

November 2008

Election Tool Kit

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Introduction

Enclosed you will find the 2008 Election Tool Kit provided by Citizens 4 DC Schools. Citizens 4 DC Schools is an advocacy group made up of community members and parents who wholeheartedly support the efforts of the Douglas County School District. This group believes that the School District is a positive force in our community. We refuse to let the quality of DCSD slip due to inadequate funding and support.

This advocacy group's goal is to inform citizens about the need to more effectively invest in Douglas County's public education system. The ultimate objective is to educate the public on the issues of school funding, gain momentum for additional funds to support schools, and pass a School District bond and budget measure in November 2008.

In the past, Citizens 4 DC Schools has helped the School District organize, manage and run election campaigns. The Douglas County School District Board of Education is considering asking County voters to support a bond and budget measure in the November 2008 election. Additional funds are needed now just to help DCSD maintain its current programming, level of services and high levels of student achievement.

Efforts are under way to build a broad coalition of supporters representing business owners, community groups, parent groups, and other stakeholder groups to work in support of

DCSD. Douglas County's investment in public education is below Denver Metro area averages. We know below average is not good enough for our community and not good enough to prepare our kids for the future.

Thank you for your support of this important effort!

Getting started

Work as a team to share information with stakeholders and gather feedback about the upcoming DCSD bond and budget election messages in this tool kit. Feedback will inform how we take the message to the broader Douglas County public.

Inside this tool kit, you will find tips for organizing and hosting group stakeholder conversations, a sample agenda, suggested talking points and handouts about the 2008 election. Frequently asked questions, tips for public speaking and dealing with pushback are also included.

For more information, access the Citizens 4 DC Schools website: www.Citizens4DCSchools.com. This document is downloadable from this site, along with other pieces of information supporters can use to educate stakeholders.

To contact Citizens 4 DC Schools, email info@Citizens4DCSchools.com.

For more factual information about the Douglas County School District's bond and budget measure, visit www.dcsdk12.org. Click on "Bond/Override Info."

How to use the 2008 Election Toolkit

Who is it for?

This community conversations tool kit is designed for individual School, Department and Feeder Area election teams – principals, department leaders, school board members, citizen advocates, and employees - that have been communicating regularly with Douglas County voters about the need for a 2008 DCSD bond and budget election.

Phase One: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow Presentations

Information sharing during phase I of the 2008 bond and budget election roll out started with the internal DCSD “family” (employees, involved parents and school leaders), and now moves to larger groups of community stakeholders and eventually will target the broader voting public.

Goals:

- 1) Tell the story of where DCSD has been and where it is going as it approaches its 50th Year Anniversary.
- 2) Share budget pressure information, fiscal comparisons of DCSD to neighboring districts, and information regarding stakeholder requested programming options.
- 3) Solicit feedback from key internal stakeholders regarding programming enhancements planned for with new monies.

The “Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow” presentations can be found on: www.dcsdk12.org or www.citizens4DCschools.com.

Phase Two: Ensuring Student Success Presentations

Broader community outreach efforts occur once the DCSD Board of Education members approve the basic components of the 2008 bond and budget election package. Phase two of Road to November 2008 Election planning begins with School and District teams hosting conversations with groups of key stakeholders, such as parent/teacher organizations, parents, business leaders, community service groups and other key members of the Douglas County community.

Goals: Be purposeful and strategic about how we move forward, keep the work manageable for site and feeder election teams and build a chorus of supporters calling for increased financial support for Douglas County School District

Phase Three: Get Out the Vote!

Citizens 4DC Schools will coordinate voter publicity activities throughout Douglas County starting in August 2008, ramping up in September and on through Election Day. These activities will include: fund raising, distribution of campaign literature and yard signs, continued presentations at community forums and events, solicitation of elected officials’ endorsements and building a coalition of community support for our schools. Community and school events will be targeted for information sharing and recruitment of DCSD supporters. Door –to-door canvassing of voters will be needed to explain the needs of DCSD and to make a compelling case for support.

Continuing internal communications

Employees and school board members are lead communicators – a cadre of people who can speak accurately and firsthand about the schools where they work.

The campaign's success hinges on making sure employees and school board members are well-informed and can speak with one voice about the need for additional funding and an increase to the mil levy.

Considering that more than 6,500 people work full time for Douglas County School District – serving more than 52,000 students – DCSD has a wealth of ambassadors. School employees are the best investment we can make in our communications efforts. Involve them, train them and inform them. Don't leave them behind! They are the people our community trusts most for credible information about schools – followed by students themselves, parents and then media.

Simple strategies

- Place the Citizens 4 DC Schools handout from this tool kit in workrooms and employee lounges.
- Include regular mentions in employee print and electronic newsletters and intranet notices.
- Begin staff meetings by citing a statistic and encouraging employees to visit the District web site (www.dcsdk12.org) and click on Bond/Override Info.
- Brief DCSD DVD – see Parent Lead or school Principal for copy

In a recent poll, 70% of more than 400 registered Douglas County voters surveyed had positive feelings towards teachers and neighborhood school leaders. The key to a successful election will be to arm our trusted employees with information.

Repetition is a communications strategy

The way to make a lasting impression is to repeat, repeat, repeat.

People need to hear a message *nine to 12 times* before it sinks in. Are you repeating these messages in multiple ways over time? You have lots of tools at your fingertips. Visit www.Citizens4DCSchools.com, or www.dcsdk12.org under "Bond/Override Info" which is updated regularly, for ideas.

Employees are glad to know this information first – before they start hearing about it from parents at parent teacher conferences or people who might stop them in the grocery store.

Community and Stakeholder Conversations

Hosting Community Conversations

Phase two of the campaign begins with school teams hosting one-hour conversations with small groups of key stakeholders, such as leaders of parent organizations, business leaders, community members, residents, and prospective parents in their communities.

Start with the “family” (our own employees and school board members), move to small groups of community stakeholders and then target the broader public. Broader community outreach efforts would occur after school teams hold stakeholder conversations.

The materials in this tool kit can be customized for shorter or longer meetings. Whatever their length, these meetings should be conversational and engaging – more of a dialogue and less of a presentation.

Four weeks out

- Select a time, date and location.
- Confirm a room to accommodate setup for a small-group discussion, including a DVD player and TV.
- Determine School and District team participants (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, DOS, Board members and DCFT leaders).
- Discuss suggested meeting agenda with other site team members and customize as needed.
- Call or email 15 to 20 stakeholders to invite them to the meeting.

- Secure a DCSD Anticipating the Future DVD

One week out

- Email a reminder notice, driving and parking directions, and an outline of the agenda to participants.
- Arrange for refreshments (like snacks & soft drinks) and meeting supplies.
- Make copies of the agenda, handouts and sign-up forms. (See the “Meeting handouts” section in this tool kit.)
- Print a table-top name tent identifying each participant.

Day of meeting

- Post a front door sign identifying the meeting and room location.
- Set up the room (tables and chairs, name tents, refreshments, TV, etc.).
- After meeting, collect sign-up forms. (See the “Meeting handouts” section in this tool kit.)
- Complete a feedback form. (See the “Resources” section in this tool kit.)

Next day

- Submit feedback form and sign-up forms per directions on forms.
- Review with school district participants what worked and what can be improved for next time.
- Send a thank-you letter or email to those who attended, and encourage them to visit www.Citizens4DCSchools.com.

Selecting participants for small-group stakeholder conversations

If you invite 15 to 20 stakeholders, small-group conversations might include about a dozen individuals who are able to attend. We suggest limiting the meetings or breaking large groups in to 12 people to allow ample time for everyone to speak.

You might mix attendees to get broad-based views, such as parents and business leaders to the same meeting. If you experience trouble attracting attendance, try this “Plan B” option: Schedule one-on-one phone calls with individual leaders to begin to share the message. (Employees should use personal phones and not District-issued equipment)

School Teams

- Advisory groups (for example, SAC, PTO/PTA)
- Youth organizations (for example, Boys & Girls Clubs and Scouts, after-school recreation providers, church groups)
- School key communicators: opinion leaders who have credibility, speak accurately about the school district, correct misinformation, keep in touch with school officials, and immediately report misperceptions and inaccuracies
- Parents
- Retired employees
- Student councils
- Citizen advocacy groups

Cabinet’s Speaker’s Bureau will cover: City and county governments

- County commissioners
- City Council members & elected officials
- Retiree groups and Realtor Associations
- Intergovernmental consortiums (for example, the Denver Regional Council of Governments, DC Partnership, HRCA, and Library Board)
- Civic organizations (for example, Kiwanis, Optimists and Rotary)
- Education foundations and associations
- Chambers of commerce and other similar business groups (CREDCO, PEDCO, SWEDCO, etc.)
- Faith-based organizations
- Early childhood providers
- Political parties

Inviting participants to small-group stakeholder conversations

Consider personally inviting participants with a phone call and following up with an email to ensure maximum participation.

Sample invitation

Please join us from [X-X time] on [day, date] at [location] for a conversation about our valuable community asset: Douglas County School District. We would like to introduce you to Vote Yes on 3A and 3B, Quality Schools = Quality Community, an initiative to inform public school stakeholders about the need to more effectively invest in public education in Douglas County.

Colorado's investment in public education is below national averages. Douglas County's investment in public education is below Metro area averages. The solution must come from a shared effort among local residents.

Members of the Citizens 4 DC Schools advocacy group and School District leaders are meeting with community groups across the County representing business, parent groups, senior citizens, community services and other stakeholder groups to build a broad coalition that can work to build support for additional funding for DCSD. Please let us know by [date] whether you can attend this conversation by calling [phone number] or emailing [address].

[name, title, school district]

Sample follow-up note

Thank you for making time to participate in our recent conversation about Douglas County School District. It was a rich discussion, and I will forward feedback to the Board of Education and School District leaders as they work toward next steps.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to submit the sign-up form you received at our meeting to begin receiving periodic email updates about Citizens for Douglas County Schools and the campaign for Yes Votes on 3A and 3B. You also can sign up at www.Citizens4DCSchools.com.

Again, thanks. Feel free to contact me if I can provide additional information.

[name, title, school district]

Facilitating small-group stakeholder conversations

Depending on the meeting's length and the audience's depth of knowledge, consider using the following suggested one-hour meeting outline and talking points – and the agenda handout in this tool kit.

Use your discretion in selecting data and information most appropriate to the audience. (See the “Resources” section in this tool kit.) Include local data and anecdotes to make the presentation more relevant to your community.

- Welcome and introductions (5 to 10 minutes)
Thanks for joining us today for a conversation about how Douglas County invests in public education. [Introduce yourself and ask others to do the same.]

To set the stage, I'd like to begin by playing a DVD called Anticipating the Future. It was produced by Douglas County School District. Then we'd like to briefly talk about the Citizens 4 DC Schools initiative before moving into our conversation.

- DVD presentation
- About Vote Yes on 3A and 3B for Douglas County School District – Quality Schools = Quality Community

As you just saw, Douglas County School District is working hard to prepare future generations to compete globally and become citizens who can positively impact our community. DCSD can't do it without community support. Citizens 4 DC Schools is a group of parents, business owners, and community partners, representing supporters of Douglas County School District.

We started this spring educating parents, employees and school

board members about the need to invest in public education.

Our next step is to begin building a chorus of supporters, so we're hosting conversations with DCSD stakeholders and other essential service providers for children in our community.

The DVD and early power point presentations were used to help educate our own employees. But the initiative is about educating the community about the needs and challenges of DCSD. Right now, Douglas County's investment in public education is below Denver Metro area averages. Below average is not good enough and will not be sufficient to maintain the high level programming being offered our children.

At best, Douglas County School District must focus on maintaining its existing programming – unable to continue to improve and expand offerings for its students. This is not what we want as our community continues to grow.

We'd like to talk with you about what the future will bring for our children with a successful election campaign.

- **Group discussion** (30 to 45 minutes)

1. What are your general reactions?
2. What kinds of investments should we be making now in education that we currently are not?
3. Let's talk more about Douglas County School District. What does "Quality Schools = Quality Community" look like to you? What does "Quality Schools = Quality Community" mean to you? [For example, we have a skilled work force prepared for global competition etc.]
4. What would you be willing to do to help spread the word about this initiative?

How did it go?

Please forward your successes and challenges by submitting the feedback form on page 20 in this tool kit. You can also find the feedback form online at www.Citizens4DCSchools.com.

- **Wrap-up** (5 minutes)

- Thanks for sharing your ideas today.
- If Douglas County continues what we're doing right now, we're going to see changes in the high-achieving School District.
- We need to ensure additional local voter support occurs.
- We must Vote Yes on 3A and 3B to ensure Quality Schools and a Quality Community.
- We encourage you to fill out the sign-up form if you'd like to get email updates about our work.
- We also encourage you to spread the word that Douglas County's investment in public education is below Denver Metro area averages – and that we need to fix that.
- *We'll be sending you info pieces via email. If you support this movement, please send that communication to 10 of your friends/contacts.*
- Feel free to refer people to www.Citizens4DCSchools.com for information.

RESOURCES

Key messages and talking points

Based on input from District teams that participated in phase one of the Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow presentation, we have developed the following messages to use as you continue to communicate internally and also move the discussion into your community.

Strategic messages should be repeated in every opportunity such as presentations, meetings and one-on-one conversations.

While the three messages should be used regularly and consistently, please do not feel as if you must repeat every talking point in meetings or presentations. Instead, pick and choose the talking points that will appeal most to your audience. Customize them with examples, stories and compelling data specific to your community. Think about what will connect most with your audience. Ideas for localizing messages can be found in this toolkit.

Message One: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow – Tipping Point

- Douglas County School District receives the lowest per student funding in the Denver Metro area.
- State funding for public education is inadequate.
- It's our responsibility to create the future we want for ourselves and for our children.
- *For 33 cents a day, DCSD would receive necessary bond and budget override funds needed to build new schools, renovate and maintain existing facilities, keep up with growth and build out of 4-track, maintain and improve academic performance, recruit and retain the best workforce, maintain and improve technology and strategically respond to enrollment growth.*
- Taking care of public education, its services and programs contribute to a community's quality of life.
- Douglas County is a wealthy county. We rank sixth in the country in per capita income. Yet, our taxes for public education are among the lowest – including residential and business property tax, state and local taxes, and sales tax.
- State law allows school districts to ask local voters to fund up to 20% of the state's total program funding. So far, Douglas County voters have approved just over 10% for DCSD.
- DCSD has reached a "tipping point" where the total cost to operate 4-track year-round schools annually equates to the cost of building the necessary additional seats. DCSD's business plan for the future includes saving taxpayer dollars building enough schools to accommodate growing student enrollment, and transitioning all schools away from the more costly 4-track, year-round school calendar. This plan requires additional funding.
- Not only will projected revenues not be enough to maintain school buildings, and educational programs, they also will not be enough to pay for any new or expanded services to accommodate growth.
- Current levels of technology infrastructure are inadequate to provide students and teachers the necessary access to 21st Century learning skills needed to compete in a global marketplace. This infrastructure greatly limits students, teachers and parents from available resources.
- DCSD continues to be one of the highest achieving school districts in the region.
- Without additional resources, DCSD will not be able to maintain its existing levels of student achievement or programming.
- No additional funding will result in no new construction of school facilities, which could impact class sizes and cause overcrowded classrooms.



Message Two: Ensuring Student Success

- Education is the best investment a Douglas County citizen can make.
- Douglas County School District is one of the highest achieving school districts in the state.
- The District has stretched every dollar in innovative programs to serve ALL students. Without additional funding, the excellent services provided our stakeholders will need to be reduced and/or eliminated.
- DCSD is committed to ensuring 100% of its graduates will be prepared for college and/or the work force. Students will have strong academic skills and rigorous graduation requirements, be competitive in the global marketplace, acquire skills to become responsible citizens, and be provided varied programming to meet diverse needs.
- Colorado has the second highest percentage of college graduates in the nation. DCSD has an excellent track record of helping students prepare for college with rigorous graduation requirements. These requirements cost an additional \$15M per year above the funding provided by the state.
- Research shows that a college education yields important social and economic benefits. Those with a bachelor's degree earn almost \$1 million more than high school graduates over a lifetime.
- From preschool through college, our public schools must graduate more workers with the know-how to participate in our changing economy, solve increasingly complex problems, communicate effectively using a variety of media, work in teams to create and innovate, and continually adapt to rapid change.
- Tools like technology, which are critical to a students' successful future in a global marketplace, are unfunded by the state. DCSD is far behind competing school districts and in danger of falling farther behind in providing access to these tools.
- DCSD has reached a point where it not only needs to build additional schools to manage growth, but now needs to pour additional dollars into the renovation and remodel of older, existing facilities. Nearly half of the bond package will be used to renovate aging facilities and to improve District infrastructure.
- Research ties the quality of education to a community's quality of life. Between 2% and 10% of a Single Family Home's value is attributable to a high-quality school district.
- DCSD is the largest employer in the Douglas County and is a major contributor to the economic vitality of the County.

Message three – Vote Yes on 3A and 3B, Quality Schools = Quality Community

- Douglas County School District needs additional funding to prepare students of today to compete in the global economy.
- Education is the best investment Douglas County can make.
- Voters have the opportunity to approve two measures 3A for \$17 million to the District's operational budget, and 3B for \$395 million for construction of 10 new elementary schools, repairs, renovations and updates for almost 50 District schools, and major technology improvements for ALL schools.
- The combined cost for BOTH measures is an additional **33 cents** (or \$10 a month) on an average Douglas County home of \$372,000.
- Douglas County School District receives the lowest funding per student in the Denver Metro area.
- Between 2-10% of a single-family home's value is attributable to the quality of the local school district. Douglas County property owners will continue to benefit from the high quality of DCSD.
- Additional funds are needed to maintain and improve academic achievement.
- DCSD needs to improve 21st Century technology capabilities.
- 10 new elementary schools are needed in order to keep up with projected growth, and strategically begin to move all elementary schools off 4-track.
- Allow DCSD to compete with neighboring districts to recruit and retain the best work force for our students.
- More than 54,000 students are served by Douglas County School District. More than 2,000 new students are anticipated every school year through 2012.
- FAILURE of 3A & 3B will result in: no additional space to accommodate student enrollment growth; class sizes will go up, more overcrowded classrooms and schools; nearly all elementary schools will move to 4-track; DCSD will lose the best teachers due to inability to maintain competitive compensation; technology capabilities will fall farther behind; an additional \$10 million in necessary budget reductions for the 2009-10 school year will impact classrooms and students.
- Today's students will work with technology that has not been invented. Today's teachers are preparing students for jobs that don't exist right now.

Customizing Messages

Tips to customize messages for your community:

- In 2007-08 Colorado invested on average \$7,939 per pupil, which is \$1,034 per pupil less than the national average. Douglas County School District received \$6,416 per pupil, which is \$1,523 less than the Colorado average – **a full \$2,557 less than the national average** for each of its 52,000 students.
- Amendment 23 funding shrinks in 2011. K-12 funding is slated to continue to increase by the rate of inflation – not by inflation plus 1 percent. That 1 percent loss in investment means = \$5M in DCSD.
- *For Feeder Areas with several schools on 4-track:* Additional funding would allow DCSD to systematically build off of the 4-track calendar.
- Currently, additional staffing, administration and utility expenses add up to more than \$200,000 per 4-track site, per year. DCSD has reached a “tipping point” where the total cost to operate 4-track year-round schools annually equates to the cost of building the necessary additional seats.
- Building 5 elementary schools in addition to building schools needed to keep up with growth, and adjusting some boundaries, will allow all elementary schools to move to conventional calendars.
- Without additional funding to build necessary schools, the number of 4-track schools will grow to 49 by 2028 – with some schools currently on conventional or modified calendars faced with the reality of moving back onto 4-track to accommodate student growth. The operations deficit will increase from \$4M to \$9.8M.
- Schools are doing more than ever before. To meet the

federal No Child Left Behind mandate that students achieve 100 percent proficiency by 2013, schools are investing more to serve students' varied learning needs. In the past five years, our student population has changed to include more students learning English or those who qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Suggestions to customize messages for specific audiences:

- *Business leaders:* smart, prepared work force for the changing economy; fair taxes
- *Classified K-12 staff:* examples of funding changes they have seen in their schools
- *Community organizations:* a focus on what is best for the common good
- *Community members:* schools are meeting more needs than ever before; good schools mean good property values; fair taxes
- *Democratic leaders:* a focus on the common good; fair taxes
- *Republican leaders:* efficiency; fair taxes
- *Parents:* preparing children for success in the world in which they will work
- *Second homeowners:* good schools mean good property values
- *Senior citizens and retirees:* preparing their grandchildren for success in the world in which they will work; teaching character education, work ethic; better managing the increasing costs of health care and Medicaid; good schools mean good property values
- *Teachers:* classroom impact of changing student demographics data

Data

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow – Tipping Point

More than half of the District's 28,406 elementary school students attend classes in year-round schools. In the late 1980's, DCSD leaders along with the Board of Education adopted the 4-track, year-round concept as a way to barely keep up with the county's tremendous growth. At the time, DCSD did not have the financial capacity to build enough schools to house incoming students because assessed valuation of all property within District boundaries was insufficient. Circumstances have changed and DCSD can now raise the necessary capital monies to build more schools.

Growth will continue to be a challenge as DCSD adds between 2,000 and 2,500 new students a year. While the 4-track, year-round calendar saves construction costs because 25 percent more students can occupy the same space, the operational inefficiency of 4-track is more expensive to operate annually. Additional staffing, administration and utility expenses add up to more than \$200,000 per 4-track site, per year. DCSD has reached a "tipping point" where the total cost to operate 4-track year-round schools annually equates to the cost of building the necessary additional seats. The number of 4-track schools will grow to 49 by 2028 if DCSD stays on this path and the operations deficit will increase from \$4M to \$9.8M.

Building 5 elementary schools in addition to building schools needed to keep up with growth, and adjusting some boundaries, will allow all elementary schools to move to conventional calendars.

Technology

Technology has no dedicated funding stream. Since 2002-03, technology costs have increased 187% to \$15.4M. DCSD technology needs have exceeded capacity of current infrastructure. *An average DCSD High School only has the network capacity of 5 Douglas County homes!* Voter approved bond and override resources are needed to provide the above 21st Century technology capabilities.

Transportation

DCSD receives minimal funding from the state for transporting students – 25 cents on the dollar. Costs continue to rise. DCSD buses drive more than 4.5 times around the world in one five-day week transporting students to and from school. Since 2003, fuel costs have increased 353%. DCSD spent more than \$2.3 million in the 2007-08 school year on diesel fuel costs. Transportation of students is not required by law.

K-12 education

Almost 800,000 students are enrolled in Colorado's public schools in nearly 180 school districts. Various calculations rank Colorado between 37th and 49th in investment in public education. The most recent data show:

- Colorado average per pupil investment: \$7,939
- DCSD receives the lowest per pupil funding in the Denver Metro Area.
- For 30 cents a day for both additional bond and budget override funds, DCSD would

Speaking publicly

Whether you are hosting a small-group conversation or making a presentation to a larger group, being prepared and having control of your message are prerequisites for establishing a connection with people. Here are some tips for public speaking:

- ✓ **Know your material.**
Use humor, personal stories and conversational language – that way you won't easily forget what to say.
- ✓ **Know the room.**
Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
- ✓ **Know the audience.**
Greet people as they arrive. Work the room. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to strangers.
- ✓ **Relax.**
Begin by addressing the audience. It buys you time and calms your nerves. Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything.
- ✓ **Realize that people want you to succeed.**
Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you.
- ✓ **Start with eye contact.**
Don't just pass your gaze throughout the room; try to focus on individual listeners and connect with them by looking directly in their eyes for 5-10 seconds.
- ✓ **Smile.**
- ✓ **Stay true to your personality.**
Respond naturally to what you feel and say.
- ✓ **Vary your speaking position.**
Move from one spot to another as you hit different points.

Source: Toastmasters International

Dealing with pushback

When things go awry, what you can control is your reaction. Do expect to hear some pushback from staff, stakeholders and the community during conversations about additional funding for Douglas County School District. However, it is our experience that limiting the number of meeting participants to 12 people leads to a richer, more in-depth conversation and minimizes grandstanding. Consider both positive reactions and the criticisms.

While it is difficult to respond positively to people who are in attack mode, you can respectfully neutralize the situation:

- Listen.
- Show empathy.
- Acknowledge their concern.
- Ask questions to get to the heart of their concern.
- Accept that there may be some truth in what they are saying.
- Don't get defensive.
- Ask to hear from others who haven't had a chance to speak or who may have opinions different from those of the critic.
- Say what you can and will do, follow up, if appropriate.
- Remember, you don't have all the answers.
- Stay focused on the overall conversation.

Report the most common reactions to the message that you encounter to info@Citizens4DCschools.com so that we may assist you with preparing answers and/or a response!



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the difference between a bond and budget election?

Bond: property, facilities, equipment

Budget: dollars for operations, teachers and staff to maintain current programs and implement program improvements

Q: What is a bond?

A bond is a loan; in other words, a security using different terminology. The issuer is equivalent to the borrower, the bond holder to the lender, the capital project being the investment, and the coupon equating to the interest rate.

Q: What is the purpose of a bond?

Bond funds are used to build new schools, purchase facilities and equipment.

Q: What is a mil levy?

A mil levy is a property tax rate based on dollars per thousand of assessed valuation. For example, a mil levy of 50 means \$50 of tax per \$1,000 in assessed value. Mill levies are placed by a taxing district such as a school district on property owners in the district.

Q: DCSD's currently has 46.5 mils. What do neighboring districts have?

Area school district Mil Levies FY 2005-06

District	Total Levy
Adams 12	68.763
Poudre	52.496
Cherry Creek	51.132
Jeffco	51.098
Littleton	49.509
Westminster	48.154
Aurora	47.003
Douglas County	46.500

Q: What is property tax?

The general property tax is levied on land and buildings located within the boundaries of the school district. Every owner of private and business property in the school district, including public utilities, pays this tax. Property owned by governmental, charitable, and religious institutions is exempt from taxation.

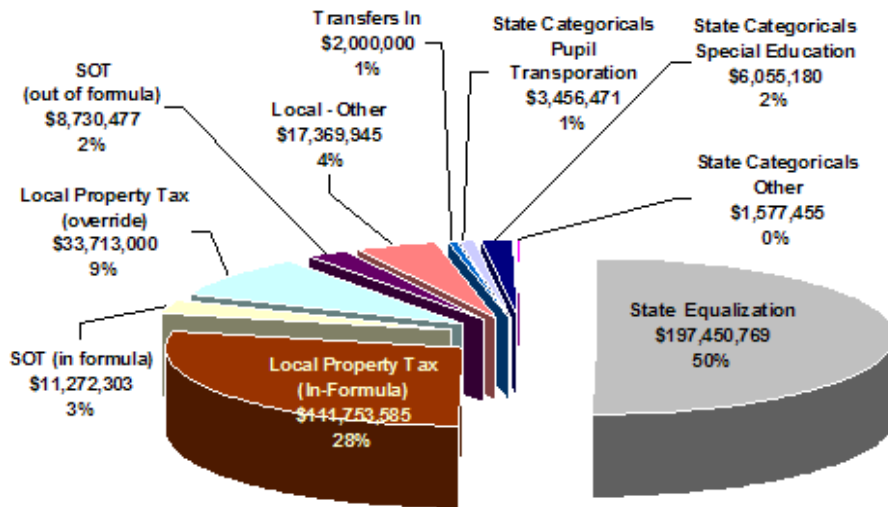
Q: What do property taxes fund?

Property taxes provide local government their primary source of funding. School districts are very dependent upon property tax revenues. Sixty cents of every dollar collected in property tax revenue is dedicated to K-12 funding.

Frequently Asked Questions, *continued*

Q: Where does school funding come from?

Local tax revenue (property tax, specific ownership) + intergovernmental (transportation, charter reimbursement, G/T, Voc Ed, Except Child Ed) + other local revenues
(See chart below for School District Budget Revenues 2007-08)



Q: What is funded pupil count?

A District's pupil count, for funding purposes, is determined by the Public School Finance Act of 1994 (as amended). The Act uses the October 1 enrollment count for each school year to determine a school district's program funding for the current fiscal year. The funded pupil count is expressed in full-time equivalent (FTE) pupils.

Q: How do you determine Total Program funding?

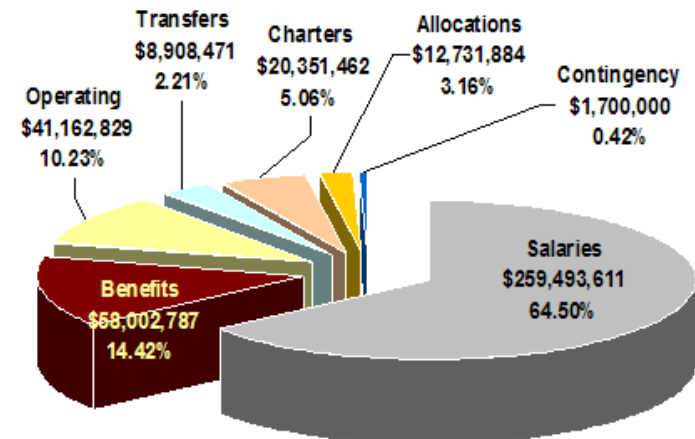
Total Program = (Funded Pupil Count) X (Total Per-Pupil Funding) + (At-risk Funding) + (On-line Funding)

Q: What are general funds?

The General Fund is the main operating account of the school district. The fund accounts for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in another fund. All revenues and expenditures, except those required attributable to other funds, are accounted for in the General Fund.

Q: Where do General Funds go?

Salaries, Benefits, Operating, charter, Transfers, Contingency (see chart below for General Fund Expenditures 2007-08)



Q: What is local share?

The local share is the portion of a school district's total program contributed directly by local taxpayers of the school district. A

Feedback Form

School name _____

Contact person/title _____

Email address _____

Phone number _____

Group/audience _____

Meeting date _____

How are your conversations about DCSD's Road to November going? Please share your successes and challenges. Forward questions. Ask for help.

1. What reactions did you hear? _____

2. What questions were raised? _____

District's local share includes revenue from property taxes and specific ownership taxes.

3. What additional data or resources would have been helpful?

4. What advice would you give to Citizens 4 DC Schools or Douglas County School District for taking the message to the broader community?

Complete this form and email a copy to Info@Citizens4DCSchools.com.
Need additional help? Call 303.688.3381.

Meeting Handouts



Meeting Agenda *(insert date of meeting, location and time.)*

1. Welcome and introductions

2. DVD presentation

3. About “Vote Yes on 3A and 3B: Quality Schools = Quality Community”

4. Group discussion

- What are your general reactions?
- What kinds of investments should we be making now in education that we currently are not?
- What does “Vote Yes on 3A and 3B: Quality Schools = Quality Community” mean to you? What kind of School District do you want for your children’s or grandchildren’s futures?
- What would you be willing to do to help spread the word about this initiative?

5. Wrap-up

Handouts

About DCSD Election 2008
School Finance Basics
Sign-up form



About Douglas County School District Election 2008

Douglas County School District (DCSD) is asking County residents to approve two questions on the November 2008 ballot, for a fixed 4 mils, to provide additional funding.

- **3A:** \$17 million budget question to increase the District’s operational budget to:
 - Maintain and improve academic performance
 - Recruit and retain the best work force
 - Maintain and improve technology
 - Strategically respond to intense growth

- **3B:** \$395 million bond question:
 - To build 10 new elementary schools
 - Renovations, updates and repairs to almost 50 District schools
 - Technology infrastructure (wiring, WAN, servers, etc.) improvements at ALL schools

DCSD would receive these additional funds for 33 cents a day on an average Douglas County home valued at \$372,000.

Douglas County School District is one of the highest achieving school districts in Colorado.

- The percentage of DCSD students scoring at or above proficient on specific CSAP assessments exceeded statewide results by 12-19 percentage points.
- DCSD students exceed the state average in ACT results by 1.8 to 2.0 percentage points.
- 92% of DCSD schools were rated excellent or high by the Colorado Department of Education in 2007.

Douglas County School District ranks lowest among neighboring school districts in state formula per pupil funding.

FY 2007-08 School District	Funded Pupil Count	Total Per Pupil
Sheridan	1,544	\$8,315
Denver	67,663	\$8,199
Commerce City	6,359	\$7,956
Boulder Valley	27,228	\$7,799
Westminster	9,979	\$7,719
Englewood	3,414	\$7,665
Littleton	15,309	\$7,527
Cherry Creek	47,752	\$7,477
Jefferson	81,386	\$7,413
Mapleton	5,209	\$7,370
Aurora	31,518	\$7,157
Northglenn	35,275	\$7,141
Douglas County	49,695	\$7,094

DCSD continues to strategically respond to growth.

- DCSD will continue to be one of the fastest growing school districts in the state from 2008-12.
- DCSD is the third largest school district in the state, with an expected enrollment of more than 54,000 students in 2008-09.
- In ten years, DCSD has grown 117%. An additional 2,000 students are anticipated per year over the next 5 years.
- DCSD has used four-track, year-round elementary schools to manage growth. DCSD has reached a “tipping point” where operational expenses equal or exceed capital costs to build needed space.

For more information, go to: www.dcsdk12.org, and click on “Bond/Override Info.”

Citizens 4 DC Schools

Citizens 4 DC Schools is an advocacy group made up of community members and parents who support the efforts of the Douglas County School District (DCSD). This group believes that the School District is a positive force in our community, and refuses to let the quality of DCSD slip due to inadequate funding and support.

Our goal is to educate and inform citizens about the need to more effectively invest in Douglas County's public education system. The ultimate objective is to educate the public on the issues of school funding, gain momentum for additional funds to support schools, and pass a potential School District bond and budget measure being considered by the Board of Education for November 2008.

In the past, Citizens 4 DC Schools has helped the School District organize, manage and run election campaigns. The DCSD Board of Education is considering asking County voters to support a bond and budget measure in the November 2008 election. Additional funds are needed now to help DCSD maintain its current programming, level of services and high levels of student achievement.

Efforts are under way to build a broad coalition of supporters representing business owners, community groups, parent groups, and other stakeholder groups to work in support of DCSD. Douglas County's investment in public education is below Denver Metro area averages. Below average is not good enough.

Citizens 4 DC Schools plans to rally support of community members for DCSD, host ongoing fundraisers, and provide information about the School District. It is our responsibility to create the future we want for our children and for our community.

- An investment in education is an investment in the community and the state's future.
- National research shows clear ties between the quality of education to a community's quality of life.
- Between 2% and 10% of a Single Family Home's value is attributable to a high-quality school district.
- An educated and skilled local work force attracts jobs, improves productivity, creates a larger tax base and adds wealth to our communities.
- DCSD is one of the highest achieving school districts in Colorado. Without additional funding, these levels cannot be maintained.
- Colorado has the second highest percentage of college graduates in the nation, but we rank 32nd in sending our own high school graduates to college. Over time, more jobs will require education beyond high school.
- Tomorrow's employees need to solve increasingly complex problems, communicate effectively using a variety of media, work in teams to create and innovate, and continually adapt to rapid change.

For more information, or to find out how you can help, go to: www.Citizens4DCSchools.com, or email info@Citizens4DCSchools.com.

School Finance Basics

Public school investment in Colorado

Colorado invests in K-12 public schools through a combination of local property taxes and state revenues. Historically, local property taxes made up the majority of funding. However, since property taxes decrease and will continue to do so based on the impact of the constitutional Gallagher amendment, the state has been required to fill in the amount that local property taxes used to cover.

Amendment 23 (passed 2000)

Amendment 23 was passed by voters to reverse a decade of budget cuts experienced by Colorado school districts throughout the 1990s. During that decade, Colorado's education investments did not keep pace with the inflation rate. Per-pupil investment in education was (and still is) well below the national average. Amendment 23 requires the state's K-12 investment to increase by the rate of inflation plus 1 percent from 2001 to 2011 and by inflation after that. It is intended to bring K-12 investment closer to the national average. Yet if Amendment 23 is honored through 2011, the state essentially will invest as much per child in real dollars as it did in 1989.

Gallagher amendment (passed 1982)

The Gallagher amendment was designed to maintain a constant ratio between the property tax revenue that comes from residential and business property. To simplify a set of very confusing formulas, the effect of Gallagher was to reduce the assessment rate (the percent of property value that is subject to taxation) whenever statewide total residential property values increased faster than business property values. As a result, the assessment rate for residential property has declined by more than two-thirds over the years because of Colorado's population growth and because of increases in real estate values. Colorado

has among the lowest residential property tax rates in the U.S.

TABOR (passed 1992)

TABOR is the Taxpayer Bill of Rights. TABOR prohibits any tax increase without a vote of the people. It places the strictest limits in the nation on how much revenue the state can keep and how much it can invest. Under TABOR, the state can increase operating expenses by just 6 percent from one year to the next. Any revenue collected in excess of TABOR's revenue limits must be refunded to the taxpayers. (This provision of TABOR has been suspended until 2011 with the passage of Referendum C.)

Referendum C (passed 2005)

The economic downturn from 2001 to 2003 required deep cuts in essential state services that already had been pared down. Because TABOR prevents the state from investing more than 6 percent of what it did the previous year, the state cannot restore cut services to pre-economic downturn levels once the economy begins improving. In response, a bipartisan coalition referred Referendum C to the ballot, and it was approved. It is basically a 5-year time-out from TABOR's annual state revenue collection and investment limits. Without Ref C passage, the state would have been forced to make deep cuts at the same time it refunded hundreds of millions to taxpayers. During this Ref C time-out from TABOR, the state is allowed to keep all the revenue it brings in from Colorado's tax rates (already among the lowest in the nation). That allows the state to fully invest the minimum increase to K-12 education as required by Amendment 23. In 2011, TABOR's limits will be put in place again. *Source: Great Education Colorado*

Quick Facts about Douglas County School District

The Douglas County School District Vision is “to create responsible citizens who contribute to our society.”

Location

Douglas County School District covers 870 square miles

Students

Student enrollment: 52,983 (*October 2007, official count*)
54,000 students expected in 2008-09 school year

Funding

Per-pupil funding revenue (2007-08 state formula): \$6,416
Per-pupil operating revenue (2007-08): \$6,124

Schools (2008-09)

46 elementary schools
2 magnet schools
9 middle schools
9 high schools
8 charter schools
1 alternative high school
1 night high school
1 university center
34 preschool locations
34 preschool sessions (AM & PM)

Classroom Teachers

Average years of experience: 11
Average years with Douglas County: 6
Percentage with master's degrees: 64
Percentage with doctorates: 1

Staff

Certified staff (teachers): 3,457 (teachers)
Classified staff: 2,791
Administrators: 216
Professional: 70
Technical: 23

Academic achievement

Douglas County School District's (DCSD) student performance on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is among the highest in the state in all content areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and science (27 different assessments). Results show Douglas County continues to exceed state averages in every subject tested. When comparing the percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency, DCSD students exceed the state average by 12-19 percentage points.

DCSD has some of the highest graduation requirements in Colorado. The dropout rate is one of the lowest at 0.7%.

DCSD's ACT results also exceed state averages:
DCSD 20.9/State Average 19.1

92% of DCSD schools rated excellent or high (up from 87% two years ago)

Preparation for the Future

Douglas County School District graduates will be college ready and/or work force ready. Students will possess strong academic skills; be preparation for competitive global marketplace; acquire knowledge and skills to be Responsible Citizens; and utilize critical thinking, creative problem solving and leadership skills.

Academic programming pathways to success in the form of Career & Technical Certification include: Electronics, Digital Media, Oracle, Construction Trades, Automotive, and Medical Preparation.

College Ready pathways include: Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, and Guaranteed Transfer courses to in-state universities.

Technology in the classroom

Douglas County's classrooms integrate tried and true educational approaches, including a wise use of technology that provides students with a foundation of skills for lifelong learning. Professional development opportunities and an investment in current hardware and software combine to provide teachers with the latest advances in technology to enhance student learning.

More choices for families

Douglas County parents have more choices for their children in neighborhood schools and alternative offerings. Eight charter schools are available, as are the Lone Tree Elementary Magnet, Renaissance Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound Magnet School and the Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning. DCSD will operate a virtual school, called eDCSD beginning in the 2008-09 school year, offering students a K-12 education outside of traditional classrooms. Families also have the option to open enroll their students in any Douglas County neighborhood school if there is space available.

Keeping pace with growth

Douglas County is the third largest school district in Colorado with more than 52,000 students. Projections show an additional 2,000+ new students are expected to enroll annually through 2011-12. That means, in the next 5 years, 10,000 additional are students expected, which will require the District to build an additional 1 high school of 2000 students, 2 middle schools of 1000 students each, and 9 elementary schools of 680 students each.

Conservation minded

School designs save resources & improve learning environments. Natural lighting use, high performance boilers, and increased insulation save utility costs. Artificial turf practice fields conserve more than 27 million gallons of water annually.

World Language initiative

Voter support of the 2006 budget override, allowed DCSD to expand its World Language offerings at all grade levels – particularly at the elementary level. Douglas County School District wants to ensure that every student that goes through the system will have the basic ability to speak another language and be prepared for a competitive global marketplace.

State Board grants waivers

Douglas County School District is among a few school districts in the state granted permission by the State Board of Education for waivers from current state teacher licensure and endorsement procedures. The District, acting as an arm of the Colorado Department of Education, has set up a system to pre-qualify candidates and provide the additional training and endorsements needed to hire for hard-to fill teaching positions, such as special education, bi-lingual and high level math and science to meet student needs.

Sign Up Form

**Yes! Sign me up to receive periodic email updates about Citizens 4 DC Schools.
I am also interested in participating in the following activities:**

- Organize Volunteer Recruitment
- Activity & event Coverage (parent conferences, games, fairs, etc.)
- Flyer Distribution (in neighborhoods, at neighborhood stores & businesses)
- Letter/Postcard Writing Campaign
- Phone Bank
- Precinct Door-to-Door Walking Campaign
- Yard Sign Distribution
- Placing Yard Sign on my property
- Organize Community Events (coffees, gatherings, "Get to Know your School" Day, etc.)
- Writing Editorial Letters to local media outlets
- Donate to Citizens 4 DC Schools Advocacy group

Look for updated factual information on the District website at www.dcsdk12.org, under "Bond/Override Info."

Citizens for Douglas County Schools will provide updated information on our website at www.citizens4dcschools.com, or email info@Citizens4DCSchools.com.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Phone: _____ Neighborhood School: _____

Specific Area of Interest: _____

Are you a registered voter? Yes No

