



CASE STUDY

# San Antonio Independent School District (TX): Using Strategic Stakeholder Engagement to Win Bond Approval

*by Rebecca Kessler*

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*But how did SAISD leaders know which community members to convince first? Superintendent Durón notes that it was helpful to divide the community into three groups: people who will always agree with you, people who can be convinced to agree with you, and people who will never agree with you.*

# San Antonio Independent School District: *Using Strategic Stakeholder Engagement to Win Bond Approval*

The general election on November 2, 2010, brought good news to San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) leaders: voters overwhelmingly passed the \$515 million bond proposal with a 2-1 margin. While Superintendent Robert Durón celebrated the district's success that evening, the mood at many school districts across the state was less jubilant. Of the 53 school district bond proposals on the ballot statewide, only 19 (36%) were successfully passed by voters. Not only was SAISD one of the few school districts with a successful bond initiative that year, but the bond was the largest school district bond on a ballot across the state. At \$515 million, SAISD's bond dwarfed the average dollar amount of other successful bonds (approximately \$91 million), and is larger than SAISD's 2010-2011 total budget (approximately \$474 million). This case study explores the strategies the SAISD leadership and communications teams used to engage community members and win approval for the bond despite the odds.

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## Background

San Antonio ISD is the third largest public school system in the Bexar County area, and the thirteenth largest in Texas. It is located within the San Antonio city limits, and also includes some outlying areas. Of the district's 55,000 students, 92.6% are economically disadvantaged — reflecting both the need for school improvements as well as the difficulty in financing those improvements. The district is led by seven elected school board members, and has won a number of awards for its leadership, including the 2007 Good Governance Matters Award from the Texas Association of School Boards/Texas Association of School Administrators.

The district's proposed \$515 million bond was approved by the board of trustees in mid-August 2010, two and a half months before the November general election. The proposed bond was to fund seven areas, all in line with the district's Long Range Restructuring Plan that had itself been developed with community

### San Antonio Independent School District (TX) Fast Facts

- Superintendent: Robert Durón (Fall 2006 – present)
- 55,086 students (2010-2011)
  - Hispanic: 89.5%
  - African American: 7.4%
  - White: 2.7%
  - Asian/Pacific Islander: 0.2%
  - Native American: 0.2%
  - Economically Disadvantaged: 92.6%
- 3,437 teachers (2010-2011)
- \$474,077,450 total budget (2010-2011)

Source: SAISD

input. Under this plan, 13 schools will be closed and consolidated over the next 10-12 years. Phase One of the Long Range Restructuring Plan calls for the closure of five primary schools by the 2013-2014 school year, and funds from the proposed bond are to go towards preparing and renovating the main receiving schools (i.e., those schools receiving the students from the closed schools). The remaining schools will not be closed until several years later, after the passage of another bond.

The majority of the funding (\$347.4 million) from the proposed bond is to go towards renovations and additions to district schools, many of which are over 50 years old and in desperate need of repairs. These funds will bring older schools up to code and modernize them, so that students attending these schools can receive the same benefits as students at newer, state-of-the-art schools. This will decrease discrepancies and disadvantages, and level the playing field for students across the district. As stated above, part of SAISD's Long Range Restructuring Plan calls for closing five schools over the next several years. Money from the bond would go towards preparing schools that are slated to receive students from closing schools. None of the money would go to the schools slated for closure

— upkeep for these five schools would come out of the district's operating budget.

The remainder (\$167.6 million) would fund a variety of projects, including safety and security upgrades, technology upgrades, improvements to vocational and career instruction programs, upgrades for playgrounds and athletic facilities, transportation improvements, and renovations to the district stadium and convention center.

The tax impact of the bond would not go into effect until 2012, when the average homeowner would see a property tax increase of \$1.58 per month. The tax peak, in 2027, would result in an approximately \$10 per month increase in average property taxes. Even with that increase, taxes would still be lower than overall property taxes were in 2007, before a tax cut slashed property taxes by about 20%. Tax increases would not affect senior citizens' property taxes.

### Engaging the Community to Ensure Success

SAISD Superintendent Robert Durón began involving the community in the bond process before the bond was even announced to the public. The proposal itself was developed during the summer of 2010 with input from ▷

## SAISD 2010 Bond: Use of Proceeds

Funding from the bond would go to seven categories of improvement, all in line with the district's Long Range Restructuring Plan:

- 1. Safety and Security Upgrades, \$43.9 million** – Improved lighting, new fire alarms, key-card access controls, security cameras, and fencing at 68 schools.
- 2. Technology Upgrades, \$6.2 million** – New classroom computers and related hardware to replace aging equipment and provide increased student access to technology for 68 schools.
- 3. Renovations and Additions, \$347.4 million** – Extensive renovations to 22 schools, 14 upgraded to fully modern facilities; includes infrastructure repairs, and classroom additions and renovations.
- 4. Vocation and Career Instruction, \$73.8 million** – New or upgraded facilities for high school career programs; and the addition of career technology labs at middle schools.
- 5. Playgrounds and Track Resurfacing, \$6.1 million** – New or improved playground equipment for 48 elementary/PK-8 schools; and all-weather track resurfacing and lighting at seven high schools for use by students and the surrounding community.
- 6. Alamo Stadium and Convocation Center, \$35 million** – Renovations for infrastructure involving electrical, plumbing (water and sewer systems), storm drainage system, sidewalks, parking, stone walls restoration, lighting, landscaping, and irrigation; ADA access; stadium and convocation center play areas, seating, restrooms, locker rooms, concessions, press boxes, storage, sports lighting, and sound and security systems.
- 7. Transportation Efficiency, \$2.5 million** – Provides for necessary space for bus transportation center, resulting in shorter bus travel distances; and supports consolidation of all transportation, maintenance, and facilities operations for additional cost savings and operational efficiency.

Source: SAISD

a 35-member community-based committee that consisted of parents, citizens, school staff, and other district stakeholders. The committee analyzed and prioritized the needs of the district to ensure they were in line with SAISD's Long Range Restructuring Plan, and made its recommendations to the board of trustees. District leadership made final adjustments to the community-developed plan and, on August 16, approved the finished proposal and called for a bond election just two and a half months later, on November 2, 2010.

It was clear from the beginning that community members felt strong emotional ties to their schools, and that district leadership would need to take those feelings into account in order to convince the voting public to pass the bond. Durón hoped that the community would support the bond if they knew the benefits of the bond, and if they understood how gradual changes over time had meant that current facilities were no longer adequate for supporting district needs. Durón's community engagement process involved several key elements that were critical to the success of the bond:

- An innovative communication strategy to determine which segments of the public to target for support first.
- Recognizing that there are people who can be convinced to agree with you and those who cannot.
- Recognizing and respecting people's ties to their schools.
- Developing an effective slogan to communicate the benefits of the bond.
- Using a variety of channels to interact with community members.

Throughout the process, SAISD leadership kept a consistent, persistent message that focused on the benefits of the bond and why it was necessary for students. "We didn't have any other choice," Durón says. "We needed this to pass."

### **SAISD's Innovative Community Engagement Process**

A large part of SAISD's success in the bond initiative can be attributed to their innovative, comprehensive communications strategy. "We got the people whom we had convinced to support the bond to go out and help spread the message," Durón notes. This allowed district leadership to concentrate on persuading the harder-

to-convince members of the community that the bond was necessary. Convincing key community members of the importance of the bond first also helped to control the message that was being spread. "People are going to talk," says Durón. "It's efficient if they know the right story." Executive Director of Communications Leslie Price agrees, "One of the major challenges was staying on top of the rumors and misinformation, particularly around the tax impact. We had to make sure people were getting their information from us." To that end, district leadership held open board meetings as well as community forums to ensure that the public received accurate information concerning the need for the bond, the funding structure, and its impact.

But how did SAISD leaders know which community members to convince first? Superintendent Durón notes that it was helpful to divide the community into three groups: people who will always agree with you, people who can be convinced to agree with you, and people who will never agree with you. Durón's grouping is similar to the Friend/Foe/Ally/Adversary rubric developed by Laurence Stybel and Maryanne Peabody.<sup>1</sup> In their classification, friends and foes are both unconditional relationships: friends share "a relationship of unconditional trust," while enemies have a relationship of "unconditional antagonism."<sup>2</sup> Allies and adversaries, on the other hand, are both conditional relationships and may be persuaded to work with or against each other depending on the circumstances. Communication with each group requires a different approach, and has a different benefit. Since friends will always agree, it makes little sense to spend more time preaching to the choir. Likewise, enemies will never agree, regardless of the argument made. Thus, it makes little sense to spend valuable time trying to convince an enemy to change his/her mind, when that effort could be better spent elsewhere. Allies and adversaries, as conditional relationships, are more flexible and can be persuaded, although they may require more time to be convinced of the merits of an argument.

The SAISD leadership team's division of community members into friends, enemies, and true critics (i.e., allies and adversaries) mirrors this distinction. "We had to distinguish between people who have the mentality of 'Don't confuse me with the facts' and people who are true critics, who will show you where your blindspots are

and can be convinced to agree,” Durón explains. “Some people will never get on board, and some people will get on board when you convince them.” This distinction is crucial, and likely contributed greatly to SAISD’s success. Using district friends to convey the message from the start allowed district leadership more time to convince undecided voters. The district’s pro-bond message could reach a larger audience through word of mouth spread by friends and converted allies. Little time was spent trying to convince enemies, since leadership recognized that their time and energy could be better spent working to persuade community members whose views were less rigid.


**Recognizing People’s Emotional Ties to Their Schools**

“Never underestimate people’s emotional ties to their school,” Durón states, when asked about specific highlights from his district’s bond success. “You can’t let emotion win out over reasoning, but you have to be very sensitive to the emotional ties people have.” The district’s plan to close five schools and renovate

existing schools brought a lot of emotion to the fore in the community. Some people questioned the need for renovations, calling the bond a “bricks and mortar” tax hike, rather than a means to better fund academic programs and improve the district’s academic performance. Others argued against closing schools, despite the decreasing size of the student population and the city’s changing demographics. Durón and other district leaders recognized that many community members had strong emotional ties to their schools, although few had actually seen their schools since they graduated. The district developed several strategies to cultivate community awareness of the need for the bond, including conducting tours of schools, using demographic data to show population changes, and emphasizing the benefits of the bond (Exhibit 1).

Facilities tours allowed community members who were no longer intimately acquainted with SAISD schools to see the current state of the schools. Many buildings in the district are over 50 years old, and several are more than 100 years old. A steadily decreasing >

EXHIBIT 1



**Ogden Elementary School** **\$18,634,488**

\*\*\* Includes an allowance for replacement or historic renovations. If replacement is selected, the new construction will comply with the model school.

**2010 Proposed Bond Projects**

**Safety & Security**

- Improve campus security and access control with additional security cameras, new building access cards and readers for faculty and staff, and new classroom door safety locks
- Repair and update existing PA system, emergency fire alarm system, and fire sprinkler system in campus buildings
- Improve special-needs accessibility issues
- Improve site lighting and fences

**Technology**

- Provide additional technology equipment for use in campus classrooms, computer labs, or other instructional spaces

**Major Replacement & Historic Renovations**

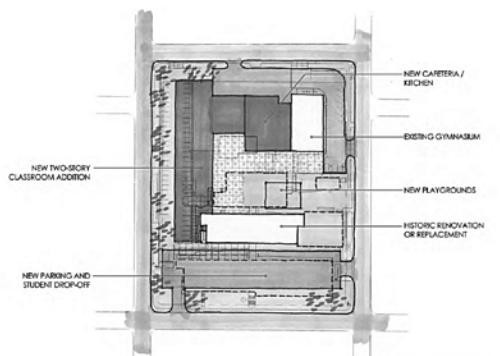
- Renovate and expand library
- Classroom additions and renovations
- Art lab
- Music lab
- Special education classrooms
- Renovate life skills classroom
- Major restoration of existing mechanical systems
- Electrical Upgrades
- Add new power circuits for computer requirements
- Add & renovate restrooms
- Upgrade plumbing
- Re-pave & resurface damaged parking & driveways
- Address storm water issues
- Loading dock area for kitchen
- Repair or replace dumpster pad
- Repair front retaining wall
- Renovate cafeteria and kitchen
- Renovate stage
- New canopies & walkways connecting buildings
- Courtyard at entrance of new building

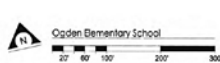
**Playground Equipment**

- Add, replace and/or repair existing playground equipment

**Election Day November 2, 2010**  
*Early voting runs October 18 – October 29*

**San Antonio Independent School District**





\*CAMPUS WIDE IMPROVEMENTS FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY

\*\*ADDITIONAL TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT

For more information go to [www.saisd.net/Bond2010](http://www.saisd.net/Bond2010)

SAISD developed a series of talking points for every school in the district, detailing how the bond would benefit that school, like this example from Ogden Elementary School.

Source: SAISD

district budget, combined with lower state aid, has meant that school renovations have taken a backseat to other district priorities. As a result, many of the district's schools were in serious disrepair. Flooding, falling ceiling tiles, ancient HVAC systems, a distinct lack of technology in many of the schools, and electrical systems that could not support upgrades even if the district could buy the technology, all combined to create in many schools an environment hardly conducive to learning. Budget cuts had forced the elimination of arts classes and other electives, likely exacerbating the district's drop-out problem. The tours, conducted by

Football announcers were even given brief scripts highlighting the bond election and where to find details of the proposal.

district leaders and principals, helped to make the situation more clear to community members.

As in any district facing school closures, there was some opposition from community members. Again, district leaders acknowledged community members' emotional ties to their schools, but sought to convince them that this change was needed. "It's like that boiling frog analogy," Durón explains. "You keep gradually increasing the water temperature, and a frog doesn't notice the changes until it's cooked to death. Over time, people don't see long-term demographic changes and their effects on schools." Gradual change is hard to notice as it's happening, and it was easy for many San Antonians to miss the fact that populations were changing within the district. SAISD turned to demographic data to drive this point home for community members. The district used census data and geo-mapping to create density clouds over areas within the district limits where the majority of school-aged children lived. Schools in areas with fewer school-aged children were slated for closure, while those schools in more densely populated areas were, with bond funding, targeted for renovations and additions to accommodate the increasing population. District leaders highlighted

these changing demographics in their conversations with community members, and also pointed out that the decreasing size of the student population overall was tied to decreasing revenue. The density clouds were "a shock" for people, Durón notes, and helped district leaders create more allies in their push to pass the bond.

Consolidating students into fewer schools meant that the district could offer more electives to those students. Electives, such as art classes, have been shown to keep kids in schools and can be an effective drop-out prevention strategy. SAISD leadership began to point to this benefit of school consolidation as a tag-line for the district: the bond would help create more electives for kids; *that's the way it used to be*. District leadership started using short catch-phrases to highlight the benefits of the bond: *We can put more money into your kid's classroom if we stop heating and cooling the empty top floor of a school*. These sound bites helped to focus voters on district needs, and created talking points within the district. Executive Director of Communications Leslie Price was surprised that parents who were initially very emotional about school closures were able to move past their emotions and were excited to see the benefits the bond would bring for their children. "They realized it wasn't a matter of *if* we were going to close schools, but *how* we were going to do it," she explains.

### Messaging

These various communication methods — from recognizing which community members to enlist in spreading the word, to understanding and using people's emotional ties to their schools as a means of gathering support for the bond, and creating short sound-bites in support of the bond benefits — ensured that district leadership was able to reach different groups of constituents. The district wanted to reach as many people as possible, and developing a number of communications strategies was crucial to that effort. "People like their information in different ways, so we had to use multiple touchpoints to target different audiences, all the while using consistent messaging and branding with our bond logo," states Price. Over 200 public forums held by district leaders, trustees, principals, and community members helped to address stakeholder concerns and acknowledge emotional ties while still allowing them to remain persistent in spreading their message.

EXHIBIT 2



## EMISIÓN DE BONOS 2010

### Día de la Votación: Noviembre 2, 2010

Votación adelantada: octubre 18 a octubre 29

**Propuesta para Emitir Bonos por \$515 millones**  
 La Mesa Directiva de SAISD comienza a una votación el 2 de noviembre del 2010 para emitir bonos escolares. Los fondos de la emisión pagarán las ampliaciones y remodelaciones a escuelas en todo el distrito, ya que algunas edificaciones tienen más de 100 años y casi la mitad tiene más de 50 años.

**Lo más importante:**

- Equipar los salones de clase con computadoras y programas para reemplazar la tecnología obsoleta.
- Remodelar radicalmente 22 escuelas – 14 de ellas se actualizan para incorporar lo más moderno.
  - Se consideran mejoras y ampliaciones al salón de clase para los cursos básicos, incluyendo laboratorios de ciencia y tecnología.
  - Reemplazar los equipos de aire acondicionado, cableado eléctrico, plomería y equipos de cocina que ya no son eficientes.
- Construir instalaciones nuevas y mejorar las actuales para los programas profesionales de preparatoria y laboratorios de tecnología en las secundarias.
- Renovar los campos de juego o agregar equipos en las 48 escuelas primarias.
- Renovar Alamo Stadium para que tenga la misma calidad que los estadios de los distritos vecinos.
- Construir 5 escuelas y proporcionar el financiamiento para la Fase 1 del plan de reconstrucción, abarcando \$100 millones a SAISD en los próximos 10 años, mínimos que se incrementará en nuevos programas académicos, de arte y tecnología.
- Si la emisión de bonos pasa, la Mesa Directiva establecerá un Comité de Calidad para monitorear y reportar a la Mesa Directiva y al público el progreso de la implementación del programa de bonos.

**Resumen de la Emisión de Bonos que se Propone:**

- Seguridad y vigilancia.....\$43 millones
- Modernización de Tecnología.....\$6.2 millones
- Remodelaciones y Ampliaciones.....\$547.4 millones
- Escuelas Primarias.....\$185.1 millones
- Escuelas Secundarias.....\$166.3 millones
- Mejoras y adiciones a la instrucción vocacional y profesional.....\$73.8 millones
- Campos de juego y pistas de atletismo.....\$6.1 millones
- Renovaciones a Alamo Stadium y Convocation Center.....\$35 millones
- Transporte más eficiente.....\$2.5 millones
- Total: \$515 millones**

**Impacto a los Impuestos de las Personas Mayores de 65 años:**  
 Los impuestos a la propiedad de los ciudadanos mayores de SAISD no serán afectados por estos bonos si se solicita una exención por la casa de los mayores de 65 años. Buscar Approval Notice, si son propietarios de la casa a partir de enero 1 del 2010. Para obtener más información sobre estas exenciones, favor de llamar al 282-2432 o visitar [www.bcaj.org](http://www.bcaj.org).

Favor de visitar: [www.SAISD.net/Bond2010](http://www.SAISD.net/Bond2010) para obtener más información

**Impacto Fiscal Estimado:**  
 Estos bonos no afectarán los impuestos a la propiedad hasta 2012, cuando el propietario promedio de SAISD pagaría adicionalmente \$1.58 por mes. Cuando los pagos de los bonos lleguen a su punto más alto en 2027, el propietario promedio tendrá un impacto de \$9.97 por mes. Sin con los aumentos de esta emisión de \$515 millones, el impuesto total seguirá siendo más bajo que en 2007.

**Impacto Mensual a los Impuestos por la Emisión de \$515 millones para el Dueño de una Casa de \$ 80,882**

Año	Impacto Mensual en Impuestos
2011	\$0
2012	\$1.58
2013	\$4.28
2014	\$7.19
2015	\$9.57
2016	\$9.58
2017	\$9.59
2018	\$9.60
2019	\$9.62
2020	\$9.65
2021	\$9.78
2022	\$9.86
2023	\$9.87
2024	\$9.89
2025	\$9.91
2026	\$9.94
2027	\$9.97
2028	\$3.51

Spanish-language informational flyer sent to parents and voters.

Source: SAISD

The district developed an array of visuals and other communication methods to relay its message. “We started working on these before the board called for the bond,” Price says, “although we waited until after the bond was approved to finalize some of the details.” She stresses the importance of being prepared in order to pull off such a huge project in only two and a half months. The communications team branded everything so that all bond communiqués had a similar look and feel to them, and created all documents in both English and Spanish to reach a wider audience (Exhibit 2). Media outlets, such as the local newspaper and television channels, were also incorporated into the messaging effort. “We met with the editorial board of the newspaper, and also pitched stories to reporters about the bond,” states Price. “As a result, we had positive editorials and even got a Sunday front page article about our high school career programs and facilities and how the bond would pay for much needed upgrades to these programs and facilities.”

“We thought a lot about the best way to communicate this,” says Durón. For the bond, SAISD created a Bond 2010 website (<http://www.saisd.net/bond2010>), both in English and Spanish, complete with videos explaining the bond and the district’s need for it, a timeline for implementation, voting information, and frequently asked questions. A bond newspaper in English and Spanish was sent by bulk mail to 146,000 households within the district. Videos were shown during television broadcasts of high school football games, and also played during the games at the concession stand. Price explains, “We wanted to make sure we reached everyone, so we had to use all of our tools.” Football announcers were even given brief scripts highlighting the bond election and where to find details of the proposal.

Price also credits early voting as key in the bond messaging. A phone message system and postcards relayed early voting information to all parents and senior citizens within the district who were registered to vote. Principals distributed voter registration cards at their open houses, early voting notices were placed in community newsletters, and school marquees announced voting information to passersby. The district also released photos of Superintendent Durón and other community members as they left the early voting facilities to encourage participation (Exhibit 3).

EXHIBIT 3



Superintendent Robert Durón leaves an early voting site after casting his ballot.

Source: SAISD

### The Role of Leadership in SAISD's Success

Superintendent Robert Durón credits the district's distributed leadership as one reason for the success of the bond measure. SAISD partnered with community members to lead the bond initiative. The district was also supported by the community-based political action committee (PAC) "Vote Yes to Schools. Students. Community," which hired local marketing firm Guerra-DeBerry-Coody to help spread the message and convince voters of the district's need. Such shared leadership meant that each group could target a specific audience, further differentiating the district's communication plan, and reaching

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more voters. As in any election, grassroots support proved vital for the success of the initiative. Targeting grassroots support for the bond required a different kind of leadership, and could not be the responsibility of one lone individual. Distributing leadership amongst district leaders, principals, community supporters, and outside firms backing the project made the initiative more effective by targeting messages to different populations within SAISD. Also, the distributed leadership helped to remove any notion of the bond being solely the pet project of one or two board members, and helped to facilitate transparency in the process. Holding a number of people accountable for the bond's success meant that the district had to have a clear, consistent message.

The distributed nature of leadership was embedded in the bond campaign from the beginning. Not only was the bond initiative itself developed by a 35-member community group, but a Citizen's Oversight Committee was written into the bond structure. The Citizen's Oversight Committee was approved by the SAISD board of trustees to provide status updates, feedback, and recommendations to the board concerning the bond, and also to ensure the effective and efficient use of bond monies. Citizens were invited to apply to the committee, and the final 24 members were appointed by the board of trustees on January 18, 2011. The committee meets once a month, and meetings are open to the public.

The district regularly briefs the committee on communications plans and activity, and gets their input. Keeping the public informed of bond progress is critical — the plan includes a new Bond Projects microsite off of the SAISD website (<http://bond.saisd.net>), using social media such as Facebook and Twitter to provide updates, holding events and open houses around major milestones, distributing a monthly bond update report along with electronic newsletters and other publications, and highlighting bond progress in the district community newspaper to every household in the district. The website includes project timelines for each section of the bond, and details the progress made thus far in each of the seven funding areas of the bond, along with financial updates and monthly financial status reports.

Executive Director of Communications Leslie Price credits SAISD principals and staff with much of the bond's success. Principals were sent a list of talking points and flyers immediately following the board's vote for the bond election, and principal meetings were held throughout the district to ensure that all principals and staff were on board with the bond message. "We had to make sure that everyone internally understood the bond," Price explains, adding that staff members were often the first point of contact for parents or community members interested in the bond. Since the bond proposal was approved by the board shortly before the start of the school year, principals used their schools' beginning-of-the-year open houses as forums to disseminate bond information to parents. Principals' allowing the media in their schools in order to highlight the benefits their



schools would receive through the bond was also critical to success.

In fact, despite SAISD's widely distributed leadership throughout the campaign, Superintendent Durón thinks there could have been more: "I should have turned the mic over more. That's what made us successful. I got better at turning the mic over, but I should have done more of it." Community participation has paid off for SAISD. From the original 35-member committee that developed the bond proposal, to the Citizen's Oversight Committee that oversees financing and operations of the bond, to the focus on hiring local vendors to complete bond projects, SAISD's bond has truly engaged and involved the entire community.

### Persistence Pays Off

The district's bond success is an interesting story within the larger context of San Antonio and Bexar County. San Antonio ISD voters had not passed a bond issue in the ten years prior to the November 2010 election. In the same election, voters in neighboring Judson ISD, also within Bexar County, voted down three bond initiatives totaling \$198 million that also would have gone to support local schools.

Durón and Price credit consistency and persistence as the main determining factors in the bond's success. The innovative community engagement and communications plan, along with the PAC's efforts led by local marketing/public relations firm Guerra-DeBerry-Coody, enabled SAISD leadership to focus on converting allies, rather than wasting time trying to convince enemies. A variety of communications methods — the bond website, videos, principal and staff interactions with community members, community forums, mailings, and grassroots campaigning — ensured that the district was able to communicate with and engage as much of the community as possible. Durón says he tried to keep an open mind during the whole process; he realized that communities have strong ties to their schools, and that people's emotions will come to the fore over issues such as school closures and renovations. He believes that the ability to remain humble and to recognize and respect others' emotions went a long way towards the bond's success. Such persistence and thought paid off on November 2, 2010, when the bond initiative passed

with 66% of the vote. "We hadn't had a bond in several years," says Price. "This ended up being a learning experience, and a positive one."

The first bond sales began soon after the election. The district sold \$151.4 million in bonds on December 14, 2010. A portion of the bond was purchased by local government entities as part of an effort to encourage local investment and continue local support of the school district. By May 2011, bond efforts were underway. Safety and security upgrades had begun at seven of the 68 schools, computers and related software had been purchased for campuses, architecture firms were lined up to begin the renovation work, athletic tracks were in the process of being resurfaced, and playground equipment had been ordered and was awaiting installation. The bond is helping to make SAISD's Long Range Restructuring Plan a reality by financing school upgrades and overhauls and allowing for the closure of five district schools, which will ultimately save the district millions of dollars.

San Antonio Independent School District's \$515 million bond issue came at a critical time in the district. Enrollment was decreasing, resulting in drops in revenue just as budgets were being slashed, and academics within the district were likely suffering as a result of the deteriorating physical conditions. The district's academic plan targets decreasing the drop-out rate and increasing the number of SAISD schools that are rated Recognized or Exemplary; the bond will help with both of these goals — consolidating schools will increase program offerings for students, likely decreasing the drop-out rate, and updating and modernizing schools will help both teachers and students succeed.

<sup>1</sup> Laurence J. Stybel and Maryanne Peabody, "Friend, Foe, Ally, Adversary ... or Something Else?" *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Volume 46, Number 4, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



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