

# Referendum Communications

## West Lafayette Community School Corporation



July 5, 2023



# AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Building Trust
3. Situation Analysis
4. Referendum Communications
5. Timeline, roles, next steps

The logo for Dehler PR is presented within a white rectangular box with rounded corners. The text 'DEHLER' is in red, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a light green background. The text 'PR' is in light green, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a red background. The two parts are separated by a thin white vertical line.

**DEHLER PR**

Educate. Communicate. Motivate.

## **CORE FOCUS**

### **Purpose/Cause/Passion:**

We improve communities through exceptional public relations, marketing, and strategic counsel.

# About DehlerPR



## **OUR NICHE**

Public sector; school districts

## **CORE VALUES**

- Trusted, Experienced
- Passionate, Principled, Problem solvers
- Caring, Committed, Counselors

# Meet Our Team



**Jeff Dehler, APR, “Chief Relationship Builder”**  
More than two decades in PR. Louisville, KY



**Dave Beery “Account Manager”** Extensive experience in school PR and journalism. Fishers, IN



**Ron Wilke “Senior Strategic Counselor”**  
40-year veteran of public schools. La Crescent, MN



**Jayne Helgevold “Account Manager”** Experienced in marketing and community engagement. Macon, GA

# Our Approach | RPIE



## RPIE: The Four-Step Communications Process

Effective communication sets and meets objectives to ensure our messages are effectively reaching the

DehlerPR adheres to the world-wide, industry-standard, four-step communications process of **Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation**, a process championed by the Public Relations Society of America and the National School Public Relations Association.

We overlay this process with our corporate values: We listen intently to client needs, dig deep to understand the situation, and work closely with clients to address their unique needs, and the unique needs of client stakeholders. **Always unique; never a cookie-cutter approach.**





## **SERVICES**

- Strategic counsel
- Communications planning
- Branding/Messaging
- Marketing (including referendum)
- Crisis communications
- Traditional and social media relations

# Referendum Websites



THE ROAD THROUGH LIFE BEGINS HERE.

Canvas | ParentSquare | PowerSchool | SchoolPay | ZCS Portal | Select Language

ZIONSVILLE  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

DISTRICT ACADEMICS SCHOOLS STUDENTS PARENTS STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

[Referendum Information](#) » What is the Plan?

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

Looking backward with PRIDE and forward with a PLAN.

A two-question referendum is proposed for Nov. 5, 2019, one question to build an elementary school, add on to the high school, and perform maintenance and renovations at all schools; the second question would extend our current operating levy by eight years.

We propose to build a new elementary school, add 32 classrooms to the high school, and facilitate long-term maintenance, repairs and renovation at each of our buildings, affecting the 1.6 million square feet ZCS uses to educate more than 7,000 students. The proposed facilities tax rate of (19.69 cents) would still bring the aggregate school tax rate to a lower level than in the current year. (To \$1.268 from this year's \$1.298). The rate will decrease because previous building bonds are being paid off.

We propose to extend the current Operating referendum at the same maximum tax rate of 24.4 cents for eight years. This is an extension of the same rate that was originally authorized in 2012 and extended in 2015. One hundred percent of the levy derived from this tax rate goes to classroom teachers, counselors and other specialists like speech and hearing teachers. This maintains reasonable class sizes and allows us to continue providing top notch education to a growing community.

Click here to read the [actual ballot questions](#).

TIMELINE

The new elementary school is proposed by 2022 while the high school classroom space is expected to open by 2023-2024. All facility and enrollment capacities are based on deep studies so the timeline is based

Looking Forward With A Plan

Referendum Information - Why Now?

Challenges

What is the Plan?

Tax Calculator

ZCS Situation - Managing Increasing Enrollment

What Was the Process?

Media

Resources

FAQs

Election Information

Recommendation to the Board of Education

Referendum Advocacy Rules

[Zionsville](#)  
[Monroe](#)

# Referendum Video



YouTube video player interface showing a video titled "Benton Community Schools When You're Here You're Home". The video features Jim Schoen, identified as "HOOSIER ASSOCIATES, INC.", speaking in front of a large yellow sign that reads "BENTON CENTRAL BISON". The video player includes a search bar, a "Premium" button, and a "Subscribe" button for the channel "DehlerPR" (5 subscribers).

[Zionsville](#)  
[Benton \(1\)](#)  
[Benton \(2\)](#)  
[Other samples](#)

# E-Newsletters



[Zionsville eNexus](#)

# Branding



PANTONE 541 C



PANTONE 193 C





# Branding

DEHLER PR



# Direct Mail

DEHLERPR



# Pre-Referendum Timetable



## November Timeline

**January - May:** Internal and public facing communication

**February:** Public opinion survey

**February:** Staff Meetings

**February - March:** Community based committee/task force - 3-6 meetings

**April:** Community meetings, online and in-person

**May - June:** School board work sessions and decision



# Referendum Timetable



## November Timeline

**April:** PAC leadership recruitment, draft communications plans and timeline

**May:** PAC kick-off meeting, organization; District campaign rollout: Key messages, brand, website, fact sheet

**August:** Yes voter identification, tabling at events, activities; district mailing

**September:** Yes voter identification, tabling at events, activities

**October:** Yes voter identification, Get out the vote activities; district mailing

**November:** Election

# Contact Us



## YOU HAVE ONLY SO MANY HOURS IN A DAY

You are busier than ever and may not be able to afford a full-time communications person. A communications consultant could be your solution, as we can:

- Develop key messages & tell your good news
- Identify & reach varying audiences
- Produce newsletters/e-newsletters
- Manage crisis communications
- Guide referendum strategies
- Customize our services to your needs.

The DehlerPR team is a combination of in-house staff and strategic partnerships with accomplished professionals who have experience in many industries. Our virtual agency brings us to your doorstep in-person, via video conference, phone or email.

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**Public Relations** is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.

Broom, "Cutlip & Center's Effective Public Relations"



**WHY COMMUNICATE?**



# Why Communicate?

- Retain resident students
- Build community support to help you - referendum
- Create understanding
- Maintain or improve staff morale and confidence
- It's good business



**BUILD**

**TRUST**

# DISCUSSION

- What does a trusting relationship look like?
- What fosters a trusting relationship?
- What gets in the way of a trusting relationship?



# Group Norms



**G**ET ALONG!  
*Don't argue.*

**R**ESPECT OTHERS!  
*Listen to everyone.*

**O**N TASK BEHAVIOR!  
*Are you doing your job? Task Talk only.*

**U**SE QUIET VOICES!  
*Only your group should hear you.*

**P**ARTICIPATE!  
*Do your part.  
Don't let others do all the work.*

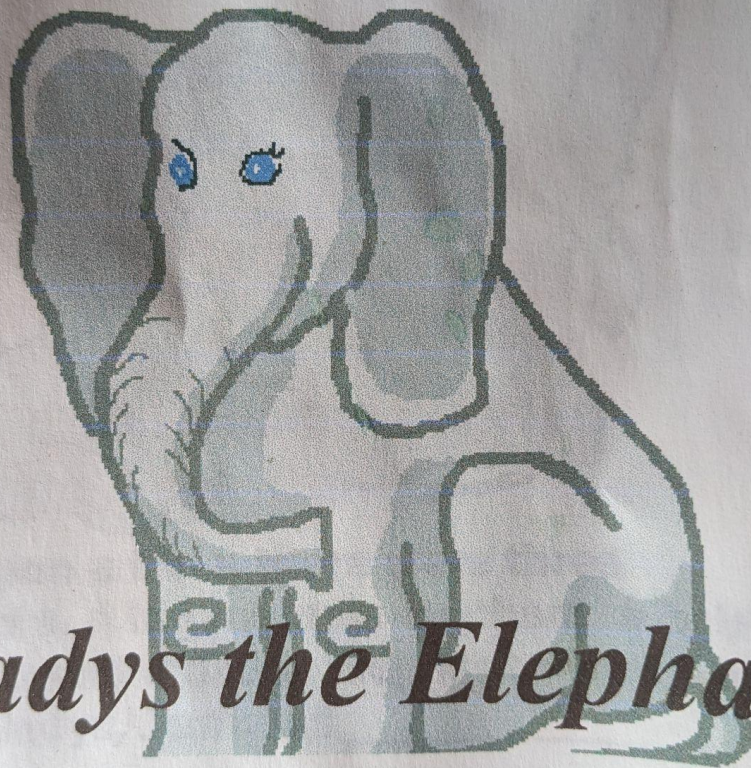
# DISCUSSION

- What does a trusting relationship look like?
- What fosters a trusting relationship?
- What gets in the way of a trusting relationship?

# DISCUSSION

- In the context of the school corporation and its publics – staff, families, key stakeholders – what are the results of a trusting relationship?





# *Gladys the Elephant*

Based in Lafayette, Indiana

## WL schools will ask voters to renew property tax referendum in November

School board starts process to continue a 37-cent property tax referendum for next eight years, aiming for the ballot in November. Current referendum passed with 94% of vote in 2017.



DAVE BANGERT

JUN 13, 2023 · PAID

“At one point, a member of a dwindling audience in a Happy Hollow Elementary multi-purpose room interrupted the board’s back-and-forth, asking them to knock it off and just move on.”

# DISCUSSION

- What is the impact of this behavior on the school corporation's relationship with your publics?
- Can board members disagree and still have a positive impact on public relationships? How?

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# West Lafayette

## SITUATION



# What is the situation?

- More than 2,400 students in K-12 programs
- Elementary, intermediate and junior/senior high school
- Recognized as high achieving by Niche, U.S. News & World Report, and the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation

# What is the situation?

- Average household adjusted gross income nearly \$20,000 higher than the state median; net assessed value per pupil of nearly \$100,000 greater than the state median at more than \$482,000
- Racial makeup: 20% Asian, 65% White, and 3%-6% Black, Hispanic and two races

# What is the situation?

- Of 290 school corps in IN, West Lafayette ranks 288 for total state tuition support per pupil
- Circuit breaker credits reduce the operations fund by 31%
- The referendum levy is 18% of the total budget
- The corporation is expected to seek voter approval to renew the 37 cent levy on November 7

# POLITICAL SITUATION

# Political Situation

- Voters approved operating levy referenda in 2010 and 2017 by 65.5% and 94.3%, respectively
- Previous PAC (YES Committee) politically charged
- Voter turnout is not expected to be high – only referendum and municipal elections on the ballot
- County tends to vote Democrat in presidential elections
- Because the levy doesn't expire until next year, a loss would allow WL to seek approval next year without losing revenue

# DISCUSSION

- SWOT Analysis

# REFERENDUM COMMUNICATION

# REFERENDUM

## Function and Components



DISTRICT

CITIZENS  
(YES  
Committee)



## IC 20-46-1-20

A school corporation can only provide factual information beginning on the date the school board approves a resolution to place a referendum on the ballot.

It cannot advocate for or against the ballot question.

Prior to that date, it can advocate for or against the question.



## IC 20-46-1-20

School board members,  
the superintendent,  
an assistant superintendent,  
and the business manager  
may personally advocate  
for or against a referendum,  
so long as it is not done by  
using public funds.



# District informational campaign

- The goal is an informed citizenry.
- The district must provide information about the campaign in a neutral manner.
- District funds must not be used to promote the election's outcome.
- Districts may use funds for a neutral informational campaign.





## Political Action Committee (the “Vote Yes” group)

- The YES Committee operates independently of the district.
- The goal is to pass the referendum.
- The individuals who work on the promotional campaign have a great deal of latitude in their promotional work.
- The promotional campaign raises and spends private funds.

STRATEGY

# 4 Steps to Success

1. Community Engagement
2. Good Project
3. Good District Story
4. Committed Advocates



# District Information

- Research, comprehensive plan
- Website, social media, email
- Direct mail
- District newsletter
- Presentations and meetings

**Communicate facts with all**

# YES Committee

- Political campaign approach
- Persuasion – Meetings, displays, TARGETED marketing
- Concentrate on Yes voters
- GOTV

**Identify YES voters and get them to the polls**



# ROLES & NEXT STEPS

# YES Committee: Getting started

1. Committee leadership
2. Review election law, get a bank account
3. Recruit volunteers (staff home contact info)
4. Plan strategy and budget
5. Fundraise
6. Obtain voter file, determine number of votes needed

# Citizens Referendum Team

## Communi- cations

Speakers  
Bureau  
Lawn Signs  
Messages  
Literature  
Direct Mail  
Door Hangers  
Website  
Email  
Social Media

## Volunteers

Phone Banks  
(Voter ID)  
GOTV  
Coffee  
Gatherings  
Letter Writers  
Recruiters

## Finance

Fundraising  
Disbursements  
Legal Reports

## Technology

Data  
Collection  
Website  
Email  
Social Media

## Staff

(Devoted to  
working only  
with district  
employees)  
Fundraising  
Volunteers  
Guidelines

## Other

Special Target  
Audiences

# Admin Team

## STAFF

- Educate, answer questions
- Recruit staff for committee

## PARENTS

- Answer questions
- Info displays in parent trafficked spaces
- Committee tables at events
- Site teams systematic parent engagement

# School Board Members

- Be visible in your support
- Serve as community “eyes and ears”
- Share district informational messages – concise and consistent
- Can take any role on citizen’s committee
- Lead by example
- Keep superintendent informed
- Attend open houses, presentations
- Network

# DISCUSSION

- What scenarios can you expect when interacting with community members?

# Referendum Communications Timeline - DRAFT

July	August	September	October	November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kick-off meetings</li><li>• Research</li><li>• Communications Plan and Timeline</li><li>• Committee organization</li><li>• Theme</li><li>• Key Messages</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campaign brand</li><li>• Website phase 1</li><li>• Fact Sheet Mailing</li><li>• Yes voter identification</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Website phase 2</li><li>• Ongoing communication</li><li>• Meetings with key stakeholder groups</li><li>• Yes voter identification</li><li>• Get out the early vote activities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ongoing communication (enews, social, etc.)</li><li>• Meetings with key stakeholder groups</li><li>• Yes voter identification</li><li>• Get out the early vote activities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get out the vote</li><li>• Post referendum communication</li></ul>



# DISCUSSION

- What can you do or say prior to when materials are made available?

It's about...



If you don't speak  
for kids, who will?

