

2011 School Board Elections



Handbook

From AEA Government Relations



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INTRODUCTION

The Arkansas Education Association encourages its affiliates to be actively involved in school elections. It is important for local associations in each school district to get school board candidate views on education and to make candidates aware of member concerns.

TIMETABLE FOR ELECTION 2011

SCHOOL ELECTION CALENDAR

June 22	First Day to Circulate Petitions for School Elections
July 15 (noon)	First Day a School Board Candidate Can File a Petition of Candidacy
July 20 (noon)	First Day a Write-in School Board Candidate Can File a Notice of Intent to be a Candidate
July 22 (noon)	Deadline to File as School Board Candidate
July 27 (noon)	Deadline for Write-in Candidates to Give Notice of Intent to Run
August 22	Voter Registration Deadline for School Election
September 12	Voter Registration Deadline for School Election Runoff
September 13	First Day for Early Voting for School Election
September 19	Deadline for Voter to Participate in Early Voting
September 20	SCHOOL ELECTION DAY
	School Election Runoff (if needed)
October 4	First day to early vote
October 10	Last day to early vote
October 11	SCHOOL ELECTION RUNOFF

FILING TO RUN AS A CANDIDATE FOR A LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD

Each Arkansas school district is governed by a board of education elected by the voters of the district. To qualify for the school board, one must be:

- 1. a resident of the district in which he or she wishes to serve,**
- 2. a qualified elector of the district.**

A candidate can file for the local school board in two different ways.

If a candidate wishes to have his or her name on the ballot, he or she must file a petition with the county clerk of the county where the school district administration is located. The petition must include the names of at least twenty (20) registered voters who are residents of the school district, and, if applicable, of the school board zone.

A candidate may begin circulating a petition no earlier than ninety (90) days before the school election. In 2011 that date is June 22. Any signature dated more than ninety (90) days before the school election cannot be counted.

The petition and the candidate's political practices pledge must be filed with the county clerk between noon of July 15 and noon of July 22.

A person can also file to run as a write-in candidate for a local school board. A write-in candidate must file a notice of intent, an affidavit of eligibility and a political practices pledge with the county clerk between July 20 and noon on July 27.

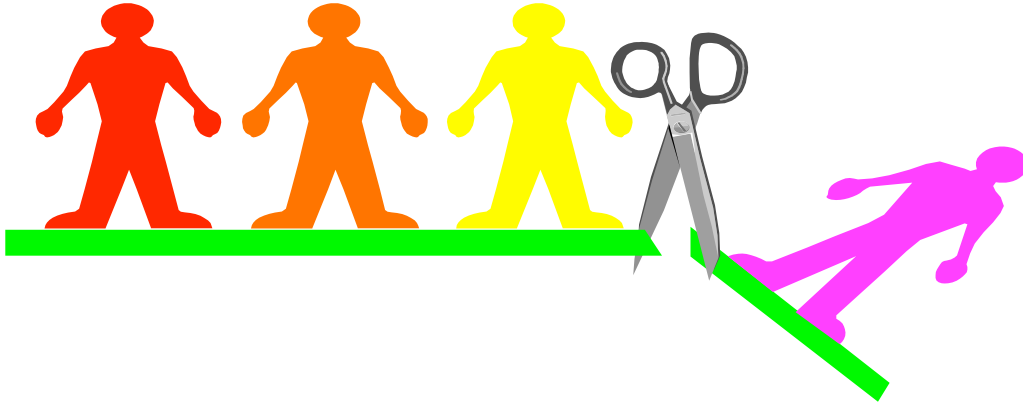
The order in which names of the candidates are to appear on the ballot are determined by lot at a meeting of the county board of election commissioners held not later than fifty-five (55) days before the school election. In 2011 that date is July 27.

July 25 is the deadline for school board candidates filing by petition to file a Statement of Financial Interest form (unless filed by an incumbent officeholder by January 31, 2011).

August 1 is the deadline for write-in school board candidates to file a Statement of Financial Interest form (unless filed by an incumbent officeholder by January 31, 2011).

Note: Legislation passed by the 2011 Arkansas General Assembly makes several changes in school election law that will be effective in 2012. These changes will be reflected in the 2011-12 AEA pocket calendar.

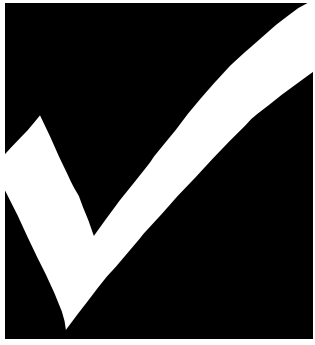
SCREENING



WHY SCREEN SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES?

School Board candidates are screened for the following reasons:

- **To develop positive attitudes towards school employees and association goals.**
- **To establish a dialogue with the candidates on the issues, educate the candidates on important educational issues, and develop a candidate's understanding of the local association's positions.**
- **To determine the candidates' position on issues, background, and base of support.**
- **To provide information necessary for making an informed decision on recommending a candidate.**



CHECKLIST

SCREENING TEAM COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Screening team appointed**
- Make appointments with candidates**
- Send confirmation letter to screening team with copy of screening questions, background material and information on questioning techniques and screening philosophy**
- Confirm interview dates, times & sites; notify screening team members**
- Preside at the screening**
- After the interview, send copies of the candidates' questionnaires and recommendation report forms to your UniServ Director**



BRIEFING OF SCREENERS

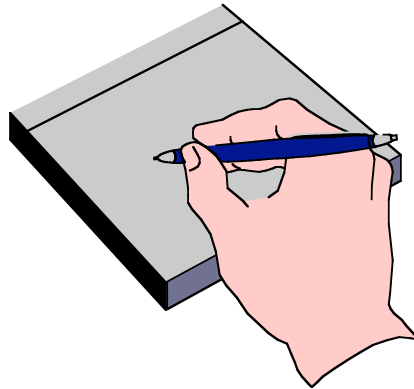
- **Brief the screening team before the screening takes place. This briefing could be just prior to actual screening.**
- **The agenda will cover local association goals and rationale, the interview process, a detailed report on incumbents' accessibility, effectiveness and leadership.**

THE SCREENING PROCESS

- **The screening coordinator reviews the schedule of interviews with the team.**
- **A secretary may be appointed to take detailed notes to allow screening team members to participate fully in the discussion.**
- **Questions may be prioritized in a different order than they are printed on the question sheet. It is not necessary to go over every question if the candidate's written answer is satisfactory.**
- **Additional questions may be asked. However, they should be agreed upon before the screening.**
- **Make sure that any additional questions (unless they are a follow-up to a designated question) come after the questions on the questionnaire.**
- **Ask each candidate the same questions, unless a question is designed to deal with an issue that doesn't apply to all candidates.**
- **Allow one hour as a minimum for each candidate's interview and allow sufficient time between each screening for discussion.**
- **Members of the local political action committee should serve on the screening committee. Others who may serve include the local association president, members of the bargaining team or personnel policies committee, and volunteers from the local association.**

AIDS TO GOOD SCREENING

KEYS TO GOOD LISTENING



- **PREPARE IN ADVANCE** - Remarks and questions prepared in advance, when possible, free your mind for listening.
- **CONCENTRATE** - Focus your mind on what the candidate is saying. Practice shutting out distractions.
- **TAKE NOTES** - This will help you remember important points, but be selective. Trying to write down everything the candidate says can result in being left far behind or in retaining irrelevant details.
- **LIMIT YOUR OWN TALKING** - You can't talk and listen at the same time.
- **ASK QUESTIONS** - If you don't understand something or feel you may have missed a point, clear it up now before it embarrasses you later. Questions for clarification should be addressed through the screening coordinator.
- **DON'T INTERRUPT** - A pause (even a long pause!) doesn't always mean the candidate has finished saying everything he/she intended to say.
- **INTERJECTIONS** - An occasional "Yes", "I see", etc., shows the candidate you're still with him or her...but don't overdo or use as a meaningless comment.
- **LISTEN FOR IDEAS, NOT JUST WORDS** - You want to get the whole picture...not just isolated "bits and pieces".
- **DON'T ARGUE WITH THE CANDIDATE** - Don't allow irritation at things the candidate may say or his/her manner to distract you and disrupt the interview. Avoid making unwarranted assumptions about what the candidate is going to say or jumping to conclusions before the candidate is finished speaking.
- **LISTEN FOR THE OVERTONES** - You can learn a great deal about the candidate from the way he/she says things and the way the candidate reacts to the things you say.

BEGINNING THE INTERVIEW

The screening coordinator welcomes the candidate, introduces the screening team members, and allows the candidate to make an opening statement.

If a candidate's answer to a question is unclear, ask follow-up questions to get a clear answer.

At the conclusion of the interview, allow the candidate to make a brief closing statement.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

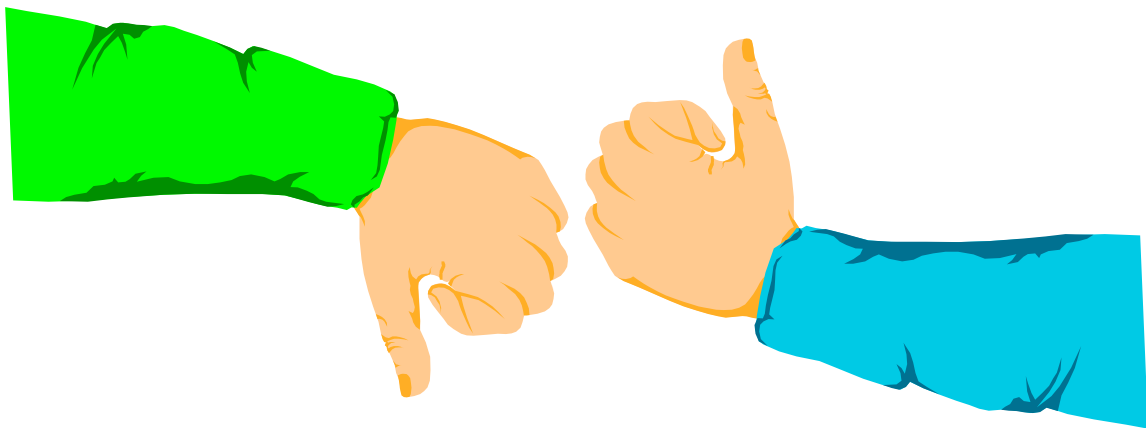
Take time to compile a single detailed answer sheet.

Use the rating scale (0 to 5) to evaluate the sincerity of the candidate's answers. (Zero (0) is weak; five (5) is strong.)

The screening team has three options:

1. No recommendation
2. Support a specific candidate or candidate(s)
3. Do not support a candidate

The screening team coordinator should send a handwritten "thank you" note to each candidate and members of the screening committee.



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

FAX NUMBER: _____

E-MAIL: _____

1. Why do you wish to serve on the school board?

2. a) What do you see as the major problems facing the school district?

b) If elected, what solutions or ideas would you offer for resolving the problems you've noted?

Questionnaire for School Board Candidates (Continued)

3. Please review your qualifications or expertise in the following:

A) Budget

B) Policies

C) Personnel

D) Instruction and Curriculum

c) What other insights and abilities do you feel you can bring to the position of school board member?

4. a) Are you aware of the salary and benefits offered to employees in our district?

b) How do you feel about the salaries/benefits provided by our District in terms of recruiting and training the best possible employees?

Questionnaire for School Board Candidates (Continued)

- c) What priority do you believe needs to be given to efforts to significantly increase employee salaries in this district? Would you support a millage increase designated for employee salary improvements?
5. Would you, as a school board member, support the right of an employee organization, if authorized to do so by a majority of school employees, to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the school district dealing with salaries, working conditions and other matters of professional concern?
6. If our district were to receive unexpected funds, what would you list as the three top priorities for these monies?
7. Should our district experience a serious drop in enrollment and the financial situation necessitate a reduction in expenditures, what area(s) would you recommend for these reductions? How would you see prioritizing the areas in which reductions should take place?
8. Currently, some school districts are experiencing attacks by organized groups calling for censorship of classroom instructional materials, removal of certain books from libraries and reading lists, and restrictions on the academic freedom of public school teachers. As a school board member, how would you deal with such attacks in our school district?

Questionnaire for School Board Candidates (Continued)

9. Schools and school districts today are being urged to implement restructuring programs, charter school programs and site-based decision making. Are you familiar with these programs? How do you feel about such programs?

10. What types of things do you believe the school district can do to improve community relations and build more community support?

11. a) Upon what basis do you feel school employees should be evaluated?

b) Who should conduct the evaluation?

c) Do you feel school administrators should be evaluated?

d) Whom do you see evaluating the Superintendent and what do you feel would be an effective way in which to conduct such an evaluation?

e) Do you support the idea that evaluation policies should be developed jointly by school employees and administrators?

f) What role, if any, should the school board play in evaluation?

Questionnaire for School Board Candidates (Continued)

12. What do you feel is the appropriate use of standardized tests (such as the benchmark tests and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills)? Should results of these tests be used to evaluate teachers or determine teacher pay?

13. a) If you wished to obtain information about the condition of the school system regarding student, teacher and support personnel morale; the physical quality of the environment that exists for learning; the curriculum or any other school-related issues, to whom would you go?

b) Do you feel it appropriate for the local education association to keep you informed on such matters?

14. If recommended by the local association, what role do you see school employees and the association playing in your campaign?

NOTE: PLEASE SEND THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW.

AEA
SCREENING/RECOMMENDATION REPORT FORM
SCHOOL ELECTIONS 2011

Open Race _____ **Incumbent Race** _____ **(Check one)**

UniServ Director: _____

Member in Charge of interview: _____

Local Association Interview Team Members:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

After interviewing the candidates in the _____ school district
on (date) _____ at _____,

we recommend:

Candidate _____

Campaign Address _____

City/State/Zipcode _____

Phones: Campaign or Business _____ **Home:** _____

E-Mail: _____ **Fax:** _____

General Ratings (Low "0" to High "5")

What is the consensus rating of the committee? _____

AEA Screening/Recommendation Report Form (Continued)

	Name of Candidate	Name of Candidate	Name of Candidate
A. Attitude toward school employees. (Does the candidate show respect for school employees and the role they play in public education?)	_____	_____	_____
B. Knowledge. (Is the candidate familiar with the issues? Does the candidate demonstrate open-mindedness?)	_____	_____	_____
C. Campaign. (What kind of campaign will he or she run?)	_____	_____	_____



1. Reason for Serving	_____	_____	_____
2. Problems and Solutions	_____	_____	_____
3. Expertise	_____	_____	_____
4. Employee Salaries	_____	_____	_____
5. Negotiations	_____	_____	_____
6. Unexpected Funds	_____	_____	_____
7. Reduction in Expenditures	_____	_____	_____
8. Attacks on Schools/Censorship	_____	_____	_____
9. Site-Based Decisionmaking	_____	_____	_____
10. Community Relations	_____	_____	_____
11. Evaluations	_____	_____	_____
12. Use of Standardized Tests	_____	_____	_____
13. Obtain Information	_____	_____	_____
14. Campaign Assistance	_____	_____	_____
Total:	_____	_____	_____

COMMENTS: Please be as specific as possible. Attach additional sheet(s) if necessary. Mail this along with a copy of each completed questionnaire to your Association UniServ Director.

SCHOOL ELECTIONS...GETTING READY!



What Do You Need?

- List of those voting in '07, '08, '09 and '10 school elections
- Maps of the school district divided by precinct
- Absentee ballot applications
- List of civic and club leaders

Things to Do During the Campaign

- Letters to the editor
- Cards to friends
- Mailing/Literature drop
- Neighborhood gatherings
- Telephone/Get-Out-The-Vote
- Absentee voting
- Target favorable and turnout precincts
- Develop literature/cards for distribution
- Develop coalitions with other groups
- Schedule candidate appearances

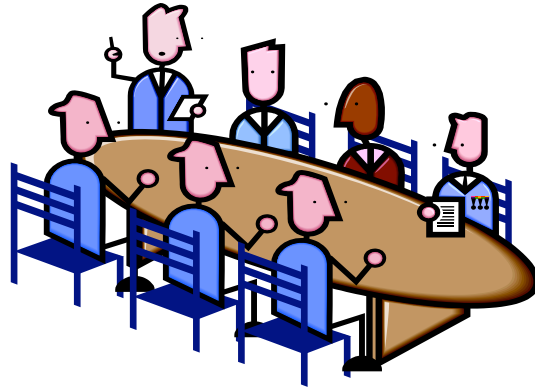
The campaign utilizes the frequent voter list with telephone numbers and methodical, repeated contacts with those voters. Favorable voters and undecideds who are leaning toward our recommended candidate(s) are identified for Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) contacts.

A chairperson for each activity must be identified and made part of a campaign organization.

Preparation of the Candidate

The candidate should be briefed on the overall assets of the school system, the problems of the system, as well as needs of the system.

THE CANDIDATE



Factors to Look for in Determining Whether or Not to Support a Candidate

Issues and attitudes

Attitude toward school employees

Knowledge about the issues

Positions on the issues important to the Association

Name recognition

Manpower availability – power base

Finances – To how much money does the candidate have access?

Personality

Candidate background

Past record, both perceived and real

Electability

Who else is in the race?

Other organizational support

Issues to which the candidate is related

Ability to project a winning image

Skeletons – does the candidate have any in the closet?

Ability – to take advice

Attitude toward the media

Attitude toward fundraising

Attitude toward winning

Attitude toward hard work

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN



THEME DEVELOPMENT

- Why is the candidate running?
- What is his/her concept of the job?
- How do the candidates differ? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Records of each?
- What is the meaning of the campaign?
- What message is the campaign trying to get across?
- Is it likely that the message will develop as the issue of the campaign?

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

- How badly do the candidate and his/her campaign workers want to win?
- How many votes are needed to win?
- Where are the votes?
- How can undecided voters be identified and persuaded?
- How can the base support be solidified?
- How can the vote be turned out?
- What are the local issues?
- What will be the strategy of the opponent?
- How much time is the candidate committing to the campaign?
- Will a sufficient amount of money be raised to carry out the strategy?

VOTING EXPECTATIONS

- What is the demographic breakdown of the district?
- What will be the strongest areas? Which will be most easily organized?
- What will be the weakest areas?
- What will be the turnout by precinct?
- What groups will likely influence the outcome of the election?
- How can the support of these groups be gained?

VOLUNTEERS

- How many volunteers will be needed? How many will be available?
- What will they be used for?
- Who will recruit the volunteers?
- How will the volunteers be managed?
- How can the volunteers be made to feel they are an essential part of the campaign?

Developing a Strategy for a Political Campaign (Continued)

COMMUNICATIONS

- What is the nature of the media market?
- Is it possible to get free media coverage? Can letters to the editor be effective?
- How will news releases be handled?
- How can voter contact programs reinforce the message?
- What media events should be planned?
- What printed materials could be effectively used?
- What paid media should be used to get the message across? Radio? TV? Newspapers? Direct Mail? Billboards? Lawn signs? Bumper Stickers? Telephone? How should each be utilized?

SCHEDULING THE CANDIDATE'S TIME

- How can the candidate's time best be used?
- Who will coordinate and advance the candidate's schedule?
- When will a plan be completed for the best use of the candidate's time?

RESEARCH

- What opposition research needs to be done? How soon?
- Will polling be done? When? How will the results be used?
- What type of targeting will be done?

VOTER CONTACT AND GET-OUT-THE VOTE (GOTV)

- Will the campaign need telephone banks?
- How important is a GOTV effort?
- Is there a clearly defined GOTV plan?
- Are sufficient resources available for a GOTV effort?





Targeting is a method of analyzing past voter behavior so you can make campaign management decisions concerning the best allocation of your limited resources.

Targeting is both an art and a science.

The art of targeting is based on your political judgment and knowledge of the area. The science of targeting is drawn from election statistics, which you will have to arrange and manipulate.

Targeting will locate the precise localities in which to carry out our three campaign activities. These are:

- Voter registration
- Persuasion
- Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV)

There are four measurements of voter behavior which are needed to complete your targeting formula. The figures are to be by precinct or in some cases intermediate voting areas. These measurements are:

- Size - total current registration
- Turnout - percent of registered voters who voted
- Performance - percent of voters who support your political party, candidate, or issues
- Persuadability - percent of voters, in the same election, voting for candidates belonging to different parties or supporting different interests

There are five steps to the successful completion of precinct targeting. These are:

- Selection of data - deciding which past election results are most applicable to your campaign
- Acquisition of data - found in public records at the County Courthouse
- Arrangement of data - using appropriate forms to arrange our raw data
- Manipulation of data - devising formulas which will transform the raw data into usable information.
- Ranking the data - so we can direct campaign activities into the most productive areas

Contact AEA Government Relations or your UniServ Director for assistance with targeting.

WHAT'S WORKING IN MILLAGE CAMPAIGNS

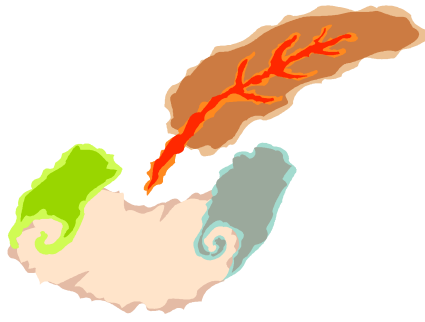


Things That Are Working

- Appointment of small campaign steering committee that meets frequently
- Recruitment of many volunteers who are responsible for specific, clearly defined campaign tasks
- Heavy work in “Yes” precincts
- Specialized Get-Out-The-Vote drives
- Individualized neighborhood campaigning
- Special school-building-oriented communications to parents
- Targeting of the “young” voter
- Repetitive messages that are clearly understood by voters
- Issuance of messages that link popular school activities with millage need
- Stream of endorsements issued periodically during campaign
- Enthusiasm, interest, and a positive approach

Things that do not seem to work

- Complicated school finance lessons
- Canned organization speeches with standard flip-chart presentations
- Uniform system-wide campaign that does not allow for neighborhood differences
- Negative campaigns that blame people or state government for the financial need
- Hazy campaigns that give voters no concrete reason to vote “Yes”
- Long fact sheets filled with hard-to-read copy



CHECKLIST FOR YOUR MILLAGE CAMPAIGN

1. Work hard to get citizen volunteers...that's the key to passing millages. Get volunteers to do a limited number of duties. Don't expect the volunteers to do too much since they have limited time.
2. Don't waste time on campaign strategies that produce limited results. For example, don't spend time collecting endorsements that fail to arouse voter interest.
3. Have committees carefully assigned so that each committee knows what is expected.
4. Set up a pool of workers who can be called on at a moment's notice for campaign duties (poster distribution, door-to-door fliers, automobile use, registration drive, etc.)
5. Write a blunt, candid letter to raise campaign funds.
6. Have a master calendar with every campaign activity listed. Use a large calendar that can be easily posted in the millage committee campaign room.
7. Identify by name and number of children, people who have moved into the district in recent months.
8. Determine through canvassing (either by telephone or door-to-door) where the greatest strength is in "yes" votes and make certain efforts are made to get out the vote in those areas. Analyze precincts street-by-street.
9. Get voter lists from past millage elections...pinpoint people who are likely to vote.
10. Work hard to enlist the support of younger parents...they usually have a low voter turnout record.
11. Canvass apartment areas. Here is a good "yes" vote bloc...particularly in the homes of preschool parents.
12. Inform people about absentee ballots (particularly college students, traveling business people, etc.)
13. Avoid long fact sheets. Nobody reads them.

Specialized Communication Targets for Millage Campaigns

Here are some audiences that could receive personalized communications:

- Union members
- Recent high school graduates
- University students still residing in community
- Season ticket holders
- Parents of newly-registered kindergarten students
- Newcomers to the community
- School aides and volunteers
- Parent organization members
- Business people
- Real estate agents
- Clergy
- 18 to 21 year-olds
- Teacher association members who work elsewhere but live in the community
- Parents of newly-registered pupils coming to public schools
- Parents of newborn children

THEMES FOR MILLAGE CAMPAIGNS

A catchy, simple slogan is a campaign "must". Here are a few slogans:

"Vote YES for Children!" "This is the YES Year!"

"Kids COUNT in (city name)!" "We're Counting on You!"

"We Care!" "Keep Our Schools Open!"

"Our Kids Need Your Help!" "Put Children First!"

"Save Our Schools!" "PLEASE! For the Kids' Sake!"

"Education Pays!" "Wanted: Room for Learning!"

"Let's Pull for the Schools!" "Together We Can!"

"Children First!" "Our Kids Deserve the Best!"

