

by **Todd Zeidler** on **Wed, 25 Oct at 10:10 AM** via **Email**

PDC Guidance Feedback - School Districts

External Email

Dear Public Disclosure Commission Guidance Review Committee -

I would like to take this opportunity to share my perspective and comment about updates to the election guidance for school districts. As a school district communications professional, I feel a very important duty to provide the facts about levy and bond measures to help inform our community as they prepare to vote. Over and over, we have heard from our community specifically about levies with questions on what they fund, how they work, why they are necessary, what the cost is to taxpayers, and more.

We have conducted listening sessions with community members through ThoughtExchange and other avenues, but we feel handcuffed in today's information glut that our infrequent information is getting lost. How can it be that if we stick to the facts, we can't continue to put the facts in front of people as much as possible? In my opinion the guidance should be more based on the information itself rather than limiting the frequency. We as school districts continually and regularly communicate with our families about all kinds of information and issues, yet, when it comes to levy/bond information, we are very restricted in our frequency of dissemination.

I'd like to share an example to help illustrate how we operate when it comes to disseminating information. Non-levy/bond example: We have Late Start Wednesdays, but there are five dates that we have NO Late Start on a Wednesday during the course of the school year. Based on feedback through our annual communications surveys with families, our plan to ensure that families are aware and prepared for a schedule change on those five dates throughout the year includes more than 24 touchpoints from the district and additional touchpoints by each individual school. We publish these dates on the web, social media and "Welcome to the School Year" info emails, then with each date, we send an email reminder the week before and the night before. In addition, we share these dates on issued calendars and our individual schools put up social media reminders and include it in email communications with their families. Even with this level of outreach around a single topic, we still have families miss the message.

Those types of outreach plans are based on the annual communications survey of our parents, who ranked some form of electronic communications as each of the top 5 ways they prefer to receive information. Our printed/mailed newsletter ranked #6. Also in this survey, which had 655 respondents, only 50.7% said they read the newsletter at all, which is mailed to every household in the school district, parent of a student or not. Furthermore, of that 50.7%, only 21.6% said they read the entire newsletter.

To wrap up my comment, if we are allowed only one printed piece sent to our families about bonds/levies in an election cycle, which will be read by a maximum of half of our community (likely less due to survey results around how much of it they read), and only a limited number of social media posts (based on the PDC fine Highline Schools received for posting too frequently), how can we help our community understand the ballot measure if the message never cuts through the glut we all experience in the electronic world? As I'm sure you know, changes in the communications landscape, the importance of repetition in today's information glut, and the role of storytelling in modern communication all contribute to the need to update the guidance around what school districts can and can't do regarding bonds/levies. Please consider removing limits on the frequency, while still maintaining the integrity of the information shared by a school district in keeping it to just the facts.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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