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Research-supported and Data-driven Methods to Pass a School Levy

**Nov. 5, 2013 - passed 4.9-mill CONTINUING levy
FOR THE TAX LEVY, 4129 = 54.83%
AGAINST THE TAX LEVY, 3360 = 44.62%**

- 1. Sound financial decision-making for several years leading up to the levy referendum**
- 2. Local community & alumni organizations**
- 3. 6 week campaign**
 - a. Districts that limited their campaign efforts to six weeks prior to the election were 3.375 times more likely to see the passage of their levies (Johnson & Ingle, 2008)
- 4. Explained WHY we needed the additional money to the community & voters**
 - a. Districts that indicated that they provided data to the community that explained and justified the need for the additional funds were nearly seven times more likely to pass levies than districts that did not (Johnson & Ingle, 2008)
- 5. Voter Contact Strategies**
 - a. The more strategies the better
 - i. A greater number of levy strategies led to a higher passage rate and media outlets did not equate to higher passage rates (Johnson & Ingle, 2009).
 - ii. Identifying and targeting “Yes” voters, explaining and justifying the need for the levy (Johnson & Ingle, 2009).
 - iii. Local newspapers were an effective tool for levy passage, while campaign brochures were not effective and were associated with levy failure.
 - iv. Five common themes with successful levy campaigns included: “1) getting positive voters to the polls, 2) creating a sense of urgency, 3) defining consequences, 4) using board of elections databases in intentional and targeted ways, and 5) having a strong sense of community support for schools” (Johnson & Ingle, 2009).

6. Identified “Yes” voters and put them into a Google Spreadsheet

- a. Districts that indicated that they did so were 7.6 times more likely to have their levies pass (Johnson & Ingle, 2008)

7. Implemented Get Out The Vote (GOTV) on Election Day by calling 1,700 identified “Yes” voters from the BOE building

- a. 100 % of the districts that responded to our survey that were successful in their campaign for new operating money made this a priority (Johnson & Ingle, 2008)

8. Absentee voting (approx. 30% of electorate)

9. Create a sense of urgency

- a. Creating a sense of urgency in the community (Johnson & Ingle, 2008)
- b. What happens if the levy passes and what happens if the levy fails?

10. Only sought the “Yes” vote from 7,000 of our 21,500 registered voters

- a. Eighty percent of school districts who responded very specifically used the data to target registered and unregistered parents and made attempts to get them registered and to the polls.
- b. Another 80% used the data to conduct targeted door-to door campaigns in precincts the data showed to be positive toward school levies in past campaigns. Others used the data to conduct phone surveys to specifically confirm likely “yes” voters or to organize “mine plus nine” campaigns (Johnson & Ingle, 2008)

11. We stressed that the campaign was about having pride in our community

12. Our campaign, although small, worked incredibly hard

13. Recruit as many people from the community as possible

- a. Ingle, Johnson, and Petroff (2011) noted the ability to use community and student volunteers kept campaign prices lower. A district can maximize volunteering by adequately training them and giving them appropriate recognition following the campaign.
- b. School administrators and teachers play a valuable role in levy campaigns by recruiting volunteers and organizing and prioritizing campaign strategies and expenditures (Ingle, Johnson, et al., 2011, 2012).
- c. There is no relationship between district location, student and community demographics, program enrollment percentages, and new operating levy success (Ingle, Petroff, et al., 2011).

- d. The results of this study are overwhelmingly in favor of a more diverse, community based levy campaign structure (Ingle, Petroff, et al., 2011).

14. Do not overvalue yard signs

- a. The number of yard signs equates to nothing unless the community members with the yard signs are willing to show their support for the schools publicly (Ingle et al., 2013).

15. Does the grade card and typology of the school district matter for levy passage? (No)

- a. According to Wheatley (2012), the outcome of a tax levy are not highly correlated with changes in the components of the school district report card and school district typology does not serve as a good predictor of tax levy passage.

16. How much money needs to be raised?

17. Campaign Structure

- a. Committees: Steering, Finance, Publications, Volunteer, Voter Contact/Voter Turn-out

18. Suggestions that are not research-based but are a result of experiences

- a. Mine Plus 9
- b. What if people want to help but don't want to talk to people
 - i. Canvass, Entering Data, Phone-bank
- c. Never give people who ask about the campaign a false positive to keep them from worrying
- d. All data must be recorded or entered into a spreadsheet
- e. District events
- f. Try to meet your volunteers half way
- g. Seek campaign leaders within each building (2-3)
- h. We had two recruitment meetings per building
- i. We send out two mailers to every household in our district

- j. You must recruit people in person**
- k. Positive Momentum before levy**
- l. Selling the costs**
- m. AW Voter Modeling Data (according to Support Ohio Schools)**
 - i. Support Ohio Schools data - Collected prior to Nov. '12 election:
 - 1. Yes = 15.1%, Maybe = 46.4%, No = 38.5%
- n. Social Media**

References

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