</p> <p>-Keep people on plan</p> <p>-Align structure to new culture</p>	<p>-Involve people throughout the organization; solicit input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Methods of involving people throughout the organization to solicit input, including campus staff and classified/hourly staff ○ Methods of soliciting input from the parents and community members <p>-Run team-building exercises for guiding team</p> <p>-Hold meetings to communicate direction as well as solicit feedback</p> <p>-Provide training, resources, and support provided to district leaders, school board leaders, school staff, parents, and community members regarding the bond development & election process</p> <p>-Create a “culture” between all groups involved in the bond referendum process</p>

<u>Political Frame</u>	<u>Symbolic Frame</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organize and communicate an overall agenda -Map the political terrain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determining informal channels of communication -Identifying principal agents of political influence -Analyzing possibilities for mobilizing internal and external players -Network with key players; use power base to impact the outcomes of the school bond referendum election -Stack team with credible, influential team members to serve in key roles in the school bond referendum process -Create arenas; build alliances; defuse opposition in the school bond referendum process -Invest resources and power to ensure early wins -Defuse opposition, anticipating counterstrategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tell a “compelling story” in the school bond referendum process -Install a commanding officer on the guiding team -Create a “hopeful vision of the future rooted in organizational history” -Visible leadership involvement; kickoff ceremonies -Use ceremonial activities in the school bond referendum process -Stage public hangings of counterrevolutionaries -Celebrate and communicate early signs of progress -Hold revival meetings -Acknowledge and celebrate losses or changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Mourn the past; celebrate the heroes of the revolution; share stories of the journey

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