



On Call

Evaluate your election results: What to do when you win and when you lose

The November election is over and the results are in. Whether you won or lost, your future election success depends on taking the time now to thoroughly review what you did and didn't do in this election that made the difference.

Start by saying thank you.

- In writing to each and every volunteer.
- In school communications to staff, parents and key community members.
- Via social media, in publications or even a newspaper ad to your community.

Review how well your campaign worked using measurements that show how well each campaign element was carried out.

- Conduct a post-election meeting with district staff responsible for information activities.
- Conduct a post-election meeting with advocacy committee members.
- At both meetings assess what worked, what didn't, and what you need to do differently next time. Use the attached forms to help you organize those discussions.

Take time now to assess the accuracy of your research.

- Did you have an accurate random sample of your voters' opinions about the measure?
- Did you use what you learned from the survey to determine what to ask voters to approve?
- Did your advocacy committee use the survey results to develop a research-based campaign?
- Did the voters the campaign identified as potential "yes" voters vote? Or did more voters identified as "no" voters turn out in larger numbers than anticipated?
- Look at the election results precinct by precinct. Which areas of your district were most supportive? Least supportive? Why?
- Are there voter groups and/or neighborhoods that need to be reconnected with your schools before you vote again? How will you communicate with them?
- Use the form provided with this article to help you do the precinct analysis. Then use a precinct map of your district to color the precincts one color for "yes" and another color for "no" so that you can see visually where you need to work.

Keep your election information where you can find it.

- Once you determine what worked, what didn't, and what you need to do differently next time, write it down.
- Organize and store all your information campaign materials/files and advocacy committee campaign materials/files electronically or physically.
- Make sure all key people know where the materials/files are stored and that the district's information office or superintendent's office has backup copies easily accessible for the next election.

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Washington State
School Directors'
Association
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(Over)

Communicate next steps

Post-Election
Checklist

If you won, communicate work in progress:

- Emphasize student achievement for operating fund measures.
- Show project timelines and progress for bond measures.

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If you lost, communicate the impacts:

- Is what you said would happen now happening?
- How is the measure's failure impacting student learning?
- What will the district do now to listen to the community and determine next steps?

Whether you won or lost, there are things that would have worked better had they been done differently. Now is the time to discuss those things and record your findings. The following worksheets will help you do that.

Voter Turnout Worksheet

Evaluation Checklist

School District Election Assessment: District information activities for (date/type) election

School District Election Assessment: Advocacy Committee activities for (date/type) election

Source: Election Success, C&M Communications

Contributed by Jeanne Magmer, communications consultant

Checklist

Common elements of successful finance elections

How does your election campaign measure up?

Did you . . .	Yes	No
... have a good communications program in place long before your district even thought about placing a measure on the ballot?		
... start early and plan well?		
... have wide community involvement in the discussion of district needs and listen and respond to what you heard?		
... have survey research that showed a fighting chance of winning (at least 60% when a simple majority is required)?		
... make decisions about what to put on the ballot that reflected community priorities and were based on research?		
... have well-planned information programs that explained the measure to all voters using their priorities as identified in research?		
... recruit strong community leadership?		
... have a well-organized, dedicated, hard-working advocacy committee?		
... coordinate advocacy efforts with district/school information for maximum impact?		
... conduct a targeted advocacy campaign planned to meet the unique needs of your community as identified by research?		
... stick to your written, research-based campaign plans and carry them out 100%?		
... identify enough "yes" voters?		
... target the right messages to the right voters?		
... deliver messages to voters with at least three contacts, most of them personal?		
... most importantly, turn out "yes" voters to vote?		
... plan and execute information and advocacy campaigns that set the stage for future election success?		

