

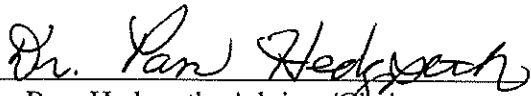
THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES USED IN SUCCESSFULLY
PASSING TAX REFERENDUMS IN MISSOURI AND ARKANSAS SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

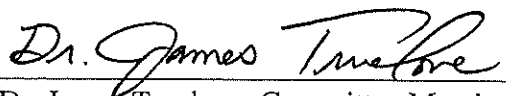
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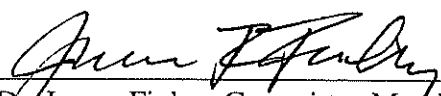
The undersigned, approved by the Department Chair of Graduate Studies in Education, have examined a dissertation entitled:

THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES USED IN
SUCCESSFULLY PASSING TAX REFERENDUMS IN MISSOURI AND
ARKANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Presented by Katie Kreimer-Hall, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.


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THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES USED IN SUCCESSFULLY
PASSING TAX REFERENDUMS IN MISSOURI AND ARKANSAS SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department
Southwest Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By

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Dr. Pamela Hedgpeth, Dissertation Advisor

April 2017

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ABSTRACT

The need for proper communication strategies during a bond or levy campaign has been a critical part of the tax referendum process. The intent of this study was to identify the best communication strategies used by superintendents during the three stages of a tax referendum. Planning a tax referendum, campaigning for a tax referendum, and then using communication strategies after a tax referendum were the three stages included. Communication strategies were separated into the two distinct categories of mass communication and personal communication to determine if superintendents preferred specific types of communication strategies over others. The design of this study allowed the researcher to gather quantitative and qualitative data from 202 superintendents in Missouri and Arkansas. Through the study the researcher found superintendents valued both personal and mass communication strategies throughout the tax referendum process. Respondents noted best practices when communicating with district stakeholders as well as the significance of citizen participation throughout the tax referendum process. In addition, superintendents emphasized the importance of ongoing routine communication strategies in order to build trust within the school community.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The superintendent of schools has one of the most crucial and perhaps most difficult public positions in contemporary American life. Superintendents have been expected to have the ability to recognize a problem and find a solution before it becomes an emergency. Plotts and Gutmore (2014) argued the occupant of this position, more than any other single person in the community, influenced the shape of public education. Marzano and Waters (2009) conducted a significant meta-analysis study, which revealed a statistically significant relationship between district leadership and student achievement. School superintendents had a basic role in determining what would become of the young people of their community, and through them what the community and the nation would become (Missouri Association of School Administrators, 2015). An educational leader was responsible for a multitude of tasks including setting goals, motivating teachers and students, developing parent and community partnerships, and communicating a vision to all stakeholders.

Schools depend on the effectiveness of school superintendents. Leadership in school districts changed throughout the years and was no longer a top-down operation where the control was in the hands of one person (Devono & Price, 2012). There has been research on shared decision-making among stakeholders and how it was crucial for creating and sustaining a successful school system (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Reeves, 2009). Superintendents were required to be skilled collaborators and knowledgeable about their available resources in the educational and business community to meet the

needs of the school district (Devono & Price, 2012). This school administrator needed to have highly effective interpersonal skills and understand and demonstrate effective communication techniques. Communication was the foundation for establishing successful leadership (Tyson, 2006).

A major challenge facing our education system was the lack of funding to meet high academic standards. The United States has traditionally funded school systems through an uneven mix of federal, state, and local tax money (Crader, Holloway, & Stauffacher, 2002). Many states depended greatly on local property taxes to fund education. As the federal government cut millions from the education budget and local economies struggled to pay bills, schools found it harder and harder to keep up with building maintenance, facility improvements, and increased enrollment. When competitive wages paid to teachers were added to other processes such as expanding education services for students with special needs, rapid advancements in technology, and rising expenditures outside of the classroom, the price of quality education was increasing. School districts had to meet these demands to ensure the needs of students. A struggling school district led to families relocating and property value declining (Stainback & Donahue, 2005).

The intent of this study was to identify the best communication strategies used by superintendents during the three stages of a tax referendum. Planning a tax referendum, campaigning for a tax referendum, and then using communication strategies after a tax referendum were the three stages included. Communication strategies were separated into the two distinct categories of mass communication and personal communication to determine if successful superintendents preferred specific types of communication

strategies over others. This quantitative study reviewed the facility and operational needs of school districts and analyzed the perceptions of superintendents related to effective communication strategies throughout the three identified tax referendum stages to promote the passage of tax referendum.

Theoretical Framework

Over the last several years, researchers have identified factors to assist school leaders in passing school tax referendums to finance school building projects. A landmark study conducted by Piele and Hall (1973) compiled a comprehensive list of 61 factors that affect bond election outcomes. These 61 factors have been studied throughout the years to identify specific strategies to be used by superintendents when attempting to pass a tax referendum. Piele and Hall subdivided the 61 factors into the following six major areas: school district characteristics (e.g., property assessment, student-to-teacher ratio, amount of bond, and per pupil expenditure); election characteristics (e.g., time of year, past voting patterns, turnout, and purpose of the issue); voter demographic characteristics (e.g., income, social economic status, education, home ownership, age, child status, and gender); voter psychological characteristics (e.g., cynicism, educational attitudes, and civic improvement orientation); information factors (e.g., source of information, use of citizen advisory committees, campaign techniques, and media support); and political characteristics (e.g., interest group activity and school-community relationships). This research found the size of the district did not affect the outcome of the bond issue and the more people who actually voted decreased the chances of the bond passing. The researchers also found the time of year and purpose of the bond did not significantly factor into the outcome whereas voter income and education did play a role

in the outcome. According to Piele and Hall's research, young parents of school age children who have a high level of education and income were most likely to vote in favor of a bond issue.

Community stakeholders viewed the use of taxpayer money to fund school projects as political in nature. Superintendents and school boards needed to view tax referendums as political campaigns and had to function with public relations constantly on their minds (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Holt, 2002; Lifo & Senden, 2004). Research conducted by Lifo and Senden (2004) discussed quality public engagement and considered communication strategies as the foundation for successful finance elections. Public engagement and communication strategies looked different from campaign to campaign. Superintendents and district leaders were responsible for determining what would be successful in their community. Communication regarding the tax referendum could be through mass media such as radio, television, or newspaper coverage. Some districts used specially prepared methods such as bulletins, signs, and mailed letters. Engaging the public included interpersonal communication. Lifo and Senden identified successful districts as having outstanding quality, ongoing public relations, and a focused message highlighting the purpose and benefits of the desired tax referendum.

Bolman and Deal (2008) discussed politics as the process of making important decisions and allocating resources. Superintendents have often operated in the political frame when campaigning for a tax referendum for their school districts. Superintendents needed to find a method to unite groups of stakeholders having differences in their interests, beliefs, information, and ways of thinking in order to motivate the people to work together and financially support the school district. Creating networks of support

with the school board, community, and staff allowed for bargaining and negotiating for position when needed throughout a tax referendum campaign. According to Bolman and Deal, when working in the political frame, leaders needed to assess the terrain and build linkages to key stakeholders to help tax referendums be successful.

The passage of school tax referendums has been an integral part of a superintendent's job. Ultimately, superintendents may have been faced with the task of passing a tax referendum at some point during their tenure, and the size of his/her district determined how much expertise was needed to be successful on this venture. Only large districts were usually fortunate enough to have a communications expert on staff to assist superintendents with public relations tasks (Lambert, 2012). The need for proper communication and marketing strategies during a bond or levy campaign was a critical part of the campaign process. The awareness of differing factors to increase the chances of school districts passing their future bond and levy campaigns was identified as an aspect that should be closely studied by school leaders. Consequently, superintendents learned they must be aware of what was working and what was not, while striving to create and implement effective strategies within their communities, to assure success in future tax referendums. These theoretical frameworks provided the lens for the problem statement.

Problem Statement

As school buildings have aged across the country, there has been a constant need for new structures. School districts across the United States have been in serious need of repairing, rebuilding, and remodeling aging facilities. A state-by-state assessment of school infrastructure needs by Crampton and Thompson in 2008 revealed approximately

\$254,600,000,000 of repairs were needed across the country. Holloway (2000) stated many of these needed repairs were clear safety and health code violations and could have been potentially dangerous for students and staff. These types of conditions created a counterproductive learning environment (Holt, 2002). The estimated cost was \$112,000,000,000 just to bring our nation's schools up to health and safety codes. Retaining quality teachers, providing required materials, updating technology, and providing support programs for students were all essential in order to provide a quality education. The cost of education has been rising and children have been depending on their schools to prepare them to be successful in the future. Large cuts in state education funding made this difficult (Oliff, Mai, & Leachman, 2012). Throughout the United States, the predominant way to acquire additional school funds has been through passing tax referendums, which required citizens to pay higher property taxes. Often times voters were reluctant to support a measure that would have raised their taxes; with recent economic difficulties increased financial burden was even more significant for people and the district (Hickey, 2007; Lambert, 2012). School leaders had to find ways to encourage voters to support tax referendums that could impact the district for many years to come. This research identified a school district superintendent's communication strategies did have an impact on the outcome of school tax referendums and led to the rationale for this study.

Rationale for the Study

Research has demonstrated student achievement is impacted by the learning environment. Earthman and Lemasters (1996) found a link between building conditions and academic performance. Students needed clean air, good light, and a quiet,

comfortable, and safe learning environment in order to learn. Student achievement could only be increased within the parameters of the school's existing funds and resources. Adequate funding and support as acquired through local revenues have been key to student achievement.

The ability of school leaders to meet the district's needs was contingent upon funding secured to maintain and support student achievement. Due to limited school resources, administrators often relied on community support to generate revenue. Throughout the United States, the predominant way to acquire additional school funds has been to pass tax referendums that required citizens to pay higher property taxes (Crader et al., 2002); however, it was just not the superintendent or school board making the decision for the school to borrow money. The district's voters, including those who did not have students attending local schools, had to be convinced, primarily by the superintendent, that the schools needed money. All constituents, not just those who were familiar with the school system, needed to be willing to support the effort (Fairbank, 2006). Superintendents were often unprepared for leading a tax referendum campaign. This research was important because school leaders needed to find ways to encourage voters to support bond issues and tax levy increases. The intent of the researcher was to inform future leaders and current superintendents of the influence communication strategies may have on the success or failure of bonds and tax levies. Poor communications has been one of the main reasons tax referendums have failed in all types of school districts and communities (Lifto & Senden, 2006). This study served as a blueprint for school superintendents who needed to gain public support for a tax referendum.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to determine communication strategies that are influential in the success of a tax referendum. The following primary question guided this study:

What communication strategies are perceived by Missouri and Arkansas superintendents as most successful in building trust in communities to pass a tax referendum?

In an effort to narrow the focus of this study, the primary question was expanded with subquestions. Each subquestion focused on one of the identified stages of the tax referendum process. The following subquestions also guided this study:

Subquestions

1. Are there differences in communication strategies used by superintendents based on demographics?
2. What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful when planning a tax referendum?
3. What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful when campaigning for a tax referendum?
4. What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful after passing a tax referendum?

The researcher identified all public school districts in Missouri and Arkansas and surveyed the superintendents to test the following null hypothesis: Communication strategies used by superintendents to promote bond issues and tax levies have no effect on the outcome.

Assumptions/Limitations/Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study that have been defined are outlined in this section.

1. It was assumed that superintendents participating in the survey responded in a truthful manner.
2. A change in the district's demographics or economic status may have had an impact on the research reviewed and the attitudes reflected in the surveys.
3. Natural disasters might have had an impact on the community and the data collected.
4. The amount of time a surveyed superintendent had served within his/her district and the rapport and communication strategies utilized by the previous superintendent may have influenced results.
5. The selected method for collection of survey data did not allow any opportunity for the researcher to establish a relationship with the participants.
6. Geographical areas included in the study were limited to Missouri and Arkansas.
7. Communication strategies were narrowed down in order to make the length of the survey manageable for the participants and the researcher. Data obtained were limited by the number of questions and choices provided on the survey.

Design Controls

The study design was quantitative. The online survey for school superintendents in the states of Missouri and Arkansas was comprised of a total of 59 questions. Likert scale questions were used to measure responses about communication strategies ranging from *no positive influence* to *strong positive influence*. The online survey and analysis

programs, QuestionPro and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), were used because they were available to doctoral students at Southwest Baptist University. Prior to submitting the survey to the participants, a field test was submitted to an expert panel to measure content and face validity. Subsequent changes were made to the original survey to reflect the concerns noted on the field test. The survey was then distributed to a pilot study group of superintendents and tested for reliability. Changes to the survey were made again based on the pilot study. The researcher choose to use a survey because it was relatively inexpensive and permitted a collection of data from a large sample. A survey properly constructed also diminishes researcher bias.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions have been provided by the researcher:

1. Mass communication. Distributing information on a large scale to a wide range of people (e.g. television, magazine, internet, newspaper, radio).
2. Personal communication. Distributing information face-to-face where the sender and receiver are a person.
3. School bond. A certificate issued by a school district for sale to the public. Bonds are issued in the amount of the principal loan on a capital project. Accrued interest and the principal are paid to the holder of the bond over the life of the bond.
4. School bond issue. When a public school district places a question before the voters as a ballot measure asking them to approve or deny additional proposed spending.

5. Tax levy. Property tax or millage tax that an owner is required to pay on the value of the property being taxed.

6. Tax referendum. The principle or practice of submitting to popular vote a measure proposed by a district's school board. It can be a bond levy or an operating tax levy.

Summary

This chapter contained an overview of the conditions of American school buildings and the high price of repair that most school districts cannot afford without passing a school bond issue. It discussed the rising cost of education and the lack of state funding to provide for all that is needed. This chapter also briefly reviewed early research of some specific factors that can affect outcomes of school bond elections and the importance of school superintendents being aware of these factors. The researcher discussed the possibility of communication strategies having an impact on the success or failure of school bond and tax levies and identified a key research question to be reviewed. This study determined the most influential communication strategies for a successful bond election in school districts.

In Chapter Two the researcher reviewed professional literature identifying effective strategies and influential factors for school leaders in regard to passing a bond issue and tax levy. Chapter Three discussed the methodology of the research design, the procedures, and the statistical data regarding the piloted survey. Results of the analysis of the final survey data were analyzed for conclusions in Chapter Four. Conclusions of findings and recommendations for further research were presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviewed the body of related literature on communication strategies used by superintendents when attempting to pass a tax referendum. This review of the literature included information on the need for increasing school funding; using bond issues and tax levies; superintendents routinely communicating to stakeholders; planning for a tax referendum; campaigning for a tax referendum; and finally, communicating after a tax referendum. This literature was divided into two sections, which focused specifically on the need to acquire funding through bonds and tax levies and communication strategies used throughout the three stages of attempting to pass these tax referendums.

The first section identified the multiple needs for increased school funding and the means school districts can use to acquire these funds. The United States General Accounting Office (1995) found that the nation's schools need an estimated \$112,000,000,000 to repair or upgrade their facilities to good condition. It is important for superintendents to address these building and facility needs since research indicated a link between building condition and academic performance (Earthman & Lemasters, 1996). School bonds typically finance building and facility repairs as well as new construction. Additional needs for funding often included technology and instructional services. These types of expenses were financed most often by tax levies.

The second section identified communication strategies used by superintendents throughout the three stages of attempting to pass a tax referendum. The importance of

routine communication in which superintendents participated in with stakeholders throughout the school year was also discussed. Proper communication with the school community should have been constant throughout the school year regardless of what was happening in the district (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Holt, 2002). The first stage was the communication that occurred when planning for a tax referendum. This phase usually included polling voters to determine what initial feelings they had regarding a tax referendum as well as strategies such as conducting focus groups made up of community members to identify key topics to address. Campaigning for the tax referendum was the second stage, which included a variety of possible strategies to spread the word about the upcoming tax referendum (Gallagher, Bagin, & Kindred, 1997). The third stage of communication was the communication after a tax referendum had passed or failed. According to VanSciver (1990), ongoing communication after a tax referendum helped the school districts maintain the trust of their stakeholders.

There was a need for school districts to place tax referendums on local ballots to fund capital projects, building projects, and the rising cost of education. School districts needed community support to secure financial resources. Funding shortages for education are due to the following factors: building and facility needs, school safety needs, technology updates, increased student enrollment, instructional needs, and increasing staff wages (Faltys, 2006). The responsibility of this huge endeavor fell on the superintendent's shoulders. Communication might have been the key component to success of all challenging issues in a school district such as passing a tax referendum. The importance of communication was not to be underestimated, especially when attempting to pass a tax referendum (Florence, 2014).

Increased School Funding for Facility Improvement

Americans have always regarded education as important, whether it was for the purpose of giving people knowledge, for the survival of democracy, or for the growth of the economy (Goodlad, 2004). Education used to be a parental responsibility. As society became more complex, education became a local responsibility. When the public perceived a failure of the education system due to falling or flat test scores, answers and expectations were required through No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002). A major shift in education funding resulted in the second half of the 20th century, with state and federal governments playing an increasingly larger role in support of education. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) defined this phase of education as the Second Way. During this era, the government created politically defined performance standards and achievement targets. There was a sense of urgency for schools to meet standardized educational goals in hopes of producing students who were able to succeed in a competitive job market. This was evident in state equalization efforts and in federal programs for at-risk students such as Title I, Head Start, Reading First, teacher quality grants, free and reduced lunch programs, bilingual education, and after-school programs. This federal money has been providing assistance to the states and schools in an effort to supplement state support; however, according to the United States Department of Education (2005), state and local funding accounts for approximately 92% of education expenditures.

Historically, local property taxes have been the major source of education revenue (Goodlad, 2004). Wealthy communities did raise more money from property taxes as a result of having higher property values. Other sources of local revenue for school districts

have included parent teacher associations, booster clubs, state lotteries, school-business partnerships, tobacco and gambling settlement money, and local education foundations.

State funds cover, on average, 44% of total education expenditures in the United States (Leachman & Mai, 2014). In recent years, states' budgets have been funding less per pupil across the country. Thirty-five states provided less funding per student for the 2013-2014 school year than they did before the recession hit in 2007. Fourteen of these states have cut per-student funding by more than 10%. In the state of Missouri, per-student spending was down 3.1% since 2008, which amounted to approximately \$107 per year for each student enrolled in the district. The state of Arkansas per-student spending was down 5.2%, which was equivalent to approximately \$216 each year for each student (Leachman & Mai, 2014). The effects of the first round of state budget cuts were quickly seen in school districts across the nation. Federal employment data showed school districts began reducing the overall number of teachers and other employees in July 2008. As of August 2013, school districts across the nation had cut a total of 324,000 jobs since 2008 (Leachman & Mai, 2014).

With only minimal financial support from the federal government and cuts at the state level, a greater financial burden was to be assumed at the local level for funding. Local school districts have been forced to either scale back the services they can provide, to raise more revenue to make up the difference, or both (Leachman & Mai, 2014). Local support, primarily through property tax issues, requires approval by local voters. Community members have been called on to financially invest in the future of their own children. Success in tax referendums has been recognized as important for the continued growth of educational programs and student achievement within the school district

(Faltys, 2006). Many districts also found difficulty in gaining the stakeholder support required to pass a bond issue. Obtaining support of teachers, listening and communicating with the community, and building a foundation of trust assisted the school district in gaining the support to pass a ballot initiative (Hickey & Simons, 2005).

How Facilities Affect Student Achievement

The passage of general election bonds was necessary for school facility construction (Faltys, 2006). The importance of school facilities was well defined when one identified the classroom as the meeting place where all teaching and learning occurred. There was a large amount of research that indicated the learning environment of the school was a huge influence on student learning and achievement (Holt & Smith, 2002); however, additional research demonstrated school learning environments actually did not make much of a difference on student achievement. Asiyai (2014) examined the perception of secondary school students on the condition of their classroom physical learning environment and its impact on their learning and motivation. The sample for this study included 800 randomly selected students from 16 schools (eight private and eight public). Eight schools were located in urban areas while eight schools were located in rural areas. Survey results disclosed 73.39% of the students said the condition of their classroom could motivate them to actively participate in academic activities and 61.26% of the students said it could hinder their motivation to learn. According to 89.13% of students, their motivation to learn would increase if their learning environment were improved, while 92.53% said they would learn more and attain higher grades if the condition of their classroom physical learning environment were improved. A considerably large number of students (87.48%) felt the condition of their classroom

could influence their personal behavior and make them absent from school. The relationship between student absenteeism and poor classroom physical learning environments was well documented. Students did need clean air, good light, and a quiet, comfortable, and safe learning environment. Students were more likely to be absent if they were sick due to poor indoor air quality or mold due to humidity (Asiyai, 2014; Jones, Smith, Wheeler, & McManus, 2010). The findings of Asiyai's work exhibited how facilities affected student achievement through the impact it had on students' learning, attendance, and motivation.

Chan's (1996) studies showed the relationship between building age and student academic performance. The researcher concluded modern school buildings were better able to meet the needs of contemporary educational programs because they incorporated the latest innovative ideas and technology. According to Chan, computer and technology education and science instruction have placed new fiscal demands on school buildings. These programs typically required additional space and changes to the school buildings, such as upgraded electrical and telephone capacity and higher air quality with improved ventilation systems. A building's age served as a surrogate for a number of specified variables, such as the condition of the building, thermal control, proper lighting, acoustical control, support facilities, the condition of restrooms, and the aesthetic condition of the environment. It was difficult to attribute an increase in student learning to any one factor because so many forces influenced student learning; however, research has shown a positive relationship between the building condition and the achievement levels of students (Faltys, 2006; Holloway, 2000). Without available funding to maintain

buildings and construct new facilities, school districts lose an opportunity to impact student achievement.

Older research from Earthman and Lemasters (1996) concluded the discrepancy in learning that can be attributed to a school building was small; however, the impact of the school building itself was very important because it was one variable over which the school district had direct control. These researchers discovered a positive relationship between the building condition and the achievement levels of students. A positive relationship between student academic performance on all subtests of the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) and the condition of the school building was found. Further, students in schools with cosmetic building problems had higher levels of achievement than students in schools with structural building problems. Student achievement in the area of science was higher in buildings with better quality science equipment than in buildings with lower quality science facilities (Earthman & Lemasters, 1996). In addition, the researchers investigated the scores of all Virginia 11th graders on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). The students in above-standard buildings outscored students in substandard buildings in all but two subtests of the CTBS. The differences in scores between the two building conditions ranged from 1 to 9 percentile points. This research indicated a link between building condition and academic performance.

Hattie (2009) spent 15 years researching and synthesizing 800 meta-analyses (52,637 studies) to determine the most influential factors on student achievement. He determined everything done in education has an effect, but some things had more of an effect. Throughout Hattie's research, effect size indicated a particular outcome of improvement. The effect size of .40 equated approximately a full school year's worth of

growth. He identified the following six main contributors that influence achievement: student, home, school, curricula, teacher, and teaching strategies. When reviewing relationships specific to the school building, the learning space was found to have a 0.01 effect size on student achievement. According to Hattie, learning space, such as building conditions, was not correlated to increases in achievement. The research indicated mixed results related to facilities and student achievement, but there was evidence that noted there was a positive correlation (Asiyai, 2014; Chan, 1996; Faltys, 2006; Holloway, 2000; Holt & Smith, 2002).

Updating and building new school facilities only occurred within the limits of the school's existing funds and resources. Adequate funding and support as acquired through local revenues were key to providing students and teachers favorable working conditions. Some teachers were so demotivated by low pay and poor working conditions they put in minimal effort, sometimes just going through the motions before leaving school to put in time at another job (Schneider, 2002). It was the superintendent's responsibility to address building and facility needs by ensuring safe and desirable conditions. Unfortunately, across the United States, school leaders have recognized they lack the funds to make improvements for facilities in poor condition (Schneider, 2002).

Building and Facility Needs

Ninety percent of American children attend public schools. In 2009, the American Society of Civil Engineers released a report card that gave American schools a D in their overall condition because 75% of America's 86,000 schools were inadequate to meet the needs of students. Since that report, the nation's public education needs have increased with more children attending schools that were unsafe or out of date. Nearly one third of

all public schools were more than half a century old. This occurred in all communities—urban, rural, and suburban (Crampton & Thompson, 2003). According to Beckham and Maiden (2003), the average public school in America was 42 years old, and school facilities began needing significant improvements after 40 years of use. Approximately \$254,600,000,000 of repairs were needed across the country. At the state level, funding needs ranged from \$326,000,000 in Vermont to \$25,400,000,000 in California. The average state funding need was \$5,100,000,000.

Cave (2010) discussed in big cities, such as Detroit, Michigan, student population drastically declined in the past 10 years, which resulted in the closure of hundreds of schools while existing school buildings needed new roofs, plumbing, and heating and cooling systems. In Massachusetts there were over 250 educational building projects waiting to be funded (Stainback & Donahue, 2005). Approximately 75% of 903 surveyed elementary and secondary schools reported their school facilities needed some type of repairs, renovations, or modernizations. This work was estimated to be \$2.2 million per school and was most likely to be funded by asking local voters to approve a bond issue (Lewis et al., 2000).

One of the largest studies concerning school building conditions was completed by the United States General Accounting Office in 1995 when it published the *Condition of America's Schools* report. This report included the following statement:

Older buildings often had more sound infrastructure than new buildings. Buildings built in the early years of this century-or before-frequently were built for a life span of 50 to 100 years while more modern buildings, particularly those built after 1970, were designed to have a life span of only 20 to 30 years. (p. 18)

McLaughlin and Bavin (2003) discussed research that indicated half of U.S. schools had unsatisfactory environmental conditions for appropriate learning by students. A study in 2000 by the National Education Association estimated, “\$268 billion is needed to bring the nation’s schools up to acceptable standards for basic issues such as plumbing, roof integrity, lighting and safety” (McLaughlin & Bavin, 2003, p. 28). In the same study, it was noted 3 of every 4 existing public school buildings were in need of repair. A strong influential factor in the condition of a school was the age of the facility. As would be expected, older schools were in most need of repair, and yet in many cases, they existed in school districts that did not have the funding capacity to maintain these buildings. A survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found the average age of public school buildings was 40 years and on average major renovations had occurred over 11 years ago. Lewis et al. (2000) calculated the functional age of a school building based on the year of construction of the main instructional building that had not experienced any major renovations since original construction. The average functional age of school buildings in America was 16 years, with 40% having a functional age of over 15 years.

Regardless the size of the community, if the bulk of students was from low-income households, school districts had fewer dollars to build and maintain facilities. A familiar and common problem in urban districts was quickly deteriorating and aging school facilities (Agron, 1998). Some inner-city schools were in such poor condition physical safety was threatened every time a student or staff member entered the building. Urban districts such as Chicago, Cleveland, Hartford, and Detroit were more likely to have a large percentage of poor and minority children. It was estimated more than 11

million children in America's public schools attended an urban district (Agron, 1998). These districts were typically associated with low test scores, high dropout rates, and higher absenteeism when compared to rural and suburban districts. School facilities in urban areas acquired more use because of the high number of students attending summer school, wraparound programs, and before and after daycare programs. It was estimated urban districts need about \$50 billion to repair crumbling facilities. Holloway (2000) found in urban school districts, "...about 3.5 percent of the budget is typically spent on facilities maintenance, of this amount, however, 85% is budgeted for emergency repairs, with only a small amount remaining for preventive maintenance" (p. 88).

According to No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), healthy, high-performing school buildings were defined as facilities in which the design, construction, operation, and maintenance use energy-efficient and affordable practices and materials. School buildings should be cost-effective by enhancing indoor air quality and protecting and conserving water. Federal dollars from No Child Left Behind offered school districts opportunities to begin the conversations needed to pursue new and upgraded school buildings; however, none of these federal funds were allowed to be used for construction, renovation, or repair of school facilities. On December 10, 2015, No Child Left Behind was replaced by President Obama and his administration with the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). This new law provided changes for school districts in multiple areas such as testing and accountability; however, the Every Student Succeeds Act did retain many of the original provisions of No Child Left Behind. The definition of healthy, high-performing schools was not changed and was worded exactly the same in the new legislation.

Inadequate, decaying facilities sent the wrong message to children and stakeholders, that education was not important. The upkeep of school facilities did have impact on instruction, staff job satisfaction, student academic growth, and community opinion toward the district. Education should have been a priority in America to ensure children were learning in safe, modern buildings. Each student should have had the opportunity to obtain a quality education from facilities and educators that stimulate growth for the future (Grega, 2006).

School Safety Needs

Since the year 2010, there have been approximately 54 school shooting incidents in the United States (Lee, 2013). After Columbine, Sandy Hook, and multiple other school shootings, school districts renewed their focus on school safety. Student safety became a concern not only for parents and educators, but also policy makers. The high-profile nature of school safety accelerated attempts to improve school settings. Preventative safety measures came at a price that school districts needed to find ways to fund. Even the simplest safety measures, such as requiring students and staff to carry school identification cards, cost school districts money (Heinen, Webb-Dempsey, Moore, McClellan, & Friebe, 2007).

In the past decade, many schools remodeled entryways or started new construction projects reviewed by security experts. Main entrances have been reconfigured to funnel all visitors to and through the main office. Some schools have gone further in only allowing entrance into the facility by being buzzed in by school personnel. Older doors and locks have been replaced with newer hardware, and signs have been added on the outside of buildings to communicate all visitors must report to

the main office (Trump, 2009). A majority of schools transitioned to using visitor management systems for identifying and recording who entered their schools. More than 95% of United States schools require visitors to sign in upon entry (Heinen et al., 2007). Though some schools chose fairly basic sign-in logs and visitor identification badges, others have invested in expensive technology that allows the scanning of drivers' licenses to check visitors against sexual offender databases and produce visitor identification cards (Trump, 2009).

Surveillance cameras also became a common safety measure to have on school campuses, especially in the high schools and middle schools. A report conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics stated in the 2003-2004 school year, 60% of U.S. high schools used surveillance cameras (Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, & Baum, 2006). Garcia (2003) reported 40% of school districts have spent over \$500,000 on new surveillance technology and spending on surveillance technology could cost large districts over a million dollars. Camera use was reported in a reactive or passive manner to investigate incidents that had already occurred. The cameras have also been used as a monitoring system with a school secretary or security personnel assigned to view the footage throughout the school day. Costs associated with cameras included computer systems and broadband technology to access video images on-site or even off-site using handheld devices (B.B. Moore, 2014). Even with the high price tag associated with them, the use of electronic surveillance cameras has become a common reality in most schools.

School resource officers have been considered the most recent effort by districts and government leaders to keep students safe. Weiler and Cray (2011) noted according to national data 35% of American schools had school resource officers on campus. The

salary of a school resource officer could have been paid in a variety of ways; however, it was generally maintained through a combination of local and school district money. It was usually through local law enforcement that professional trainings were conducted with school staff to improve readiness skills in case of an emergency. Even if a school was fortunate enough to have a school resource officer on-site, faculty still needed to know exactly what to do in every type of crisis situation. An analysis of U.S. school shootings by Lee (2013) determined it was because of educators' actions that most of the school shooting incidents were stopped, not through intervention of law enforcement. This finding indicated the significance of providing teachers with crisis training. The costs associated with this training had to come out of the school district's budget.

All students and youth deserved a safe, respectful, caring, and positive learning environment. According to Asiyai (2014), an appropriate learning environment was the key to effective learning and development. She asserted such an environment was supportive and productive for student learning. There were multiple factors to consider when defining a learning environment, but the physical school facility was a large part of the equation. School districts used bond money to fund building improvements, remodel to improve school safety, or to finance new construction (Neill, 2003).

Bond Issues

Balsdon, Brunner, and Rueben (2003) explained bonds are what school districts in most states used in order to finance capital improvements, such as constructing new buildings or remodeling existing structures. Legally bond proceeds had to be used to either acquire land for a public school or on the actual facility for construction, rehabilitation, or repairs. If voters approved the tax referendum, then the bonds were paid

with funds raised on taxes that were above and beyond the general property tax. The school district paid a certain percentage of interest on the bonds to the bondholder until the maturity date on which the educational agency was required to buy the bonds back from the bondholders (Balsdon, Brunner, & Rueben, 2003).

Missouri statute 164.121.1. stated the following regarding school bonds:

The school board of any district other than a metropolitan or urban district may borrow money and issue bonds for the payment thereof for the following purposes: (1) Purchasing schoolhouse sites and other land for school purposes; (2) Erecting schoolhouses or library buildings; (3) Furnishing schoolhouses or library buildings; (4) Building additions to or repairing old buildings; (5) Purchasing school buses and other transportation equipment; (6) Paying off and discharging assessments made by counties, cities, towns and villages or other political subdivisions or public corporations of the state against the district in connection with the erection, construction and maintenance of sewers and sewer systems, sidewalks, guttering, curbing and paving of streets and alleys adjoining and abutting real estate of the district if the general funds of the district are insufficient in the judgment of the board to pay and discharge the assessment (Missouri General Assembly, 2016).

Arkansas Code § 6-20-1202 stated the following regarding school bonds:

(a) For acquiring a building site, building or equipping a new school building, repairing, making additions to, or equipping a present school building, purchasing new or used school buses or refurbishing school buses, or the professional development and training of teachers or other programs authorized under the federally recognized qualified zone academy bond program codified at 26 U.S.C. § 1397E, any school district of the State of

Arkansas is authorized to borrow money and issue negotiable bonds for the repayment thereof from school funds (General Assembly of the State of Arkansas, 2014).

The need for quality facilities was well documented, and school bond issues played a vital part of funding building renovations and new construction. Since districts had become dependent on citizens' approval of school bonds to fund building needs, they needed to be aware of key issues to address. Utilizing effective communication strategies during the bond election educated voters of the benefits of increased taxes (Clemens, 2003).

Increased School Funding for Instructional and Staff Support

The ways in which students learn, acquire information, and develop the skills of problem solving and inquiry have changed dramatically in recent years. The types of jobs for which schools were preparing students have also changed. Students needed teachers who could teach in ways distinctly different to provide students the tools and skills required for the 21st century (Cogshall, Bivona, & Reschly, 2012). If educators were not using those tools and teaching students how to use them, they were not providing students with what they needed to be successful adults (Marx, 2014). These support tools required a funding source, and school leaders had to find a way to pay for what was necessary.

Dolph (2006) explained it was becoming more common for school districts to ask constituents to help finance the increased cost of education through the tax levy process. He contended schools were dependent on funds from tax levies because of limitations in state funding formulas, unfunded programs required by the federal government, a lack of resources, and changes in tax laws. Hattie (2009) determined through his meta-analysis

there was minimal relationship, or effect size, between educational expenditure and student achievement (.23); however, he stated there was a more positive correlation between expenses for cost of instruction such as teacher quality and classroom supplies. School funding for instructional and staff support included technology, instructional needs (i.e., professional development; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] education; and project-based learning), and competitive salary wages.

Technology Needs

Technology in the classroom was not only transforming modern education and student learning, it was changing how school districts spent their resources. Technology evolved to more than just computers. It incorporated a variety of new devices. Document cameras, iPads, cell phones, liquid crystal display (LCD) projectors, online multimedia, electronic readers, audio players, and interactive whiteboards have become part of the new technology vocabulary for teachers and students. These instructional technology tools greatly enhanced visuals and interaction that led to better student engagement and learning for all students (Angle, 2010). Gray, Thomas, and Lewis (2010) developed a report using data from a survey distributed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology. Over 4,000 teachers in rural, urban, and suburban school districts responded concerning their use of technology in the classroom. The majority of teachers (97%) reported having one or more computers in their classroom, and 93% of the computers had Internet access. Computers are not the most desired item by all teachers anymore. Interactive SmartBoards and iPads were reported as being used more often but were not as available.

Closing the achievement gap between low- and high-performing students has been the goal of every school district. Angle (2010) discussed how instructional technology, including hardware, software, and staff development, is used in schools to provide differentiated lessons to meet the needs of individual students. Students in some districts were able to recover graduation credits through online programs such as GradPoint. Programs such as Khan Academy, Study Island, Accelerated Reading/Math, and Read 180 provided specific standards-based and skills-based instruction to students who needed additional support. Hattie (2009) measured computer-aided instruction as having a .37 effect size on student achievement. He noted computer-aided instruction was in the form of tutoring, managing, simulation, enrichment, programming, and problem solving. He also stated the use of technology was more effective when the teacher used a variety of teaching strategies, when teachers were properly trained in how to use the technology, when there were multiple opportunities for learning, when the student was in control of the learning, and when peer learning and feedback were optimized (Hattie, 2009).

Acquiring technology was tricky for districts due to decreased funding and budgetary restraints (Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013). Beckham (2001) discussed in more recent years school districts have used money from tax referendums to fund new technology for their schools and keep up with technological advancement. The initial technology resources could cost a district thousands of dollars; however, technology costs were assumed to be ongoing. Yearly licensing fees, constant maintenance, and updating were included in the total cost of technology used in a school district.

As varying amounts of money were being spent on technology, Odden and Picus (2008) encouraged superintendents to focus on student achievement and how the use of technology was going to assist students in meeting learning goals. According to these authors, technology was an area on which a lot of money had been spent, but there was very little research on how much it supported student achievement. Technology was unlikely to raise student test scores by itself, but it did play some role in the general education system. Student learning was mainly dependent on adult actions, which predicted student performance. Stephen White (2011) defined these actions as antecedent data and characterized them into three groups: teacher routines, instructional strategies, and learning conditions. Teachers were to be well versed in research-based practices that met all instructional needs of the diverse population American schools serve.

Instructional Needs

Professional development. Teacher quality has become the foundation for improving student achievement. There was a growing amount of research finding professional development and building teacher capacity to be vital for school improvement efforts (Fermanich, 2002). Reeves (2009) outlined teacher development as the key to change that resulted in improved student achievement. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) also noted investment in leadership training and an emphasis on professional development for teachers as necessary for educational reform. Ensuring students have teachers that can meet the demands of college- and career-ready standards was crucial. According to the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001), 25% of a teacher's time should be spent on some kind of professional learning or collaboration with colleagues; however, school districts usually budgeted only a fraction of their

expenditures on teacher training. Studies have found school districts budgeted anywhere from 1-10% on professional development expenditures (Coggshall et al., 2012; Killeen, Monk, & Plecki, 2002). Habitual professional development activities such as teacher workshops and conferences cost a district anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars a year. There were also less traditional activities such as teacher supervision, mentoring, teacher sabbaticals, curriculum writing, daily plan time, instructional coaches, and salary increases resulting from additional college credits. The cost for substitutes when teachers were out of the building attending in-services was also required (Fermanich, 2002). There were varying definitions of what professional development looked like as well as different price tags for delivery models.

STEM education. During the past decade, educators and politicians have discussed STEM education. Overwhelming consensus and a wide array of various reports put STEM education at the forefront of K-12 education (V.R. Carter, 2013). Professional fields in STEM were growing more quickly than any other field besides the health care industry. STEM occupations were projected to grow by 17% from 2008 to 2018 compared to 9.8% growth for non-STEM occupations. These workers earned higher wages and were more likely to have at least a college degree (Langdon, McKittrick, Beede, Khan, & Doms, 2011). The additional supplies and materials required in schools to provide STEM education to students were obviously an increased expense for school districts. There has been a growing interest in K-12 education with the Maker Movement. Makerspaces were being developed in schools to enhance opportunities for students to engage in design and engineering practices. Through a focus on STEM education, materials were provided for students to build, modify, or repurpose to make a product.

Instructional materials needed for this type of learning included digital tools, prototyping tools, microcontroller platforms, and 3D printers (Martin, 2015).

Project-based learning. Another trend in current education reform has been personalized learning (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The idea of personalized learning was to customize instruction and assessment to each individual student's strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Personalized learning often came in the form of project-based learning. Project-based learning for individual students provided students the skills to take initiative, collaborate, problem solve, and present work. It engaged students in real-world business situations to challenge thinking and enhance learning (Mosier, Bradley-Levine, & Perkins, 2016). Characteristics of project-based learning included the following: student choice in project, authentic real-world problems, multiple sources of information, interdisciplinary content, group collaboration, and self-assessment. Project-based learning was being used as an instructional strategy across the nation to prepare students to live and work in the 21st century; however, there was a price school districts paid for this instructional method. Cook and Weaver (2015) found teachers needed additional professional development to enhance their content knowledge and facilitation skills when using project-based learning. Similar to STEM education and Makerspaces, the equipment and materials for these projects cost a school district thousands of dollars.

Competitive Salary Wages

The past decade has brought economic instability and budget cuts to school districts. Teachers across the country have scrutinized their financial opportunities as many districts have frozen salary schedules and reduced benefits in attempts to balance decreasing budgets. Retaining quality, veteran teachers and attracting new, motivated

teachers was difficult when a school district was unable to be competitive with surrounding districts or the private business sector. Businesses aggressively competed for talented educators with incentive packages school districts were not able to offer (Wright, 2003). Entry-level teaching salaries were unfavorable compared to other professions that required similar college training. Reports have shown half of new teachers leaving the teaching profession within five years, and many of them stated money and professional dissatisfaction as the reasons (Goorian, 2000).

Personnel expenses accounted for up to 80% of a district's budget. The variation of teacher pay among districts across the nation was based on several factors such as cost of living in the area. Retaining and attracting quality staff needed to be a priority for school districts in order to provide quality education for students (Chambers, 1995).

Standardized test scores were often used to determine how successfully a school district was operating. Gill and Meier (2001) found one factor that impacted student achievement on standardized test scores was teacher salaries. A report published in 1996 by the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future coincided with Gill and Meier as it stated progressive salary schedules benefitted schools by rewarding teachers for the contributions they brought into the educational system. Individuals working in education were often motivated by intrinsic rewards rather than by monetary gains; however, investing financial resources in teacher salaries was important for a school district in order to hire and retain quality teachers. Finding the funds to provide competitive salary wages was frequently done by school districts through the passage of a tax referendum.

Increased School Funding for Operational Costs

Teaching and learning have been declared the Number 1 priority in schools but have been largely driven by the financial reality of the district. Educational programs cost money. Citizen tax dollars have been relied on in order to provide students an education. The goods and services school districts used to continue operating were slowly increasing with time. It had become necessary to pass tax referendums in order to keep school districts operating and providing the quality of education the community had grown to expect (Sargent, 2014). The ongoing operation of a school district included any expense that was necessary each year in order to make the school district function to serve the purpose of educating students. Operating expenses included utilities, equipment, services, and supplies used throughout the school year (Grega, 2006).

The United States spent more money on K-12 schooling than any other nation in the world. Switzerland was the only country with higher per pupil spending than the United States (Guthrie & Ettema, 2012). The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) reported total expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools in the United States during the 2011-2012 school year amounted to \$12,401 per public school student. Of these expenditures, \$11,014 per student were for operation of schools. Operational costs in this report included instruction, student support (guidance, health, attendance, and speech pathology), instructional staff services (curriculum development, staff training, libraries, media, and computer centers), operation and maintenance, administration, transportation, and food services.

When school districts had declining revenues due to budget cuts, they were compelled to cut instructional costs and eliminate programs. Increased accountability

through No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) has steered schools to focus on core subjects such as math and literacy. These subjects often received more funding and instructional time in public schools while noncore subjects, like the fine arts, were being reduced or completely eliminated due to budget restraints (Major, 2013). A study conducted by Olszewski and Maury (1997) surveyed 2,617 teachers in southern Minnesota regarding how much personal money they spent for their classroom instructional needs. Their research showed teachers spent an average of \$492 per year on behalf of their students because the school did not provide the funds for these educational supplies.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) stated student achievement required communities to mobilize and support their local schools through financial investments. Student achievement could only be achieved within the limits of the school's resources. Adequate funding and support as acquired through local revenues were key to student achievement.

Tax Levy Issues

New tax proposals for daily operation of a school district were considered as tax levy increases. The most common use of a tax levy was to raise property taxes to fund education. A levy was supplemental to the general fund that paid for the operation of the school district. It included salaries and benefits, supplies and equipment, materials and utilities, and fuel and extracurricular expenses (Grega, 2006). State funding for schools has steadily declined during the past decade. According to Oliff et al. (2012) schools in 35 states were receiving less funding than they had 5 years previously. Seventeen states have cut per-student funding by more than 10% from 2008 levels, and three states have reduced funding by more than 20%. School leaders have had to make tough decisions in

difficult economic times. Many school districts will have to choose between asking citizens to raise their taxes or go without additional funds.

Financial cuts at the state level have created a significant consequence to local school districts. An estimated 44% of total education expenses had been financed by these funds, and without them school districts had to either scale back on the educational services they provided or raise more local tax revenue to make up the deficit (Oliff et al., 2012). These cuts hindered education reforms, such as smaller class sizes, increased professional development, early childhood programs, and summer and extended-day programs.

Assessed Valuation and Local Property Taxes

The literature was clear that money from local tax levies was necessary to provide quality education and keep a school district in operation. In order to effectively allocate resources, it was beneficial for school superintendents to understand how local assessed valuation, tax rates, and per pupil expenditures affected their school district (Brazeale, 2014). Property tax was the main source of local taxes, which were dedicated to education. School districts received revenue from local property taxes from the tax rate based on the assessed valuation. Ogle (2007) defined assessed valuation as the value of all real and personal property in a school district as calculated by the county assessor. The operating tax levy was combined with the assessed valuation to determine the amount of property taxes to be collected in each district. Therefore, the higher the tax levy the more funds school districts acquired through local taxes. Brazeale (2014) discussed there was a variance in school funding amounts throughout states due to differences in the assessed

value of properties between school districts. Property tax rates reflected property-wealthy communities had the ability to spend more per student than property-poor communities.

School funding has been a combination of federal, state, and local revenue contributions, with the bulk of the money resulting from the assessment of local property taxes (Crader et al., 2002; Goodlad, 2004). The review of literature revealed it was key for a school superintendent to obtain essential funding through passages of bond issues and tax levy increases. Without these tax referendums, school facilities became unsafe learning environments, teachers were not trained with new skills, technology became outdated, instructional needs were not met, teacher pay was not competitive, and programs were eliminated (Beckham, 2001; Dolph, 2006; Faltys, 2006; Grega, 2006). Research supported communication made the greatest impact on the success or failure of a tax referendum (Holt, 1993). Therefore, superintendents needed to utilize effective communication strategies throughout the process. The remainder of this review of literature focused on the importance of communication strategies used by superintendents during the three stages of a tax referendum.

Communication by Superintendents

Communication has been an ongoing responsibility of superintendents, but also an essential foundation needed to increase the probability for any future tax referendum passage. Holt's (1993) research supported the finding that communication made the greatest difference between success and failure. Bohrer (2000) discussed one of the most difficult responsibilities for a school superintendent was getting voters to pass a tax referendum in their community. The numerous needs for increased school funding for facility improvements, as well as increased school funding for instructional and staff

support and operational costs, must all be communicated to the voters. The process of getting a tax referendum passed required an even mix of public relations, community education, and consensus building. Credible and strong leadership from school administrators was important (Bohrer, 2000). The superintendent had to be seen by the community as serving the overall good of the school. Since all public decisions regarding taxpayers' dollars are political by nature, community outreach and communication were a critical part of the process (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Through communication strategies, school leaders were required to capture the commitment, enthusiasm, and imagination of individuals and groups in the community to join in support of high-quality education of students and the vision for the school district (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

There were many factors that led a superintendent to be successful, but communication skills were the greatest (Neudecker, 2008). Routine communication strategies used throughout the school year often included communicating a shared vision to stakeholders (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). Routine communication was found to establish trust between school leadership and the community. Communicating while planning for a tax referendum included polling voters and engaging a diverse group of stakeholders. Campaign communication came in a variety of forms such as media outlets, written materials, committees, and other diverse strategies. Communication after a tax referendum was another opportunity to build relationships and trust with community members (Florence, 2014). These types of communication strategies used by superintendents will be explored in the next section of the literature review.

Routine Communication by Superintendents Prior to a Tax Referendum

This study investigated various phases of communication in reference to passing a tax referendum. The first phase the researcher examined was routine, ongoing communication, which was utilized by superintendents with the idea of creating transparency and trust. These elements became highly important in a school community in the event a tax referendum needed to be put on the ballot at a later date (Faltys, 2006; Godown, 2011; Hickey, 2007). Successful superintendents were constantly laying the groundwork, through good routine communication, even if there was not a tax referendum in the district's near future (Vogel, 2006).

Seventy percent of waking time was spent in communication with others (Harris, 2004). In fact, communication was exactly what the majority of superintendents and principals did all day long. School superintendents spent 70% or more of their time communicating. The importance of this communication was well documented and closely associated with the leadership abilities displayed by school superintendents (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Since routine communication was so much part of a school leader's role, knowing how to communicate effectively was a key to his/her success. The image of the school district was greatly influenced by the conduct and mannerisms of the superintendent (Harris, 2004). Effective routine communication involved accepting others' points of view, presenting issues in a positive manner, keeping an open mind while supporting the best interest of the school, and keeping dialogue constructive. The superintendent accepted the challenges of communicating effectively with a diverse population. Successful superintendents recognized and engaged each group, with its own needs and perceptions, in the communication process (Harris, 2004).

A reality of public education was superintendents had to be not only outstanding educators, but also outstanding communicators (Neudecker, 2008). In the past, school leaders have typically focused on what educators know best. Topics included curriculum, professional development, child development, and building management. In recent years, superintendents have become responsible for not only having the knowledge of current education trends, but also frequent communication with stakeholders regarding the development of all education initiatives or proposals in their local district. Successful superintendents ensured communication was a priority from the beginning of every process. Communication did not just occur at the end when all the important decisions were made (Neudecker, 2008). Working diligently to create a culture and vision of positive two-way communications has become part of superintendent's daily work in order to gain support from employees, parents, community, business leaders, elected officials, and others. This support was needed when asking voters to approve a tax referendum.

According to Kowalski, Petersen, and Fusarelli (2009), "Communication and cultural change are interlaced. Cultures are created and sustained by communication, and once established cultures determine communicative behavior..." (p. vi). Administrators who were found to be effective reformers were also effective communicators. Public relations, communication, and school reform were linked and necessary for reform to occur. Positive, planned change did not take place if the school administrator was an ineffective communicator (Kowalski et al., 2009). According to Carroll et al. (2013), good communication by the superintendent increased teamwork, productivity, employee morale, job satisfaction, and retention. Routine communication by superintendents

created school cultures that worked toward a shared vision and had trust in their school leaders.

Shared Vision

A vision was only a dream until it was widely shared and accepted (Nanus, 1992). Without the ability to regularly communicate district needs and vision to all stakeholders in the community, the district could become stagnate in improvement (Barth, 2006; Devono & Price, 2012). The superintendent had the significant responsibility of creating a shared vision, or picture, for what the school district looked like in the future. This vision was shared with all stakeholders to help define the values of the district and motivate personnel to improve productivity and efficiency. The concentrated efforts of members of the organization increased the possibilities of the vision's successes. A shared understanding of desired results was important to maintaining public confidence and accountability for the district throughout the school year (Gemberling, Smith, & Villani, 2000). Skillful school leaders focused on key aspects of the school's vision and consistently communicated the vision clearly and convincingly. These leaders also invited dialogue in relation to the vision with multiple stakeholders through communication strategies.

In his book *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge (2006) defined systems thinking as seeing the interrelationships within the whole organization. Systems thinking was important when communicating with stakeholders, because of the many complex structures within a school district and throughout the community. Senge identified four core disciplines, which all worked together to create systems thinking. Among these disciplines was shared vision. Learning organizations did not exist without a shared vision to help the

organization stay on track and be committed to productive change. Shared vision provided an organization focus and energy, which were vital components of any change efforts (Gemberling et al., 2000).

Kotter's (2012) eight-stage process of how to understand and develop change in an organization emphasized the importance of routinely communicating the vision. Communicating the vision was Kotter's fourth stage of creating major change in an organization. Kotter emphasized communication must be frequent and effective to be truly understood and accepted. To assist communicating an organization's vision, Kotter gave the following suggestions: keep it simple, use examples or stories, use multiple venues, lead by example, explain inconsistencies, and get key stakeholders to help repeat the message.

Fullan et al. (2004) identified 10 components to make school improvement possible by successfully implementing large-scale change. One of the components they discussed was designing a compelling conceptualization. This was described as communicating the vision by distributing leadership throughout multiple stakeholders. When there was two-way communication occurring throughout the change process, there was a larger sense of shared ownership and commitment to the task. Michal Fullan's (2008) *The Six Secrets of Change* described the six conditions that had to be present in any organization for change to be successful and sustained. One condition recognized was connecting peers with purpose to foster continuous and purposeful interactions related to the common cause or vision. A shared vision that was routinely well communicated and embraced by stakeholders inspired commitment and energy within the

school community. This commitment and energy were found to be beneficial for a potential future tax referendum.

Trust in School Leadership

Excellent communications started with relationships. Ongoing communication, when planned appropriately, developed high levels of trust within an organization (Harris, 2004). Relationships with stakeholder groups inside and outside of the school were the foundation for building support for educational reforms and change efforts (Fullan, 2008). A definite way to build trust was by being transparent with stakeholders. Transparency through clearly and continuously shared results led to successful change (Fullan, 2008; Neudecker, 2008). Carroll et al. (2013) stated transparent, open, and frequent communication built trust in a school district and its school leaders.

There was a large body of research that discussed school tax referendums being won or lost based on the amount of trust the community had in the superintendent and the school board (Barth, 2006; Devono & Price, 2012; Faltys, 2006; Florence, 2014; Vogel, 2006). Superintendents who had employed ongoing, routine, trust-building communication strategies prior to any discussion about a tax referendum had created a culture more likely for success (Vogel, 2006). As the leader of the whole district, it was vital that the superintendent formed relationships that fostered a sense of trust and cooperation among all of the stakeholders (Barth, 2006; Devono & Price, 2012). Florence (2014) tested a handbook for superintendents with strategies and practices that assisted in passing a tax referendum. She stated trust was an integral part of successfully passing a tax referendum. Routine communication strategies such as being transparent with financial spending, listening to stakeholders' opinions, and being open and honest built

trust with the community. Godown (2011) also discussed the importance of trust and credibility. His research, which surveyed 121 superintendents, showed trust was a dominant influential factor when attempting to pass a tax referendum.

Superintendents who were described by Bird and Wang (2011) as having an authentic leadership style were individuals who established long-term, meaningful, and transparent relationships with people. Through their research, a positive correlation between superintendent authenticity and their district budget-building process was found. The more authentic a superintendent self-reported their leadership style, the more they reported that their financial decision-making processes included others, such as employees and local citizens.

Bryk and Schneider (2003) discussed the importance of trust in a school community when implementing change or reform. Good schools depended heavily on cooperative endeavors. The authors gave details on how trust was the connecting force that bonded individuals together to improve schools. Trust had to be present for schools to take risks, which were associated with positive change. Through their research, the researchers found collective decision-making occurred more often in schools with strong relational trust. Trust was not something that occurred overnight or that happened to a school district after simply attending a conference. School leaders built trust during day-to-day routine social conversations and actions. Honest and genuine conversations did not occur without trust. Bryk and Schneider concluded increased trust and deepened organizational change supported each other. School districts with cultures of high trust had the motivation and energy to stay the course under challenging circumstances. Creating change and reform became doable when people felt supported (Fullan et al.,

2004). Hickey (2007) discussed how district leadership that exhibited honesty and transparency to the public earned more support. Superintendents who were viewed as intimidating, dominating, and unsupportive towards teachers resulted in negative feelings from citizens. When community members were made promises in the past that were not kept by school officials, there was more hesitation to support future endeavors (Hickey, 2007; Hickey & Simmons, 2005).

Building trust between voters and school leaders took place every day of the year. Trust was built with numerous behaviors. Hickey (2007) discussed ongoing communication and focus groups built trust with voters because the stakeholders got a chance to voice their opinions about future planning. He also suggested another way to earn trust was to prove fiscal responsibility by doing the right thing with taxpayers' dollars. When stakeholders trusted and were involved in the school district, they were more likely to advocate on its behalf, defend it during difficult situations, and support it financially (NSPRA, 2013). Godown (2011) said the issue of trust cannot be ignored by a superintendent and it takes years to build through the open and honest actions of administrators and effective routine communication strategies.

Effective Routine Communication Strategies Prior to a Tax Referendum

When determining what types of communication strategies the school district was going to employ, it was important for superintendents to use strategies that were ongoing and not just reserved for a campaign. Effective school leaders were constantly laying the groundwork for good communication through the press and Internet, even if there was not a bond issue in the mix at that time (Vogel, 2006). When strategies were used to create positive interactions, they provided support for school improvement and as well

gathered support for ballot issues (Carlsmith & Railsback, 2001). When a community sensed the superintendent was doing a good job through a regular school year, chances were greater for winning funding elections when the time came. Often negative press of the school district from previous years resulted in negative votes on bond issues by the constituents of the district (Vogel, 2006).

Carroll et al. (2013) published a *Communication E-Kit for Superintendents*, which explained why marketing public schools was necessary due to our media-saturated world. In this document various authors discussed the concept of the superintendent as the individual being able to tell the school district's story the best. It encouraged superintendents to take charge of their schools' image and message, which was being communicated in the community. Studies have shown positive school marketing influences school choice. When superintendents marketed their schools in a positive light, patrons were more likely to choose public education over charter schools, vouchers, and tax credits. A successful communication plan helped student learning and instructional success. Effective routine communication strategies throughout the school year were associated with higher levels of student achievement, attendance, good behavior, and parent involvement (NSPRA, 2013).

The NSPRA (2013) had several real-life examples for superintendents to use in their school districts to frequently communicate with community members. Some of these strategies included hold open houses and tours of the schools; invite unenrolled students to visit for a day; meet with stakeholders at businesses, churches, and community locations; and send repeated mailings marketing the successes happening in the district. The NSPRA also suggested superintendents create ambassadors and

encourage them to spread the good news and happenings that were going on in the district. These ambassadors were to reach out in a persistent way and with a compelling message to diverse cultural groups holding different values. The most successful districts developed an ongoing relationship with their community through these ambassadors, who interacted with constituents, kept them informed of issues, listened to their opinions, and showed them the good being accomplished with their tax dollars (Tyson, 2006).

The NSPRA (2013) reminded superintendents that technology has opened up powerful routine communication channels to everyone. Traditional news cycles have become obsolete and information, whether accurate or inaccurate, has gotten out to the public quicker than ever. Communicating to patrons through the school district Web site was no longer optional, but an absolute must. In addition, the growth of social media use among people of all ages made it important for school districts to embrace these and other emerging technologies (NSPRA, 2013). The appearance of electronic communication strategies conveyed an image of the entire school district. According to the NSPRA, a quality image helped build the reputation of the school district, which in turn, aided in the recruitment of highly qualified teachers and support staff.

The overall goal of communication between school districts and the community was to establish and develop partnerships to gain support. The problem was most districts only communicated with their community when they needed something like votes to pass a bond issue or tax levy (D. Moore, 2003). Public schools had to have community support to be successful. This support was built on the trust developed through open and frequent communication, collaboration, and shared decision making. Effective financial

communication needed to be at the core of all communication plans to build support for school budgets, tax levies, and bond elections (NSPRA, 2013).

Communication Strategies While Planning for a Tax Referendum

The amount of planning required when attempting to pass a tax referendum was a daunting but important endeavor. The strategic planning prior to placing a tax referendum on the ballot has been shown to effect the successful passage of an election. School districts were more likely to pass referendums when an organized, step-by-step approach was utilized. Many districts that did not exhaust the time or effort to create this type of plan were unsuccessful in their results. Thoughtful planning regarding the various factors that have shown to effect the outcome of a tax referendum was beneficial to school districts (Faltys, 2006; Pappalardo, 2005).

O'Connor (2011) discussed how important a developed and organized plan was to successful tax referendums in Texas. Each of the 10 superintendents interviewed in his qualitative study agreed it was impossible for them to be successful without substantial planning time, which included collaboration and communication with citizens. Nine of the participants believed having six or more months was necessary to truly be ready for putting the referendum on the ballot. The superintendents used this time to communicate with the public. O'Connor stated developing communication strategies based on the communities needs was a common approach of effective planning. Pappalardo (2005) agreed communicating the school district's needs and plans must occur well before the referendum is to be placed on the ballot. Superintendents in his study suggested communicating at least 14 months before the potential election.

When reviewing successful bond passages in the state of Kansas, Bohrer (2000) credited the creation of a well-organized and properly implemented strategic plan as one reason for success. He stated the plan should outline the community educational needs the tax referendum would fund and outline the financial impact of the bond or levy. Bohrer believed the number of people needed to plan for a tax referendum could become large and overwhelming for a superintendent. The author suggested when school districts begin the planning process for school improvements and passing tax referendums, a committee should be formed to first conduct a needs assessment and then to help support in the initial planning. After the district needs have been identified, he recommended establishing subcommittees to focus on specific aspects of the referendum to help make the planning more manageable. Holt (1993) supported Bohrer's research and recommended these smaller committees should be involved in studying student enrollment, site selection for building projects, conditions of existing facilities, timelines, and needed finances. When local citizens were included in the beginning phases of planning the tax referendum, it was advantageous because the community developed the needs of the district.

Leary (2007) supported school districts establishing a list of reasons for requesting additional tax money as well as a list for not doing so. If there was a clearly defined need from the created list, the referendum should go forward. School districts should not arbitrarily attempt to commit voters to increased taxes without a thorough plan and strong understanding of how the voters feel about district changes. Current literature uncovered multiple ways to communicate while planning a tax referendum. Numerous authors (Cunningham, 2004; Fairbank, 2006; Lambert, 2012; Lifo & Senden, 2006;

Vogel, 2006) suggested polling voters to determine the community's attitude towards the school district and the potential tax referendum. Involving a diverse citizen group of stakeholders in committees, task forces, and focus groups also came highly recommended by researchers while schools were still in the planning stages of a tax referendum (Chan, 2004; Faltys, 2006; Holt, 1993; Lifo & Senden, 2004; Lode, 1999; D. Moore, 2003; Vogel, 2006; Weathersby, 2002).

Polling Voters

Before a tax referendum was placed on the ballot, successful school leaders determined what the taxpayers and the community needed and wanted from their local school district. This has had the potential of becoming an overwhelming task for a superintendent and school board. Lambert (2012) proposed using a survey to discover what stakeholders want when it came to their schools and school construction projects. Surveyed stakeholders included parents, school staff, senior citizens, students, and business owners. Surveys were conducted in numerous ways in order to collect data for decision making. Surveys have been done in person, over the phone, in a public place, or by mail. Holt (2002) suggested if survey data were collected in groups, the groups should be homogeneous with people of the same background. Homogeneous groups made participants feel safer and helped elicit more accurate feedback. Vogel (2006) suggested conducting polls to determine what the voters were feeling about the items included on the future tax referendum. If the majority of voters had an issue with a specific part of the tax referendum, Vogel encouraged revision of proposed expenditure designations. Polling services gave a superintendent a quick overview of the public's thinking and gauged its feelings on a particular topic (Cunningham, 2004; Lifo & Senden, 2006). Fairbank

(2006) suggested polling and survey data provided superintendents with insights regarding the opinions and concerns of voters. A strong and comprehensive poll served as a roadmap for a tax referendum and provided direction in communicating with voters in order for positive responses and success. Clear, concise, and compelling language can be identified through polling voters. The end result of polling voters was to measure the support of a referendum and existing objections (Dolph, 2006; Fairbank, 2006; Holt, 2002).

Lifto and Senden (2006) also discussed how polling voters could be beneficial when initially planning for a tax referendum. The authors' research suggested conducting scientific telephone surveys to identify key words that best communicated with voters. The words used in a tax referendum campaign made a big difference in how a voter related to the issue. For example, their research showed voters were likely to support an upgrade to school libraries but were significantly more unsupportive when it came to improving school media centers. Another school district they investigated used the statement "to expand career development labs at district high schools" (Lifto & Senden, 2006, p. 43). This statement was much less supported by voters than "increase student access to hands-on vocational and technical instruction" (Lifto & Senden, 2006, p. 43). Identifying words and language voters will support helped superintendents best communicate.

Scott LaFee (2009) stated communication strategies used by many districts during the initial planning phase included launching a listening and learning tour. This strategy involved the superintendent and other district administrators meeting with a variety of individuals and groups within the community to gain a better understanding of how

stakeholders were feeling about the potential tax referendum. Forums for questions, interactions, and meeting with people were established in various public venues. This approach allowed for the district's decision-making process and all decisions to be as public as possible.

Communicating with stakeholders during the planning phase of a tax referendum assisted the superintendent in gaining understanding of what the taxpayers and the community needed and wanted from their local school district. Polling and surveying voters acted like a guide for superintendents during the referendum process. No matter what strategy was used to begin the initial planning phase, the most important factor was that stakeholders were involved in the process (Holt, 2002).

Involvement of Stakeholders

One of the most well-known researchers in school tax referendum elections was Carleton Holt. His dissertation research in 1993 identified multiple factors affecting the outcome of school bond elections. Several of his key recommendations were directly related to the involvement of stakeholders in the bond election process. Some of these recommendations were (a) publicizing promotional activities led by community support groups, (b) creating a diverse community group to look at all viewpoints, (c) allowing local media and school staff to be involved in the planning stage of the referendum, (d) having personal contacts share information about the needs of the students, and (e) using consultants to educate support groups as well as the community. Holt's research has been used as the foundation for additional studies regarding successful passage of tax referendums across the country. The involvement of stakeholders continued to be an emerging theme.

Cunningham (2004) discussed although 78% of superintendents reported they had procedures in place to encourage communication with stakeholders, only 41% said they actually solicited input from community stakeholders for important district decisions. It seemed most superintendents had good intentions of involving the public, but when it came down to executing the communication plan, it did not happen. Gilly (2013) stated superintendents communicated more frequently with internal stakeholders such as school employees, as opposed to external stakeholders such as parents. Involving stakeholders in many forms of communication such as polling voters, community-based citizens' committees, volunteers, study circles, task forces, and focus or core groups was key to the success of school referendums.

The one common theme to emerge from research on districts that successfully passed a bond issue was for the community to be involved in the initial planning process. Taxpayer input from a variety of sources was an important component of a successful tax referendum (Faltys, 2006; Holt, 1993; Lifo & Senden, 2004; Lode, 1999; Weathersby, 2002). When stakeholders were involved in the initial planning, they understood the purpose, process, effort, and results of a successful tax referendum. Stakeholder involvement had a very positive effect on the passage of a tax referendum (Chan, 2004; Holt, 2002; D. Moore, 2003; Vogel, 2006; Weathersby, 2002).

Holt (2002) discovered data indicating the most significant factor in passing a school tax referendum was the development of citizen volunteer committees. When citizen groups were highly visible spreading positive communication about the tax referendum, it sent the message to voters that the community had embraced change and the need for a referendum. Clemons, Salazar, Sprick, Valdez, and Williams (2010)

supported Holt's research that the more community involvement the better the chance was the community would support the plan and future referendums. School leaders who took the time to organize citizen groups to be involved in the planning of a tax referendum had improved support when they needed it the most (LaFee, 2009).

Core groups or focus groups were found to be an effective way to involve the community in making important school district decisions when planning for a tax referendum (Brown, 2001; Cunningham, 2004; LaFee, 2009). These types of groups engaged variety community members in deep discussion with school leaders about particular topics. District's needs were analyzed by the groups and proposals for solutions were created. This communication strategy helped superintendents identify key issues needing to be addressed at larger meetings or issues that had the potential to negatively disrupt a larger meeting. A positive aspect of group involvement was the transparency of the district. To truly understand the issues, people needed to know what was real and what was rumor. The participatory roles for citizens were to be viewed as a purposeful management tool when planning a tax referendum. These authors agreed collaboration and participation were significant components in successful two-way communication efforts.

Diversity in citizen participation. Superintendents primarily worked with and through other people. They helped establish the connections and relationships that enabled the school district to be effective and successful in its efforts. Therefore, the more community leaders and support the school obtained on their side, the better (Holt, Wendt, & Smith, 2006). These community leaders included labor unions, realtors, service groups, Chamber of Commerce, and ministerial associations (Vogel, 2006). Stakeholders

of different backgrounds and all demographic sectors were to be included when planning for a tax referendum. Retirees and voters in households without school-aged children were not to be left out; they made up a large portion of the voting population (Clemons et al., 2010). Including the opposition was given consideration as an opportunity to bridge some issues before the election. The better the school district's relationship with the community was, the better the chance for successfully passing a bond issue or tax levy (D. Moore, 2003; Kessler, 2012).

Teachers, administrators, parents, and students were also found to be important potential sources when attempting to pass a bond issue in the community. These stakeholders were able to accurately analyze and prioritize the needs of the district. Even without a formal leadership role in the school district, they helped others embrace goals, understand the changes needed, and work together towards improvement (Clemons et al., 2010). Hickey (2007) analyzed three different school districts with prior bond election failures. His qualitative research consisted of interviewing superintendents and citizens in these school districts after the failure. Local citizens stated district leadership was not concerned with advice from teachers and other school support staff. They also mentioned the community was not asked for input on the planning, which resulted in a lack of understanding and support. Hickey recognized how important teachers were in the attempt to pass a tax referendum. Teachers were a group of stakeholders who had a lot to gain from the improvements gained through a successful tax referendum. Teachers also had a significant influence in the community through the relationships they had with families and other school support staff. Teachers were considered to be in a key communication role to influence parent understanding of the educational and social

issues connected to a successful tax referendum. Hickey explained teachers and other district support staff helped spread a positive message and positively influenced community members to vote in favor of the bond. Communication through all district employees created a foundation for tax referendum success. When the staff members were kept informed about district needs and financial planning, they were more likely to support future plans and communicate to citizens accurately (Clemons et al., 2010; Hickey, 2007; Vogel, 2006).

The number of noncertified support staff in schools across the United States has significantly increased in the past 50 years. From 1970 to 2010, the number of support staff (employed by the district but not serving as classroom teachers) had grown by 130%. In some districts, half of the employees were nonteachers (Richmond, 2014). Staff members such as nurses, secretaries, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers played an important role in communicating while planning for a tax referendum. This was a large group of school representatives that could spread positive communication while planning for a tax referendum (Hickey, 2007).

Involving parents and students was also found critical to the success in planning for a tax referendum. Weathersby (2002) investigated strategies used in passing a bond issue in 23 school districts in Mississippi. One hundred percent of superintendents surveyed in this study stated they used parent-teacher organizations in assessing, planning, and promoting the bond issue. Findings from the distributed questionnaire and interviews with key school district personnel indicated that in addition to involving parents in the initial planning stages, securing unanimous school board support, involving community leaders, and developing a planned strategy were keys to success. The

inclusion of students in planning committees and stakeholder groups was a concept discussed by some researchers. Borden (2004) argued students established ownership in their school if involved in the planning of a tax referendum. Students offered a different perspective and helped design a space more conducive to learning since a major portion of a student's day was spent in school.

Using a variety of local citizens provided a means for communicating tax referendum issues to a wide array of voters. Involved community members who had previous relationships with voters were able to more clearly describe the details of the election to their neighbors and friends. Citizen committees provided valuable communication channels and feedback, which positively influenced the vote (Lode, 1999). Planning for a tax referendum was uniquely different in each district; however, successful districts had a specific strategic plan to gauge the feelings of the community members and to get them involved during the planning stages before the future campaign (Lifto & Senden, 2004).

Communication Strategies While Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

The second stage of communication when attempting to pass a tax referendum was the actual campaign process. When the final decision by the school board had been made regarding placing a tax referendum on the ballot, the campaign began. At that time, the school district started spreading the word about the upcoming election. Erickson (2011) stated, "providing communication to voters is critical to a successful referendum" (p. 17). Faltys (2006) explained there are influential factors that have been found to contribute to the success or failure of a tax referendum; however, connecting any single campaign strategy with an explanation of why some pass or why some fail was

impossible. He did determine, however, time and resources were valuable when campaigning for a tax referendum and successful superintendents used them wisely to communicate.

Trust in school leadership and general district stability has shown to be influential when obtaining support and passing a tax referendum. Hickey's (2007) examination of failed and successful bond elections demonstrated efforts by superintendents to communicate, clarify goals, and build trust resulted in strong support at the polls. Superintendents interviewed during this research believed trust was one of the foundational issues that must be addressed when asking stakeholders to support a tax referendum.

There were numerous ways for a school district to get the message out about an upcoming tax referendum. Gallagher et al. (1997) discussed the communication process as having a specific channel to convey the message.

The channel may be word-of-mouth conversation; an oral presentation on radio or television; written document in the form of a letter or a memorandum; printed matter like a newspaper, a book, a magazine, or a brochure; or a combination of words and pictures through the medium of motion pictures, videotapes, slides with sound tracks, and the like. (pp. 72-73)

Holt (1993) found a poorly organized, managed, and communicated campaign was a critical factor in many failed school tax referendums. Media outlets, written materials, presentations, committees, and additional strategies such as door-to-door canvassing were all communication strategies used by a school district throughout the campaign process. Ultimately, taxpayers decided the outcome of any tax referendum, but

the communication strategies used by superintendents were critical to expose voters to the issues and factors on which they based their decisions.

Media Outlets

Media coverage was identified through the literature as an excellent tool for communicating with the public. Communication has changed within the last 10 years with the Internet being so readily available. Additional communication channels now include e-mails, blogs, social media accounts, Web sites, and any other method using the Internet (Lambert, 2012). Sargent (2014), as well as Neill (2003), found a statistically significant influence on the outcome of tax referendums when information was communicated through media outlets. Media sources such as newspaper, radio, social media sites, and television reports helped inform voters about the tax referendum and important campaign events. Lode (1999) found when two-way communication was not in place with external media outlets, the tax referendum was less likely to pass. In successful elections, local media was invited at the beginning of the referendum process so they knew what the important issues were. Proactive media relations set the tone for media coverage and winning in the court of public opinion (O'Brien, 2008). Successful school district leaders called the local media before receiving calls from them. Kessler (2012) encouraged school districts to stay on top of rumors and misinformation by ensuring voters received the correct information from all media channels. All public meetings about the future tax referendum were to have written press releases for the media in case reporters were not able to attend (Lode, 1999; O'Brien, 2008).

Lode (1999) suggested maintaining a steady stream of information to the local media and keeping good news about the district in front of patrons at all times. O'Connor

(2011) also acknowledged the importance of focusing on a positive message. His research suggested the more negative things a superintendent can keep out of a conversation or media outlet, the better the message about the referendum will be received. Reporters should be aware of the facts and offer positive stories that inform the public how a successful tax referendum would benefit children and the community. For several school districts, the underlying positive was an increase in funds would help the district retain high-quality teachers, who provide a better education for kids. The importance of the message the school district communicates to the voters was critical to the outcome of the tax referendum (Fairbank, 2006; Holt et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2011; Sargent, 2014).

Communication through media outlets was to center on how the changes from the tax referendum were designed to improve the quality of education. Quality of education was identified as outstanding student achievement, various school honors or awards, athletic successes, and any other state or national recognition for school programs (Erickson, 2011; Sargent, 2014). Hockersmith (2001) identified strategies used by superintendents, chief business officials, and school board members, which were perceived as effective when attempting to pass a tax referendum. He discussed creating a list of projects, which would result from a successful tax referendum. Communicating the list to parents and stakeholders through numerous media outlets gave citizens a reason to take personal ownership in the campaign. Quality of education and student achievement were at the heart of every successful bond effort, and taxpayers needed to see how this positively affected the community (M.A. Carter, 1995; Hickey, 2007).

Johnson and Ingle (2009) found the use of media venues increased the likelihood of bond passage by 11 times. Vogel (2006) suggested campaign information be distributed through a wide variety of media outlets. These communication strategies included electronic employee newsletters, staff e-mails, special district Web sites, the district's cable television channel, parent e-mails, district publications, the district's mass notification system, and weekly televised media briefings. The current use of social media outlets and new technology networking tools were also encouraged to help communicate details (O'Brien, 2008). There were multiple ways for districts to communicate through media; since media has become such a huge part of our American culture, it cannot be overlooked as a communication strategy.

Written Materials

One type of communication from the district to the voters has been in the form of written communication. Written materials, such as flyers, newsletters, brochures, mail outs of informational literature, question and answer sheets, yard signs, and pamphlets, provided news to voters about the tax referendum (Erickson, 2011; Sargent, 2014). Information disseminated through mailings was particularly effective because it was able to highlight key costs, what the money was to be used for, and how the referendum affected the voter. Written materials were also an effective way to convey the need for a tax referendum. Written information was to always focus on how the tax referendum would benefit children and the community (Erickson, 2011; Holt et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2011). Erickson (2011) stated in addition to having hard copies of all written materials for voters, these documents were to be placed on district Web sites and all social media accounts the district utilized.

Neill (2003) surveyed superintendents in Kansas school districts to identify effective strategies for bond campaigns. His results demonstrated the importance of informational community meetings and district-designed informational brochures. These two strategies were consistently ranked first and second in successful and unsuccessful, past and future, campaigns. Being ranked in the top two emphasized the importance of using written materials as a communication tool with stakeholders during a tax referendum. According to Neill, the written materials were designed to give the facts to stakeholders regarding the specifics of the building project and the financial details involved in the bond issue, which laid to rest any false rumors about spending.

Bohrer (2000) discussed having the editor of the local newspaper serve on the campaign committee to distribute written material. This was an effective method to provide positive and accurate information to citizens completely free of cost. A writing style in the local newspaper, which was editorial in nature, rather than simply informative, positively influenced the audience. Editorials in the newspaper were to be positive and convincing so that a passage of the bond was not only right for kids but for the entire community. Benzaquen (2016) examined a school district that failed to pass two previous tax referendums and then was successful in its third attempt. It was noted during the first two referendum attempts, there were more negative letters to the editor than positive ones. During the campaign for the third referendum, there was an increase of proreferendum letters, which helped edge out the antireferendum letters. According to Pappalardo (2005), superintendents in California reported newspapers were mixed in their support for tax referendums. In some cases the newspapers came out in support of the bond measure, and in some cases they provided balanced views, while others were

opposed. Superintendents surveyed by Pappalardo actually rated using the local newspapers as a communication strategy as low in effectiveness. Written materials distributed by school districts had the potential to reach a large group of stakeholders and give detailed accurate information about the tax referendum. It was recommended this communication strategy not be disregarded by school leaders when attempting to pass a tax referendum (Erickson, 2011; Neill, 2003; Sargent, 2014).

Presentations

In addition to the written communication strategies the district used to distribute campaign information, Erickson (2011) suggested making presentations at a variety of local public and private events while campaigning for a tax referendum. Florence (2014) explained formal and informal communication was necessary to gain support for a tax referendum. Formal communication was defined as planned and systematic like speaking in front of a large crowd. Informal communication was defined as conversations at sporting events and grocery stores. Florence went on to say school superintendents had to use one-way and two-way communication in order to pass a tax referendum. Two-way communication results were beneficial, but both were shown to be necessary to build strong relationships and trust with stakeholders.

A qualitative study by O'Connor (2011) identified strategies used by Texas superintendents in successful tax referendums. The following five primary themes emerged from his data: trust, broad-based support, marketing economics, communication, and collaboration. Establishing trust was the core theme emphasized throughout the interviews with participants. Specifically, 7 of the 10 superintendents mentioned having open and honest relationships was a key to success when campaigning for a tax

referendum. In one interview, a superintendent stated his primary strategy was building trusting relationships. To establish trust with stakeholders, the superintendents in this study unwaveringly discussed the importance of building relationships and providing accurate information to stakeholders through small group presentations. Each superintendent mentioned the importance of talking to people in small groups to develop relationships. Personal, less formal conversations and presentations were identified as a successful communication strategy for successful tax elections (O'Connor, 2011).

Kraus (2009) also examined critical factors affecting the success and failure of tax referendums. Kraus's research validated Hickey's (2007) and O'Connor's (2011) previously discussed work by emphasizing the importance of trust between patrons and the school district. Participant responses from unsuccessful districts indicated greater mistrust of district administration and board members than responses from patrons of successful districts. Respondents stressed the importance of ongoing communication about school happenings even when the district was not in need of money. Grega (2006) questioned 250 community members in a Midwestern town that had recently passed a bond issue. Results from the data showed the community-wide perception of trust and school district leadership was critical in a tax referendum campaign. Principals in the district were interviewed and stated that trust in district leaders to follow through with the intentions of the proposed tax referendum was due to constant communication being provided to the community. It was suggested to start early and have a plan to follow. If the district said it was going to do something, then it had better follow through with its promise. A community needed to believe the district would accomplish what it had promised. People who were trusted and well liked usually did what they said. To attain

and keep the trust of the community, school districts were financially responsible and advocated for their students with positive communication (Grega, 2006; Hickey, 2007).

Brief explanations about the tax referendum at sporting events, parent meetings, musical concerts, and extracurricular activities were effective ways to communicate with parents who had children in the district. Presenting at community meetings such as the city council, civic organizations, and churches was a way to communicate with stakeholders who might not have students enrolled in the district. Forums where citizens could personally ask questions and immediately receive answers about the tax referendum were found to be beneficial. This communication strategy also allowed stakeholders to voice their concerns (Erickson, 2011; Hockersmith, 2001). Details about the campaign were to be presented to as many diverse groups of citizens as possible. Pappalardo (2005) identified the local Chamber of Commerce; Parent Teacher Association; Kiwanis, Lions, and Rotary clubs; and employee associations, both certified and classified, as important organizations with which to spend time attending the meetings to gather support. Holt (1993) found it was critical in the successful passage of a school tax referendum to communicate with senior citizens. He suggested setting up public forums for this specific group of voters to help them understand the dire need of new facilities and the increased cost of education. This generation of stakeholders appreciated the face-to-face communication where they could feel involved and give their opinions. Carroll and Carroll (2000) gave four guidelines to follow when making connections with senior citizen voters. These guidelines included keeping the message simple and concrete, repeating the message, favoring print media over TV and radio, and making full use of the message.

Benzaquen (2016) conducted a qualitative study in a school district that failed to pass two previous tax referendums and then was successful in its third attempt. The superintendent in this study reported discussing the referendum face-to-face with small groups of citizens was much more beneficial than one-way and one-time forms of communication such as yards signs, bumper stickers, and newspaper articles, because the communication was personal. He stated his conversations at churches, restaurants, grocery stores, or other public places were more effective in persuading community members to vote for the referendum. This communication strategy was much more time consuming and labor intensive for district personnel but resulted in a passed referendum after two previously failed attempts (Benzaquen, 2016). Rock (2016) conducted a similar qualitative study that examined the viewpoints of 11 Ohio superintendents regarding recently passed tax referendums. All of the participating superintendents mentioned communication as a key reason for passing their tax referendums. Eight of the superintendents reported face-to-face communication such as door-to-door conversations, neighborhood meetings, telephone conversations, and coffee meetings as most beneficial. Making an effort to communicate with stakeholders on their territory was also mentioned by eight of the superintendents. This research showed the importance of attending council meetings, church events, club activities, and other local gatherings.

The recommendation was presentations and verbal communication at such events should come from district officials as well as community volunteers (Erickson, 2011; Sargent, 2014). Lode (1999) discussed citizen presentations provided a communication strategy for getting a clear explanation of the issues and accurate facts to the voters. He suggested school leaders, as well as volunteer committee members, be involved in public

presentations. This strategy enabled local representatives to accurately describe issues to their friends and families, which helped influence a positive vote. Developing written communication strategies and combining them with verbal communication strategies created the need for citizen participation through the work of assorted committees (Lode, 1999).

Committees

A significant factor identified for a successful tax referendum campaign was the early development of stakeholder volunteer committees and groups. As discussed previously, stakeholder involvement has had a very positive effect on the passage of school bonds and tax levies. Campaign committees served as vehicles for getting information to voters as well as receiving feedback from the public (Erickson, 2011). Community involvement through committees made it easier for constituents to understand, accept, and approve the tax referendum (Faltys, 2006; Godown, 2011; Holt, 1993; Weathersby, 2002). Benzaquen (2016) discussed effective communication during a tax referendum campaign went beyond the message being communicated and depended on the person relaying the message. The message resonated with stakeholders differently depending on who was the one communicating. If community members did not know or trust district officials, the communication was not well received. When the same message came from a close neighbor or friend, the stakeholders were more likely to listen.

Erickson (2011) described a campaign committee as a diverse group of stakeholders who were connected by the common goal of passing the tax referendum and were willing to assist in the process. He stated it was important that the campaign committee included a variety of individuals that represented all aspects of the

community. Having a voice in all the neighborhoods and within all the different subcultures was also found to be essential. Hockersmith (2001) found the most important members of campaign committees were parents and community leaders. Success in passing a tax referendum was difficult to achieve without committee volunteers who worked together. By law, school districts were not allowed to use district resources when campaigning for a tax referendum, including employee time. Therefore, it was essential to get good outside help to raise campaign funds, make phone calls, print and disseminate written materials, and talk to local community groups (Fairbank, 2006; Leary, 2007; Pappalardo, 2005; Vogel, 2006). Holt (2002) suggested delegating duties during the campaign process to help define roles with the overwhelming organization process. He stated appointing a steering committee to identify and coordinate all necessary tasks and other committees leading up to Election Day was beneficial (Clemons et al., 2010; Hockersmith, 2001; Holt, 2002).

Committees specifically focused on registering voters, and get-out-the-vote strategies were found to be effective in producing “yes” votes in the final weeks of a tax referendum. This communication strategy involved a concentrated effort on citizens who were undecided during the duration of the campaign (Hockersmith, 2002). Hockersmith (2002) suggested two months before the election, volunteers should encourage district parents to complete voter registration paperwork. Bohrer (2000) described a school district that formed a small group of parent volunteers playing different roles to help communicate and gain public support. The voter registration subcommittee targeted unregistered citizens such as recent high school graduates and purchased a voter registration list from the election commissioner to contact voters. Voter registration was

made easy by setting up booths at the community center and football games, and advertising in the local paper and other places to quickly register. High school seniors who were 18 prior to the election were registered to vote in the school office during school hours but were not encouraged how to vote. Through the high school's senior tracking service, letters were sent out to former students providing them with information about the approaching bond election. Godown (2011) discussed the use of a youth committee to get secondary students involved in the tax referendum campaign. Students had firsthand knowledge of the needs of their school and worked closely with the "get out the vote" campaign to encourage 18-year-old students to get to the polls. All of these efforts, through volunteer committee members, helped to assure a large voter turnout.

Holt (2002) also encouraged efforts to get voters to the polls through voter registration drives and to find a way to appeal to senior citizens. Campaign committees, which reached out to senior citizens in the school community and catered to them in order to get their support, were found to be effective. Research showed getting people over the age of 65 to the polls was important because in the year 2030 this age demographic will outnumber those under the age of 20 (MacManus, 1995). Holt et al. (2006) stated spending resources and time to get yes voters to the polls was more important than spending resources and time trying to change the minds of people. Vogel (2006) and M.A. Carter (1995) agreed districts were better off to push those who were likely going to vote yes to get out to the polls rather than trying to convince those who likely to vote no to change their minds. The goal was to get more yes votes to the poll than no votes. Hockersmith (2001) advised against addressing those in opposition with the idea of changing their minds. His research showed the use of yard signs and

newspaper advertisements did more to draw out the opposition than support the yes vote. Campaign committees were advised to focus on the community members who were most likely to vote.

Bohrer (2000) discussed another important committee, which was responsible for raising money to pay for any campaign functions that could not be paid for out of the school budget. This subcommittee also regulated expenditures during the bond process. An additional committee was the information central subcommittee, which coordinated the development of written materials such as brochures, information sheets, newspaper articles, and advertisements. The community relations subcommittee handled all the public informational meetings, civic group presentations, and door-to-door visits.

Holt et al. (2006) conducted a study to determine the perceived most influential factors that led to two successful school bond referendums in a rural school district serving a community of 20,000 citizens and 2,600 students. Prior to the bond issue, the district operated five facilities: three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. The elementary and middle school facilities were all over 50 years old and not equipped to meet the needs of all students and staff. The schools lacked adequate heating and cooling equipment, appropriate handicap accessibility measures, elevators, sufficient lighting, and acceptable classroom space for teaching and learning. The researchers presented a survey to 140 participants, including school board members, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and patrons. The survey gave participants a list of 11 activities that were utilized during the 2001 and 2003 bond campaigns and asked them to rank the activities according to their priority or significance in the passage of the two bonds. The study found the most important factor to school bond success was the school board and

administrators establishing a diverse community task force or facilities study committee. The research discussed the facilities study committee, which was comprised of well-respected and trusted citizens that represented all facets of the community. Some of the committee's members were average citizens, and others held leadership roles in the community. The public viewed this committee as a great representation that was very willing to listen to all stakeholders.

Additional Campaign Strategies

Holt et al. (2006) recommended other campaign strategies to assist in communicating about tax referendums such as utilizing telephone campaigning, coffee meetings in homes, parent-teacher meetings, door-to-door canvassing, and direct mailings. A telephone campaign involved the use of information obtained from the Registrar of Voters regarding local citizens who were currently registered to vote. Volunteers were provided a script to read to potential yes voters to remind them to head out to the polls and vote (Hockersmith, 2002). Pappalardo (2005) reported individual phone calls to voters was ranked as highly effective by interviewed superintendents. Having a communication strategy that involved contacting potential yes voters and getting those voters to the polls on Election Day was critical for passage of a tax referendum.

Crader et al. (2002) suggested allowing senior citizens free admission to all school events such as athletic games, fine arts performances, and assemblies. This strategy made senior citizens active participants in the local school community and allowed them to see first hand the facility conditions. Benzaquen (2016) also suggested school officials give tours of the school facilities in need of repair. Florence (2014)

argued not all senior citizens were opposed to school tax referendums just because they no longer had students in the district. In fact, senior citizens had more free time and were willing to devote volunteer time to the campaign. They were also able to rally more seniors to support the passage of the referendum if given the opportunity.

Hockersmith (2001) stated during a tax referendum campaign, superintendents need to be involved in every way possible, whenever possible. Superintendents involved in his study, who had experienced a successful campaign, found they were totally immersed in the tax referendum for the entire duration of the campaign. Depending on the culture of the school district, other school leaders as well as school board members were also very active in their communities communicating the campaign message. Lode (1999) recommended if a school district did not feel capable of organizing a tax referendum campaign on its own, superintendents should seek a public relations firm to assist in the campaign process. Having a multipronged communication plan that used a variety of strategies to reach all sorts of audiences was found to be important when campaigning for a tax referendum. Communication through media outlets, written materials, presentations, and volunteer committees aided in all communication channels being wide open. Some of these same strategies were found to be a successful way to communicate to voters after a tax referendum.

Communication After a Tax Referendum

In our multifaceted, information-driven society, communication between the school district and the public was vital to maintain the public's trust, continue to outline important issues, and inform voters of how the district was spending money (Knight, 2013). Continuous and effective communication with the school community created an

advantageous environment for future tax referendums to be successful (Holt, 1993; Rock, 2016). Literature specific to communication strategies found useful after a tax referendum was limited. The communication strategies that were found useful after a tax referendum were similar to strategies discussed in the previous three stages of passing a tax referendum. There was an emphasis in the literature on maintaining trust and communicating with stakeholders how their money was being spent responsibly.

Maintaining Trust

Florence (2014) suggested districts follow through with their promises and follow up with all voters after a tax referendum. If the district expected to be successful in future tax referendums, fiscal responsibility was crucial for school leaders. Whether victorious or defeated, after the tax referendum vote was over was when relationships were built and trust building began. Leary (2007) suggested after the vote creating a list of everyone who voted and supported the referendum. The list should be updated annually to maintain and expand school support in the future. Support of people who opposed the bond issue was very important for next time around. School administrators thanked and recognized all stakeholders even if they did not vote for the levy or bond issue (Graham, Wise, & Bachman, 1990). Carroll and Carroll (2000) called attention to successful nonprofit agencies, which were incredibly profitable year after year because they gained and retained customer support. These agencies had a reputation of serving their customers well, again and again, with attention to small and important details. This strategy paid off in maintaining strong confident relationships with stakeholders in the community. Informing constituents of progress on all projects is one way that helped build and maintain trust (Hickey, 2007).

Cunningham (2004) recommended keeping all stakeholders informed of the progress the school district was making on the bond issue projects and emphasized that community input was heard during initial discussions and was making a difference. Open and honest communication after the tax referendum was to occur throughout the building process. This was accomplished by highlighting what has been financed by the referendum through the use of updated information on the school's Web site, billboards, distributed written materials, media outlets, ribbon cuttings, celebrations, and presentations (Florence, 2014; Hickey, 2007). When discussing the success San Antonio Independent School District had in passing a \$515,000,000 bond proposal, Kessler (2012) noted the use of facility tours to allow community members to see how taxpayers' money was spent responsibly. Inviting constituents into the schools for tours and special events made them feel more favorable toward the schools after a tax referendum. Allowing voters free admission to sporting events and fine arts productions was an additional way to communicate after a tax referendum and show stakeholders how the money was spent (Crader et al., 2002).

VanSciver (1990) stated if school districts wanted to retain the trust of their stakeholders after a tax referendum was passed, they needed to have continuous and ongoing dialogue after the campaign. After a successful campaign, the community still wanted communication, input, and ownership of the decision they had made on the ballot. If a school district did not maintain ongoing and clear communication with stakeholders after the tax referendum was over, confusion and distrust developed. The Lake Forest School District in Harrington, Delaware, formed a committee to communicate to the citizens the decisions that were being made regarding how bond monies were being spent

on the schools. The chairperson of this committee made a report at each monthly board of education meeting; committee members met with the architect, toured the construction sites, and had a say in the bids for purchasing materials. It was noted committees established during the campaign stage of the tax referendum process could continue to be used to communicate with stakeholders after the vote (VanSciver, 1990).

After a loss, school leaders avoided pointing fingers and placing blame. The loss was treated as one step in a long-range process of developing community support. The factors that contributed to the loss were assessed and strategies designed to address them in the next campaign. Districts had a system developed to listen and learn from the community so relationships avoided becoming adversarial and unsupportive (Clemons et al., 2010; Holt, 2002). After a failed tax referendum, analysis occurred right away to determine the reason. Districts then immediately began to adjust their strategies (Clemons et al., 2010). Poor communication was a key reason for finance election failure (Lifto & Senden, 2006).

Summary

Chapter One provided an overview of the study. Chapter Two reviewed the body of related literature surrounding communication strategies used while attempting to pass tax referendums. This review of the literature was divided into two specific sections. The first section focused on the needs for additional school funding and how student achievement was related to school facilities. These needs included facility improvements, instructional and staff support, and operational costs. The difference between bond issues and tax levies was also discussed. The second section concentrated on communication strategies used by superintendents during the three identified stages of a tax referendum.

Specific strategies reviewed during the routine communication stage were shared vision and having trust in school leadership. Specific communication strategies discussed during the planning stage were polling voters and involving a diverse group of stakeholders. Examined campaign communication strategies included media outlets, written communication, presentations, and the use of committees. Finally, the importance of communicating after the tax referendum was emphasized for maintaining trust between the voters and the school district. Chapter Three described the methodology of this study, including the process of survey validation, piloting, and sampling. Chapter Four presented the findings of the quantitative study, including inferential and descriptive statistical analysis. Chapter Five included the summary and implications of the study, including the implications of the findings of this study and how they add to the body of research regarding communication strategies used when attempting to pass a tax referendum. Finally, further research recommendations were explained.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Effective superintendents engaged all diverse groups and subgroups of staff, parents, and the community in the communication process in order to efficiently manage a school district. When attempting to pass a tax referendum, communication was more important than ever. The rising cost of education and large cuts in state education funding made passing these tax referendums vital for school success. Every year across the United States, school superintendents attempted to get additional funding to build or upgrade facilities or increase their operation budget (Bowers, Metzger, & Militello, 2010). Districts unable to secure funding from voters had a more difficult time providing a quality education for their students. The purpose of this descriptive, quantitative study was to identify the best communication strategies used by superintendents when attempting to pass a tax referendum in Missouri and Arkansas. For gathering data regarding these mass and personal communication strategies, the researcher developed an online survey (Appendix A).

Research Design

Participants

The subjects were the public school superintendents working in the states of Missouri and Arkansas at the time of the study. There were 518 public school districts in the state of Missouri and 238 public school districts in the state of Arkansas as of July 2016. The school districts across these two states represented a wide range of demographics. The school districts ranged in sizes from less than 100 students in Grades

K-12 to over 25,000 students in Grades K-12 and had superintendents with varying backgrounds in education. The districts also varied in socioeconomic status, race makeup, mileage in attendance area, and assessed valuation. Schools from rural, suburban, and urban areas were included in the research.

To ensure a wealth of data, the survey was sent to every school superintendent in the states of Missouri and Arkansas except the 60 superintendents who were included in the pilot group and two of the superintendents who participated in the validity panel, resulting in the survey being sent to 694 participants. By using such a large sample size, the opportunity to collect data from across all demographic areas in the states of Missouri and Arkansas was accomplished. Including two states in the study allowed a larger group of participants than just using one state.

Utilizing the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education database as well as the Arkansas Department of Education database, a list of all school superintendents was generated along with their contact information. The researcher sent the e-mail survey invitation (Appendix B) using QuestionPro directly to each superintendent. Participation was voluntary and the superintendents gave consent to be involved in the study by completing the online survey. The researcher informed participants that data would be collected, participant-identifying information would be kept confidential, and results would be shared at the completion of the study. Additionally, the researcher explained to participants the beneficial use of the results for the field of education. The participant completed response rate was 28.9%. At the time the final statistical results were run, 201 completed responses had been submitted.

Research Questions

The following primary question guided this study:

What communication strategies are perceived by Missouri and Arkansas superintendents as most successful in building trust in communities to pass a tax referendum?

The primary question was expanded with the following subquestions:

1. Are there differences in communication strategies used by superintendents based on demographics?
2. What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful when planning a tax referendum?
3. What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful when campaigning for a tax referendum?
4. What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful after passing a tax referendum?

Questionnaire

A survey instrument was designed by the researcher and focused to better understand communication strategies perceived by superintendents as most influential in a successful tax referendum. Because no existing survey was available for use, the researcher created, evaluated, and piloted a survey that investigated the entire process of communicating a school tax referendum. For the purpose of this study, the researcher divided the focus of communication into three distinct stages that occur when school superintendents communicate with their stakeholders about a tax referendum. These three stages included communication strategies while planning for a tax referendum,

communication strategies while campaigning for a tax referendum, and communication after a tax referendum. The research subquestions were specific to these three stages in an attempt to narrow down successful mass and personal communication strategies to use in each stage of a tax referendum to assist school leaders in the future. These research subquestions were designed to build on previous work by researchers who had identified factors and strategies for successful passage of school tax referendums.

The study design was quantitative. Survey questions were created based on the research subquestions, the support of the literature review, input from the dissertation committee, input from the validity panel, and results of the statistical analysis of the piloted survey. The survey gathered quantifiable data regarding the perceptions of public school superintendents in regards to effective strategies used in successfully passing a tax referendum in their current state. Participants were asked to identify and rate communication strategies from past tax referendums that positively affected the outcome of the school district's tax referendum. The identified communication strategies were categorized by the researcher as mass communication or personal communication. Mass communication included generalized strategies that did not involve face-to-face interactions. Personal communication included strategies that involved a physical presence with the intended audience. Appendix C, Survey Instrument for Validity Panel, was designed to collect focused data on these two categories of communication. The questions on the pilot and final versions of the survey had been shuffled. The pilot and final versions of the survey also included additional questions for the collection of demographic data, the selection of the most effective communication strategies from a

prescribed list, and a text box in which subjects were invited to share additional strategies they perceived as successful.

The first two items on the questionnaire identified how many bond issues/tax levies the superintendent had attempted in his/her current district and how many of those bond issues/tax levies had successfully passed. The remaining survey items were broken into the identified and defined three stages of communication when attempting to pass a tax referendum. The first stage was the communication that occurred when planning for a tax referendum. This stage usually included polling voters to determine what initial feelings they had regarding a tax referendum as well as strategies such as conducting focus groups made up of community members to identify key topics to address. The questions for this stage included such strategies as stakeholders participating in planning meetings, informal discussions, mass e-mails, and distribution of information through media coverage. Campaigning for the tax referendum was the second stage, which included a variety of possible ways to spread the word about the upcoming tax referendum. The questions in this stage included such strategies as door-to-door canvassing, personal presentations at meetings, yard signs, and letter to the editor campaigns. The third stage of communication was the communication after a tax referendum had passed or failed. The questions in this stage included such strategies as tours of the new facilities, presentations in the new facilities, billboards to communicate progress, and distributed fliers.

There were 16 questions for each stage of the tax referendum process. Communication strategies for each specific stage were derived from the literature review. A wide number of communication strategies were considered but were by no means all

inclusive. To avoid confusion of the three identified stages of a tax referendum, the researcher provided the subjects detailed definition of each communication stage prior to the superintendents answering questions. Fourteen of the 16 questions in each tax referendum stage were about specific mass and personal communication strategies and effectiveness was measured using a Likert scale. Participants were asked to rate items in terms of the degree to which each factor positively influenced district stakeholders. The superintendents' responses were measured on a 4-item scale of *No Positive Influence*, *Some Positive Influence*, *Positive Influence*, and *Strong Positive Influence*. They also had the option to choose *Not Applicable*. Seven of the 14 questions were categorized as mass communication strategies and seven were categorized as personal communication strategies. Seven questions for each category of communication were used to ensure accurate results. This amount of questions also allowed for future possible elimination of a question if needed based on final validity and reliability tests. Each tax referendum stage section concluded by asking superintendents to identify from a list the four communication strategies they perceived were most beneficial to their tax referendum efforts. Participants were also given the opportunity to identify any other communication strategies (effective or not effective) they had used that were not mentioned in the survey.

The next part of the questionnaire had two questions asking superintendents how much they valued routine communication with stakeholders when a tax referendum was not being considered. These questions set the stage to determine if the participating superintendents valued communication practices throughout the school year. Participants were then asked to provide additional communication strategies used on a routine basis to communicate information with stakeholders.

The final demographic section of the questionnaire covered the participant's gender, highest educational degree, number of years as a superintendent, number of students in the district, and the district's free and reduced lunch rate. The questions regarding gender, educational degree, and numbers of years as superintendent were asked to determine if a certain demographic of superintendent preferred one type of communication category over the other. For example, were female superintendents more likely to use personal communication strategies over mass communication strategies? Another example would be did female and male superintendents differ in the way they communicated with their stakeholders? The questions regarding the size of the district and the district's free and reduced lunch rate were asked to determine if superintendents in varying size districts and varying poverty levels communicated differently than each other or preferred one type of communication category over the other.

Consent

In accordance with the guidelines of Southwest Baptist University regarding the protection of human participants, a request for review was submitted to the Research Review Board for approval to give the survey to approximately 850 participating superintendents for this study. Upon receiving Research Review Board approval and collaborating with the dissertation committee, participant recruitment and data collection began. E-mail addresses were used to distribute the survey link, however, the names and identifying information of participants were kept confidential. All data were collected and maintained through QuestionPro, a secure system provided through the university. In addition, data collected from this study were deleted from the QuestionPro site upon completion of the project.

Participants were informed of the intent of the survey to identify effective strategies used in successfully passing tax referendums in Missouri and Arkansas school districts. They were given the opportunity to not participate in the survey or to withdraw from the study at any time. Participation was voluntary and the superintendents gave consent to be involved in the study by completing the survey.

Instrumentation

Validity and Reliability

Since the survey used in this study was created by the researcher, testing for reliability and validity was necessary in order to ensure it was a dependable research tool. The survey was initially administered to experts in the field of educational leadership to measure validity. These experts included five superintendents in the states of Missouri and Arkansas who judged the survey questions for clarity and fit to the research questions. Feedback from the validity panel was reviewed by the researcher and changes were made to the survey. After revisions, a pilot survey was conducted for reliability. The results of the input from the validity panel and the data analyses from the pilot survey were employed to review and improve the survey tool.

Face validity. In order to determine if the survey measured what it said it was measuring, the researcher did an informal review utilizing input from the dissertation committee as well as colleagues from the Southwest Baptist University doctoral program. Additionally, the researcher developed a table of specifications (see Appendix D) with the questions from the original survey. The table of specifications indicated the research subquestion number, the survey question number, the survey item, and the category of communication strategies under which the statement fell. With the help of the

experienced dissertation committee, the table of specifications was used to establish face validity. The instrument was closely aligned with the current research found in the literature review, and the questions asked what the researcher wanted to measure.

Content validity. During the development of the survey, the instrument was reviewed and amended based on feedback from the researcher's professors and committee members. To ensure survey questions were aligned and communicated efficiently, a Validity Panel comprised of five experienced superintendents was created. These experts were invited and verbally agreed to serve on the Validity Panel to judge if the questions were clearly worded. The index of item-objective congruence developed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977) was used for evaluating content validity at the item development stage. These five individuals of the validity panel were considered experts because each had multiple years of experience as a school superintendent and experience passing district tax referendums. All five of them held doctorate degrees in educational leadership. Between them, they had 51 years of superintendent experience and had passed 12 tax referendums. A cover letter (Appendix E) and survey instrument scoring form (Appendix F) was e-mailed to the panel of experts. Respondents were asked to review each question on the survey and evaluate it on a 3-point scale: *Good Match* (1), *Neutral* (0), and *Does Not Match* (-1). Validity panel participants had the opportunity to provide further suggestions for improvement to the survey. The researcher was also able to have dialogue with the panelists and gain understanding of issues found in the initial survey.

All five members of the Validity Panel returned the scoring form. The feedback from the Validity Panel was examined by the researcher and dissertation committee. The sum and the average of the Validity Panelists' five scores for each survey item were

calculated. Questions with averages higher than 0.68 were kept without further review. Any questions with comments or an average lower than 0.68 were reexamined.

Table 1

Validity Panel Results

Question	Average score	Decision for change
3	0.8	
4	0.4	Add “at their meetings”
5	1	
6	1	
7	1	
8	1	
9	1	
10	1	
11	0.6	Change “through students” to “to students to take home”
12	1	
13	1	
14	1	
15	1	
16	1	
19	0.8	
20	0.4	Remove “at their meetings”
21	1	
22	0.6	Change “to individually” to “by volunteers”
23	1	
24	1	
25	1	
26	1	
27	0.6	Change “advertisements” to “news coverage”
28	1	
29	1	
30	1	
31	1	
32	1	
35	0.6	Remove “personal”
36	1	
37	1	
38	0.8	
39	0.8	
40	0.8	
41	1	
42	0.6	Change “through students” to “that are sent home with students”
43	0.6	Change “advertisements” to “news coverage”
44	1	
45	1	
46	1	
47	1	
48	1	

In the Validity Panel Survey, Question 27 and Question 43 referred to the use of television as a communication strategy. The term “advertisement” was replaced by the term “news coverage” because it was considered by the panel as a more common term. Question 11 and Question 42 involved distributed printed written material that supported the tax referendum. Verbiage for these two questions was changed to better explain that students would be given the material to take home with them. Question 4 and Question 20 consisted of the tax referendum being discussed at community meetings. The wording of these two questions was changed to validate that the communication would occur at the community meetings by the leaders of the organizations. The words “by volunteers” was added to Question 22 to clarify who would be communicating during the door-to-door canvassing. The word “personal” was removed from Question 35 as advised by two of the panelists. Based on the changes suggested by the five experts on the Validity Panel, content validity had been established.

Pilot

After changes were made to the survey based on input from the Validity Panel, the questions were mixed up and entered into QuestionPro. The pilot survey was sent to 30 superintendents in Missouri and 30 superintendents in Arkansas from the pool of 756 currently employed superintendents. The researcher randomly choose these 60 superintendents by identifying every 10th e-mail address from the master list of 756 eligible participants. An invitation to participate including the pilot survey link was sent through e-mail to the selected superintendents. A reminder e-mail was sent to those who had not responded four days later. In order to acquire more responses, the pilot survey invitation was then sent to 90 randomly selected superintendents in Oklahoma as well as

the five experts who had served on the Validity Panel. A final reminder e-mail was sent to all selected pilot participants a week later. Twenty-three superintendents completed the pilot survey. The pilot response of 23 was considered adequate for statistical evaluation of pilot construct validity and reliability. According to QuestionPro, the average time for completion of the pilot survey was 12 minutes. The pilot survey results were uploaded to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analyses.

Construct validity. A two-factor analysis was performed to determine construct validity regarding the set of questions about mass communication strategies and the set of questions about personal communication strategies. The factor analysis was used to identify if relationships existed between the questions according to the responses of the participants. Component 1 referred to mass communication strategies. Component 2 referred to personal communication strategies. The closer the absolute score was to 1.0, the better the question was with that component. The researcher reviewed the results of the factor analysis with the dissertation committee and revisions were again made to the survey in order to clarify questions. The revisions are noted in Table 2 (see Appendix G).

Reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was determined through SPSS to determine internal consistency and reliability of the survey to evaluate how each of the items on the survey related to all the other items on the survey. The result of this calculation was an alpha level. Alpha levels greater than 0.9 were considered excellent, less than or equal to 0.9 and greater than 0.8 were considered good, and less than or equal to 0.8 and greater than 0.7 were acceptable (Pelham, 2013). Scale 1 addressed personal communication strategies (based on Questions 3-9, 19-25, and 35-41) and earned a suitable Cronbach's alpha score of 0.763. Scale 2 addressed mass communication strategies (based on

Questions 10-16, 26-32, and 42-48) and indicated a very strong reliability by earning a high Cronbach's alpha level of .0912.

Summary of reliability and validity. In summary, the survey instrument was designed by the researcher for superintendents to quickly respond to questions in an effort to evaluate effective communication strategies with attempting to pass a tax referendum. A table of specifications created by the researcher established face validity. The proposed survey was then sent to a panel of five experts in educational leadership for their evaluation of the content validity. The input from the validity panel was used to make revisions to the survey. The questions were entered into QuestionPro and then e-mailed to the pilot group of 60 randomly selected superintendents. The pilot survey results were analyzed in SPSS. Statistical tests included a factor analysis to determine construct validity and Cronbach's alpha tests to test for reliability. Revisions were made by the researcher and dissertation committee as needed. Strong reliability and validity were established before the final survey for distribution was finalized.

Final Survey

Final Survey Disseminated to Superintendents

The final survey instrument was e-mailed to superintendents across the states of Missouri and Arkansas on Tuesday, February 21, 2017. A total of eight reminder e-mails were sent to nonrespondents over the next three weeks until the survey closed on Monday, March 13, 2017. Once the data were collected using QuestionPro, they were uploaded into SPSS for analyses. Data were disaggregated by the demographic questions asked: gender, highest educational degree, years of experience as superintendent, district

size, and district free and reduced lunch percentage. Additional tests run on the collected data were presented in Chapter Four.

Validity

Parallel with the pilot survey, a two-factor analysis was performed on the final survey question data to determine construct validity regarding the set of questions about mass communication strategies and the set of questions about personal communication strategies. Component 1 referred to mass communication strategies. Component 2 referred to personal communication strategies. The closer the absolute score was to 1.0, the better the question was with that component. The higher component correlation has been indicated by the bold scores in the table below. There was a total of nine questions with revised wording from the pilot survey, which have been indicated by a superscript ^a. There was only one of the nine revised questions that did not correlate more strongly with the intended component and support the revision decisions that had been made before the final survey was distributed. There were two survey items that did not show a strong relationship between the survey items and the theorized scale. Item 7, “Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum,” and Item 22, “Door-to-door personal conversations to promote the tax referendum,” were included in the final data analysis but would need more testing to be used in future studies. The final survey factor analysis also resulted in five questions with similar but acceptable correlation scores, which were noted in Table 3, Final Survey Rotated Component Matrix (see Appendix H). Construct validity was established on the final survey.

Reliability

As with the pilot survey, Cronbach's Alpha was determined through SPSS to establish internal consistency and reliability of the final survey to evaluate how each of the items on the survey related to each other. Scale 1 represented questions related to personal communication (Questions 3-9, 19-25, and 35-41) and earned a very strong Cronbach's alpha score of 0.920. Scale 2 represented questions related to mass communication (Questions 10-16, 26-32, and 42-48) and also produced a very high Cronbach's alpha level of .952. Based on these statistics, no questions were eliminated from the final survey. The final survey that had been distributed to all Arkansas and Missouri superintendents had strong validity and reliability.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

In summary, the survey instrument was designed by the researcher for superintendents to quickly respond to questions in an effort to evaluate effective communication strategies with attempting to pass a tax referendum. A table of specifications established face validity (Appendix D). The proposed survey was then sent to a panel of five experts in educational leadership for their evaluation of the content validity. The input from the validity panel provided data for Table 1 and established content validity. Revisions to the survey were made based on the validity panel data, and the questions were entered into QuestionPro. The pilot survey was then e-mailed to the pilot group of superintendents and results were analyzed in SPSS. Statistical tests included factor analyses to determine construct validity and Cronbach's alpha tests to evaluate for reliability. Revisions were made as needed, and strong reliability and validity were established. The final survey (Appendix A) was distributed to participants, and data

were analyzed again for validity and reliability using a two-factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha. Creating, testing, and implementing the survey was a detailed and tedious process; however, it resulted in a valid and reliable instrument for this study and possible future research.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were needed to draw conclusions for the research questions. QuestionPro was used to collect data, and the quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative survey data. The researcher closely examined qualitative data to find common themes between the respondents' open-ended answers.

Quantitative Data

Many factors led to a successful passage of a tax referendum, but outstanding quality and ongoing communication skills were critical (Erickson, 2001; Lifo & Senden, 2004; Neudecker, 2008; Tyson, 2006). Effective school leaders were good communicators regardless of what was happening in the district in order to build trust (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Holt, 2002; VanSciver, 1990; Vogel, 2006). In order to gain insight on how the respondents valued these routine communication strategies, descriptive statistics were initially utilized for Survey Questions 51 and 52. The mean scores for these two questions were used to determine if participants valued communication with district stakeholders and made an effort to provide ongoing communication on a routine basis to build trust in their communities.

The data from Survey Questions one and two, as well as Survey Questions 55, 56, 57, 58, and 59, corresponded to Subquestion one regarding participants' demographics

and experience attempting tax referendums. Descriptive statistics were used to identify respondent's demographic information and tax referendum experience. The demographic variables were then analyzed using a *t* test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and post hoc Tukey HSD to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between demographic groups and how they perceived mass communication and personal communication strategies as beneficial.

Survey Questions 3-16 (14 questions) corresponded to Subquestion 2 regarding effective communication strategies used during the initial planning stage of a tax referendum. Seven of these questions were specific to mass communication strategies and seven questions were specific to personal communication strategies. Descriptive statistics were used on this set of survey questions to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication during the planning stage of the tax referendum process. Question 17 also related to Subquestion 2. Quantitative data from this item were ranked by frequency of responses in order to identify the four most effective methods of communication during the initial planning stage.

Survey Questions 19-32 (14 questions) corresponded to Subquestion 3 regarding effective communication strategies used during the campaign stage of a tax referendums. Again, seven of these questions were specific to mass communication strategies and seven questions were specific to personal communication strategies. Descriptive statistics were used on this set of survey questions to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication during the campaign stage of the tax referendum process. Question 33 also related to Subquestion 3. Quantitative data from

this item were ranked by frequency of responses in order to identify the four most effective methods of communication during the campaigning stage.

Survey Items 35-48 (14 questions) corresponded to Subquestion 4 and examined effective communication strategies used after the tax referendum was complete. Identical to the other two tax referendum stages examined, seven of these questions were specific to mass communication strategies and seven questions were specific to personal communication strategies. Descriptive statistics were used on this set of survey questions to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication after the tax referendum was complete. Question 49 also related to Subquestion 4. Quantitative data from this item were ranked by frequency of responses in order to identify the four most effective methods of communication during the campaigning stage.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were gathered from Questions 53 and 54 to further investigate how the respondents employed and valued ongoing routine communication strategies. Again, this was important because research noted proper communication with the school community should have been constant throughout the school year regardless of what was happening in the district. Building trust between voters and school leaders took place every day of the year (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Hickey, 2007; Holt, 2002). Open-ended comments, specific to how respondents communicated with large and small groups of stakeholders, were analyzed using the Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis (Kolb, 2012). The constant comparative method was used to develop concepts and

patterns to allow for interpretation. During analysis of qualitative research, checks were made for relevance to the research subquestions.

Survey Items 18, 34, and 50 each asked participants to share additional communication strategies that they thought were effective during the related tax referendum stage (planning, campaigning, and after the tax referendum). Question 18 corresponded to Subquestion 2, Question 34 corresponded to Subquestion 3, and Question 50 corresponded to Subquestion 4. Once again, open-ended comments were organized into recurring themes to allow for interpretation and then discussed by the researcher.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the quantitative survey data including a *t* test, ANOVA, and post hoc Tukey HSD. Open-ended comments, specific to how respondents communicated with large and small groups of stakeholders, were analyzed using the constant comparative method.

Summary

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study. Chapter Two reported the review of literature regarding school tax referendums and communication strategies used throughout the referendum process. Chapter Three included the explanation of the methodology used in the study. It reviewed the research subquestions and then described the research design and creation of the survey instrument. Results were analyzed and presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five interpreted the results of the data analyses, discussed implications for practice, and presented recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Florence (2014) stressed that the importance of strong communication by school superintendents could not be underestimated, especially when attempting to pass a tax referendum. School leaders were responsible to find ways to encourage voters to support tax referendums that could impact the district for many years to come. All constituents, not just those who were familiar with the school system, needed to be willing to support the effort (Fairbank, 2006). There were many factors that led a superintendent to be successful in passing a tax referendum, but outstanding quality and ongoing communication skills were critical (Erickson, 2001; Lifto & Senden, 2004; Neudecker, 2008; Tyson, 2006). Effective school leaders were constantly laying the groundwork for good communication regardless of what was happening in the district in order to build trust (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Holt, 2002; VanSciver, 1990; Vogel, 2006). When strategies were used to create positive interactions, they provided support for school improvement and also gathered support for ballot issues (Carlsmith & Railsback, 2001; Gallagher et al., 1997).

The purpose of this research study was to identify the best communication strategies used by superintendents during the three stages of a tax referendum: planning a tax referendum, campaigning for a tax referendum, and following up after a tax referendum. Communication strategies were also separated into the two distinct categories of mass communication and personal communication to determine if participating superintendents preferred specific types of communication strategies over

others. The steps taken in establishing validity and reliability of the survey instrument were explained in Chapter Three. The invitation to participate in the study was sent to 694 currently serving superintendents in the states of Arkansas and Missouri. The data analysis included 202 completed surveys as well as data from incomplete surveys that had been saved in QuestionPro. The participant response rate was 29.1%. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data.

Findings

The primary research question of this study was this: What communication strategies are perceived by Missouri and Arkansas superintendents as most successful in building trust in communities to pass a tax referendum? In order to answer the primary research question, the researcher divided the tax referendum process into three distinct stages: (a), Communication when planning for a tax referendum; (b), Communication when campaigning for a tax referendum; and (c), Communication after a tax referendum. Additionally, the researcher divided communication strategies into the two categories of mass communication and personal communication. Mass communication included generalized strategies that did not involve face-to-face interactions. Personal communication included strategies that involved a physical presence with the intended audience. Research subquestions examined mass and personal communication strategies during each of the three stages of the tax referendum process.

Descriptive statistics regarding day-to-day routine communication were first analyzed to determine if participants valued communication with district stakeholders and made an effort to provide ongoing communication on a routine basis. This data analysis did not directly tie to a research question but instead assisted the researcher in

understanding how much respondents valued communication in order to build trust in their school community (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Holt, 2002; Vogel, 2006). This was an important factor because the review of research literature specified routine communication strategies were how trust and relationships were built in a school community. Building trust between voters and school leaders occurred during the day-to-day interactions that took place.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data that corresponded to Subquestion 1. This subquestion addressed participants' demographics as well as their experience attempting tax referendums. These demographic variables were then analyzed using a *t* test, ANOVA, and post hoc Tukey HSD to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between demographic groups and how they perceived mass communication and personal communication strategies to be beneficial.

Subquestions 2, 3, and 4 addressed effective communication strategies during the three identified stages of a tax referendum. Descriptive statistics were used to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication during the planning stage of the tax referendum process, the campaign stage of the tax referendum process, or after the tax referendum process was over. Additional quantitative data for each subquestion provided the frequency of specific mass and personal communication strategies used by superintendents during each of the tax referendum phases. Open-ended comments were also organized into recurring themes to allow for interpretation of additional communication strategies recommended by superintendents at each stage of the referendum process.

Additional descriptive statistics for personal communication and mass communication were utilized in analyzing if superintendents preferred one type of communication category throughout the entire tax referendum process. The entire tax referendum process included all three identified stages, which included planning, campaigning, and after the referendum. This specific data analysis did not directly tie to a research question but presented the overall communication preferences of respondents.

Routine Communication

Research from the review of literature discussed school tax referendums being won or lost based on the amount of trust the community had in the superintendent and the school board. Superintendents who had employed ongoing, routine, trust-building communication strategies prior to any discussion about a tax referendum had created a culture more likely for success (Barth, 2006; Devono & Price, 2012; Faltys, 2006; Florence, 2014; Vogel, 2006). Survey Questions 51 and 52 asked participants to choose the level of importance they placed on communication with stakeholders by rating each statement as *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. These two survey questions did not directly tie to a research question but were included in order to determine how much the respondents valued ongoing communication on a routine basis.

Table 4

Value on Routine Communication

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
51. Communication with stakeholders is something I value.	72% (148/202)	18% (37/202)	0% (0/202)	10% (20/202)
52. I work to have ongoing communication with stakeholders.	58% (118/202)	33% (68/202)	1% (2/202)	8% (17/202)

Based on this data, respondents clearly agreed communication with stakeholders was something they valued and worked on throughout the school year. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed to valuing communication with stakeholders. Ninety-one percent of the participants agreed to working on ongoing communication.

Table 5

Routine Communication When Communicating to Large Stakeholder Groups

Strategies	Social media	Messenger systems	Web sites	Local newspaper	Newsletters
Total Responses	70	38	36	27	22

Based on the qualitative data from Question 53, the top five answers were identified by the researcher and ranked by how many times the communication strategy was mentioned by respondents. Social media was the most common response among participants. Social media accounts such as Twitter, Facebook, and individualized school applications were stated specifically by name. Messenger systems were mentioned 38 times and included systems that sent mass e-mails, texts, and phone calls to multiple people simultaneously. Based on how this study defined mass communication strategies (generalized strategies that did not involve face-to-face interactions), the most common five answers given by participants to communicate with large groups of people all were categorized as mass communication strategies. One comment from a current superintendent included, “The school's Facebook account is used daily to provide information to stakeholders.” Another comment from a respondent was, “Small groups don't get you the votes you need. Think big, think about reaching large numbers.” These statements supported the value participants had on communicating to larger groups with

mass communication such as social media accounts. Appendix I lists the qualitative responses for Question 53.

Survey Question 54 asked participants to provide communication strategies used on a routine basis to communicate district information with small groups of stakeholders. A total of 106 superintendents responded in the open text box.

Table 6

Routine Communication When Communicating to Small Stakeholder Groups

Strategies	Presentations for local civic groups	Small group meetings	One-on-one conversations	Presentations at school events	Presentations at community events
Total responses	37	26	21	17	13

The top five answers were identified and are presented in Table 6. Results from this qualitative data demonstrated when communicating with small groups of stakeholders, superintendents preferred to use settings such as meetings and events to personally present information. Based on how this study defined personal communication strategies (personal presence with the intended audience), the most common five answers given by participants to communicate with small groups of people were all categorized as personal communication strategies. Open-ended comments also included the benefit in “always talking to the public at any and all events,” personal phone calls and visits, small group informal gatherings “such as coffee houses,” and conversations at social events. Appendix J lists the qualitative responses for Question 54.

The qualitative data suggested that when communicating with large numbers of stakeholders, superintendents primarily relied on mass communication strategies to reach as many constituents as possible. The qualitative data also suggested that when

communicating with smaller groups of stakeholders, superintendents invested more time to have personal interactions through presentations, individual conversations, or informal meetings. The demographic data collected revealed more about the respondents.

Demographics

The data from Survey Questions 1 and 2, as well as Survey Questions 55, 56, 57, 58, and 59, corresponded to Subquestion 1 regarding participants’ demographics and experience attempting tax referendums. Descriptive statistics were initially used to identify respondents’ demographic information and tax referendum experience. Further along in the statistical analysis, demographic information was also used to investigate if specific demographic groups perceived mass or personal communication strategies as more beneficial. The demographic questions included gender, highest educational degree, number of years the superintendent had served in their current district, district student enrollment, and district free and reduced lunch rate.

Table 7

Demographics Summary

Gender	Highest educational degree
Male: 165 (82%)	Doctorate: 83 (41%)
Female: 37 (18%)	Specialist: 102 (51%)
	Master’s: 17 (8%)
Years as superintendent in current district	Free and reduced lunch rate
1-5 years: 95 (47%)	Less than 25%: 9 (4%)
6-10 years: 50 (25%)	25%-50%: 53 (26%)
11-15 years: 32 (16%)	50%-75%: 111 (55%)
16 or more years: 25 (12%)	More than 75%: 29 (14%)
Student enrollment	
Less than 300 students: 42 (20%)	
300-1,000: 78 (39%)	
1,000-5,000: 69 (34%)	
5,000-10,000: 9 (4%)	
10,000 or more: 4 (2%)	

Demographic data showed the majority of the respondents were males who had served as superintendent in their district for 1-5 years. Ninety-two percent of the respondents had earned an advanced degree higher than a master’s degree. Regarding district demographics, 39% of superintendents had student enrollments between 300-1,000 students, and 34% of superintendents had between 1,000-5,000 students in their districts. These two enrollment categories totaled 73% of the survey respondents. Furthermore, the majority of the superintendents who participated in this study worked in districts that had a free and reduced lunch rate between 50%-75%. There was a wide variety of superintendent and school demographics represented in the study, and all demographic subgroups were represented to some degree.

In addition to the previously discussed demographic data, Survey Question 1 explored the experience the superintendents had attempting tax referendums. Respondents were asked how many tax referendums they had attempted to pass in their current school district in the past five years. Survey Question 2 investigated the success or failure of the tax referendums that had been attempted by the participants. Respondents were asked how many of the tax referendums they attempted in their district had been successful.

Table 8

Superintendent Experience Attempting and Passing Tax Referendums

Attempts	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Respondent experience	153/307 (50%)	113/307 (37%)	27/307 (9%)	11/307 (4%)	2/307 (.65%)	0/307 (0%)	1/307 (.33%)
Passed referendums	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	170/307	113/307	19/307	4/307	1/307	0/307	0/307

A total of 50% of the respondents had experience attempting tax referendums in their current district, and 50% did not have any tax referendum experience in their current district. Overall, the participants who answered Survey Question 1 had attempted to pass 214 tax referendums among the group. Of the 214 tax referendums that the respondents had attempted to pass, 167 were successful. Therefore, the participants in this study who had answered Survey Questions 1 and 2 had a success rate of 78%. It was important to note that the number of responses for this first question of the study survey was 307, and there were only 202 superintendents who completed the entire survey. Therefore, 105 participants who answered Survey Question 1 and 2 did not complete the entire survey.

Research Subquestion 1 Findings

The first research subquestion was as follows: Are there differences in communication strategies used by superintendents based on demographics? The survey created and piloted by the researcher included 21 Likert questions specific to mass communication strategies and 21 Likert questions specific to personal communication strategies. Using these 42 Likert questions specific to mass communication and personal communication, the *t* test, ANOVA, and post hoc Tukey HSD were conducted to determine if certain demographic groups preferred one type of communication category over the other. The demographic data included gender, highest educational degree, number of years the superintendent had served in their current district, district student enrollment, and district free and reduced lunch rate. Statistical findings for personal communication strategies are presented in Table 9 and statistical findings for mass communication strategies are presented in Table 10.

Table 9

ANOVA for Personal Communication Strategies

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Score	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between groups	1807.820	4	451.955	2.617	.036*
Within groups	33682.000	195	172.728		
Total	35489.820	199			

* $p < .05$.

Table 10

ANOVA for Mass Communication Strategies

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Score	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Between groups	5146.556	4	1286.639	3.634	.007*
Within groups	69752.177	197	354.072		
Total	74898.733	201			

* $p < .05$.

The statistically significant finding shown in Table 9 was .036 alpha between demographic groups regarding personal communication and the statistically significant finding shown in Table 10 was .007 alpha between demographic groups regarding mass communication. The follow-up Tukey's HSD post hoc revealed there were significant differences found between district enrollment groups. The variable options were as follows: less than 300 students, 300-1,000 students, 1,000-5,000 students, 5,000-10,000 students, and more than 10,000 students. The data suggested superintendents working in districts with 300-1,000 students and 1,000-5,000 students were more favorable toward mass communication. This may indicate superintendents with district student enrollments

between 300 and 5,000 are more likely to use mass communication when attempting to pass a tax referendum. Due to only four of the respondents representing districts with more than 10,000 students, there could have been other differences that were not detected because of the small sample size. There were no other significant statistical differences found in preference of personal or mass communication based on gender, highest degree of education, years as superintendent, and district free and reduced lunch rate.

Demographic data regarding the superintendents' experience and success attempting tax referendums also addressed the first research subquestion: Are there differences in communication strategies used by superintendents based on demographics? A *t* test was used to determine if there were differences in communication strategies utilized by superintendents who had successfully passed a tax referendum and those who had not experienced passing a tax referendum.

Table 11

Superintendents Who Had Successfully Passed a Tax Referendum

<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Lower	Upper
-2.173	205	.031*	-11.30061	-.54898

* *p* < .05.

In Table 11, the two-tailed *t* test for equality of means significance of .031 revealed a statistically significant finding between communication categories: Superintendents who had successfully passed tax referendums valued mass communication strategies more than personal communication strategies.

Table 12

Superintendents Who Had Not Passed a Tax Referendum

			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	Lower	Upper
-2.035	136.907	.044*	-11.68276	-.16684

* $p < .05$.

In Table 12, the two-tailed t test for equality of means significance of .044 also revealed a statistically significant finding between communication categories: Superintendents who did not have any experience passing a tax referendum valued mass communication strategies more than personal communication strategies. Regardless of whether the superintendent had experience passing tax referendums, the respondents were more favorable towards mass communication strategies throughout the full referendum process (planning, campaigning, and after the referendum).

Research Subquestions 2, 3, and 4 addressed effective communication strategies during the three identified stages of a tax referendum. The three stages of a tax referendum defined in this study by the researcher were planning a tax referendum, campaigning for a tax referendum, and after running a tax referendum. The researcher also separated communication strategies into the two distinct categories of mass communication and personal communication. The survey was created to determine if superintendents valued specific types of communication strategies over others during each phase of the tax referendum process.

Research Subquestion 2 Findings

The second research subquestion was as follows: What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful when planning a tax referendum?

Survey Questions 3-16 (14 questions) corresponded to Research Subquestion 2 regarding effective communication strategies used during the initial planning stage of a tax referendum. Seven of these questions were specific to mass communication strategies and seven questions were specific to personal communication strategies. Participants were asked to rate items in terms of the degree to which each strategy positively influenced district stakeholders. The superintendents' responses were measured on a 4-item scale of *No Positive Influence, Some Positive Influence, Positive Influence, and Strong Positive Influence*. Participants also had the option to choose *Not Applicable*. Descriptive statistics were used on this set of 14 survey questions to identify whether superintendents put greater value on mass communication or greater value on personal communication during the planning stage of the tax referendum process.

Table 13

Mean and Standard Deviations for Communication When Planning a Tax Referendum

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal communication	21.7490	4.38499
Mass communication	23.7020	7.18741

These descriptive statistics provided an overall picture that superintendents valued both personal and mass communication during the initial planning stages of a tax referendum. The higher mean of mass communication strategies suggested superintendents perceived these types of strategies to be more beneficial during this initial stage. The higher standard deviation for mass communication signified the respondents were more diverse in their answers than with the personal communication strategies.

Survey Question 17 asked the superintendents to rank what they believed were the four most effective methods of communication when planning for a tax referendum from a prescribed list of strategies. The list of items included both personal and mass communication strategies. Data were ranked to find the four most frequently selected strategies.

Table 14

Top Four Most Effective Communication Strategies When Planning a Tax Referendum

Rank	Communication strategy	Responses	Communication category
1	Presentations at community events	157	Personal
2	Social media accounts	112	Mass
3	Brochures/fliers	106	Mass
4	Presentations at school activities	94	Personal

Social media accounts and brochures/fliers were categorized by the researcher as mass communication. Presentations at community events as well as school activities were categorized as personal communication by the researcher. Therefore, two of the top four communication strategies were mass communication and two were personal communication. With two selected strategies from each communication category, the data supported previously discussed data that superintendents valued both types of communication strategies in the initial planning stages of a tax referendum and slightly preferred mass communication strategies based on that category being ranked second and third.

Survey Question 18 asked participants to share any other communication strategies not previously mentioned in the survey they had used to communicate with stakeholders the need for or initial plan for a tax referendum. Thirty-three participants provided additional items or comments. Respondents indicated a helpful tool was the

utilization of technology such as text messaging and QR (quick response) codes that “lead to further information on Web sites.” Multiple respondents commented how important it was for district employees to know the issues in order to be “positive ambassadors for the tax referendum.” Small group meetings hosted in homes, coffee shops, and nursing homes were noted as effective in order to communicate the facts to people on fixed incomes. Presentations at local civic meetings was a common theme among respondents to “gain endorsements from power structures and influential groups.” Tours of existing facilities were mentioned as an effective way to gain buy-in and support for a tax referendum and “present the current situation.” Finally, one-on-one conversations at conferences, school events, and personal phone calls were recorded as being effective. Qualitative comments included a variety of mass and personal communication strategies, which again supported previously discussed data that superintendents valued both types of communication strategies in the initial planning stages of a tax referendum. Appendix K lists all qualitative responses for Question 18.

Research Subquestion 3 Findings

The third research subquestion was as follows: What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful when campaigning for a tax referendum? Survey Questions 19-32 (14 questions) corresponded to Subquestion 3 regarding effective communication strategies used during the campaign stage of a tax referendum. Seven of these questions were specific to mass communication strategies and seven questions were specific to personal communication strategies. Descriptive statistics were used on this set of 14 survey questions to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication during the campaign stage of

the tax referendum process. Participants were asked to rate items in terms of the degree to which each strategy positively influenced district stakeholders. Responses were measured on a 4-item scale of *No Positive Influence*, *Some Positive Influence*, *Positive Influence*, and *Strong Positive Influence*. They also had the option to choose *Not Applicable*.

Table 15

Mean and Standard Deviations When Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal communication	24.6360	5.32254
Mass communication	23.0219	6.84147

These descriptive statistics provided an overall picture that superintendents valued both personal and mass communication during the campaigning stages of a tax referendum. The slightly higher mean of personal communication strategies suggested superintendents perceived these types of strategies as more beneficial during the campaign stage. The slightly higher standard deviation for the mass communication strategies showed answers were more diverse but still comparable.

Survey Question 33 asked the superintendents to rank what they perceived were the four most effective methods of communication when campaigning for a tax referendum. The given list of strategies included mass and personal communication items. Data were ranked to find the most frequent answers.

Table 16

Top Four Most Effective Strategies When Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

Rank	Communication strategy	Responses	Communication category
1	Presentations at community events	129	Personal
2	Social media accounts	98	Mass
2	Brochures/fliers	98	Mass
4	Presentations at school activities	90	Personal

These results were very similar to the findings from the second research subquestion. There were the same two strategies from each communication category represented in the top four selected answers. Therefore, two of the top four communication strategies seen as beneficial during the campaign process were mass communication and two were personal communication. These data also support previously discussed data that superintendents valued both personal and mass communication strategies in the campaigning stage of a tax referendum.

Survey Question 34 asked participants to share any other communication strategies not been previously mentioned in the survey they had used to communicate with stakeholders a tax referendum would be on the ballot. Nine participants provided additional items or comments for the campaign stage of the tax referendum process. Responses included polling for ballot language and meeting with community groups to gain support for the tax referendum. Analyzing voting history, organizing “get out the vote citizen committees,” and individual phone calls to registered voters were all seen as beneficial during the campaign stage. Meeting with small community groups was seen again as beneficial by several respondents during this stage as well. A mass communication strategy that was identified included “placing tri-folds in businesses with informational pictures and facts about bond issue.” Qualitative comments included a variety of mass and personal communication strategies, which again supported previously discussed data that superintendents valued both types of communication strategies during the campaign stage of a tax referendum. Appendix L lists all qualitative responses for Question 34 regarding communication strategies used when campaigning for a tax referendum.

Research Subquestion 4 Findings

The fourth research subquestion was as follows: What communication strategies are perceived by superintendents as most successful after passing a tax referendum? Survey Items 35-48 (14 questions) corresponded to Research Subquestion 4 and examined effective communication strategies used after the tax referendum was complete. Similar to the other two tax referendum stages previously discussed, seven of these questions were specific to mass communication strategies and seven questions were specific to personal communication strategies. Descriptive statistics were used on this set of 14 survey questions to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication after the tax referendum was complete. Participants were asked to rate items in terms of the degree to which each strategy positively influenced district stakeholders. The superintendents' responses were measured on the same 4-item scale as previously mentioned.

Table 17

Mean and Standard Deviations for Communicating After a Tax Referendum

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal communication	24.8502	5.44806
Mass communication	23.7246	7.33038

These descriptive statistics provided an overall picture that superintendents valued both personal and mass communication after the tax referendum. The slightly higher mean for personal communication strategies suggested superintendents perceived these types of strategies as more beneficial after the tax referendum was complete. A higher standard deviation for the mass communication strategies showed answers were more diverse but still comparable.

Survey Question 49 asked superintendents to rank what they believed were the four most effective methods of communication to use after a tax referendum. The given list of strategies included mass and personal communication items. Data were ranked in order to find the most frequent answers.

Table 18

Top Four Most Effective Communication Strategies to Use After a Tax Referendum

Rank	Communication strategy	Responses	Communication category
1	Open house events	107	Personal
2	Tours of new facilities	102	Personal
3	Social media accounts	95	Mass
4	Presentations at school activities	90	Personal

Open house events, tours of new facilities, and presentations at school activities were all categorized by the researcher as personal communication strategies. Therefore, three of the four most frequent answers for communication strategies used after the tax referendum has been completed were categorized as personal communication strategies. These results supported that superintendents valued both types of communication strategies after the tax referendum was complete. However, according to the data from Survey Question 49, respondents identified personal communication in this stage as more beneficial. This finding aligned with the descriptive statistics for this subquestion.

Survey Question 50 asked participants to share any other communication strategies they had used after the tax referendum to communicate to stakeholders how monies were being spent and projects were being completed. Four participants provided additional items or comments for this final stage of the tax referendum. All of the qualitative comments revolved around some type of ribbon cutting event or open house to showcase new building projects. One participant commented, “We had a big grand opening that we

did in conjunction with homecoming weekend. It had a large turnout. We tied the past to the present.” An additional statement specific to communication strategies used after a tax referendum included, “We received very positive feedback from individuals attending open houses to see the new construction.” This qualitative data further supported previous findings for Subquestion 4: Superintendents perceived personal communication as more beneficial after the tax referendum was complete.

Additional Findings

Throughout the study the researcher used two distinct categories of communication: mass communication and personal communication. Mass communication included generalized strategies that did not involve face-to-face interactions. Personal communication included strategies that involved a physical personal presence with the intended audience. Additional descriptive statistics for personal communication and mass communication were utilized in analyzing if superintendents preferred one type of communication category overall, throughout the entire tax referendum process. The entire tax referendum process included all three identified stages, which included planning, campaigning, and after the referendum. This specific data analysis did not directly tie to a subquestion but was further information for the researcher to report.

Table 19

Means, Variance, and Standard Deviations for Communication Categories

	Mean	Range	Standard Deviation
Personal communication	71.32	59-84	12.717
Mass communication	70.06	51-90	19.519

Table 19 lists the mean, range, and standard deviation for the two categories of communication identified on the survey instrument. The very close mean scores of 71.32 and 70.06 revealed superintendents valued personal and mass communication strategies throughout the full tax referendum process. However, with a slightly higher mean score of 71.32 respondents perceived personal communication strategies are more beneficial through the entire tax referendum process. The high standard deviation of 19.519 indicated there was a greater range in scores among the mass communication strategies and a wider variation of answers.

Additional key qualitative comments that originated in this study upheld research from the literature review (Chan, 2004; Faltys, 2006; Holt, 1993; Lifo & Senden, 2004; Lode, 1999; D. Moore, 2003; Vogel, 2006; Weathersby, 2002) regarding the importance of involving community stakeholders throughout the tax referendum process in order to establish and develop partnerships to gain support. This finding was evident through qualitative comments made by participants in each stage of the referendum process. The common theme of including civic groups, churches, parent groups, and influential citizens to help communicate was identified by the researcher. Respondents mentioned forming parent committees and teams to help spread information about the referendum. Securing support from influential citizens to help promote the referendum was also noted. The following statement from a participant summarized the importance of why a diverse group of stakeholders should be involved during the tax referendum process:

It's not just how to communicate but who communicates the message. You need community members to be willing to talk and take charge of the communication.

People know school employees have a bias. They want to see someone from the outside with something to say.

Summary

Descriptive statistics regarding day-to-day routine communication strategies were first analyzed to determine if participants valued communication with district stakeholders and made an effort to provide ongoing communication on a routine basis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data that corresponded to participants' demographics as well as their experience attempting tax referendums. Descriptive statistics were then used to identify if superintendents put greater value on mass communication or personal communication during the planning stage of the tax referendum process, the campaign stage of the tax referendum process, or after the tax referendum process was over. Qualitative data from open-ended comments were also organized into recurring themes to allow for interpretation of additional communication strategies recommended by superintendents at each stage of the referendum process. Finally, descriptive statistics for personal communication and mass communication were utilized in analyzing if superintendents preferred one type of communication category overall throughout the entire tax referendum process.

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study. Chapter Two discussed the review of literature regarding the need for school tax referendums and communication strategies used throughout the referendum process. Chapter Three included the explanation of the research design and methodology as well as the process used to establish a valid and reliable survey instrument. Chapter Four contained the results and

findings. Chapter Five interpreted the results of the data analyses, discussed the implications for practice, and presented recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Communication practices of superintendents and school leaders were an important aspect for this research. Communication was the foundation for establishing successful leadership (Tyson, 2006). The importance of this communication was well documented and closely associated with the leadership abilities displayed by school superintendents (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Public engagement and communication strategies looked different across various school districts throughout the tax referendum process. Superintendents and district leaders were responsible for determining what would be successful in their community (Faltys, 2006; Godown, 2011; Hickey, 2007). Lifo and Senden (2004) identified successful districts as having outstanding quality, ongoing public relations, and a focused message. This message could be delivered through mass or personal communication strategies. The awareness of differing communication strategies to increase the chances of school districts passing their future bond and levy campaigns was identified as an aspect that should be closely studied by school leaders. Superintendents must be aware of what was working and what was not, while striving to create and implement effective strategies within their communities, to assure success in future tax referendums and build trust in their communities (Carlsmith & Railsback, 2001; Holt, 2002; Neill, 2003; Sargent, 2014).

The intent of this study was to identify the best communication strategies used by superintendents during the three stages of a tax referendum. Planning a tax referendum, campaigning for a tax referendum, and then using communication strategies after a tax

referendum were the three stages included. Communication strategies were separated into the two distinct categories of mass communication and personal communication to determine if successful superintendents preferred specific types of communication strategies over others.

Summary of Methods

School superintendents from Missouri and Arkansas were invited to participate in the study to identify the best communication strategies used during the three stages of a tax referendum: planning a tax referendum, campaigning for a tax referendum, and following up after a tax referendum. For the purpose of this study, communication strategies were separated into the two distinct categories of mass communication and personal communication to determine if participating superintendents preferred specific types of communication strategies over others. A total of 202 superintendents completed the full survey, which was a participant response rate of 29.1%.

The survey instrument was designed by the researcher and advisors to meet the needs of the research questions (see Appendix A). The survey was written with quantitative and qualitative questions. Each survey question item corresponded to a research subquestion. The survey was revised after feedback from the field testing and pilot testing to ensure the survey was valid and reliable. The final survey link was e-mailed to participants including a brief letter explaining the importance of the study.

The quantitative and qualitative data were collected and saved using QuestionPro. The quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS software. The statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected was descriptive and inferential. The researcher closely

examined qualitative data to find common themes among the respondents' open-ended answers.

Conclusions

Communication during the tax referendum process has been and will continue to be a topic of interest for school superintendents. Communication might have been the key component to success of all challenging district issues such as passing a tax referendum. Statistically significant differences discovered during the study and other pertinent information were identified and noted below in the seven numbered conclusions:

1. The importance of routine communication was not to be underestimated, especially when attempting to pass a tax referendum (Florence, 2014) and was presented in this study's survey. The primary research question addressed communication strategies most successful in building trust in communities to successfully pass a tax referendum. The participating superintendents placed a high level of importance on routine communication with stakeholders to build trust in the school community throughout the school year. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed to valuing communication with stakeholders, and 91% agreed to working on ongoing communication. The high value put on routine communication by participating superintendents supported the literature review in that building trust between voters and school leaders took place every day of the year (Hickey, 2007).
2. A key conclusion from the study was that most superintendents indicated both mass and personal communication are important when communicating with stakeholders during the tax referendum process. Overall, in examining the

findings related to the first research subquestion about differences among demographic groups, there were no significant statistical differences in preference of personal or mass communication based on the following demographics: gender, highest degree of education, years as superintendent, and district free and reduced lunch rate. Quantitative data showed a diverse group of superintendents indicated both mass and personal communication strategies were beneficial when communicating to stakeholders. This was also supported by qualitative data from open-ended responses. Research from the literature review supported when determining what types of communication strategies the school district was going to employ, it was important for superintendents to use a variety of personal and mass communication strategies in order to reach multiple stakeholders (Vogel, 2006).

3. Another conclusion from the first research subquestion was the difference of preferred communication strategies of superintendents in districts from varying student enrollment demographics. Superintendents working in districts with 300-1,000 students and 1,000-5,000 students were more favorable toward mass communication when compared to school districts with less than 300 students and more than 5,000 students. However, data for the much larger districts (10,000 students or more) might have been hindered because of the small response rate from this enrollment group. The qualitative statement from a survey participant, “Social media has become the new standard,” supported research of the value of mass communication. The higher value on mass communication strategies from these demographic groups supported research from the literature review, which

discussed how technology has opened up powerful routine mass communication channels to everyone and information can get out to the public quicker than ever (Neill, 2003; NSPRA, 2013; O'Brien, 2008; Sargent, 2014; Vogel, 2006).

Communicating to patrons through the school district Web site was no longer optional but an absolute must for school districts. In addition, the growth of social media use among people of all ages made it important for school districts to embrace these and other emerging technologies (NSPRA, 2013).

4. The final point related to the first research subquestion resulted from the demographic data regarding the superintendent's experience in attempting tax referendums. This information expanded on the previous conclusion and provided further support related to the importance of mass communication. A statistically significant finding revealed both superintendents who had successfully passed tax referendums, as well as those who had not passed tax referendums, valued mass communication strategies more than personal communication strategies.

Regardless of whether the superintendent had experience passing tax referendums, the respondents were more favorable towards mass communication strategies throughout the full referendum process (planning, campaigning, and after the referendum). One comment from a participant included, "Small groups don't get you the votes you need. Think big think about reaching large numbers."

Yet again, the higher value on mass communication strategies from these demographic groups supported research about how communication has changed within the last 10 years with the Internet being so readily available. Additional communication channels now include e-mails, blogs, social media accounts, Web

sites, and any other method using the Internet (Lambert, 2012; Neill, 2003; Sargent, 2014). The Internet and numerous electronic devices have become a quick and efficient way to communicate with larger groups of stakeholders (NSPRA, 2013).

5. Conclusions from Research Subquestions 2, 3, and 4 emphasized the importance of investing time and resources in personal communication strategies. Personal communication strategies were perceived as more beneficial during the campaign stage as well as after the tax referendum was complete. Findings also indicated superintendents perceived personal communication strategies throughout the full tax referendum process (initial planning, campaign, and after the referendum) as more beneficial than mass communication strategies. Although personal communication strategies can be more time consuming and labor intensive, research has shown face-to-face conversations with small groups of citizens were much more beneficial than one-way and one-time forms of communication (Benzaquen, 2016). There was an abundance of research studies directly related to the benefit of personally involving stakeholders in the tax referendum process (Holt, 1993). The most successful districts developed an ongoing personal relationship with their community, kept constituents informed of issues, listened to their opinions, and used them as ambassadors to spread positive messages about what was going on in the district (Tyson, 2006). Involving stakeholders in many forms of communication such as community-based citizens' committees, volunteers, study circles, task forces, and focus or core groups was key to the success of school referendums (Gilly, 2013).

6. Another essential element related to the importance of personal communication strategies really came through in the qualitative comments from participants about communicating how monies were being spent and projects were being completed after the tax referendum. Participants shared communication strategies they had used after the tax referendum was completed. All of the qualitative comments revolved around some type of personal communication strategy, such as grand opening events or open houses to showcase new building projects. When asked to rank what they believed were the four most effective methods of communication to use after a tax referendum, three of the four top answers were personal communication strategies. Open house events, tours of new facilities, and presentations at school activities were noted as beneficial in order to communicate to stakeholders how referendum money was being spent. Research supported inviting constituents into the schools to make them feel more favorably toward the school district after a tax referendum and to show stakeholders how the money was spent using input from initial discussions (Crader et al., 2002; Cunningham, 2004). Ribbon cutting ceremonies, celebrations, and presentations to highlight what had been financed by the initiative were effective ways to thank voters for their support and retain their trust after a referendum passed (Kessler, 2012).
7. The last conclusion derived from this study was the importance of involving community stakeholders throughout the tax referendum process. This finding was evident through qualitative comments made by participants in each stage of the referendum process. The common theme of including civic groups, churches, parent groups, and influential citizens to help communicate was identified by the

researcher. Involving a diverse citizen group of stakeholders in committees, task forces, and focus groups also came highly recommended by researchers while schools were attempting to pass a tax referendum (Chan, 2004; Faltys, 2006; Holt, 1993; Lifo & Senden, 2004; Lode, 1999; D. Moore, 2003; Vogel, 2006; Weathersby, 2002). School leaders primarily worked with and through other people. They helped establish the connections and relationships that enabled the school district to be effective and successful in its efforts. Therefore, the more community leaders and support the school obtained on their side, the better (Holt et al., 2006).

Professional Implications

Conclusions from this study provided implications for future leadership practice.

The importance of effective communication resonated from the conclusions. School leaders need to be communication experts to successfully handle public relations and build trust within the community. A total of five professional implications were recognized and noted below:

1. One implication for practice included the importance of leaders prioritizing communication as a key way to build trust. Routine ongoing communication was highly valued by practicing superintendents. The importance of strong, consistent communication should not be underestimated in order to build trust with stakeholders. Research noted proper communication with the school community should have been constant throughout the school year regardless of what was happening in the district (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Holt, 2002). Additionally, research documented successful superintendents ensured communication was a

priority from the beginning of every process. Communication did not just occur at the end when all the important decisions were made (Neudecker, 2008).

Superintendents, as well as other school leaders, should continuously be laying the groundwork through good, routine, trust-building, communication strategies, even if there is not a tax referendum in the district's near future (Barth, 2006; Devono & Price, 2012; Faltys, 2006; Florence, 2014; Vogel, 2006).

Communication by superintendents, principals, and other district leaders must be frequent and effective to be truly understood and accepted (Kotter, 2012).

2. Another implication for professional practice included relying on a mixture of mass and personal communication strategies to distribute information as well as build trust with the stakeholders. Research specified there were numerous ways for a school district to get the message out about an upcoming tax referendum (Holt, 1993). To communicate effectively with stakeholders, a variety of communication strategies, mass and personal, should be used by school leaders. Mass communication should include generalized strategies such as social media accounts, electronic messenger systems, and media outlets that do not involve face-to-face interactions. Personal communications involving a physical presence with the intended audience should include strategies such as personal presentations, small group meetings, or phone conversations.
3. Conclusions from this study also implied the importance for school districts to embrace social media accounts and invest in new technology resources to communicate with large groups of stakeholders. These findings supported research that mass media communication outlets positively influence the outcome

of tax referendums (Neill, 2003; Sargent, 2014). Mass communication sources such as newspaper, radio, social media sites, Web sites, and television reports provide stakeholders with important district information. School leaders should include a variety of mass communication strategies and media outlets when communicating to the public (O'Brien, 2008; Vogel, 2006). Since social media has become such a huge part of our American culture, it should be a priority for school districts to use as a mass communication strategy. School districts need to stay current in the resources and tools they utilize to communicate to large groups.

4. The importance of effective personal communication throughout the tax referendum process also resonated from the conclusions. School leaders had to invest the time and resources through personal communication strategies in order to maintain trust with stakeholders. After a successful campaign, the community still wanted communication, input, and ownership of the decision they had made on the ballot (Florence, 2014; Hickey, 2007; VanSciver, 1990). Any decisions made by school leaders needed to be effectively communicated with stakeholders. Continuous and effective communication between the school district and the public was vital to maintain the public's trust (Knight, 2013). School leaders built trust with numerous behaviors. Stakeholders appreciated personal communication strategies because they got a chance to voice their opinions (Carroll & Carroll, 2000). Personal communication strategies, such as small groups in which citizens could personally ask questions and immediately receive answers, were found to be beneficial (Erickson, 2011; Hockersmith, 2001).

5. The involvement of stakeholders continued to be an emerging theme in this study. School leaders primarily worked with and through other people. They helped establish the connections and relationships that enabled the school district to be effective and successful in its efforts. Therefore, the more community leaders and support school leaders can obtain on their side, the better. Using a variety of local citizens to provide communication for school issues was noted as valuable (Lode, 1999). Erickson (2011) stated it was important that communication through stakeholders included a variety of individuals that represented all aspects of the community. Having a voice in all the neighborhoods and within all the different subcultures was found to be essential. The message resonated with stakeholders differently if it came from a close friend rather than a school official (Benzaquen, 2016).

Recommendations for School Leaders

School districts will always need community support to secure financial resources for building projects and increased operational costs. Working diligently to create a culture and vision of positive two-way communications has become part of superintendents' daily work in order to gain support from employees, parents, the community, business leaders, elected officials, and others. A reality of public education was superintendents had to be not only outstanding educators, but also outstanding communicators (Neudecker, 2008). To promote effective communication strategies throughout the tax referendum process, as well as routinely communicate in order to build trust with stakeholders, the researcher made the following recommendations for all school leaders:

1. The implementation of frequent and effective routine communication strategies throughout the school year;
2. The use of a combined variety of personal communication strategies and mass communication strategies when communicating to stakeholders;
3. The use of multiple mass communication strategies, specifically social media accounts and other advanced online resources;
4. The investment of time and resources to employ multiple personal communication strategies in order to build relationships and trust with stakeholders; and
5. The involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders when communicating to be able to have a voice in multiple different subcultures found in the school district.

Further Research Suggestions

Further study regarding tax referendums and the specific communication strategies utilized throughout the process was recommended by the researcher. Questions were brought to light by this study that permit further research. The following recommendations will add to the current body of research examining best practices when communicating to school district stakeholders.

1. Since there were only a small number of participants from large urban schools, it was recommended this study be replicated to include a larger sample size of superintendents working in districts with more than 10,000 students. Replication of the study to include more participants from various states would be beneficial to increase the sample size in order to more broadly incorporate and investigate demographic influences.

2. The researcher further recommended future studies involving the perceptions of community stakeholders as a way to continue assessing the effectiveness of communication strategies used throughout a tax referendum. This study could be expanded by asking the perceptions of parents, senior citizens, teachers, and members of the community agencies. Gathering insights from a variety of citizens could provide school leaders with valuable information to contribute to the scholarly research of effective communication practices.
3. Further testing of the three individual stages of the tax referendum process would also be beneficial for school leaders in order to drill down on what single specific strategy was most effective in each stage. This study grouped communication strategies into the two categories of mass and personal. The wide array of communication strategies made it difficult for school leaders to know which specific mass communication strategies worked the best and what specific personal communication strategies worked the best.
4. A future emphasis on social media would be advantageous since this was a commonly used mass communication practice for school districts.
5. Future study of effective communication strategies to use after a tax referendum would also be valuable since to date the scholarly research and literature have been limited.

Summary

Chapter One introduced the study. The current failing conditions of American school buildings and the high price of repair cannot be afforded by school districts without passing a school bond issue. In addition, the rising cost of education and the lack

of state funding to provide for all that is needed puts a financial burden on districts. The primary research question addressed communication strategies most successful in building trust in communities to successfully pass a tax referendum. In order to answer the primary research question, subquestions examined mass and personal communication strategies during each of the three stages of the tax referendum process (initial planning, campaigning, and after the referendum). Chapter Two developed the review of literature regarding the need for school tax referendums and communication strategies used throughout the referendum process. Chapter Three included the explanation of the research design and methodology as well as the process used to establish a valid and reliable survey instrument. Chapter Four reported the data analysis. Overall, superintendents highly valued routine communication with stakeholders. Findings including both mass and personal communication strategies were perceived as beneficial throughout the tax referendum process. In Chapter Five the researcher discussed the conclusions, professional implications, and recommendations, and made suggestions for further research. Communication is a fundamental part of a school leader's professional responsibility. It takes years to build trust through the open and honest actions of administrators and effective routine communication strategies. The key insight of this study was the importance of using a variety of ongoing mass and personal communication strategies to gain the much needed support from local citizens and stakeholders.

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Appendix A

Effective Communication Strategies for Passage of Tax Referendums Survey Instrument

Tax Referendum Information

1. How many bond issues/tax levies have you attempted in your current school district?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. How many of those attempted bond issues/tax levies have successfully passed?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Communication Strategies While Planning for a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents to communicate a potential tax referendum that could possibly be put on the ballot in the near future (includes initial planning)

Please rate the following communication strategies in terms of the degree to which each factor positively influences district stakeholders while planning for a tax referendum.

Rate the following statements 1=No Positive Influence 2=Some Positive Influence 3=Positive Influence 4=Strong Positive Influence N/A=Not Applicable

	Personal Communication	
3.	Individualized communication through parents participating in the planning meetings	1 2 3 4 NA
4.	Community leaders communicating to individuals, at their meetings, about the district's strategic plan	1 2 3 4 NA
5.	School administrators' presentations at public meetings about school needs	1 2 3 4 NA
6.	School leaders' informal discussions with constituents when attending district extracurricular activities	1 2 3 4 NA
7.	Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum	1 2 3 4 NA
8.	Individualized presentations at civic group meetings by school administrators	1 2 3 4 NA
9.	Communicating individually with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds serving on initial planning committees	1 2 3 4 NA
	Mass Communication	
10.	Automated calling systems to reach mass audience	1 2 3 4 NA
11.	Written materials distributed to students to take home	1 2 3 4 NA
12.	Mass distribution of information through radio advertisements	1 2 3 4 NA
13.	Mass e-mails to reach the public	1 2 3 4 NA
14.	Reaching multiple people through social media accounts	1 2 3 4 NA
15.	Using district Web sites to communicate information to multiple people	1 2 3 4 NA
16.	Mass mailings to reach multiple constituents	1 2 3 4 NA

17. Please circle the **four most effective** methods of communication with district stakeholders when planning for a tax referendum in your opinion.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| brochures/fliers | school Web sites |
| mass e-mails | billboards |
| newspaper editorials | television advertisements |
| social media accounts | automated phone calls |
| presentations at school activities | door-to-door canvassing to poll voters |
| presentations at community events | small group meetings at local establishments |
| teacher conversations with parents | informal conversations at events |
| bulk mailings | radio advertisements |
| yard signs | |

18. Are there any other communication strategies (effective or ineffective) that you use to communicate with stakeholders the need for or initial plan for a tax referendum that have not been mentioned above? **PLEASE SHARE OTHER STRATEGIES YOU HAVE FOUND SUCCESSFUL.**

Communication Strategies While Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents when a tax referendum is on the ballot and needs to be communicated to and approved by voters

Please rate the following communication strategies in terms of the degree to which each factor positively influences district stakeholders while campaigning for a tax referendum.

Rate the following statements 1=No Positive Influence 2= Some Positive Influence 3=Positive Influence 4=Strong Positive Influence N/A=Not Applicable

	Personal Communication	
19.	Parents communicating to citizens in small groups	1 2 3 4 NA
20.	Community leaders advocating to individuals for the tax referendum	1 2 3 4 NA
21.	District leadership personal presentations at school activities about the need for the tax referendum	1 2 3 4 NA
22.	Door-to-door personal conversations to promote the tax referendum	1 2 3 4 NA
23.	School leaders holding informal question and answer meetings with community citizens	1 2 3 4 NA
24.	Community members' personal conversations at local churches to promote the tax referendum	1 2 3 4 NA
25.	Individualized communication by school staff with local diverse civic groups	1 2 3 4 NA

	Mass Communication	
26.	Written materials distributed by local businesses	1 2 3 4 NA
27.	Television news coverage to reach a mass amount of local citizens	1 2 3 4 NA
28.	Communicating with multiple people through social media accounts	1 2 3 4 NA
29.	Mass mailings to reach targeted registered voters	1 2 3 4 NA
30.	Using district Web sites to communicate information to multiple people	1 2 3 4 NA
31.	Yard signs to advertise to numerous local citizens	1 2 3 4 NA
32.	Letter to the editor campaigns in the local paper to inform a broad audience about the tax referendum	1 2 3 4 NA

33. Please circle the **four most effective** methods of communication with district stakeholders when campaigning for a tax referendum in your opinion.

brochures/fliers	school Web sites
mass e-mails	billboards
radio advertisements	newspaper editorials
television advertisements	yard signs
social media accounts	automated phone calls
presentations at school activities	door to door canvassing to poll voters
presentations at community events	small group meetings at local establishments
teacher conversations with parents	informal conversations at events
bulk mailings	

34. Are there any other communication strategies (effective or ineffective) that you use to communicate with stakeholders that a tax referendum will be on the ballot that have not been mentioned above? **PLEASE SHARE OTHER STRATEGIES YOU HAVE FOUND SUCCESSFUL.**

Communication After a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents after the tax referendum has passed to communicate how the money is being spent and projects are being completed

Please rate the following communication strategies in terms of the degree to which each factor positively influences district stakeholders after a tax referendum.

Rate the following statements 1=No Positive Influence 2= Some Positive Influence 3=Positive Influence 4=Strong Positive Influence N/A=Not Applicable

Personal Communication		
35.	School administrators' presentations at school extracurricular activities	1 2 3 4 NA
36.	School administrators' personal conversations at public community meetings	1 2 3 4 NA
37.	Individual tours of facilities to see new construction	1 2 3 4 NA
38.	Open house events for school leaders to have informal discussions with constituents	1 2 3 4 NA
39.	Communicating to individuals by hosting community events in the new school facilities	1 2 3 4 NA
40.	Holding individual parent meetings in the new school facilities to communicate building progress with voters	1 2 3 4 NA
41.	Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders	1 2 3 4 NA
Mass Communication		
42.	Distributed written materials that are sent home with students	1 2 3 4 NA
43.	Mass distribution of information through television news coverage	1 2 3 4 NA
44.	Mass text messages to reach the public	1 2 3 4 NA
45.	Using billboards to communicate progress on a broad level	1 2 3 4 NA
46.	Newspaper articles to communicate progress to a mass audience	1 2 3 4 NA
47.	Fliers distributed through local businesses	1 2 3 4 NA
48.	Reaching multiple people through social media	1 2 3 4 NA

Rate the following statements 1=No Positive Influence 2=Some Positive Influence 3=Positive Influence 4=Strong Positive Influence N/A=Not Applicable

49. Please circle the **four most effective** methods of communication with district stakeholders after a tax referendum in your opinion.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| informal conversations at events | school Web sites |
| bulk mailings | teacher conversations with parents |
| billboards | radio advertisements |
| newspaper editorials | television advertisements |
| yard signs | social media accounts |
| automated phone calls | brochures/fliers |
| presentations at school activities | open house events |
| presentations at community events | tours of new facilities |
| mass e-mails | |

Appendix B

Survey E-mail Invitation

E-mail Invitation Details E-mail List : Arkansas and Missouri Superintendents
Survey: Tax Referendum Communication Strategies (5531626)
From: s580655@sbuniv.edu
Subject: Tax Referendum Survey
E-mail Mode: Plain Text

Hello,

Will you please complete the brief online survey regarding effective communication strategies used when attempting to pass a tax referendum. This research will help identify specific strategies that are most beneficial for superintendents to use throughout the tax referendum process.

The average time for completion of this pilot study is 8 minutes. Your identifying information will be kept confidential. After completion of the study, the results will be available for examination at <http://www.sbuniv.edu> (University Libraries, Graduate Education Ed.D. Dissertations).

Your input is needed and greatly appreciated! Please complete the survey as soon as you can.

Please click on this link to complete the survey:

<SURVEY_LINK>

Contact s580655@sbuniv.edu with any questions.

Thank You!

Katie Kreimer-Hall

Please click on this link to complete the survey: <SURVEY_LINK>

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Validity Panel

Communication Strategies While Planning for a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents to communicate a potential tax referendum that could possibly be put on the ballot in the near future (includes initial planning)

	Individualized Communication	
3.	Individualized communication through parents participating in the planning meetings	1 0 -1
4.	Community leaders communicating to individuals about the district's strategic plan	1 0 -1
5.	School administrators' personal presentations at public meetings about school needs	1 0 -1
6.	School leaders' informal discussions with constituents when at district extracurricular activities	1 0 -1
7.	Personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum	1 0 -1
8.	Individualized presentations at civic group meetings by school administrators	1 0 -1
9.	Communicating individually with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds serving on initial planning committees	1 0 -1
	Mass Communication	
10.	Automated calling systems to reach mass audience	1 0 -1
11.	Written materials distributed through students	1 0 -1
12.	Mass distribution of information through radio advertisements	1 0 -1
13.	Mass e-mails to reach the public	1 0 -1
14.	Reaching multiple people through social media accounts	1 0 -1
15.	Using district Web sites to communicate message on a broad level	1 0 -1
16.	Bulk mailings to reach multiple constituents	1 0 -1

Comments about these questions:

Communication Strategies While Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents when a tax referendum is on the ballot and needs to be communicated to and approved by voters

	Individualized Communication	
19.	Individualized communication through parents to citizens in small groups	1 0 -1
20.	Community leaders advocating to individuals at their meetings for the tax referendum	1 0 -1
21.	District leadership personal presentations at school activities about the need for the tax referendum	1 0 -1
22.	Door-to-door canvassing to individually promote the tax referendum	1 0 -1
23.	School leaders holding informal question and answer meetings with community citizens	1 0 -1
24.	Community members' personal presentations at local churches to promote the tax referendum	1 0 -1
25.	Individualized communication by school staff with local diverse civic groups	1 0 -1
	Mass Communication	
26.	Written materials distributed by local businesses	1 0 -1
27.	Television advertisements to reach a mass amount of local citizens	1 0 -1
28.	Communicating with multiple people through social media accounts	1 0 -1
29.	Bulk mailings to reach all registered voters	1 0 -1
30.	Using district Web sites to communicate information on a broad level	1 0 -1
31.	Yard signs to advertise to numerous local citizens	1 0 -1
32.	Letter to the editor campaigns in the local paper to inform a broad audience about the tax referendum	1 0 -1

Comments about these questions:

Communication After a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents after the tax referendum has passed to communicate how the money is being spent and projects are being completed

	Individualized Communication	
35.	School administrators' personal presentations at school extra-curricular activities	1 0 -1
36.	School administrators' personal presentations at public community meetings	1 0 -1
37.	Individual tours of facilities to see new construction	1 0 -1
38.	Open house events for school leaders to have informal discussions with constituents	1 0 -1
39.	Hosting community events in the new school facilities to communicate to individuals	1 0 -1
40.	Holding parent meetings in the new school facilities to communicate building progress with voters	1 0 -1
41.	Personal phone calls to stakeholders	1 0 -1
	Mass Communication	
42.	Distributed written materials through students	1 0 -1
43.	Mass distribution of information through television advertisements	1 0 -1
44.	Mass text messages to reach the public	1 0 -1
45.	Using billboards to communicate progress on a broad level	1 0 -1
46.	Newspaper articles to communicate progress to a mass audience	1 0 -1
47.	Fliers distributed through local businesses	1 0 -1
48.	Reaching multiple people through social media	1 0 -1

Comments about these questions:

Routine Communication to Stakeholders

Definition- communication strategies used on a day-to-day basis by superintendents to communicate any district information to stakeholders (i.e., changes, planning, decisions, problems, events, celebrations).

Rate the following: 1=Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3=Agree 4=Strongly Agree

51.	Communication with stakeholders is something I value.	1	2	3	4
52.	I work to have ongoing communication with stakeholders.	1	2	3	4

53. What communication strategies do you use on a routine basis to communicate district information with mass groups of stakeholders?

54. What communication strategies do you use on a routine basis to communicate district information with small groups of stakeholders?

Comments about these questions:

Appendix D

Table of Specifications

#	Survey Item	Research Subquestion	Personal	Mass
3.	Individualized communication through parents participating in the planning meetings	2	X	
4.	Community leaders communicating to individuals about the district's strategic plan	2	X	
5.	School administrators' personal presentations at public meetings about school needs	2	X	
6.	School leaders' informal discussions with constituents when at district extra-curricular activities	2	X	
7.	Personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum	2	X	
8.	Individualized presentations at civic group meetings by school administrators	2	X	
9.	Communicating individually with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds serving on initial planning committees	2	X	
10.	Automated calling systems to reach mass audience	2		X
11.	Written materials distributed through students	2		X
12.	Mass distribution of information through radio advertisements	2		X
13.	Mass e-mails to reach the public	2		X
14.	Reaching multiple people through social media accounts	2		X
15.	Using district Web sites to communicate message on a broad level	2		X
16.	Bulk mailings to reach multiple constituents	2		X
19.	Individualized communication through parents to citizens in small groups	3	X	
20.	Community leaders advocating to individuals at their meetings, for the tax referendum	3	X	
21.	District leadership personal presentations at school activities about the need for the tax referendum	3	X	
22.	Door-to-door canvassing to individually promote the tax referendum	3	X	
23.	School leaders holding informal question and answer meetings with community citizens	3	X	
24.	Community members' personal presentations at local churches to promote the tax referendum	3	X	
25.	Individualized communication by school staff with local diverse civic groups	3	X	
26.	Written materials distributed by local businesses	3		X

27.	Television advertisements to reach a mass amount of local citizens	3	X
28.	Communicating with multiple people through social media accounts	3	X
29.	Bulk mailings to reach all registered voters	3	X
30.	Using district Web sites to communicate information on a broad level	3	X
31.	Yard signs to advertise to numerous local citizens	3	X
32.	Letter to the editor campaigns in the local paper to inform a broad audience about the tax referendum	3	X
35.	School administrators personal presentations at school extracurricular activities	4	X
36.	School administrators' personal presentations at public community meetings	4	X
37.	Individual tours of facilities to see new construction	4	X
38.	Open house events for school leaders to have informal discussions with constituents	4	X
39.	Hosting community events in the new school facilities to communicate to individuals	4	X
40.	Holding parent meetings in the new school facilities to communicate building progress with voters	4	X
41.	Personal phone calls to stakeholders	4	X
42.	Distributed written materials through students	4	X
43.	Mass distribution of information through television advertisements	4	X
44.	Mass text messages to reach the public	4	X
45.	Using billboards to communicate progress on a broad level	4	X
46.	Newspaper articles to communicate progress to a mass audience	4	X
47.	Fliers distributed through local businesses	4	X
48.	Reaching multiple people through social media	4	X
55.	Gender	1	
56.	Highest educational degree	1	
57.	Number of years as superintendent	1	
58.	Number of students in district	1	
59.	District free and reduced lunch rate	1	

Appendix E

Validity Panel Cover Letter

Dear Validity Panel,

Thank you for taking the time to serve on my validity panel. Your feedback will be used to further revise and improve my survey instrument. The purpose of this study is to determine communication strategies that are influential in the success of a tax referendum. Specifically, what are the communication strategies that are most influential in each of the identified stages of the tax referendum process (planning, campaigning, after the referendum)?

The survey questions on which I need specific feedback on are in the three large tables. This will include Survey Questions 3-16, 19-32, and 35-48. These questions deal with communication strategies. The first seven questions in each section deal with individualized communication strategies and the second seven questions in each section deal with mass communication strategies. Please evaluate each survey question regarding the alignment of the question to the idea of each section. Please record your rating for that question by using the scale below:

- +1=Good question- the question aligns well with communication strategies
- 0=Neutral- the question aligns somewhat with communication strategies
- 1=Problematic question- the question does not align well with communication strategies

Additionally, please provide any insight about the clarity of the wording and appropriate use of terms.

I would appreciate any other feedback on the additional questions not found in the tables. However, the additional feedback is not necessary. Furthermore, I will need a list of your experience and credentials that qualify you to be considered an expert in communication and the process of passing a tax referendum.

Thank you!

Katie Kreimer-Hall

Appendix F

Validity Panel Survey Instrument Scoring Form

Communication Strategies While Planning for a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents to communicate a potential tax referendum that could possibly be put on the ballot in the near future (includes initial planning)

	Individualized Communication	
3.	Individualized communication through parents participating in the planning meetings	1 0 -1
4.	Community leaders communicating to individuals about the district's strategic plan.	1 0 -1
5.	School administrators' personal presentations at public meetings about school needs	1 0 -1
6.	School leaders' informal discussions with constituents when at district extracurricular activities	1 0 -1
7.	Personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum	1 0 -1
8.	Individualized presentations at civic group meetings by school administrators	1 0 -1
9.	Communicating individually with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds serving on initial planning committees	1 0 -1
	Mass Communication	
10.	Automated calling systems to reach mass audience	1 0 -1
11.	Written materials distributed through students	1 0 -1
12.	Mass distribution of information through radio advertisements	1 0 -1
13.	Mass e-mails to reach the public	1 0 -1
14.	Reaching multiple people through social media accounts	1 0 -1
15.	Using district Web sites to communicate message on a broad level	1 0 -1
16.	Bulk mailings to reach multiple constituents	1 0 -1

Comments about these questions:

Communication Strategies While Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents when a tax referendum is on the ballot and needs to be communicated to and approved by voters

	Individualized Communication	
19.	Individualized communication through parents to citizens in small groups	1 0 -1
20.	Community leaders advocating to individuals at their meetings, for the tax referendum	1 0 -1
21.	District leadership personal presentations at school activities about the need for the tax referendum	1 0 -1
22.	Door-to-door canvassing to individually promote the tax referendum	1 0 -1
23.	School leaders holding informal question and answer meetings with community citizens	1 0 -1
24.	Community members' personal presentations at local churches to promote the tax referendum	1 0 -1
25.	Individualized communication by school staff with local diverse civic groups	1 0 -1
	Mass Communication	
26.	Written materials distributed by local businesses	1 0 -1
27.	Television advertisements to reach a mass amount of local citizens	1 0 -1
28.	Communicating with multiple people through social media accounts	1 0 -1
29.	Bulk mailings to reach all registered voters	1 0 -1
30.	Using district Web sites to communicate information on a broad level	1 0 -1
31.	Yard signs to advertise to numerous local citizens	1 0 -1
32.	Letter to the editor campaigns in the local paper to inform a broad audience about the tax referendum	1 0 -1

Comments about these questions:

Communication After a Tax Referendum

Definition- communication strategies used by Superintendents after the tax referendum has passed to communicate how the money is being spent and projects are being completed

	Individualized Communication	
35.	School administrators’ personal presentations at school extracurricular activities	1 0 -1
36.	School administrators’ personal presentations at public community meetings	1 0 -1
37.	Individual tours of facilities to see new construction	1 0 -1
38.	Open house events for school leaders to have informal discussions with constituents	1 0 -1
39.	Hosting community events in the new school facilities to communicate to individuals	1 0 -1
40.	Holding parent meetings in the new school facilities to communicate building progress with voters	1 0 -1
41.	Personal phone calls to stakeholders	1 0 -1
	Mass Communication	
42.	Distributed written materials through students	1 0 -1
43.	Mass distribution of information through television advertisements	1 0 -1
44.	Mass text messages to reach the public	1 0 -1
45.	Using billboards to communicate progress on a broad level	1 0 -1
46.	Newspaper articles to communicate progress to a mass audience	1 0 -1
47.	Fliers distributed through local businesses	1 0 -1
48.	Reaching multiple people through social media	1 0 -1

Comments about these questions:

Routine Communication to Stakeholders

Definition- communication strategies used on a day-to-day basis by superintendents to communicate any district information to stakeholders (i.e., changes, planning, decisions, problems, events, celebrations).

Rate the following: 1=Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3=Agree 4=Strongly Agree

51.	Communication with stakeholders is something I value.	1	2	3	4
52.	I work to have ongoing communication with stakeholders.	1	2	3	4

53. What communication strategies do you use on a routine basis to communicate district information with mass groups of stakeholders?

54. What communication strategies do you use on a routine basis to communicate district information with small groups of stakeholders?

Comments about these questions:

Appendix G

Pilot Rotated Component Matrix

Table 2

Pilot Rotated Component Matrix

Question	Component 1	Component 2	Revision
Individualized communication through parents participating in the planning meetings	-.096	.417	
Community leaders communicating to individuals, at their meetings, about the district's strategic plan	-.202	.298	
School administrators' presentations at public meetings about school needs	.191	.530	
School leaders' informal discussions with constituents when attending district extracurricular activities	-.348	.547	
Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum	.047	.248	
Individualized presentations at civic group meetings by school administrators	.284	.580	
Communicating individually with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds serving on initial planning committees	-.002	.416	
Automated calling systems to reach mass audience	.586	.334	
Written materials distributed to students to take home	.284	.110	
Mass distribution of information through radio advertisements	.800	.262	
Mass e-mails to reach the public	.766	.084	
Reaching multiple people through social media accounts	.548	-.085	
Using district Web sites to communicate information on a broad level	-.150	.694	Change "broad level" to "multiple people"
Bulk mailings to reach multiple constituents	.319	.676	Change "bulk" to "mass"
Parents communicating to citizens in small groups	-.292	.432	
Community leaders advocating to individuals for the tax referendum	-.291	.459	
District leadership personal presentations at school activities about the need for the tax referendum	.059	.436	
Door-to-door canvassing by volunteers to promote the tax referendum	.553	.524	Change "canvassing" to "personal conversations"
School leaders holding informal question and answer meetings with community citizens	.063	.508	

Community members' personal presentations at local churches to promote the tax referendum	.685	.257	Change "presentations" to "conversations"
Individualized communication by school staff with local diverse civic groups	.271	.381	
Written materials distributed by local businesses	.634	-.040	
Television news coverage to reach a mass amount of local citizens	.844	.078	
Communicating with multiple people through social media accounts	.380	-.097	
Bulk mailings to reach targeted registered voters	.383	.666	Change "bulk" to "mass"
Using district Web sites to communicate information on a broad level	.072	.689	Change "broad level" to "multiple people"
Yard signs to advertise to numerous local citizens	.506	-.170	
Letter to the editor campaigns in the local paper to inform a broad audience about the tax referendum	.243	-.060	
School administrators' presentations at school extra-curricular activities	.410	.463	
School administrators' presentations at public community meetings	.289	.278	Change "presentations" to "conversations"
Individual tours of facilities to see new construction	.344	-.101	
Open house events for school leaders to have informal discussions with constituents	.043	-.200	
Hosting community events in the new school facilities to communicate to individuals	.272	.035	Change to "Communicating to individuals by hosting..."
Holding parent meetings in the new school facilities to communicate building progress with voters	.507	.372	Add the word "individual"
Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders	.613	.318	
Distributed written materials that are sent home with students	.481	-.076	
Mass distribution of information through television news coverage	.867	.110	
Mass text messages to reach the public	.816	.047	
Using billboards to communicate progress on a broad level	.883	.243	
Newspaper articles to communicate progress to a mass audience	.642	-.137	
Fliers distributed through local businesses	.758	-.134	
Reaching multiple people through social media	.661	.008	

Note. Bold score = stronger component relationship.

Component 1 = mass communication strategies. Component 2 = personal communication strategies.

Appendix H

Final Survey Rotated Component Matrix

Table 3

Final Survey Rotated Component Matrix

Question	Component 1	Component 2
Individualized communication through parents participating in the planning meetings	.105	.636
Community leaders communicating to individuals, at their meetings, about the district's strategic plan.	.028	.701
School administrators' presentations at public meetings about school needs	.131	.704
School leaders' informal discussions with constituents when attending district extracurricular activities	.161	.675
Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders to discuss potential tax referendum	.587	.275
Individualized presentations at civic group meetings by school administrators	.191	.647
Communicating individually with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds serving on initial planning committees	.263	.540
Automated calling systems to reach mass audience	.730	.117
Written materials distributed to students to take home	.657	.220
Mass distribution of information through radio advertisements	.698	.171
Mass e-mails to reach the public	.753	.225
Reaching multiple people through social media accounts	.322	.462
^a Using district Web sites to communicate information to multiple people	.471	.420
^a Mass mailings to reach multiple constituents	.696	.322
Parents communicating to citizens in small groups	.274	.638
Community leaders advocating to individuals for the tax referendum	.037	.750
District leadership personal presentations at school activities about the need for the tax referendum	.251	.733
^a Door-to-door personal conversations to promote the tax referendum	.706	.223
School leaders holding informal question and answer meetings with community citizens	.150	.711
^a Community members' personal conversations at local churches to promote the tax referendum	.293	.531
Individualized communication by school staff with local diverse civic groups	.366	.603
Written materials distributed by local businesses	.584	.428
Television news coverage to reach a mass amount of local citizens	.678	.217
Communicating with multiple people through social media accounts	.383	.493
^a Mass mailings to reach targeted registered voters	.740	.272
^a Using district Web sites to communicate information to multiple people	.553	.372
Yard signs to advertise to numerous local citizens	.613	.291

Letter to the editor campaigns in the local paper to inform a broad audience about the tax referendum	.569	.416
School administrators' presentations at school extracurricular activities	.404	.486
^a School administrators' personal conversations at public community meetings	.264	.573
Individual tours of facilities to see new construction	.347	.495
Open house events for school leaders to have informal discussions with constituents	.233	.535
^a Communicating to individuals by hosting community events in the new school facilities	.337	.546
^a Holding individual parent meetings in the new school facilities to communicate building progress with voters	.438	.432
Volunteers making personal phone calls to stakeholders	.742	.118
Distributed written materials that are sent home with students	.782	.201
Mass distribution of information through television news coverage	.782	.185
Mass text messages to reach the public	.793	.196
Using billboards to communicate progress on a broad level	.802	.109
Newspaper articles to communicate progress to a mass audience	.543	.405
Fliers distributed through local businesses	.764	.213
Reaching multiple people through social media	.548	.282

Note. Bold score = stronger component relationship.

^aWording revised after analyses of pilot survey.

Component 1 = mass communication strategies. Component 2 = personal communication strategies.

Appendix I

Qualitative Responses for Routine Communication with Large Stakeholder Groups

1. Social media, Mass emails
2. District wide newsletter to all box holders in the district.
3. Social media, civic engagement, community partnerships, coffee with the community, state of the district events
4. Community event speaking
5. School social media accounts, newsletters, and mass phone call
6. Email and social media
7. Social media, mass phone calls, being present
8. Letters to editor, Facebook
9. Website
10. Personal contact, social media, presentation at community events
11. Put a team together and have a plan
12. School social media
13. Social media, school wide text and calls
14. Social media, scheduled events, chamber of commerce, internal district meetings, Kiwanis, city meetings
15. Social media, school reach calls
16. Personal conversations
17. Email, text messaging, newsletter, & website
18. Newsletter
19. Website
20. Social media
21. Email, social media, newspaper
22. Text, voice message to the masses
23. News media - television and newspaper
24. Website is #1
25. Involvement in the community
26. School website and school newsletter
27. Website, mass calling
28. Various media outlets, newsletters, social media, school website, open house events, parent activities
29. School Facebook page, Twitter, visiting with parents and grandparents at all school functions
30. Newsletters and social media
31. Primarily newspaper and mass text
32. Community forums, social media, mass emails, mass texts for those who have signed up
33. Face to face
34. Write weekly newspaper column

35. Presentations at civic organizations
36. Mailings, automated phone calls
37. Website - monthly newsletter
38. Social media, local newspaper, radio
39. E-mail, phone, word of mouth, social media
40. Website and group meetings
41. Calls
42. News media, press releases, school website, social media
43. School website, twitter, local newspaper, weekly newsletter
44. School reach, email, district new letters
45. Bulk mailers, social meetings, large group community event presentations
46. Social media, school reach emails, text and calls, school website, informal and formal conversations
47. Social media, website, meetings
48. Web page social media blog civic group presentation community and school event involvement
49. We are a small rural district. The most effective communication tool in our culture is personal conversations at school events
50. Mass emailings, mass phone calls through school messenger system
51. Website, social media, messenger system
52. Bulk mailings, website, remind, emails, phone calls
53. School newsletter quarterly, superintendent blog, supt twitter account, keep website updated
54. Local newspaper, Facebook account, Twitter account
55. Face to face communication at school and community events. Social media and radio advertising
56. Social media, civic group presentations, local newspaper
57. We have an App that is free to our patrons that shows what we do with our projects and how the progress is coming along. Student and teacher activities are also highlighted. The app pushes out to Facebook and Twitter. We also use our web site and the local paper.
58. Letters/fliers home to parents/guardians; school website; social media, mailings; personal communication with individuals
59. Website, letters home, textcaster, social media
60. Articles on district website, newspaper articles
61. Social media, newspaper
62. Social media, school website, being at school and community functions
63. Email, mass mailings
64. Social media, district newsletter, text messages
65. Weekly editorials, website, social media, participation at various civic organizations
66. Mobile app, social media, community presentations
67. School website, school messenger, Facebook, Twitter, and a school app

68. Social media blasts, newsletter articles
69. District website, Facebook, newspapers, radio stations
70. Social media and local newspaper. School wide email as well
71. Facebook page, twitter and school messenger
72. Twitter Accounts and Email Messages
73. Email, newspaper articles, mass text, web-site
74. I hold town hall meetings to provide more insight and information and to give the stakeholders and opportunity to ask vital questions. This also allows you to keep misinformation from spreading and causing challenges
75. Newsletters
76. Quarterly newsletter to entire community through bulk mail
77. Newsletters, radio interviews

Appendix J

Qualitative Responses for Routine Communication with Small Stakeholder Groups

1. Public meetings, informal conversations at community events
2. Attend local meetings and informal discussions
3. Social media, civic engagement, community partnerships, coffee with the community, state of the district events
4. YouTube update videos posted on the district website
5. Group meetings, email, and phone call
6. One on one personal conversations
7. Attend events
8. Community events, civic groups
9. Email, social media
10. Personal contact, social media, presentation at school functions
11. Small groups don't get you the votes you need. Think big think about reaching large numbers
12. Informal discussions at events and activities
13. Personal call or conversations
14. Advisory meetings
15. Face to face meetings
16. Informal conversations
17. Presentations at local civic group meetings
18. Informal scheduled meetings (district, Kiwanis, teacher meetings, staff meetings, PTO, key communicators
19. Social media, text
20. Meetings with small groups
21. Town hall meetings
22. Attend area meetings to provide updates
23. Always talking to the public at any and all events
24. Involvement in the community
25. Regular appearance at civic meetings
26. Face to face talking points
27. Admin meetings, staff meetings, teacher meetings
28. Social media
29. 1-1 meeting and info lunches
30. Committee meetings
31. Email
32. Small meetings, texts, emails
33. Face to face
34. Speak at public organizations, civic groups, and faculty meetings
35. Small group meetings
36. Meetings - (PTO-Booster Club-Civic)
37. Talking about information at school activities, meeting with individuals, roundtable discussions, surveys
38. Civic organization presentations

39. Personal visits
40. Conversations
41. Community event presentations, informal conversations, coffee with the superintendent
42. Formal and informal meetings
43. Speaking at school and community events, attending community activities and local meetings
44. Presentations and meeting with local chamber of commerce
45. Building staff meetings, local civic organizations
46. Web page social media blog civic group presentation community and school event involvement
47. Speaking to civic organizations, school function/activities, open houses and community events
48. Attend city council meetings, attend chamber meetings, attend booster club meetings, attend PTO group meetings
49. Committees, focus groups, civic organization meetings and presentations
50. Speak to civic groups ... State of The School address
51. Attend civic meetings, club meetings (i.e. Rotary and Lions), PTA meetings, superintendent coffees, advisory committees, membership on community organizations
52. Presentations
53. I always accept invitations to speak to small groups and community organizations
54. Social media, local newspaper
55. Informal meetings are used. We also meet with the business community once a year to cover workplace expectations. We survey our parents on how we are doing in communications and make it a point for every teacher to monthly reach out by phone for positive phone calls to their parents.
56. Attend chamber of commerce, Rotary meetings
57. Targeting specific groups such as churches, 4H, FFA, athletics, scholar bowl. seemed to help us catch nearly everyone in our community with our message at least once
58. Presentations, open discussions
59. Email; personal conversations; small group committees
60. Email - small group meetings - personal phone calls
61. Email, meetings
62. Meetings
63. Informal conversations at civic meetings, at school events, and out in the community
64. Informal discussions with parents and patrons, social media, website
65. One-on-one conversations, social media
66. We still work to reach out to community groups for presentations, but those groups are not as strong as they used to be
67. CSIP committee, face to face meetings, conversations at events speak at Kiwanis, local newspaper articles
68. Presentations, informal communication, phone calls
69. Small group meetings with stakeholders in different interest groups

70. School Messenger can focus on smaller groups to provide information
71. Informal conversations
72. Attend local meetings, chamber of commerce, Lions, etc.
73. Individual conversations
74. Local paper
75. Visits, informal meetings, and email
76. Small group meetings and individualized letters
77. Open forums 3x per year
78. We have committees with parents and stakeholders that are involved in our district. You have to show value and be transparent in all efforts for the public
79. Weekly class newsletters, attendance at activities, volunteering at after school activities
80. Meetings, informal conversations

Appendix K

Qualitative Responses for Communication Strategies When Planning a Tax Referendum

1. Making sure your own employees know the issues and support the mission
2. One on one
3. Information in school newsletters
4. Every tax referendum has a different facility or initiative to fund thus each referendum's strategy will be different
5. We did more of a silent campaign and ours passed by 71%+. It was right for our community and I think every community is a little different in respects to helping get something passed
6. Text messaging is very effective
7. Including QR codes in brochures and mass mailings that leads to information on a website.
8. Signed petition of supporters to publish in local paper via "Support Committee"
9. Signed petition of supporters that is published in the local paper via the Parent Committee
10. We did small group meetings with parents and community members, hosted in homes, that were very effective in reaching a broad cross-section of community members. Also, tours of the buildings we were proposing to rebuild were very effective, followed up by significant information on our website.
11. Public Q&A sessions before, during planning, and after successful passage.
12. It's not just how to communicate, but who communicates. You need community members to be willing to talk and take charge of a lot of it. People know school employees have a bias. They want to see someone from the outside with something to say.
13. Selection of community leaders such as committee of 50. They would each get 10 more community leaders to talk up the tax increase etc,
14. Must communicate need for tax increase and have good plan in place for how increase will be used to help students.
15. Visiting in the local coffee shop
16. A sense of confidence and enthusiasm and optimism radiate from school officials including the school.
17. Go to known power structures within the community beforehand to get their blessing and let them help start the process, then lots of communication with all patrons.
18. Found things to put in the bond issue that impacted several groups of people. Athletics, Performing Arts, Elementary Safety.
19. We were upfront and honest. We got a lot of positive feedback for that.
20. Seeking and publicizing endorsements from influential groups/people
21. It is important that the community members be the face of the millage, not school persons.
22. Phone calls to each voter- personal contact. Multiple times, presentations to organizations, parent groups, faculties, but in my state you can't use time

- computers and other tax owned equipment to promote a tax millage. Need a private account to raise money and promote the tax ask.
23. I find it best to have staff meeting and get as many on board with the tax referendum so they can be positive ambassadors in the community
 24. We surveyed the community to get initial feedback on various options to address the needs of the district. We also gave numerous evening tours of existing facilities to showcase the needs and gain buy-in. The tours were powerful. Parents and business leaders formed a core "kids and community" campaign group and worked tirelessly at any public venue that would have us. It was a herculean boots on the ground effort.
 25. Making a presentation at a nursing home. Keep the fixed income informed what the cost would really be. Especially if it is a no tax increase bond issue.
 26. We held a series of small group meetings. Two to three Board members and two administrators brought two to three patrons to each meeting. We held one meeting per month.
 27. We passed a bond for a new elementary at my previous school district. Using the local media and attending every function, church group, local tours of the old building, etc. really helped.
 28. One thing I found to be very effective is we hit the campaign trail extremely hard the last month. No long term push. It did not give time for anti-bond folks, if you will, to organize.
 29. In the past we have held community stakeholders meeting to present the current situation and the need for the tax issue in each individual community to address individual concerns. We make sure we have correct data on the cost to individuals and how it would effect the community.
 30. Our increase passed with 78% voting yes. Way before the process "publicly" started I went to the influential people in our district and sat down with them. These people are not the one's with the most money etc.. but the ones who are the most respected in our district. That included a few farmers, and other people. I explained how and why I needed their help. This was the biggest benefit to our success. Getting the respected community members on our side (or most of them) was key.
 31. Analyze voting history and assign supporters to individually engage/ensure a specific number of specific, individual, "yes" voters get to the polls.
 32. Parent/Teacher conferences open the door for teachers to share with parents or provide written information.
 33. Establishing parent and stakeholder committees is vital

Appendix L

Qualitative Responses for Communication Strategies When Campaigning for a Tax Referendum

1. Polling for voting language
2. Making sure your employees know the issues and support the mission
3. Mainly, I feel the community has to sell the fact of creating a better place for our children
4. Getting PTO group involved
5. Look up who votes in your district
6. Focus on the parents and grandparents that live in your school district and get them out to vote
7. Individual phone conversations more than once
8. Placing tri-folds in local businesses with informational pictures and facts about the bond issue. Much of the same information as what is provided in flyers/brochures
9. Analyze voting history and assign supporters to engage/ensure a specific number of specific, individual, "yes" voters get to the polls.