A Bond Referendum can do one of two things – bring your community together or divide it for years to come. Bond work is one of the most exciting parts of an educational project, where new possibilities are imagined and you translate your educational programs into facilities designed to meet your student and staff needs. In a time of dwindling resources and increasing demands, districts rely on winning bond votes to move forward and prepare their students for the challenges of the 21st century. Panel members will share their experience in successful bond initiatives, while lending advice and coaching along the way.

Joel Pedersen, Superintendent
Cardinal Community School District
2015 Bond Referendum - Passed
$5.3 million

Brian Rodenberg, Superintendent
Midland Community School District
2015 Bond Referendum - Passed
$12.9 million

Sam Miller, Chief Administrator AEA 267
Solon Community School District (former Supt.)
2014 Bond Referendum - Passed
$25.5 million

Chad Garber, Superintendent
Wapsie Valley Community School District
2008 Bond Referendum - Passed
$8 million

Nick Hildebrandt, Architect/Consultant
StruXture Architects
*StruXture has assisted in all of the above bond referendums as well as Waverly-Shell Rock, Central, AGWSR, Fairfield and West Central to mention a few.*

The Panel

The Purpose
Three Steps To Success

Develop A Plan

Develop the NEED verses the WANT by looking carefully at the reasons for a bond issue.
• Building Conditions/Maintenance
• New Verses Old To Modernize
• Special Facilities Are Needed
• Improved Educational Program
• Increased Enrollment
• Technology
• Facilities Damaged/Destroyed
• Merging Districts

Who can be involved in the assessment?
• School Board
• Administration
• Teachers And Staff
• Students And Parents
• Community Members
• A Steering or Building Committee

Developing a bond program needs to follow meaningful discussions about your district programs, facilities conditions, future directions and what is needed to support education properly. Before your school district knows what to ask for, it has to determine its needs. That begins with a thorough understanding of the issues and involves looking at programs, facilities, operations, maintenance, energy costs and more.

The next step is hiring an experienced consultant to help guide the process. A consultant should have expertise in education facilities planning, group facilitation, architectural/engineering disciplines and cost estimating.

An experienced educational financial adviser will be able to provide assistance in determining bonding capacity and local tax impact.

Ultimately, needs are determined by assessing how the facilities support educational programs.

Passing A Bond Referendum

Let The People Lead

Every district needs to determine how many and how drilled down they want their bond committees to be, but for a good cross-section of participants in the process, the committees should include parents, business leaders, senior citizens, government officials, school administrators, teachers, students and community leaders. The following committees are recommended:

• Citizen’s/Steering - assess/determine bond need
• Bond Issue - successfully sell the bond issue
• Finance - raise funds to conduct the campaign
• Publicity - create information, format & distribute
• Visitation - organize efforts for personal voter visits
• Calling - call “yes” and “maybe” voters as reminder
• Speakers Bureau - arrange pitch to local organizations
• Social Media - create, update and push your story
• Absentee Voting - identify and assist absent voters
• Arrangement - provide volunteers on Election Day

Listen to the PEOPLE, give them a voice and watch them LEAD the charge!

Early in the process, identify citizens who can become strong proponents for the referendum. Find community influencers to become active members of your committees.

Remember, everyone is doing this on a volunteer basis, so it is vital that you make good use their freely given time. Have agendas for all meetings with expected outcomes needed. Keep conversation focused on the issues at hand, and get people out and on their way in a reasonable time. Meetings lasting more than an hour generally deteriorate in effectiveness. Short and sweet is always a treat.

PITCH a good story which ignites the imagination, and people will move mountains to make it A REALITY!

Because a public school district cannot advocate for approval of a referendum, its role is to encourage people to vote and to disseminate information to the public. Explain the planning process, and provide project descriptions, costs, time-lines, tax impacts and other financial information.

Remember not to drill down into too much detail or you run the risk of confusing voters. Confused voters tend not to vote or vote no. Concentrate your pitch on the “yes” and “undecided” voters throughout the campaign. It is important to initially inform the “no” voter, but focus your energy on “yes” voters rather than trying to persuade someone who may never be swayed.

Craft your pitch as a story. Show the need and provide reasons why this is a true and real need. Share how this initiative will improve the lives of the students and how it will better prepare them for success in life and their future pursuits. It can also be beneficial to show how this will positively impact the overall community.

Providing transparency in communications to voters is critical for a successful referendum. A school district and campaign committees need to anticipate questions from voters and be prepared with answers. Track and publish your responses in a timely manner. Swift, simple and direct responses can stop negative campaigns and misinformation dead in their tracks!

All school board members need to support the referendum publicly, be leaders in delivering the message, and have a presence in front of their constituents. A district superintendent needs to be engaged in informing the community of the facts, relying the benefits as well as the consequences of the vote.

In the end the most important things is to pitch your story, pitch it honestly and with integrity, and pitch it often!
**Things To Keep In Mind...**

**School Bond Issue Dates For Odd And Even Years...**

**Even Years**
- 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024

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**Odd Years**

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* Six months must intervene between school bond issues for the same project.

**Some Books To Inspire Your Pitch...**

- **Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action** by Simon Sinek
- **Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us** by Seth Godin
- **HBR Guide to Persuasive Presentations** by Nancy Duarte
- **Contagious: Why Things Catch On** by Jonah Berger
- **Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook: How to Tell Your Story in a Noisy Social World** by Gary Vaynerchuk

**In Case We Didn’t Answer Your Question, Drop Us A Line...**

- Joel Pedersen, Superindent/Cardinal CSD...........................joel.pedersen@cardinalcomet.com
- Brian Rodenberg, Superindent/Midland CSD...........................brodenberg@midland.k12.ia.us
- Sam Miller, Chief Administrator AEA 267............................sammiller@aea267.k12.ia.us
- Chad Garber, Superindent/Wapsie Valley CSD........................cgarber@wapsievalleyschools.org
- Nick Hildebrandt, Architect/Consultant..............................nick@struxture.com

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