



DRAFT - Communications Plan
for the February 2010 Operations Levy and the
Buildings Technology Academics (BTA III) Capital Levy
Updated May 13, 2009

SPS Strategic Communications

Seattle Public Schools is committed to ensuring a high-quality school for every student. We believe that all students can meet or exceed grade-level expectations and graduate from high school prepared for college, career and life. We have a five-year plan called *Excellence for All* to raise achievement for all students, retain and attract great teachers, and increase efficiency in Seattle Public Schools. All communications related to levies are set within this context.

Communication and Engagement Objectives

This plan sets out the goals, strategies and tasks for information outreach related to the two February 2010 levies. This election will be the first for which King County will use an all-mail-in ballot. Ballots will be sent to all voters in January, which means that the timeline for distributing information is compressed.

The plan emphasizes sharing information with the broader community and stakeholders, reinforces *Excellence for All*, and provides timely, accurate information to all stakeholders about the upcoming Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) levy and BTA III capital levy election in February 2010.

Key Stakeholders

School Board members, Executive Management Team, all District staff, students, families, PTSA and other family groups, community and civic organizations, elected officials and broader community.

Goals

1. Disseminate timely, accurate information about the Operations and BTA III levies to all stakeholders.
2. Create awareness of the role of levy funding in the General Operation Fund (GOF) and value capital budgets. Make clear links to how these funds support students, schools and implementation of Excellence for All.
3. Report to the community on how BTA II, BEX, and EP&O funds have been utilized, including how projects have supported student academic achievement and instruction.
4. Provide easy-to-use communications toolkit for use by Board members, senior leaders, and principals.
5. Provide clear guidance to employees regarding appropriate actions related to PDC guidelines.

Information Sharing: May 2009 – January 2010

A wide variety of communications tools and methods will be used to share information about levies with our stakeholders. The list outlined below is an overview only. A more detailed and specific plan, including timing, due dates and staff lead, is being developed.

- 1 **Use regular electronic and printed publications** to share information with all stakeholders about levy planning and report on completion of current levy projects: School Beat, Principal Communicator, Web site, Classroom Connection, Email, Flyers and kid mail.
- 2 **Create and disseminate levy specific information materials**

Information Materials	Use/Dissemination
PowerPoint Presentations	Board meetings, Community meetings, staff meetings, civic and community groups, post on Web
Information Handouts	Community groups, staff meetings, civic and community groups, post on Web
Frequently Asked Questions	Primarily posted on Web
<i>Report to the Community</i> – BTA II, BEX III and	Direct mailing; distribute via schools, community

Operations Levies– fall 2009	groups, libraries, community centers; post on Web
<i>Levy Information Brochure</i> – describes Feb. 2010 levy packages – fall 2009	Direct mailing to all families; distribute via schools, community groups, libraries, community centers, post on Web
<i>Levy Information DVD</i> – describes Feb. 2010 levy packages – fall 2009	Broadcast on Channel 26; principals show at staff and parent meetings; tool for speakers to use with civic groups; stream on Web
Levy Information Web site	Create web pages specific to February 2010 levy elections with links to current capital programs, keep updated
School Messenger System	Use to inform families of meetings related to levy information and reminder to vote
Levy Information Communications Toolkit	Selected information materials for use by School Board members, senior leadership, school principals

- 3 **Conduct Community Meetings** – share levy information in context of quarterly strategic plan update meetings: May 2009 and Fall 2009

- 4 **School Board meetings and Work Sessions** – engage school board in shaping Operations and BTA III levy proposals through a series of work sessions and Superintendent updates at board meetings. First workshop: May 13. Prepare and submit levy resolution to School Board for vote in October/early November 2009.

- 5 **Inform School Leaders** (monthly school leaders meeting and summer leadership institute)

- 6 **Inform School Staff** (Principals will use communication tools of DVD and information handouts)

- 7 **Inform PTSA and other family organizations** (Superintendent, Central staff members, school principals, board members)

- 8 **Inform Community Service and Civic Organizations** – information sharing (Leadership team, board members, capital projects community liaison)

- 9 **Brief media** – roundtables, direct contact, news releases, media opportunities with Superintendent, senior leaders and School Board.

Overview of Planning Timeline for February 2010 Levies:

October 2008 – Fall 2009	School/Community Input Community Informational Meetings
November 2008 – April 2009	Facilities Analysis by MENG Develop potential academic and technology project needs
April 2009 – October 2009	Financial analysis: review assessed values, rates
May 13, 2009 and on-going	School Board Work Sessions
Fall 2009	Community Informational Meetings
September - October 2009	Levy Resolutions – Introduction and Action to School Board and Public Hearing
October 2009 – January 2010	School/Community information sharing
February 2010	Public vote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Operations Levy ➤ BTA III Levy • First “all-mailer” election for King County • Absentee ballots drop in January • Both levies require simple majority approval (50% plus one vote)

PROJECT RESOURCES

Executive Sponsors: Fred Stephens, Executive Director, Facilities

Capital Levy Planning Project Manager: Paul Wozniak, Senior Facilities Planner

Facilities Team:

- Bill Martin, Senior Manager, Capital Levies
- Kathy Johnson, Senior Planning Manager
- Lucy Morello, BTA Manager
- Eric Sonett, Facilities Budget Manager

Operating Levy Planning Lead: Linda Sebring

Financial Services: Eric Sonett, Facilities and Capital Finance Manager

Communications Team (for both levies):

- Tom Redman, Capital Projects Community Liaison
- Patti Spencer, Communications Manager
- Bridgett Chandler, Executive Director of Communications (advisory)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

All phases of developing levy packages and communicating about levy information must be considered in the context of Excellence for All, major district initiatives and environmental factors present in our community and nation. Four major areas of consideration are noted below together with comments about how these considerations are incorporated into our planning and communication:

1. Other Ballot Measures and Levies

It is important for the community to understand the role of SPS' Operating and Capital Levies in the context of other levies and ballot measures.

- Families and Education Levy
Action: Share information about FEL, what it pays for, and the differences between FEL (which is managed by the City of Seattle) and Seattle Public Schools levies.
(Action: Communications Team)
- Affordable Housing Levy - City may proposed for November 2009 ballot
Action: Monitor development of this package
(Action: Director of Policy & Legislative Relations)
- Other General Election Ballot Measures
Action: Monitor activity
Action: Director of Policy & Legislative Relations)

2. Major District Initiatives

Seattle Public Schools, in implementing Excellence for All, has taken on a broad array of strategies and projects that have wide-ranging implications for families, staff and community. Levy information communications and outreach will take place in the context of all other district work, especially:

- a. **Capacity Management** - Implementation of School Closure and Back to School (Current though fall 2009)
- b. **Student Assignment Plan** - Continued development of New Student Assignment Plan; board work, community engagement. Attendance area boundaries, option schools and tie-breaker rules will be developed during summer and fall 2009.
- c. **Budget 2009/10 and 2010/11** - The 2009/10 budget, which has required substantial reductions to create a balanced budget, will be finalized in July 2009. Work for the 2010/11 budget will begin in fall 2009. It is anticipated that as large or greater budget shortfalls will be faced in 2010/11 and 2011/12. Staff reductions being implemented spring 2009.
- d. **Labor Negotiations** - Seattle Public Schools' contracts with all employee associations which are currently in negotiation.
- e. **School Start Times** - Implementation in September 2009
- f. **Improvements in services** - The work of implementing plans for changes in delivery of services for bilingual, special education and advanced learning will continue over the next several years.

3. Economic Climate

The unprecedented economic climate must be taken into consideration as levy packages are developed and levy information is shared. Considerations include all of those factors that impact individuals who pay property taxes: property assessments, total property taxes; changes in household income due to job loss; housing market and projected change in assessed values.

Action: Projections of assessed value have been analyzed by an outside expert consultant and will be shared at a School Board work session. All of the economic climate factors will be monitored by the CFOO, Financial Services departments, and Communications Team.

4. Clarity of SPS role in sharing information about levies

It is important to clarify the role of Seattle Public Schools in sharing information about levy planning and the final levy proposals. It is the responsibility of SPS to share clear, accurate information with stakeholders about

- how taxpayer dollars have been used to support SPS operations and educational programs
- how taxpayer dollars have been spent to improve school facilities
- the levy planning process and timeline
- how facilities needs have been evaluated and prioritized
- potential projects for consideration
- impact of renewal levies on property taxes
- any other factual information related to levy planning and final resolutions

Action: EMT, Levy Planning Project Managers and Communications Team will monitor impacts.

Note: Seattle Public Schools is prohibited by law from using public resources, including staff time, computers, e-mail, funds or other resources to promote or campaign for levies - or for any other initiative or measure.

Levy Information Communications Plan Prepared by:

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