

Strategic Communication Plan E-SPLOST

for the



DeKalb County Board of Education
1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard
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January 8, 2016

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DeKalb Strategic Communication Plan for continuation of the E-SPLOST program

Goal/Mission

DeKalb County voters will approve the District's Education Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) referendum on May 24, 2016. Achieving this goal, would help assure the School District continues meeting its vision – “To inspire our community of learners to achieve educational excellence” and Mission – “To ensure student success, leading to higher education.” The District's motto “Inspire – Achieve – Excel” is based on its core beliefs and commitment:

- Focusing on teaching and learning
- Embedding an equitable and accessible 21st century learning environment supported by the use of emerging technologies throughout the curriculum
- Providing a safe and orderly learning and working environment
- Improving organizational effectiveness
- Maintaining fiscal responsibility
- Ensuring effective district & school leadership
- Ensuring that an effective teacher instructs every class
- Communicating to stakeholders in an open, honest and accurate manner
- Embracing the community's linguistic and cultural diversity and using it to enhance the educational environment through equity and access

- Creating an environment where everyone is valued and respected, encouraged to contribute, and recognized for his/her efforts
- Holding everyone accountable for educational excellence

Strategic Communication Plan

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for the



History

Brief History

[The DeKalb County School District is the third largest school district in Georgia with nearly 102,000 students and more than 14,000 employees – 6,400 of whom are teachers. The District is responsible for 14.2 million square feet of space over its 140 buildings and other facilities.]

Georgia law dictates that all sales tax referenda in the state are called on a county-wide basis in accordance with state election laws. As such, the DeKalb County School District’s Education Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) referendum vote would include all school systems within DeKalb County – DeKalb County School District, City Schools of Decatur and Atlanta Public Schools. For DeKalb, it is a continuation of the E-SPLOST program established in July 1997.

This year’s referendum will be on Tuesday, May 24, 2016. From a strategic standpoint, it is the most acceptable date, avoiding possible ballot clutter with other referenda and the presidential election in November.

Here is a retrospective of four previous votes showing Issue, Date, Sales Tax Collection Period, Voter Turnout and Yes Vote Percentage.

| E-E-SPLOST | Vote Date | Sales Tax Collection | % Turnout (DeKalb County only) | % Yes (DeKalb County only) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| E-E-SPLOST I | Mar 18, 1997 | Jul 1, 1997 - Jun 30, 2002 | 20.60% | 68.44% |
| E-E-SPLOST II | Mar 20, 2002 | Jul 1, 2002 - Jun 30, 2007 | 9.39% | 61.39% |
| E-E-SPLOST III | Mar 20, 2007 | Jul 1, 2007 - Jun 30, 2012 | 5.39% | 69.66% |
| E-E-SPLOST IV | Nov 8, 2011 | Jul 1, 2012 - Jun 30, 2017 | 13.86% | 62.19% |

Since its inception in 1997, DeKalb has received approximately \$500 million in sales tax revenue during each five-year period. Those funds have been used to address the District’s most pressing capital needs. The E-SPLOST project list is still evolving. However, based on facility assessments, community and stakeholder meetings and discussions with business leaders and others in the business community, the following improvements are being considered:

- Construction of new schools/additions to address overcrowded (or soon to be overcrowded) schools

- Replace the District's outdated financial accounting system with state-of-the-art software assuring greater security and financial accountability.
- ADA improvements and address updated code requirements
- Replace aging roofs, HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems
- Technology enhancements
- Purchase school buses and other support service vehicles to address aging fleet – (average vehicle is 10-years-old)
- Improve athletic and play fields at schools
- Address pavement and parking issues

Strategic Communication Plan

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Audiences

(Overview/Segmented/
Profiled/Ranked)

School District Audiences Identified/Segmented/Profiled/Ranked

Successful school districts in today's rapidly changing world use effective two-way communication as a management tool to help achieve their goals and lay a foundation that supports success for all students. Strategic, planned communication is achieved through the commitment of district leaders, adequate resources and personnel, careful research and planning, creative implementation, and evaluation of results. Strong communication programs successfully reach all of their target audiences. They are, after all, the people who keep school districts and other organizations functioning. These are the people who need to hear the District's key messages – on a regular basis *and* leading up to a critical **E-SPLOST vote**.

These audiences are segmented into internal, external and (important) intermediary – those who carry the key messages and are viewed as having high source credibility – respected stakeholders who validate the District's needs. They are informed, have a (third-party) vested interest and communicate on the District's behalf because they believe in the project and the District's mission and goal.

It is important to rank audiences for resource purposes – time resources and money – not just money spent communicating with them, but the amount of time allocated. Those audiences with the highest ranking get the most money and time. Those with the lowest may get neither money nor attention – but the District will make every effort to reach every niche audience.

That said: DeKalb Schools' key audiences – in rank order – include:

- Internal audiences – *Every* school district employee (teachers, administrators, support staff, maintenance and custodial, bus drivers, etc.) is a communicator and ambassador and must accept a portion of responsibility for that role. Research is clear, staff members (and volunteers) who are informed and involved take greater pride in their performance and perform more effectively.
- Board members
- Parents – important (key) audience referred to as “the person in the middle”
- Parent-Teacher organizations

- School volunteers
- Ministerium
- Media – key intermediary audience
- Key communicators (influencers – neighborhood leaders)
- Business community
- Realtors
- Elected officials
- Legislative groups
- Community organizations (Rotary, Lions, etc.)
- Special interest groups
- Non-parents and other taxpayers

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Issues

(Pro/Con)

Issues

(Discussion items to help accomplish this plan and School District's goals)

- Because the Board would have to vote on the final E-SPLOST referendum at its February Board meeting, it would drastically compress stakeholder engagement prior to the Board vote, which could be seen as a lack of transparency and shared decision-making with District stakeholders. This, however, could and will be avoided through proper planning and the Board's desire for transparency. In fact, this strategic communication plan calls for increased stakeholder involvement and engagement.
- While not probable, a negative May 2016 E-SPLOST vote would result in a referendum not going back on the ballot until November 2017. It would create a lapse in the sales tax leading to a catastrophic loss of approximately \$50 million, which could not be recovered.
- Districtwide needs expected to exceed \$2 billion by July 2017.
- While a November 2016 referendum could attract thousands more to the polls because it is a Presidential Election Year, it might be lost to voters because it has to share ballot space with presidential and local candidates, and other issues.
- Bring all teaching facilities and technology up to 21st century standards.
- Need for increased transparency through broader internal and external communication.
- Need to ensure equality of resources and instruction across the District.
- Need for more parental and volunteer involvement for a successful referendum.
- Technology hardware and software that must be brought up to standards to assure effective security and enhance accountability
- A perceived lack of confidence that the District is managing its finances efficiently

Strategic Communication Plan

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for the



The Plan

Goal

Objectives

Strategies

Tactics

The Communication Plan

Goal – Objectives – Strategies – Tactics

[Definitions]

Goal – Desired outcome of a plan of action (usually, one goal). It is more specific than the mission/goal and less global.

Objective – A specific milestone that measures progress toward achievement of a goal. An objective must address the desired communication or behavioral outcome; designate the public or publics among who the behavioral outcome is to be recognized; specify the expected level of attainment or accomplishment; and identify the time frame in which those attainments or accomplishments are to occur.

Strategy – A general well thought-out plan of action. What must be done (to change behavior) and how to accomplish it (usually carried out as part of organization's public statement).

Tactic – Specific activity, action or tool conducted to carry out the strategy. Each tactic carries cost.

Goal

DeKalb County voters will approve the continuation of the District's Education Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) via a referendum in May 2016.

Objective 1.0 – Gain School Board approval at its Board meeting on Feb. 8, 2016 of a joint resolution calling for a May 24, 2016 referendum (other districts being City Schools of Decatur and Atlanta Public Schools).

Strategy 1.1 – Superintendent's Office will communicate to the board in such a manner that it has a full understanding of the proposal's framework.

Tactic 1.1.1 – Operations staff meets with Board members in mini sessions on Jan. 14, 15, 19 and 20 to assist in drafting resolution language, discuss E-SPLOST referendum, timeline and strategy for community engagement. **(Operations)**

Tactic 1.1.2 – Present the general project list to the Board at its Committee of the Whole meeting on Jan. 21. It includes both the 17 paragraph points and a summary of the 17 points, which reduces the list to five to eight categories (“buckets”) with proposed values. All must be in place by this date because the Atlanta Public Schools’ Board is scheduled to approve the joint resolution on Feb. 1 and Decatur on Feb. 4. A key to this is to provide answers to the voters’ question “What’s in it for me?” **(Operations)**

Strategy 1.2 – Establish a need for continuing the E-SPLOST program to help assure voters have a full understanding prior to voting on May 24, 2016 or through early voting. It is important to communicate cooperation – a synergy – with the other three districts (Atlanta Public Schools’, City of Decatur and Fulton County) asking for voter approval on May 24.

Tactic 1.2.1 Complete a summary of the E-SPLOST Referendum similar to previous E-SPLOST Referenda – in layperson’s language. **(Operations)**

Tactic 1.2.2 – Supt. R. Stephen Green and Board President Melvin Johnson should be available for post-Board Meeting news briefing on Feb. 8 or the morning of Feb. 9. Limit spokespeople to one or two (for control purposes). **(Hudson)**

Objective 2.0 – Before the February 8, 2016 School Board meeting, have the (single) “point person” identified to coordinate the E-SPLOST May 24 referendum and fall community engagement meetings. **(Supt. Green)**

Strategy 2.1 – Having the coordinator designated communicates the Board and Administration’s commitment to the continuation of the E-SPLOST program and the future of the DeKalb County School District and its vision “To inspire our community of learners to achieve educational excellence.”

Tactic 2.1.1 – Design Gantt Chart, which will include every tactic included in both Communication and Operation Plans for E-SPLOST. (A rough Gantt Chart is at the end of this plan.) **(Hudson)**

Tactic 2.1.2 – Superintendent announces coordinator at Feb. 8 (or Jan. 21) meeting. **(Supt. Green)**

Tactic 2.1.3 – Finalize backgrounder/bio/justification on coordinator. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 2.1.4 – Craft and have ready for distribution news release on coordinator. **(Hudson)**

Objective 3.0 – By the Feb. 8 School Board meeting, complete the foundation for a 360-degree (two-way) communication effort. **(Hudson)**

Strategy 3.1 – Establish full transparency with the media to better educate reporters, editors, producers, etc. on the District’s physical needs so the media can better serve as an intermediary audience and communicate objectively to the various publics. **(Supt. Green, Operations, Hudson)**

Strategy 3.2 - Craft news media products to assure media’s questions are answered to the best of the District’s ability. (They would be included in Media Kit.) **(Hudson)**

Tactic 3.2.1 – Craft a comprehensive media kit (see below). **(Hudson)**

Tactic 3.2.2 – Create a dedicated website or link to District website entitled “News about E-SPLOST.” Members of the media, as well as the public, would have easy 24/7 access to the latest information. The media kit would be available on the site. As additions and/or changes are made, the media would be notified of updates clearly noted to avoid confusion. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 3.2.3 – Craft the following items for inclusion in media kit – completed in advance of the dedicated website going live (see Objective 4.0): **(Hudson)**

- Media Advisories for major announcements
- News releases – hard story and possible feature – heavy with quotes (Board President Johnson and Supt. Green)
- Fact Sheet – in simple, easily understood language
- E-SPLOST history – including District history
- Backgrounder on E-SPLOST referenda and their need
- FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

- Bios of such principals as Supt. Green, Board President Johnson and anyone else directly involved in the process
- Pictures and/or graphics
- Such other products as:
 - Position Paper – on facility needs
 - Op-Ed Commentaries (written and placed by trusted third-party endorsers, board members, District graduates, celebrities who may live within the county) focusing on District needs
 - Quotation sheet – primarily for media use
 - District logo
 - Such support materials – as pdfS- of annual reports, newsletters and links to important landing sites on School District website

Tactic 3.2.4 – Craft a separate statement – and issue it as a new release – expressing the Board and Supt. Green’s efforts to maintain total transparency as E-SPLOST evolves. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 3.2.5 – Establish “Rapid Response Team” – responsible for quick response to questions and especially clarifying negative news, rumors and incorrect information within the community. **(Hudson and Operations)**

Objective 4.0 – By the Jan. 21 Committee of the Whole Board meeting, have a dedicated E-SPLOST website ready to go live. **(Hudson)**

Strategy 4.1 – Launching website simultaneously with Board approval of the joint resolution communicates a well thought-out plan – from both operational and communication standpoints.

Tactic 4.1.1 – Referring to Tactic 3.2.3, all key media products will be ready for onsite “Newsroom,” which would be available to media and public. This communicates transparency. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 4.1.2 – Would be Tactic 3.2.4 communicating total transparency.

Objective 5.0 – By March 7, 2016, Board meeting, finalize the Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) and Facility Education Adequacy Assessment (FEAA) capacity and enrollment data.

Strategy 5.1 – The data that supports the decision-making process is critical to the development of the E-SPLOST program.

Tactic 5.1.1 – FCA and FEAA data made available for interested public. **(Operations and Hudson)**

Objective 6.0 – Within two weeks of the Board’s referendum approval, announce that District-sponsored community engagement meetings will be held starting soon after school resumes in August to assure maximum parent and other stakeholder participation. **(Operations and Hudson)**

Strategy 6.1 – The District’s image should project an air of transparency, which is essential in the planning stages. Announcing meetings at this stage assures community it will be well informed as plans continue to evolve. The late summer start for engagement meetings assures the highest degree of participation – with no summer vacation conflicts.

Tactic 6.1.1 – Same as Tactic 3.2.4. Craft a separate statement – and issue it as a new release – expressing the Board and Supt. Green’s efforts to maintain total transparency as E-SPLOST evolves. **(Hudson with Operations)**

Tactic 6.1.2 – Beginning day after Labor Day (Sept. 6), a daily stream of fall 2016 community meetings encouraging residents to attend to discuss E-SPLOST project (category) list. **(Hudson)**

Strategy 6.2 – Launch information dissemination soon after the Jan. 21 Board meeting and increasing it through the March 7 meeting assuring absentee and early voters are able to make an informed decision.

Tactic 6.2.1 – Hold a formal news briefing – or other major event – to educate the media and explain plans to inform the community. It should be in an elementary school with teachers and students in the room. The media should be encouraged to inspect *that* school and other District facilities. If teachers are comfortable, they could be available for media one-on-ones. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 6.2.2 – Complete Community Engagement Schedule and place it on the dedicated website – with daily streams as reminders. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 6.2.3 – As part of the overall strategy, once the referendum date is approved and announced the District will employ the Drip, Drip, Drip approach – releasing information formally and informally – primarily via such social media as **Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, the Districts “parent-alert system,” email, Parent APP and Parent ePortal.** All information should be fact-based so as not to attract criticism. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 6.2.4 – Conduct separate training sessions for Board members seeking assistance for their “local” meetings. This training could be as a group or one-on-one. **(Operations and Hudson)**

Objective 7.0 – By March 1, 2016, form an E-SPLOST communication team that will hold information sessions for internal staff and interested high school students. The teams would present factual information. **(See Tactic 7.1.3)**

Strategy 7.1 – Consistency and continuity being key, the team will emulate trust, credibility and knowledge about every aspect of the E-SPLOST program – source credibility being key.

Tactic 7.1.1 – Form teams that could consist of an:

- Administrator
- Teacher
- Board member
- Support staff member
- Parent-Teacher organization member
- Student volunteer

Tactic 7.1.2 – Determine if more than one team is needed. **(Operations)**

Tactic 7.1.3 – Hold a training session for each team. Multiple teams could be trained simultaneously. **(Operations and Hudson)**

- Be certain team members are familiar with FAQs and answers, but strategically, team members should speak from personal knowledge – from their head and heart – communicating with passion.

Strategy 7.2. – Conduct public presentations/meetings for all audiences – internal and external – keeping the key messages simple and easy to

understand with the take-away being information that leads to an educated voting decision.

Tactic 7.2.1 – Craft every tool needed for public presentations. Each tool is its own **Tactic: (Hudson with Operations)**

- **7.2.2** – PowerPoint overview – keep it short (7-10 minutes [12 maximum])
- **7.2.3** – Craft a short message for each member of the presentation team – one minute or less
- **7.2.4** – Large “poster-size” renderings of some of the more critically-needed projects
- **7.2.5.** – Design hard copy take-away – keeping it simple and inexpensive
- **7.2.6** – Take away should contain FAQs (remembering not to allow the take-away to appear expensive)

Tactic 7.2.7 – While this tactic is vitally important, it is placed here in the Strategic Communication Plan. Specifically, on **Jan. 11, 14 and Feb. 11** – Work in a mention of the upcoming referendum at redistricting meetings. A key message is that redistricting is short term while E-SPLOST is long term designed to prevent or minimize further redistricting. **(Operations)**

Objective 8.0 – Within four weeks of the referendum’s Board approval and approximately two weeks before the referendum (**no later than May 9**), complete internal audience meetings where the referendum is explained and questions are answered.

Strategy 8.1 – Educate internal staff of the need for E-SPLOST so they can serve as third-party validators as they speak with family, neighbors and friends.

Tactic 8.1.1 – Schedule staff presentations in every building possible. Unless there are compelling reasons, on-site internal audience meetings should be composed of heterogeneous audiences – professional, clerical, and such other support staff as maintenance, custodial and bus drivers. **(Hudson with Operations)**

Objective 9.0 – Complete two additional (a third if requested) in-person media briefings between April 11 and May 23 to keep media up-to-date and respond to questions.

Strategy 9.1 – Keeping the media informed is paramount and is part of the effort at transparency. There are no secrets in this effort.

Strategy 9.2 – To help make the referendum top of mind for voters, offer one-on-one media member meetings with key school personnel on site so reporters can see first-hand the District’s needs.

Tactic 9.2.1 – Coordinator remains in (almost) daily contact with the media for this referendum. **(Through Hudson)**

Tactic 9.2.2 – As the referendum nears – from May 16 on, reach out and schedule as many of these one-on-one media meetings as possible. **(Hudson)**

Objective 10.0 – Have foundation for a Get Out The Vote (GOTV) effort in place by mid-March. **(Hudson)**

Strategy 10.1 – Encouraging all voters to engage with the District assures increased voter turnout – whether in-person or by mailed-in ballots.

Tactic 10.1.1 – (Mass) email “Save the Date” pdf that can be printed and attached to a home calendar and/or included on electronic calendar. Some hard copies should be printed, as well, to be available at meetings. **(Hudson)**

- Emailing recent DeKalb graduates encouraging them to vote – whether in-person or absentee (if attending college) or mail-in ballot.

Tactic 10.1.3 – Educate volunteers and/or provide them with FAQs so they can help deliver key messages – to help voters make an informed decision. **(Operations with Hudson)**

Strategy 10.2 – Encourage current high school students 18 and older to review the project list and ask questions so they are better informed before they vote.

Tactic 10.2.1 – Encourage high school students 18 and older to register to vote. **(Operations)**

Tactic 10.2.2 – Conduct brief referendum information sessions **(see Objective 7.0)** for high school students – similar to those conducted for staff, but shorter. Members of “Referendum Presentation Team” should participate to answer questions. **(Operations with Hudson)**

Tactics 10.2.3 – Identify and locate recent high school graduates – going back at least four years. **(Hudson)**

Tactic 10.2.4 – Encourage parents of students new to the District to register to vote. This can be included in “New Parent Packets.” **(Hudson)**

Strategy 10.3 – Conduct morning-after news briefing to react to the vote and re-inforce how this successful outcome will contribute to the District’s vision “To inspire our community of learners to achieve educational excellence” and present the next “steps.”

Tactic 10.3.1 – Supt. Green hosts formal news (conference) briefing with key personnel on hand. **(Supt. Green/Hudson)**

Tactic 10.3.2 – Superintendent and Board send Thank You Notes to staff and volunteers. **(Supt. Green/Hudson)**

Strategic Communication Plan

E-SPLOST

for the



Addendum

Conflict Analyses
Single Spokesperson
Successful Communication Programs
Depend On Planning
Questions to Answer
Why Information Efforts Fail

Conflict Analyses (Provided by School District)

| Pros | Cons |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out ahead of the presidential primary election and the OSD referendum slated for the November 2017 ballot. • Get ahead of the possible MARTA penny sales tax vote which could come out of the 2016 Legislative Session. (This sales tax could possibly reduce the current E-SPLOST to ½ penny or eliminate E-SPLOST altogether.) • If the E-SPLOST vote were to fail in May 2016, the District’s E-SPLOST referendum could go back on the ballot one year later prior to July 2017. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board would have to vote on the final E-SPLOST V project list at its February Board meeting. This would drastically compress our stakeholder engagement process which could be seen as a lack of transparency and shared decision making with our stakeholders. • The development of the final E-SPLOST V project list and referendum would not have the level of specificity due to the compressed timeframe. This could also be seen as a lack of transparency with our stakeholders given the level of detail provided under E-SPLOST IV. • Drastically reduced the time allotted for the validation and quality control of the data used to develop the E-SPLOST V project list. |

| Pros | Cons |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will provide ample time for community and stakeholder input. • Will provide ample time to conduct the necessary validation and quality control of the data used to development of the E-SPLOST V project list. • Will provide time for staff to incorporate the middle and high school feasibility study and stakeholder input on Region 1 and Region 2 capacity issues in the E-SPLOST V discussion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If E-SPLOST vote fails, it would not be able to go back on the ballot for one year later in 2018. • If E-SPLOST vote fails, it would create a gap in sales tax revenue receipts which are slated to end June 2017. • Some risk of the possible MARTA sales tax referendum added to the ballot by DeKalb County Board of Commissioners at the same time. |

Considerations Your Single Spokesperson Must Keep In Mind (During an On-Going Event)

Communicate your plan, first internally, then externally. Seek feedback. Continuously, evaluate your plan.

Get Down to Basics

When asked tough questions, which may not have yet been answered – before anything else – gather the facts. Once you have the facts, communicate with all audiences – not just the questioner.

- Do your homework
- Provide a constant flow of information – especially to key publics
- Limit key messages to five – preferably fewer (three) – and live by the mantra that repetition is the philosophy behind successful advertising
- Be familiar with media needs and deadlines
- Be accessible
- Be as transparent as possible without disclosing proprietary information
- Be prompt and dependable
- Avoid being pushed into easy solutions
- Accept responsibility
- Be responsive, forthright and show compassion for opponents
- Bluffing an answer is not acceptable – wait until you have the correct information
- Never say “No comment”
- Speak and write your information clearly
- Monitor news coverage, email, social media and phone inquiries
- Be prepared to respond quickly (rapid response) to incorrect information

M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

Successful Communication Programs Depend On Planning and Practitioner’s Mindset. Needed Are:

- A strategic communication process in place
- Support from senior management
- Communication with the chief PR officer or someone with direct access to senior management
- Good relations and credibility with the news media
- Effective internal communication
- Strong peer relations, especially with attorneys
- Ability to “fly the plane” so to speak

C. Fernando Vivanco, Boeing Airline, and Kathleen L. Lewton, Fleishman-Hillard, Inc.

Questions to Answer Enroute to a Referendum

- Why make a change?
- What must be accomplished?
- What journey must be taken to reach the goal?
- Who should receive the message (audiences)?
- What must be done?
- How should it be done?
- What happened and why (evaluation)?
- How effective was the effort?
- What changes must be made for future referenda?

Why Information Efforts Fail

- Voter is generally uninformed.
- There are large groups in the population (passive audience) who admit to having little or no interest in public issues.
- People tend to expose themselves to material that is compatible with their attitudes and beliefs and to avoid exposure to issues, candidates and products that do not match their beliefs (selective perception).
- Selective perception and interpretation of content follows exposure: individuals perceive, absorb and remember content differently.
- Changes in attitudes – even following exposure to a message – are difficult to achieve. It may be a mistake to take too much time or spend too many resources in an effort to lead to a more favorable behavior. (Concentration should be placed on getting out the vote of those in agreement (active audience) with your candidate or issue.)
- Poor GOTV (and grassroots) effort.

Strategic Communication Plan

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for the



Summary

Summary

This section lists tactics and projected completion dates

Jan. 12: Begin work on a comprehensive media kit. **(Hudson)**

Jan. 14, 15, 19 and 20 – Operations staff meets with Board members in mini sessions on Jan. 14, 15, 19 and 20 to assist in drafting resolution language, discuss E-SPLOST referendum, timeline and strategy for community engagement. **(Operations)**

Jan. 21: Present the general project list to the Board at its Committee of the Whole meeting on Jan. 21. It includes both the 17 paragraph points and a summary of the 17 points, which reduces the list to five to eight categories (“buckets”) with proposed values. All must be in place by this date because the Atlanta Public Schools’ Board is scheduled to approve the joint resolution on Feb. 1 and Decatur on Feb. 4. A key to this is to provide answers to the voters’ question “What’s in it for me?” **(Operations)**

Jan. 21: Craft a separate statement – and issue it as a new release – expressing the Board and Supt. Green’s efforts to maintain total transparency as E-SPLOST evolves. **(Hudson)**

Jan. 21: Establish “Rapid Response Team” – responsible for quick response to questions and especially clarifying negative news, rumors and incorrect information within the community. **(Operations with Hudson)**

Jan. 25: Start encouraging high school students (18 and older) to register to vote. **(Hudson with Operations)**

Jan. 25: Identify and locate recent high school graduates – going back at least four years. **(Hudson with Operations)**

Feb. 5: Create a dedicated website or link to District website entitled “News about E-SPLOST.” It should be launched within days of Board’s referendum approval. **(Hudson)**

Feb. 8: Complete draft of Gantt Chart laying out the communication program. **(Hudson)**

Feb. 8: Craft and have ready for distribution news release on E-SPLOST program coordinator. **(Hudson)**

Feb. 8: Supt. R. Stephen Green and Board President Melvin Johnson should be available for post-Board Meeting news briefing on Feb. 8 or Feb. 9. Limit spokespeople to one or two (for control purposes). **(Hudson)**

Feb. 8: Complete a draft of meeting schedule for internal staff and others. **(Hudson)**

Feb. 9: Complete a summary (in layperson language) of the E-SPLOST Referendum and category list similar to the E-SPLOST IV Referendum currently on website. **(Operations)**

March 1: Complete formation of presentation team(s). **(Operations with Hudson)**

March 1: Have a “stable” of volunteers to assist with referendum. **(Operations with Hudson)**

March Board meeting: Announcement finalizing all data on capacity and enrollment projections. **(Operations)**

March 7: Complete hard copy of “Save the Date” card for distribution at March Board meeting. **(Hudson)**

March 14: Officially launch information dissemination effort soon after the Feb. 8 Board meeting and increasing it through the March 7 meeting assuring absentee and early voters are able to make an informed decision. **(Operations with Hudson)**

March 14: Hold a formal news briefing – or other major event – launching the intense 10-week effort. **(Operations with Hudson)**

March 14: (For start of communication program) Complete: **(Hudson)**

- PowerPoint
- Short messages for each presentation team member
- Large project renderings
- Hard copy of audience take-aways
- FAQ take-aways
- Staff meeting schedules
- Schedule at least two-additional media briefings for between April 11 and May 23
- Schedule one-on-one media meetings (particularly closer to May 24)

March 14: Conduct separate training sessions for Board members seeking assistance for their “local” meetings. **(Operations with Hudson)**

March 14: Train presentation teams. **(Operations with Hudson)**

March 14: Educate volunteers and/or provide them with FAQs so they can help deliver the key messages. **(Operations with Hudson)**

March 14: Electronically distribute “Save the Date” pdf.

Week of April 11: Conduct brief referendum information sessions for high school students – similar to those conducted for staff, but shorter. Members of “Referendum Presentation Team” should participate to answer questions. **(Operations with Hudson)**

May 24: Implement GOTV using every resource in this plan plus others raised prior to referendum day. Its purpose: to maximize voter turnout.

Strategic Communication Plan

E-SPLOST

for the



Gantt Chart

**See separate
attachment**