Growing at the Pace of Excellence

Ascension Public Schools $120 Million Bond Proposal
Approved by Voters April 2016

Submitted March 2017 by:
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Number of PR/Communication Staff: 1
ENTRY CATEGORY: Bond/Finance Campaign
TITLE: Growing at the Pace of Excellence
Please consider this entry for a Golden Achievement Award.
SYNOPSIS

Ascension Public Schools is a school district that enrolls over 22,000 students at 27 schools and is the largest employer in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. It is located between the state’s capital, Baton Rouge, and the world-famed City of New Orleans. The district has sustained a steady growth of 400-600 students each year for the past 10 years while maintaining the state’s highest academic standards.

Maintaining adequate learning facilities continues to be a challenge for this fast-growing district. Successful construction bond elections in 2006 and 2009 built new primary schools and provided much-needed facility upgrades. Nonetheless, by 2015, seven schools were operating over capacity and extending the existing 15.08 millage for a new $120 million bond was needed to provide three new primary schools, a new middle school, plans for a future high school and building improvements district-wide.

Challenges for this campaign included:

• A large Republican voting base that historically does not support taxes;
• A national and state recession resulting in budget cuts;
• Organized opposition to past Ascension Parish Government tax proposals;
• Criticism of unsupported growth in Ascension Parish such as bad roads and traffic; and
• District leadership transition when Superintendent Patrice Pujol became President of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching prior to the election.

The district’s public information office in consultation with Taylor Media Services developed a comprehensive communications plan that engaged internal and external stakeholders. Key messages emphasized maintaining academic excellence while meeting growth needs with no additional taxes. Components of the campaign included community meetings, presentations to government and business groups, a comprehensive video, mailers, strategic signage, social media and grassroots outreach.

Through leveraging personal communication, earned and paid media, as well as social media, the school district effectively communicated the needs of a new construction bond and overcame potential challenges to the successful passage of the 15.08 millage extension.

The election on April 9, 2016, was a resounding success with 80 percent voting in favor of the $120 million bond.
RESEARCH

The decision of Ascension Public Schools to ask voters to extend an existing property tax for the purpose of constructing four new schools, completing three freshmen academies, designing a new high school, and making other facility improvements throughout the parish came after much review and analysis of data and feedback from community leaders.

As part of the district’s efforts to prepare for its 10-year accreditation review by AdvancEd, surveys were given to parents, students and staff to gauge satisfaction with the individual schools and the district overall. Those surveys were reviewed as part of the district’s decision process for the election.

The results of the parent stakeholder survey indicated that parents felt strongly about the school system’s ability to maintain its facilities, services and equipment, and to provide a safe, clean and healthy environment for all students and staff. The issue received a 4.35 rating on a 5.0 scale. Also, open-ended questions about what was liked least about the schools revealed both parent and staff concerns about overcrowding. “Too many students per class,” said one parent respondent. “Limited space/resources for a rapidly growing population,” said a staff respondent.

The school system had grown by more than 500 students each year for the past 10 years, and voters had voted to extend funding and increase property taxes to meet the district’s needs -- in 2006 to pay for the construction of new schools, then in 2009, to fund a major renovation campaign of older schools. To go back to the voters again, and to be successful once more at receiving funding for more new schools and more upgrades meant that school officials would have to make their case to the voters.

Ascension Public Schools needed research to show:

- The physical/practical need for the new school facilities;
- The district’s credibility and good stewardship through its past history of spending taxpayer funds, constructing facilities on time and doing so within the budget; and
- What emotional/passionate issues might help or hinder the election’s success.

1. The district’s main measurable objective was to have voters support a special election on April 9, 2016, to extend an existing 15.08 mills (property taxes) to pay for a $120 million bond issue.

Most officials felt that the tax proposition needed to pass more than a 2:1 ratio in order to ensure a positive perception among the electorate and to enhance the district’s ability to be successful with other funding requests down the road. So for the district, the measurable success of the campaign would be to receive 70 percent of voter approval parish wide in the April 9, 2016 election.

To demonstrate the need for the tax proposition, school officials compiled data from school enrollments to show that several of the parish’s campuses were at recommended capacity and seven schools were already at or above maximum capacity. School officials have stressed for several years the importance of having the district’s construction plans line up with best practices for academic success. The “optimal size” of enrollment at each of the district campuses is based on a research-based formula to gain best use of the facility while maintaining a productive, learning atmosphere.
The recommended optimal sizes for Ascension Public Schools is that elementary schools remain at or below 500 students, middle schools be in the 750-800 enrollment range, and high schools remain under 2,000, but also include on-site, self-contained freshman academies that offer reinforcement of academic core subjects and greater behavior management. These calculations help school officials determine the number of schools needed in the parish, as well as the proposed attendance zones for those schools.

Based on the formula, the proposed new schools would greatly eliminate much of the overcrowding in the district, dropping most enrollments back to the “optimal” category to maintain a successful learning environment, while allowing the district to keep pace with parish’s overall growth.
Further analyses of U.S. Census data and population projections showed that the growth in Ascension Parish is not subsiding, but rather is on a rapid pace to increase by more than 50 percent by the year 2030. A report on the Louisiana Parish Population Projections for 2010 to 2030, developed for the Louisiana Division of Administration by Louisiana State University found that Ascension Parish will continue to be one of the state’s top five projected fastest growing parishes. According to the report, Ascension is projected to grow from a population of 127,290 in 2015 to as much as 196,140 by 2030. Thus, not addressing the current overcrowding issues NOW would only put Ascension Public Schools further behind in preparing for the influx of students still to come.

Another way the district calculated future student enrollment was through the tracking of new residential developments. Standard ratios for students per housing unit are used in the planning industry. In fact, the American Planning Association states, “A study may be used by a board of education to delineate attendance districts and ensure that adequate school capacities are proposed. For this purpose, the most useful information may be a tabular breakdown by elementary, junior high, and senior high school age-groups.” Ascension school officials discovered that residential filings or developments that had already been approved by the Ascension Parish Council could quickly add more than 6,000 homes to the parish, across all four high school feeder systems. Assuming that all the approved lots were to become occupied homes, the predicted increase in student population jumped up by more than 2,000 elementary students, more than 1,000 middle school students and nearly 700 high school students.

Showing a need is important, but it is also important to show credibility and responsibility. School officials wanted to show they were good stewards of the monies and projects the public had already entrusted to them in the past to improve the district’s ability to win a tax election. They compiled the timelines and budgets of the projects approved and funded in the 2009 capital improvement plan to show progress. This was the most recent plan voters had funded, and thus, the one voters would likely remember.
To maximize the impact of this message, the district branded a “Promises Made, Promises Kept” campaign as a precursor to the election campaign. An updated timeline of the 2009 Bond projects was used to show the timely completion or near completion of every “promised” project. By the time of the election, almost every project had been completed, strengthening that message.

The sheer numbers and facts would certainly help to make a strong argument for extending the funding for the new projects. However, such evidence may not necessarily appeal to the community’s interest, passion or emotional support of the Ascension Public Schools. And too often elections are won or lost more on emotional appeal than logic. So, to better understand those issues that voters most connected with and were most willing to support (or not support), school officials sought feedback through several informal research efforts: Officials targeted feedback from business and community leaders throughout the parish through small group meetings, town hall forums and invited public comments at board meetings, as well as social media posts and responses.

2. **A second measurable objective of the campaign was to gain a neutral or “no opinion” stance from the Ascension Republican Party Executive Committee (ARPEC).**

A key targeted audience included the parish’s Republican Party leadership, which had been very vocal in the past in opposition to tax election issues. In fact, the party’s aggressive opposition had led to the defeat of some significant funding proposals by the parish government, including a resounding 62 percent to 38 percent defeat of a parish-wide recreation tax in November 2014. Gaining a neutral stance from ARPEC would greatly enhance the tax measure’s chances of winning, as well as lessen the expense of the campaign, since there wouldn’t have to be monies spent “to fight” conflicting information.

School officials sought feedback from internal audiences – staff, teachers and administrators. The board also created a Strategic Planning Committee to better manage the efforts and regularly keep up with reports. Feedback from those sessions led school officials to include in the proposal those items that generate much interest and emotional support, including better playground facilities for younger students and better security for safer campuses, as well as a commitment to “start” on a new high school, even though the current plan to complete the freshmen academies would increase capacity and delay the need to build such a campus in the near future. They also made plans to provide opportunities where more teachers could be involved in the campaign because of their personal connections with so many in the community.

3. **A third measurable objective of the campaign was to encourage at least 20 percent of all teachers in the district to volunteer to make calls to voters about the April 9 election.**

This effort had the most potential to effectively persuade voters to turn out and vote for the proposition.

Furthermore, the school system incorporated the help of a professional public relations firm to analyze voter data and political trends. Taylor Media Services helped to target audiences, including identifying best precincts for voter turnout, as well as issues that may potentially impact voter opinion and turnout on Election Day. Taylor Media Services also researched local advertising trends, demographic audience reach and costs to help school officials determine an advertising/promotional budget to prioritize strategies.
ANALYSIS/PLANNING

After gaining the necessary research to make the argument for new schools and continued trust as stewards of the public’s money, as well as learning which improvements were more likely to be supported and help the tax proposition pass, school officials went about the job of planning a timeline and course of action to successfully deliver information to voters.

Key speakers and team members

We decided to incorporate a team approach to present the information. The district’s three top school officials served as the faces and voices of the campaign. While school board members attended events and willingly answered questions, they were not put in the forefront. A past survey of Ascension Parish voters had indicated that school officials had a higher job performance rating than the elected board members (although both numbers were rather high), so we opted for the “best” faces on the campaign.

In most cases, Superintendent Patrice Pujol served as the primary speaker, but she was also assisted by Assistant Superintendents A. Denise Graves and Steve Westbrook. This allowed the presentation to be less monotonous and to visually better reflect the makeup of the people we needed to reach – our team included a white female, black female and white male, and they lived in different parts of the parish.

Other important team members who contributed to formulating and disseminating the campaign message and materials included the district’s Public Information Officer Jackie Tisdell, public relations consultants with Taylor Media Services, the district’s director of technology, supervisor of planning and construction, director of business services, school principals and volunteer teachers.

This team approach proved to be very critical when, prior to the election, the superintendent announced she was accepting a job offer in the private sector, leaving the task of finishing the campaign to the two assistant superintendents. A. Denise Graves assumed the post of interim superintendent until the school board could hire a new superintendent later in the summer.
Target audiences
Targeted audiences for the campaign message and voter turnout were based on an individual’s influence in the parish and/or a particular community, likelihood of voting in the April 9, 2016 election, interest and involvement in the public school system, interest and involvement in local politics, and potential financial connection to the public school system, including employees and retirees.

A variety of communication strategies was incorporated to best deliver our campaign message to each audience. The most basic, grassroots efforts of one-on-one talks and small group presentations was incorporated for our identified leaders and most influential community members.

The superintendent and supervisor of planning and construction first communicated with parish government leaders to garner their support for the extended millage, and to ensure that the parish government was not asking for any tax increases on the same ballot.

They also met with plant managers, business owners and professionals, including the area’s largest employers and most influential businesses, such as the local hospital and cable communications company. They also identified community and ministry leaders, labor union leaders, political party organizers and chamber of commerce leaders.

The communications team organized the Ascension Community Coalition for Strong Schools (ACCESS). Participants of this group included influential leaders who were invited to participate to gain first-hand knowledge of school progress and actions, give feedback for improvements and better direction, and to share information in their circles of influence. Feedback was garnered at the luncheon meetings and in direct follow-up emails and correspondence from the superintendent.

We scheduled speaking presentations for the superintendent, as well as one-on-one meetings with top executives. PowerPoint presentations with strong graphics and photographs, as well as strong video presentation were effectively used. The targeted group audiences included the local chambers of commerce, Rotary clubs, Kiwanis clubs, the Republican Party Executive Committee, labor organizations, fire fighter and police organizations, local hospital administration and staff, as well as industrial plant and refinery leaders. We also scheduled four town hall meetings, where officials made public presentations.

At the same time, meetings were held with principals, school faculty and employees, including bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, as well as system retirees. A review of historical voting turnout showed that a high, positive turnout of school employees for the election could represent up to 20 percent of the total voter turnout in the parish in a special election, so getting employees to understand the importance of the issue and to be motivated to vote would greatly enhance the campaign’s chances of being successful.

Moreover, having teachers communicate positively on behalf of the campaign could prove more influential than school officials. The same survey that reported the job performance ratings of the school officials and school board members, also indicated that classroom teachers had the highest ratings and were said to have the most influence. Because of this, the communication team developed scripts and messages for those teachers who would volunteer to participate in the campaign effort. A plan was presented to principals on how to encourage and activate teachers for the campaign.
The next obvious target audience was the parents of students currently attending school in the district. The enrollment for Ascension Public Schools is more than 22,000, so the potential reach to parents and family members could be just as high, based on a 1:1 ratio for parents or household adults to students. This targeted audience has a greater general interest in the school system, possibly a financial stake, and a stronger emotional connection, making them potentially more receptive to the campaign message. Still, most parents fall within a voting demographic that does not historically have a high turnout. Plus, many in this target audience include a large number of “move ins” to the parish who do not have a history, even a family history, of being a part of the Ascension Parish community. In fact, many of the district’s parents are recent transplants from a neighboring parish that has a voting history of not winning school tax elections. So, while this targeted audience was believed to be a positive vote for the campaign, organizers knew they could not rely on just parents, combined with employees, to win the election; they would have to take their message to the general public.

Again, our research showed that older residents were more likely to vote than younger residents, even though younger residents were more likely to have children in the school system. The greatest voter turnout also was projected in the area of the parish that would not be receiving newly constructed schools as a result of the April 9 bond election. However, these two groups of voters were more likely to be life-long residents of Ascension Parish, more likely to be influenced by their local teachers and school officials, and more supportive overall of the district’s academic growth. It was decided to target them with direct mail, newspaper advertising, billboards and direct calls from teacher volunteers.

Beyond these target audiences, the campaign also targeted those parish voters who were considered frequent voters, based upon their record of participation in past elections.

**Budget**

The school district’s budget for this campaign was set at $16,000, plus the use of in-house resources and existing professional contract services. State law allows school districts, and other governmental entities, to spend taxpayer monies on the dissemination of informative information, but not on persuasive materials and messages. Therefore, in addition to the district’s dedicated funds for the campaign, school officials also solicited help from a local political action committee, Friends of Ascension Schools, which records the in-kind and financial donations made by volunteers who support efforts to improve the Ascension Public School System. According to Louisiana Campaign Finance records, the Friends of Ascension PAC spent nearly $7,500 to encourage voters to “vote yes” in the April 9, 2016 election.

The breakdowns of the two budgets are as follows:

**Ascension Public Schools:**

- $6,000 for direct mail
- $1,500 for graphic design of printed and electronic material
- $3,750 for video production
- $1,500 for signage
- $3,200 for production and distribution of district report

**Friends of Ascension Schools:**

- $5,500 for signage
- $1,850 for advertising
COMMUNICATION/IMPLEMENTATION

The district began working toward this facility expansion and improvement a few years in advance by first purchasing property of the new school sites through a private land management firm, and by routinely compiling data to more accurately project growth trends.

The more immediate timeline of the district’s campaign efforts was as follows:

October 2015

- Data on school overcrowding, enrollment growth, projected population increases and approved permits for residential developments put into easy-to-read, easy-to-understand graphic formats for presentations
- School Board’s Strategic Committee holds regular meetings to discuss need for expansion, upgrades and funding options.
- Promises Made, Promises Kept logo created, feeder-school system fliers created to update public on timely completion of construction projects in 2009 bond issue, signage provided for school offices and placed outside refurbished campuses.
- Begin scheduling speaking opportunities for the superintendent and assistant superintendents at local organization meetings, as well as scheduling appointments with business and industry leaders.

November 2015

- Proposal to call for special election to ask voters to approve a $120 million, 20-year bond proposal presented to the school board for consideration and public advertisement.
- Promises Made, Promises Kept ads placed in newspapers, on Facebook, on billboards
- News releases/pitches to reporters were put out to obtain news coverage on completed projects from 2009 bond campaign.
December 2015

- Ascension Parish School Board votes unanimously to call for special election on April 9, 2016 to ask voters to approve a $120 million, 20-year bond proposal.
- Rolled out design for “Growing at the Pace of Excellence” theme for promoting school progress in the coming months, leading up to the election. Theme chosen to accentuate growth, thus the need for action, but that this action is constantly moving toward academic success.

January 2016

- Install signage at locations of future schools proposed in April 9, 2016 bond election
- Develop news releases that focus on the district’s “A” rating and high academic scores, while giving attention to overcrowding and continuing growth in district and the need for good learning environments to continue success.
February 2016

• Produce video that demonstrates the school system’s successful capital improvements campaign, its continued growth and need for improvements to maintain its culture of academic excellence.
• Print and distribute 28,000 copies of our Report to the Community through insertions in The Advocate-Ascension Thursday Section, the Gonzales Weekly and Donaldsonville Chief, and post links to pdf copies of document on local online news publications, The Creole and Pelican Post, and on the www.apsb.org website and Ascension Public School Facebook page.
• Post information about the election on local billboards
• Post video on district web and Facebook, include in public presentations
• Create and distribute information flier on bond election
• Begin holding Town Meetings at the four parish high schools, with special invitations to feeder schools in each high school’s system.

March 2016

• Develop scripts for automated calls to parents/employees by principals and superintendent, and for broadcast at school sporting events by public announcer
• Develop scripts and organize contact lists for teacher volunteer phone banks – including traditional phone bank calls and calls from teachers to parents of homeroom students
• Distribute scripts for announcements to all school principals
• Organize volunteer teacher phone calls, March 14-22, prior to Early Voting
• Friends of Ascension volunteers erected 30 two-sided 3’x6’ signs at very visible, high-traffic locations throughout the parish, as well as distributed 1,000 two-sided yards to go in residents’ yards and at the entrance of big subdivisions.
• EARLY VOTING, March 26-April 2
Growing at the Pace of Excellence video
https://youtu.be/_I2INeuJ4as

April 2016
• Direct mail postcard sent to identified voter households
• Volunteer Phone Bank set up at local businesses, April 4-7
• ELECTION DAY, April 9
EVALUATION

The campaign effectively met or exceeded its measurable objectives and successfully strengthened the district’s support and perception as a positive community entity.

The district’s overall objective to win voter approval of the bond proposition was never in question as the election results began to pour into the reporting news agencies. The $120 million bond proposal received voter approval in 62 of the parish’s 64 precincts, with the other two small precincts tied, winning in a landslide victory of 79.65% YES votes to 20.35% No votes – a victory significantly greater than the district’s original goal of garnering a 70-30 win.

VOTERS SUPPORT ASCENSION PUBLIC SCHOOLS CONSTRUCTION BOND

Donaldsonville, La. – Unofficial election results posted on the Secretary of State’s website show 80 percent of voters supported the extension of a 15.08 millage that will generate $120 million in school construction bonds.

“Ascension Public Schools is committed to ensuring every child is successful in an ever-changing world. With this positive vote, we can implement a construction program to meet the needs of a growing population while maintaining high standards of excellence. Please accept a sincere thank you on behalf of our 22,000 students and almost 3,000 teachers and staff,” said Superintendent A. Denise Graves.

“We believe our entire community is responsible for the education of our children. The community’s endorsement of the school system’s important construction plan is vital to the future of Ascension Parish. On behalf of the Ascension Parish School Board, we thank you,” said Board President Patricia Russo.

Plans for the $120 million include building three new primary schools, a new middle school, and site planning for a future high school. Additionally, investments will be made in campus security, covered outdoor play areas for primary schools and major school renovations. For a complete list of projects, visit www.apsb.org/2016bond.

Contributing to the successful results was the district’s ability to effectively accomplish its other two measurable objectives: having no opposition from the local Republican Party and effectively mobilizing teachers to contact voters.

The ARPEC issued no public statement on the tax measure. It was the first time the group was silent on a major tax issue in nearly three years. Below is a website and Facebook post that the ARPEC still has up from its defeat of the parish government’s recreation tax request. Those same sites (http://www.ascensionrpec.org and https://www.facebook.com/ascensionparishgop) have NO MENTION of the April 2016 school tax election.
The proposed recreation millage was defeated on November 4th, 2014 with a 62% NO vote. For the last three years the Parish Council has placed a tax on the ballot. The ARPEC has opposed each tax increase. All three taxes failed; three strikes you're out! Thank you to everyone who joined in our efforts to defeat another unnecessary tax!

(reprinted from www.ascensionrpec.org post)

At the same time, a significant number of teachers voluntarily responded to the suggestion from school leaders that calling voters would help the bond proposition to win voter approval on Election Day. Nearly one-fourth – approximately 25 percent -- of all teachers districtwide voluntarily called voters after school hours.

In fact, Les Landon, public relations director for the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, publicly stated, “We certainly endorse this bond issue,” and he noted in a one-on-one meeting that he supported the teachers’ right to help and put together voter lists to call, and he encouraged them to be involved in school issues. (Landon’s quote was cited in The Advocate and additional comments from personal meeting with Taylor Media Services consultants.)

Principals verbally reported the percentage of participating teachers, but names of the teachers were not given, nor were calling records collected, to protect their privacy and maintain a buffer between school and private activities.

Moreover, some of the less measurable results of the campaign’s effective strategies included a seamless transition and consistent message at the top position. Interim Superintendent A. Denise Graves never missed a step in delivery the district’s message because she had been an integral part of the presentations from the beginning.

The district’s video proved to be one of the best-received communication tools, receiving accolades from individuals and groups to whom it was presented, and recording more than 1,000 YouTube views and 42,000 views on Facebook. Analysis of earned media during the campaign showed primarily neutral coverage with a reach of over 27 million viewers and an advertising value of $249,957.78.

CONCLUSION

Ascension Public Schools leveraged its reputation as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, delivering on promises to the public and maintaining academic excellence in a successful bond election campaign. Furthermore, by utilizing interpersonal relationships in the form of face-to-face meetings, personalized phone calls and distribution of informational materials by school, the district maximized its modest budget of $16,000.

The communication campaign for this bond continues, although planned activities around groundbreakings and bond projects were delayed due to the 2016 flood that closed five schools and displaced 5,000 students in August. A special page on our website, http://www.apsb.org/page/planning-and-construction, is dedicated to keeping the public updated on our progress.

As we continue to Grow at the Pace of Excellence, we will keep our promises to our community!
Analysis of earned media during the campaign showed primarily neutral coverage with a reach of over 27 million viewers and an advertising value of $249,957.78. The breakdown of that analysis using Meltwater is included below.

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Ascension Parish Schools holds public forums about school</td>
<td>KSLA News 12</td>
<td>160,066</td>
<td>$ 1,480.61</td>
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<td>17-Dec-2015 05:28PM</td>
<td>Ascension Schools get A Rating for 4th consecutive year</td>
<td>Action News 17</td>
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<td>01-Dec-2015 09:02PM</td>
<td>Ascension School Board gives nod to bond proposal for April 9</td>
<td>The Advocate</td>
<td>601,634</td>
<td>$ 5,565.11</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 08:34AM</td>
<td>Bond proposal going to Ascension voters on April 9</td>
<td>Education Week</td>
<td>395,473</td>
<td>$ 3,658.13</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 07:13AM</td>
<td>Bond proposal going to Ascension voters on April 9</td>
<td>KATC.com</td>
<td>342,650</td>
<td>$ 3,169.51</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 07:02AM</td>
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<td>StamfordAdvocate.com</td>
<td>55,134</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 06:57AM</td>
<td>Bond proposal going to Ascension voters on April 9</td>
<td>WLOX-TV</td>
<td>176,421</td>
<td>$ 1,631.89</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 06:26AM</td>
<td>Bond proposal going to Ascension voters on April 9</td>
<td>Greenwich Time</td>
<td>95,558</td>
<td>$ 883.91</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 06:26AM</td>
<td>Bond proposal going to Ascension voters on April 9</td>
<td>Seattlegi.com</td>
<td>1,533,616</td>
<td>$ 14,185.95</td>
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<td>07-Oct-2015 06:35AM</td>
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<td>KSL.com</td>
<td>1,749,231</td>
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<td>KTBS.com</td>
<td>112,275</td>
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<td>WVUE New Orleans</td>
<td>186,048</td>
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<td>Beaumont Enterprise(AP)</td>
<td>142,060</td>
<td>$ 1,314.06</td>
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<td>Bond proposal going to Ascension voters on April 9</td>
<td>Thibodaux Daily Comet</td>
<td>37,868</td>
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<td>The-Dispatch.com</td>
<td>28,791</td>
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<td>Connecticut Post</td>
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<td>SFGate</td>
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<td>HoumaToday.com</td>
<td>75,300</td>
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<td>06-Oct-2015 09:01PM</td>
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<td>06-Oct-2015 07:14AM</td>
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<td>The Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>06-Oct-2015 07:14AM</td>
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<td>The Advocate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Promoting key local television coverage through Facebook further boosted visibility about the need for new construction to relieve overcrowding and existing temporary buildings.
https://www.facebook.com/ascensionparishschools/videos/1023674064320109/

https://www.facebook.com/ascensionparishschools/videos/1023603290993853/
Social Media Ads

With a very modest budget, social media ads helped to extend the life of our key videos and messages.

In addition to paid advertisements, we utilized Facebook and Twitter to remind people to vote and thank them after the successful election.
Flyers
We utilized our best resources, our schools to deliver informational flyers to parents in a two-step phase. The first phase in Fall 2015 was the Promises Made; Promises Kept flyer, which was customized for each feeder system so that parents received specific information about projects completed in their area from the 2009 bond campaign. The second flyer specific to the bond election was distributed in February to parents.

Ascension Public Schools
$100 Million Capital Improvement Plan NEARING COMPLETION

Ascension Parish voters approved the extension of a 15.08 millage rate in 2009 to expand and improve some of the parish’s oldest school facilities. The capital improvements were made with NO increase in the amount taxpayers paid each year. Six years later, the investment is making a positive difference.

WE ARE PROUD OF OUR EXTENSIVE SCHOOL RENOVATIONS AND MAJOR EXPANSIONS WHILE CONCENTRATING ON MAKING EVERY CHILD SUCCESSFUL!
- Superintendent Patrice Pujol, Ed.D.

Major projects completed in the parish-wide plan include:

✓ Major “makeover” and renovations to Prairieville Middle School, Gonzales Primary School and Donaldsonville High School
✓ New architecturally-designed school building for G. W. Carver Primary School at a new campus site
✓ Begin construction of Freshman Academies at Dutchtown, East Ascension and St. Amant high schools
✓ Major electrical infrastructure upgrades to support technology and enhance new safety features
✓ Upgrade of the district’s computer and data network for wireless technology, leading the way for the innovative rollout of a computer for every student
✓ Security cameras for ALL campuses for optimal safety oversight, two-way radio system for schools, and safety locks on all classroom doors

See back for other major initiatives accomplished in the 2009 Capital Improvement Plan.
Infrastructure and Capital Improvements Update for Donaldsonville High Community Schools

Donaldsonville High
- New Classroom Additions: $2,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000

Donaldsonville Primary
- New Classroom Additions: $2,200,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000

Lowery Elementary & Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $700,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000

Ascension Headstart, Donaldsonville
- New Classroom Additions: $750,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000

Parish-Wide
- Technology Infrastructure
  - New Data Center: $700,000
  - Technology Infrastructure: $2,500,000

Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Update for Dutchtown High Community

Dutchtown Primary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000

Dutchtown Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000

Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Update for East Ascension High Community

East Ascension High
- New Classroom Additions: $3,000,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Gonzales Primary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Gonzales Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Galvez Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Lake Elementary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

St. Amant High
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

St. Amant Primary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Update for St. Amant High Community

Parish-Wide
- Technology Infrastructure
  - New Data Center: $1,200,000
  - Technology Infrastructure: $2,500,000

Gonzales Primary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Gonzales Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Galvez Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Lake Elementary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

St. Amant High
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

St. Amant Primary
- New Classroom Additions: $1,200,000
- Restroom Renovations: $40,000

Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Update for Lower Elementary

Lowery Elementary & Middle
- New Classroom Additions: $700,000
- New Instructional Facility: $10,000
The Ascension Parish School Board is asking voters to extend an existing 15.08 mills to fund much-needed construction projects and improvements across the district.

The dedicated millage has been in effect for more than 30 years. By extending the 15.08 millage rate through Year 2036, voters will enable Ascension Public Schools to borrow $120 million for school improvements at NO increased cost.

Approval of the school bond proposition will NOT increase the amount of taxes paid each year. IT IS NOT A NEW TAX!

The following projects are included in the April 9 funding proposal:

2016 Bond Construction Projects:

- New Primary School - Bullion Crossing
- New Primary School - Hwy 73
- New Primary School - German Road
- New Middle School - Breaux Road
- Completed/Complete Academy Concept at High Schools
- Future High School Site Planning and Permitting
- Additions/Recessions to Ascension High School DONALDSONVILLE
- Additions/Recessions to Dutchtown Primary
- Complete Security Plan Implementation at ALL Campuses
- Additions/Recessions to Loyalty Middle School
- Addition of Gym to Pointe-aux-Chene Middle School
- Renovation of old Donaldsonville High Library into classroom/office space
- APPle Digital Academy
- Exterior Covered Play Areas at ALL Primary Schools

Total Investment: $120 million at NO Increased Cost to Taxpayers

Vote April 9, 2016

School Construction Bond Election

Report to the Community

Our annual Report to the Community distributed to 28,000 homes as an insert in three local papers included a six-page spread about construction, fiscal excellence and the bond election.
Postcards were mailed to the homes of parish voters who were considered frequent voters, based upon their record of participation in past elections.

The Ascension Parish School Board is asking voters to extend the existing 15.08 mills to fund much-needed construction projects and improvements across the district. The 15.08 mills have been in effect for nearly 30 years. By extending this millage rate through the year 2036, voters will enable Ascension Public Schools to borrow $120 million for school improvements at NO increased cost.

Approval of the school bond proposition will NOT increase the amount of taxes paid each year. IT IS NOT A NEW TAX!

The following projects are included in the April 9 funding proposal:

- **2016 Bond Construction Projects:**
  - New Primary School – Bullion Crossing: $16,100,000
  - New Primary School – Hwy 73: $16,600,000
  - New Primary School – Germany Road: $17,900,000
  - New Middle School – Bluff Road: $29,300,000
  - Complete Freshman Academy Concept at High Schools: $12,900,000
  - Future High School Site Planning and Permitting: $2,000,000
  - Additions/Renovations to Ascension Head Start in Donaldsonville: $3,000,000
  - Additions/Renovations to Dutchtown Primary: $7,400,000
  - Continue Security Plan Implementation at ALL campuses: $3,000,000
  - Additions/Renovations to Lowery Middle School: $3,900,000
  - Addition of Gym to Prairieville Middle School: $3,000,000
  - Renovation of old Donaldsonville High Library into classroom/office space: $500,000
  - APPle Digital Academy: $2,900,000
  - Exterior Covered Play Areas at ALL Primary Schools: $1,600,000

**Total Investment $120 million at NO Increased Cost to Taxpayers**

Based on historical growth, enrollment is expected to increase by 33% over the next 10 years. Currently, nearly half the district’s schools are near maximum capacity, or already exceeding it! That's why Ascension Public Schools is seeking approval to invest $120 million into new schools, expansions and improvements.