



PLATTE COUNTY R-3 SCHOOL DISTRICT PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH PROPOSAL

CREATIVE ENTOURAGE REPRESENTATIVES:

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WBE CERTIFIED

Creative Entourage, LLC is a
certified woman-owned business

Missouri Certification No. 13638



ABOUT CREATIVE ENTOURAGE



Worked with
more than
300
School Districts

CREATIVE ENTOURAGE IS DEDICATED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE. We help school districts connect with their community through public opinion research, community engagement, strategic communications and a variety of creative services.

Since starting in 2008, our team has grown to include more than ten individuals with decades of experience in public opinion research, strategic communications and graphic design. Nearly every member of our team has worked for a public school district or university at some point in their careers, giving us unique insight into school districts' challenges and daily operations.

We are in business to make a positive impact in the school districts, municipalities, and communities where we work. That work might include helping school districts understand what their residents care about most through public opinion surveys, engaging communities in a long-range planning process, educating voters about a referendum effort or strengthening an organization's brand. We are passionate about helping our clients help the communities and people they serve. It is important to note we don't play politics; it's our company policy that we don't work with any individual political candidates or political parties.

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
CREATIVE SERVICES

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

OUR TEAM HAS A PROVEN TRACK RECORD IN IMPLEMENTING SURVEYS THAT GET RESULTS, ESPECIALLY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS. OVERALL, OUR TEAM HAS CONDUCTED PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH FOR MORE THAN 200 SCHOOL DISTRICTS AROUND THE COUNTRY SINCE THE EARLY 1990S.

More than 15 years ago, our agency was founded by our principals Jennifer Volk and Elizabeth Arway. Since then, it has grown to a full-service, Missouri certified Women Owned Enterprise. In 2020, we welcomed the team from UNICOM•ARC, which was in business for 50 years. The “ARC” in UNICOM•ARC stood for Attitude Research Company, which had long been an industry leader in public sector opinion research

Our surveys often serve as the foundation for our community engagement programs and informational referendum projects. We offer a wide variety of services to help inform communities about long-range planning projects, strategic planning and ballot proposals for school districts and other publicly funded entities. In the past five years alone, we have worked on more than 40 issue-based campaign efforts, with a more than 80% success rate, many of which were for public school districts. Efforts we have helped with have resulted in more than \$10 billion in bond funding for school districts and other public entities, in addition to billions in additional operating revenue.

Nearly all of our clients are public entities, currently more than 80% of these are public school districts.



Provided public
opinion research for
more than

200
School Districts

Conducted community
engagement programs
for more than

100
School Districts

80%+
Current Clients
Are Public School
Districts

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

DISCOVERY
IS MORE
POWERFUL
THAN
PERSUASION

Public Engagement

While many can facilitate the development of a plan, there are few who can truly engage the community. Our ability to do so is one of the compelling advantages of our team. In many ways, members of our team wrote the book on best practices in community engagement for school districts. In fact, many of our clients have won both state and national awards for community engagement projects we've developed and implemented for them.

When beginning this kind of work many years ago, there were few, if any, models or approaches to study or replicate with respect to best practices. Best practices for community engagement were learned the hard way — by doing it. And yes, some mistakes were made over the years and learning from those mistakes, in large part, has resulted in the success of more than 100 public school district community engagement programs.

The key to our success is that we are first and foremost a communications firm with years of experience working with public school districts. While implementing a community engagement program without effective communications might develop a plan for moving forward, it will not create a plan that has widespread community understanding and support.

By contrast, our process leads to a plan that is developed through the input, cooperation and collective decisions of community participants. As a result, the plan is both responsive to community needs and supported at the grassroots level. If large numbers of community members are involved in discovering challenges and solutions, those community members will be much more inclined to support those solutions. Much as in the classroom, discovery is more powerful and effective than is persuasion.



SURVEY PROCESS

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY SURVEY RESULTS CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.

Effective public opinion research is the foundation of any well-executed planning or communications program.

A survey is essential to:

- Determine the starting point in terms of overall attitudes toward the district along with benchmark support for and knowledge about possible initiatives or proposals under consideration by the district.
- Determine theme and message for a communications program.
- Understand differences in attitudes that may exist from one area to another, or from one demographic category to another.

Our team of professionals is uniquely qualified to conduct this research, and we are proud to provide surveys that include:

RELIABLE DATA

Our surveys are developed using scientifically established practices proven to deliver accurate measures of public opinion you can trust. Your survey results can help structure an actionable and effective communications plan to help build robust connections between your district and community including providing a successful foundation for referendum projects.

ELIMINATE BIAS

We pride ourselves on providing “bias free” surveys. Proper sampling methodology and questionnaire development are critically important to eliminate bias that can skew your final results. The data from our surveys is used to make important decisions that will have a long-term impact so we must ensure they are developed to be as accurate as possible. From our sampling technique and methodologies to the way we design the survey instrument, we ensure there is no room for biased responses.

ACCURATE RESULTS

Our list of dozens of clients who come back to us time and time again is a testament to accurate results that can guide decision making. When elections are involved, our survey results are often in line with the final election results. A recent Glenbard High School District 87 bond referendum was successful with 50.82% of voters supporting the proposal. Our survey, which was conducted a few months before the election, showed 51.4% support. These figures are not uncommon, with nearly all of our surveys tracking within 5% or less of the actual election results when the survey is conducted within a few months of election day, and the proposal is presented as it was surveyed.

SURVEY PROCESS

THOROUGH QUESTIONNAIRES

Longer surveys allow us to get at the data you really need. Our questionnaires are typically 30 to 40 questions long. By asking similar questions in various ways, and testing word choice and language, we can offer analysis with a greater degree of accuracy and confidence. In our experience, once a stakeholder has started a survey, it is cost effective to ask as many questions as possible yet not go so long that there is a high termination rate. So we gather as much data as we can. By statistically tracking every survey, we know how many questions we can ask before the termination rate increases to an unacceptable level. In the end, these longer questionnaires lead to a more robust and helpful survey.

THEME AND MESSAGE DOCUMENT

We are first and foremost a communications agency. We know, and you know, words matter. We know how to help you find the right words that get results. We understand the actual word or a phrase in a question can impact the data. Do you call a new theater a *performing arts center* or an *auditorium*? Does your community prefer *future ready learning* or *educational best practices*? Different words, same meaning, but often different responses. We know how to ask the questions to get you the right words. We know how to develop a theme and message document that is actionable and impactful.

In addition to our quality public opinion research, we are proud to only work on issue-based projects for public sector clients, mainly public school districts. We do not, and will not, work for any political candidates or political parties.



PROPOSED SOLUTION

WE SUGGEST A BLEND OF THREE BASIC DATA COLLECTION OPTIONS FOR PLATTE COUNTY'S PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH



TELEPHONE SURVEYS

THE MOST STATISTICALLY ACCURATE WAY TO OBTAIN SURVEY DATA.

As the number of landlines continues to decrease, completing enough telephone surveys to obtain a large enough sample size for an acceptable margin of error and the ability to cross tabulate, or disaggregate, the survey responses by key categories is increasingly challenging. To complicate this, calls to cell phone numbers are more expensive because auto-dialers cannot be used by the field service (though a lot of spam callers ignore this regulation) that must hand-dial these numbers. In our recent experience this is especially relevant in Platte County, where it has been very difficult to complete landline based interviews. In our most recent survey, more than 80% of the completed surveys were from cell phones.

We work with many of the top professional interviewing firms in the country for the completion of telephone surveys — meaning the actual phone calls. A few years ago, at minimum, to cost-effectively complete a phone survey, our vendor needed 15 phone numbers (assuming one completion per household) for each completion. Today, they are asking for more than 30.

Because of the labor time involved, telephone surveys can be expensive. And while interviewing is a little “cheaper by the dozen” — the per completion rate comes down somewhat given a larger size of the sample — they are not THAT MUCH cheaper by the dozen. So, the question is how to develop a sample size robust enough for quality analysis when available phone numbers are limited and when the cost of telephone surveys is so expensive.

Our answer to that is to combine methodologies and conduct a sufficient number of telephone surveys to get reliable overall numbers and a good measure of district demographics, and then supplement the phone survey with an electronic survey, taking steps to maximize participation and adjusting the results to reflect community demographics, to end up with a larger sample size for analysis of data.

Of course electronic surveys are less expensive than phone surveys — as mentioned, the cost of professional interviewing for phone surveys is not cheap. While a portion of the difference in cost between phone and electronic surveys will go toward promoting participation in the survey by various media, the cost of the electronic surveys remain considerably lower. For community members who cannot, or would prefer not to, complete a survey online paper versions will be made available.

For Platte County R-3, we recommend combining a 300-sample phone survey with an electronic survey. As a first step in this process, we will sit down with Platte County R-3 representatives and discuss sample size and the right mix between telephone and electronic surveys.

IMPLEMENTATION & TIMELINE

There are five main steps in the research process, each of which is described below. In particular, we recommend conducting a 300-sample phone survey, coupled with an electronic survey of district residents and registered voters.

Survey results from the electronic survey will be analyzed by statistically weighting the results to match the demographics of the district and the phone survey. If our history of doing this type of research holds, the number of completed surveys, combining the two approaches, will be far more than sufficient to break down the data by demographic categories.

Typically the entire discovery, fieldwork and reporting process takes approximately 12 weeks to complete. However, this timeline can be condensed with the knowledge that there will be tight deadlines throughout the process. We will collaboratively work with district leadership to ensure successful project completion.

1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT Week 1 - 3

LISTENING AND ASKING QUESTIONS

- Initial fact-finding meetings with district officials
- Development of input session discussion guide for initial qualitative research
- Up to five input sessions to learn issues of importance from the community
 - Conducted over the span of one to two days either virtually or in person.
 - May include board of education members, administrators, teachers, members of advisory committees, and various categories of parents and others residents.
 - The language and specific concerns that emerge from these sessions will have a considerable impact on the survey instrument.
 - Creative Entourage would be happy to facilitate additional input sessions for \$400 per session.
- Review of previous district research
 - Determine which, if any, questions should be repeated for tracking purposes.

WRITING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Draft questionnaire presented to district for approval.
- District leadership approves questionnaire
- Questionnaire finalized and prepared for telephoning and electronic survey

2 DEVELOPING THE LIST Week 1 - 3

- We will work with district leadership to develop a master list of mailing addresses and phone numbers for as many district residents as possible.
- The list will be used to:
 - Develop a random sample for the survey
 - Promote the online survey to all district residents
- Basic district demographic data will be collected to aid in the blending of the phone and electronic survey results.

3 DEVELOPING THE SAMPLE Week 1 - 3

We will work with the district to develop a strategy to complete 300 interviews of district registered voters or all residents.

4 FIELDWORK: ASKING THE QUESTIONS Week 3 - 6

- Before the survey goes into the field, the telephone and electronic surveys will be thoroughly tested.
- Participation in the electronic survey will be promoted by mail, email, text messages, social media and other media to be determined in consultation with the district's communications staff. We will monitor responses to the electronic survey to see what type of strategies are needed to boost a higher response rate.

IMPLEMENTATION & TIMELINE

5

RESULTS: REPORTING & ANALYSIS

Week 6-7

- Once fieldwork is complete, initial results will be available within four business days. Updates on survey completion rates and results will also be provided throughout the fieldwork process.
- A subsequent final report will include the following items:
 - An overview of data
 - An executive summary of key findings and interpretations in narrative form
 - Complete frequencies (in tabular and graphic forms)
 - A complete, electronic file of cross tabulations (which breaks down the responses of each question by demographic category)
 - Analysis of how the phone survey and electronic survey data compare
 - A “theme and message” document to support communications strategies
 - A copy of the survey instrument(s)
 - An electronic file and one printed copy of the final report and appendices will be provided.
- Our team will make an in-person, formal presentation to the board of education and can meet with district leadership or others to discuss the survey results as needed. If desired, our team can also lead brainstorming sessions of staff, volunteers or others to further develop theme and message. These sessions will be at no additional cost to the district.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

How we select the sample size is rooted in the science behind the margin of error, and the variety of categories the data will be broken into in the final results. While it sounds simple — and it is not — the goal is for each person in the population (registered voters, all residents, all residents 18 and older, etc.) to be sampled to have an equal chance of being selected. Rolled onto this is stratification strategies and concerns about differing response rates among different types of possible respondents (women are more likely to respond than men is one simple example). Based on conversations with district officials, these and other considerations will be selected and implemented.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND SAMPLE SIZE

SAMPLE SIZE	MARGIN OF ERROR	CONFIDENCE INTERVAL
300	±5.7%	95%
400	±4.9%	95%
500	±4.4%	95%

The desired sample size is more driven by the complexity of the population from which the sample is drawn than it is by margin of error considerations. If the population is complex, and breakdowns of the results are desired by many different demographic categories, that can result in a decision for a larger sample size.

Following initial meetings to determine informational needs, we may recommend adjusting the sample size. As noted above, the electronic surveys will greatly contribute to being able to break down the results by key demographic categories.

An example is a district wanting to see results by each of its 20 elementary attendance areas. To have anywhere close to a representative sample by each of the 20 areas would drive a much larger sample than the “normal” or typical 400 or 500 sample often seen in survey research. There is no “magic number” for sample size. This is simplistic nonsense. It is simply the size of a sample that produces a margin of error of ±5.0% at the 95% confidence interval not taking into account the size of the population (or sampling fraction) or the actual results from a specific survey question. Also remember that the margin of error distribution is bell-shaped, so much more likely to be 1% off than 5% off.

INVESTMENT

300 Sample Telephone and Electronic Public Opinion Survey • \$29,500

- All meetings held for fact-finding
- Up to five, one-hour input sessions
- The cost of acquisition of district-wide phone numbers and addresses
- Questionnaire development including preparing it for electronic completion
- Writing and design of one direct mail piece promoting participation in the electronic survey
- Assistance with emails and text messaging strategies to promote participation in the electronic survey
- Professional live phone interviewing from a US based phone bank with a questionnaire that contains 30-35 questions taking approximately 10 to 12 minutes to complete
- Sampling for the telephone survey
- Writing and hosting of the electronic survey
- Report writing and electronic delivery as outlined in this proposal, including a theme and message document
- Attendance at unlimited follow-up meetings to discuss survey results

This fee does not include the cost of printing, postage and mail handling for a direct mail piece to promote participation in the online survey. It also does not include out of pocket costs for distributing text messages. We are certainly open to discussing other alternatives for completing the survey — phone only or electronic surveys only, for example. Following preliminary discussions with district officials, we can fine tune this approach, or fundamentally change it, to provide the type of research desired by the district.

PROPOSED PROJECT TEAM



Clayton Community Foundation



Baseball Battles Cancer



Softball Battles Cancer



Charity Lemonade Stand



Eureka, Missouri Flood Relief

When we say we are in business to

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

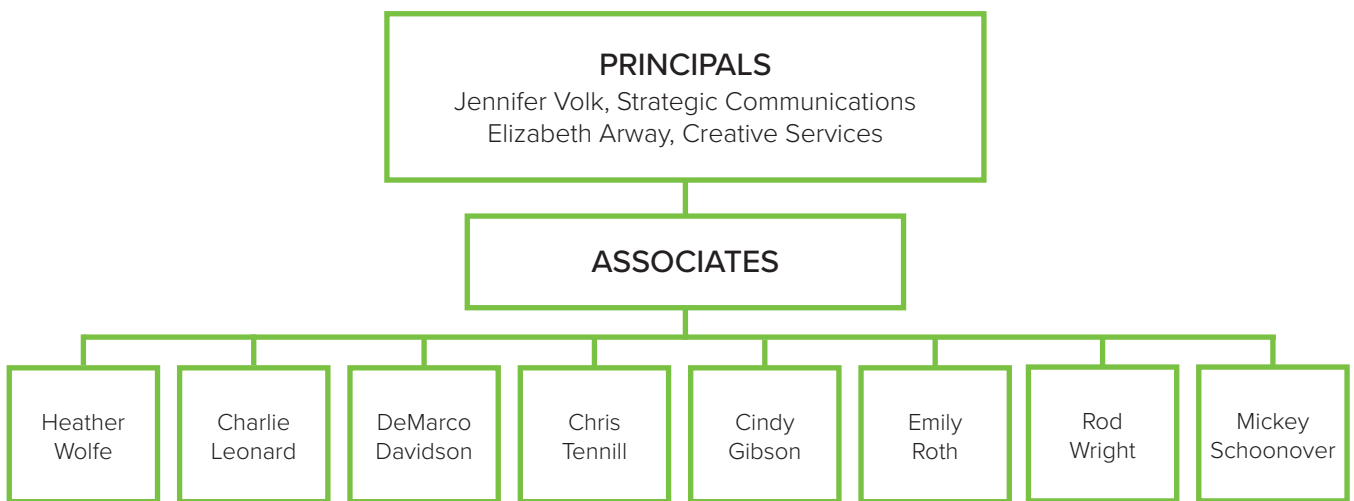
in the communities we serve, it doesn't stop with our clients. Our team is proud to be active in our community, donating hundreds of hours each year to a number of non-profit organizations throughout the St. Louis area where our company is based.

Our team has assisted in raising over \$150,000 for non-profit partners since 2013.

OUR TEAM

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Creative Entourage was started to bring together topic area experts to provide exceptional services to clients. We harness the strengths of these specialists, ensuring customized, high-quality solutions for every client's needs.



Our associates are experts in their field who provide Creative Entourage independent contractor services on a per project basis.

DISTRICT RESOURCES

Our team is prepared to work collaboratively with district staff to conduct a successful survey. To effectively implement the program, we will ask the District to appoint an internal coordinator to facilitate smooth communication between our teams and to assist with logistics such as scheduling input sessions.

Additionally, we will rely on the district's assistance to encourage community members to participate in the electronic survey if this option is chosen. While we can supply the tools needed for this recruitment effort, district leadership and staff will be crucial in extending these invitations and encouraging participation.

Our team will create a suite of communication tools aimed at reaching your stakeholders. However, the implementation of these tools will necessitate the district communication team's involvement in distributing them through the appropriate channels.

This could include tasks such as posting social media content and graphics we create to district accounts and circulating backpack fliers to schools for student distribution - actions that can only be performed by district personnel.

OUR TEAM

**JENNIFER ROLWES VOLK**

PRINCIPAL, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

As Creative Entourage's co-owner and principal of strategic communications, Jennifer Volk devotes her extensive expertise to supporting public-sector organizations in planning and implementing strategic communications crucial to meeting their goals.

Her work includes developing and managing dozens of community engagement programs across the nation that involved community members in making decisions about the future of their public schools, fire departments, community colleges and cities.

Her areas of expertise include strategic planning, community engagement, campaign management, media relations and crisis management. Jennifer finds solutions to ensure her clients are authentically engaging their communities, while also using data to make solid decisions. She and her team are problem solvers, using their wealth of experience to help organizations overcome challenges and bring a fresh, strategic perspective to their situations. Her innate curiosity leads her to ask questions and learn the most she can about her clients, so she can provide the best solutions to their individual needs.

Prior to joining Creative Entourage in 2009, Jennifer worked as a senior associate at UNICOM-ARC. Other roles include communications director and interim executive director for KidSmart, media relations assistant for the Rockwood School District, and she started out as general assignment reporter for the NBC affiliate in Columbia, Missouri. She earned a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her work has earned recognition from the Missouri School Public Relations Association, Illinois School Public Relations Association, the National School Public Relations Association, 3CMA (City-County Communications and Marketing Association), The Tellys, and the Business Marketing Association.

Jennifer lives in St. Louis with her husband Ben and their two daughters. Traveling across the country for her clients supports her hobby of finding great travel deals. She loves visiting everywhere from cities to the mountains with her family. Closer to home, you can find them at St. Louis Cardinals games or following Mizzou and Ohio State sporting events. In her free time, she also volunteers as a member of the St. Michael School of Clayton Board of Directors and as president of the Clayton Community Foundation.

COMMON PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Project management and client relations
- Strategic communications planning and implementation
- Campaign management
- Message development
- Media relations
- Crisis communications
- Content development and copywriting

OUR TEAM



ROD WRIGHT, PH.D.

SENIOR ASSOCIATE • RESEARCH, ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Rod Wright is a nationally recognized expert in public opinion research and strategic communication with extensive experience working in the corporate and public sectors. His expertise includes designing and implementing successful community engagement programs; assisting on tax increase and bond elections; market and opinion research; theme and message development; public relations strategies and crisis communications. Prior to joining Creative Entourage, Rod worked at UNICOM•ARC for 34 years. He led the opinion and market research division at the company before serving as UNICOM•ARC's president for more than two decades. He also worked as director of research with Public Response, Inc., a political and business consulting firm, and as a faculty member at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville and the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Rod earned a bachelor's degree from William Jewell College and his master's and doctorate degrees from Washington University, all in political science.

Rod has directed a wide variety of public opinion, community engagement and communications projects for hundreds of corporate and public sector clients and school and community college districts throughout the United States. He has worked on successful referendum programs for public education clients leading to more than \$10 billion in school facility improvements plus billions more in operating dollars. Projects he led won two Magna Awards from the American School Boards Journal, two Golden Paragon Awards from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations and numerous awards from the National School Public Relations Association.

Rod is a sought-after speaker at national and regional conferences. He has given presentations for the National School Public Relations Association, the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, the Annual Management Symposium of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, the Annual Leadership Forum of the American Bar Association, the State Education Improvement Partnership, and the National Governors' Association) and the national meetings of the Association of School Business Officials."

Rod grew up in a small town of less than 200 people. When he's not working he volunteers in the community and enjoys baseball, theater and restaurants, especially out-of-the-way places most people don't know.

COMMON PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Project management and client relations
- Campaign management
- Public opinion research
- Strategic communications planning and implementation
- Message and content development

OUR TEAM

**CHRIS TENNILL, APR**

ASSOCIATE • RESEARCH, ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATIONS

Chris Tennill, APR, is a nationally-recognized, veteran school communicator who spent more than two decades leading communications and community engagement programs for one of the top-ranked school districts in Missouri and the Midwest.

He is a go-to strategic advisor in the areas of strategic communications, crisis management and community engagement. He believes in the power of data and research and that, when done well, some of the best work of a public relations professional often goes unseen.

His passion for mentoring drove him to develop programs to support his colleagues new to the school communications profession throughout his home state of Missouri and nationally through work with the National School Public Relations Association's (NSPRA) New Professionals program. Chris has served in state-level leadership roles with the Missouri School Public Relations Association and nationally on NSPRA's Executive Board.

When he's not working, you're likely to find him near a soccer ball (coaching or watching... his playing days ended long ago) or transforming a large slab of meat into tasty hand-crafted BBQ or some type of old world sausage or charcuterie. Chris lives in the St. Louis area with his wife, Deana, who teaches English at a local public high school, and has two daughters: Sydney, a recent graduate of Northwestern University, and Olivia, who is studying digital video and communications at Saint Louis University.

COMMON PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Project management and client relations
- Campaign management
- Public opinion research
- Strategic communications planning and implementation
- Message and content development

OUR TEAM

**ELIZABETH ARWAY**

PRINCIPAL • CREATIVE SERVICES

Elizabeth always knew she wanted to be a designer. From her first 4-H art project, to earning her BFA in graphic design at Maryville University, to launching her own boutique agency in 2008, Elizabeth has always delighted in combining her love of art and design with her keen eye for detail and enthusiasm for fresh, innovative ideas.

As the founder of Creative Entourage, Elizabeth works to keep the agency's work on the cutting edge and ensures that each client has a distinct look that's sure to turn heads. Her TAM and AIGA award-winning work takes a client's vision and turns it into reality.

Her broad experience, which includes both print and digital work, goes beyond graphic design. She has been instrumental in developing strategies to increase brand awareness, increase engagement, and build relationships among businesses and organizations.

Elizabeth, who grew up in rural Illinois, lives in Eureka, Missouri, with her husband PJ and their beagle, Sadie. The couple has worked tirelessly since 2013 to launch Baseball Battles Cancer, an annual baseball event held to raise money for cancer research. So far, they have raised over \$60,000. She also worked closely with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul during the 2017 Eureka flooding, designing and selling a T-shirt to raise more than \$10,000 for local relief efforts. In between managing the business and her philanthropy efforts, Elizabeth helped found the Missouri Whiskey Society in 2014. In her free time, Elizabeth enjoys quilting — a great way to express herself artistically while away from a computer — and being active in her church community.

COMMON PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Project management and client relations
- Marketing and communications strategy
- Creative and art direction
- Brand development
- Print and production management

OUR TEAM

**CHARLIE LEONARD, PH.D.**

ASSOCIATE • PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Dr. Charlie Leonard's work in strategic communications and public opinion research stretches more than 30 years, after beginning his career as a magazine editor. Clients have included state agencies, school districts, community college districts, municipalities, transportation districts, other special taxing districts, corporations, and candidates for public office.

Part of the post-Watergate wave of would-be crusading reporters flooding journalism programs in the 1970s, Dr. Leonard graduated from the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and went on to magazine editorial work at publications including St. Louis magazine and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. After the Globe merged with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, he went into consulting, landing at UNICOM Group as an account manager, handling corporate and public policy client communications.

Inspired by the political work of UNICOM and the public opinion research directed by his friend and colleague, Dr. Rod Wright at Attitude Research Company (ARC), Dr. Leonard returned to graduate school for a Master's and a PhD in political science from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

During subsequent academic appointments at Lindenwood University, the University of Texas at Dallas, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and the University of Louisville, he taught a wide range of courses in political science and university honors departments, including classes on public policy, urban politics, and public opinion.

While serving as a faculty member and university administrator, Dr. Leonard remained active in polling and public policy research, including a ten-year stint as co-director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute's "Simon Poll" and "Southern Illinois Poll." Illinois legislators, agency executives, and journalists looked to Simon Poll results to help gauge public support for important statewide policy proposals.

Charlie and his wife, Dr. Kimberly Leonard, are the parents of two grown sons. When he's not working, Charlie enjoys hiking, fishing, camping and traveling. He says keeping up with the restaurant scene in St. Louis is a never-ending challenge, but "I'm up to it."

COMMON PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Public opinion research
- Project management and client relations
- Campaign management
- Strategic communications planning and implementation
- Message and content development



OUR EXPERIENCE

It's hard to imagine a firm with more relevant experience than ours. Our extensive experience includes research, communications, community engagement, and campaign programs for dozens of school districts, cities, fire districts and other public entities, all developed through extensive collaboration that facilitates long-term investment in the final product.

Our consultative, collaborative approach delivers lasting benefits to the public entities we work with.

Attached you will find numerous case studies highlighting our work, as well as references who will attest to the approach that has fostered the success stories filling our company portfolio.



NEXT, you will find case studies highlighting our work.



CASE STUDY **PLATTE COUNTY R-3 SCHOOL DISTRICT**



PLATTE COUNTY R-3 SCHOOL DISTRICT

Facing the challenge of educating voters about the complex Proposition C rollback election, Platte County R-3 School District needed a strategic approach for effective communications and planning. The concept of a Prop. C rollback, unfamiliar to most voters, required a clear explanation to inform voters.

We assisted the District with a random 300-sample telephone survey and an electronic survey open to the entire community. This approach allowed the district to gauge community awareness and understanding and identify misconceptions. The insights gained from these surveys were instrumental in developing a tailored communication plan that guided the school district's engagement and informational efforts. The Proposition C Waiver and Levy Transfer passed with 59% support in April 2024.



CASE STUDY **ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT**



ST. JOSEPH
SCHOOL DISTRICT

ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT

The St. Joseph School District in Missouri faced significant challenges, including enrollment decline, decreasing attendance rates, and struggles with teacher retention. To address these issues, the school district worked with the Chamber of Commerce to engage Creative Entourage to develop a community engagement program to gather community input and create a strategic plan to move the district forward.

Hundreds of St. Joseph School District residents participated in the Vision Forward Community Engagement program, which aimed to develop a strategic plan covering key areas such as communication, demographics, facilities, and instruction. The program’s recommendations were based on the latest research in education and informed by the input of the community. Using the community engagement program’s recommendations as a guide, district leadership collaborated with former superintendents from District Leadership Solutions to develop an action plan that reflects the district’s aspirations for its future.

The district now has a solid plan to address student success factors such as attendance, discipline, student mobility, migration of staff and families, and staffing issues. Creative Entourage’s work helped the district build a better future for its students and the wider community.

We worked with the district again in 2023 to complete a telephone and online public opinion survey to guide educational planning efforts.

CASE STUDY ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT

clockwise

- Community Engagement Postcard
- Final Action Plan
- Process Brand Guide



St. Joseph School District | 1415 N. 26th Street, St. Joseph, MO 64506

Vision Forward Has a Plan

We have a plan! The Vision Forward Action Plan has been developed using the priority statements identified during the previous Vision Forward community engagement sessions:

- Session #1:** State of the District - An Overview of St. Joseph School District
- Session #2:** What Matters - High Quality Schools for Every Classroom
- Session #3:** Help Us Cross the Finish Line

VISION FORWARD
ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

POSTAGE INDICIA HERE

JOIN US! **SEPT. 20 & OCT. 18**
Community Review of Vision Forward Action Plan

Word of Life Church
3902 NE Riverside Rd., St. Joseph, MO 64506
Both sessions start promptly at 6 p.m. and end at 8 p.m.
Join in-person or virtually!

FINAL SESSIONS

IMPROVED SCHOOLS FOR A STRONGER ST. JOSEPH COMMUNITY



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT

VISION FORWARD QUICK BRAND GUIDE

LOGOS

The full color logo options are the primary logos. Use the black and white versions if required.

WIDE





NARROW





COLORS

PRIMARY COLORS

ORANGE	TEAL	BLACK 100%
C: 0 R: 247 M: 50 G: 145 Y: 100 B: 29 K: 0 HEX #F7941D	C: 100 R: 0 M: 0 G: 136 Y: 35 B: 159 K: 24 HEX #009996	C: 0 R: 0 M: 0 G: 0 Y: 0 B: 0 K: 100 HEX #000000

SECONDARY COLORS

PURPLE	MAGENTA 75%	COOL GRAY
C: 28 R: 183 M: 84 G: 77 Y: 0 B: 156 K: 0 HEX #8740C	C: 0 R: 240 M: 75 G: 103 Y: 0 B: 166 K: 0 HEX #F67A6	C: 35 R: 219 M: 7 G: 219 Y: 5 S: 211 K: 0 HEX #E0E1F

GRADIENTS





FONTS

PRIMARY SANS FONT
Helvetica
Helvetica Regular

Helvetica Condensed
Helvetica Condensed Regular

PRIMARY SERIF FONT
Garamond
Garamond Regular

DEVELOPED BY  **CREATIVE ENTOURAGE**



IMPROVED SCHOOLS FOR A STRONGER ST. JOSEPH COMMUNITY

VISION FORWARD ACTION PLAN

ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE

PROLOGUE

Today is a *New Day* in the St. Joseph School District. When the Vision Forward Community Engagement Team first met nearly a year ago, it was difficult to predict what the upcoming year would bring to our district in the areas of Communication, Demographics, Facilities, and Instruction as it relates to Facilities will be effective uses of resources. Although tempting to skip this step, analysis of existing studies will serve the district well.

Much has happened since that day in October. Our district has new leadership, our community overwhelmingly passed a referendum in support of our schools, and we have started a school year relatively free of the challenges imposed by a global pandemic. There is a widely shared sense that we can, and will, improve our schools.

The charge to Vision Forward was to create an Action Plan for improving our schools. This document contains the first draft of the plan. Our next two community engagement sessions will be devoted to both understanding and improving that plan. The action steps were developed based on the input we received at our community engagement meetings that started in January 2020 and continued throughout the spring.

This draft of our Action Plan was developed by a large work group of district educators and members of our Community Engagement Team. The process was facilitated by District Leadership Solutions (DLS), an organization that has assisted with our community engagement program from its outset. It is important to understand that while DLS professionals facilitated the discussion, the individual action steps were determined by community engagement input then translated into action steps by our educational leaders and members of our community.

Being intentional in assessing the status of our district in the areas of Communication, Demographics, Facilities, and Instruction as it relates to Facilities will be effective uses of resources. Although tempting to skip this step, analysis of existing studies will serve the district well.

Recommendations are based on continuing research that stresses the importance of teachers and principals, supported by the superintendent and cabinet. By investing in these key roles, many of the identified concerns of the district, such as attendance, discipline, student mobility, migration of staff and families, and staffing will improve. Highly effective, caring educators are proven to make the difference when they work within an aligned school system.

The success of the school district is reciprocal with the success of the community. It is essential that the district and community identify early projects that reflect success. This partnership must commit to staying the course as upcoming improvements become part of the collective culture and the foundation for continued successes.

What follows is the first draft of our Action Plan. The order of items was determined by our community engagement meeting agenda — not by some kind of rank ordering of importance. ALL items are equally important.

St. Joseph School District | VISION FORWARD REPORT | October 2022



CASE STUDY **ELGIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT U-46**



ELGIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT U-46

U-46, the second largest school district in Illinois, had not developed a facility master plan in over a decade. With declining enrollment, aging buildings, and changing student needs, the district needed to find solutions to improve its facilities.

Creative Entourage helped U-46 turn to the community for solutions through a comprehensive community engagement program and community survey. The community engagement process, Unite U-46, brought together over 650 community members to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the district's 57 schools. The input from these community engagement sessions was supplemented by data from a 300-sample telephone survey and an electronic survey of more than 2,000 residents.

In December 2022, the Board of Education accepted the community's recommendations and placed a \$179 million bond issue on the April 2023 ballot. The measure passed with 63% yes votes. In Kane and Cook counties it was the only successful school proposal in April 2023 and it passed with the highest margin amongst school proposals in DuPage county.

CASE STUDY ELGIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT U-46

clockwise

- Survey Postcard
- Process Report
- Promotional Flier

Our U-46 Schools Need Your Voice!

- ▶ Aging buildings
- ▶ Declining enrollment
- ▶ Changing needs of students today

How can we overcome these challenges and move U-46 forward together?
Let us know what you think through Unite U-46!

Unite U-46
Unite U-46 is a community-led public engagement collaboration that brings parents, families and community members together to move the district forward by developing solutions for the district's key challenges. Everyone who resides within U-46 boundaries, whether they have students or not in the District, is encouraged to participate and your input is critically important! Participate in Unite U-46 and help us bring the ideas of our community together to develop recommendations that will move our district forward.

Join Us!
Unite U-46 is holding a series of community engagement sessions where you will learn more about these challenges, the District's facilities, pre-K and middle school education and more, then participate in interactive work activities with fellow community members to come to general agreement about the priorities to move our schools forward. The results of these work activities will be included in a series of recommendations presented to the Board of Education. Registration is not required, but RSVPing at [UniteU46.org](https://uniteu46.org) will be helpful for planning.


UNITE U-46 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS
Each session will provide information about and gather feedback on a different topic:
 Session 1: **April 27** Session 2: **May 25** Session 3: **Oct. 19**
 Session 4: **Sept. 14** Session 5: **Nov. 9**
 All sessions will be held from 7 p.m. at the U-46 Welcome Center, near the car dealership at 1038 E. Chicago St. in Elgin.
 A virtual option via Zoom is also available. Visit [UniteU46.org](https://uniteu46.org) to register, and a Zoom link will be emailed to you.

SCHOOL DISTRICT U-46
Unite46
Moving Forward Together

Todas las sesiones se llevarán a cabo de 7 p.m. a 9 p.m. en el Centro de Bienvenida del Distrito U-46, cerca de los concesionarios de automóviles en 1038 E. Chicago St. en Elgin.
También se ofrece una opción virtual por medio de Zoom. Visite [UniteU46.org](https://uniteu46.org) para registrarse y poder recibir el enlace de Zoom por correo electrónico.

FOR MORE INFO
▶ [UniteU46.org](https://uniteu46.org)
▶ UniteU46@u-46.org

PARA MÁS INFO
▶ [UniteU46.org](https://uniteu46.org)
▶ UniteU46@u-46.org



Help Move Our Schools Forward!

¡Ayude a que nuestras escuelas sigan adelante!

Take Our Survey by Oct. 16!

¡Tome nuestra encuesta antes del 16 de octubre!



Let us know what you think about plans created by our community to update our school buildings and move our School District U-46 forward.
Take the survey online at U-46.org/unitesurvey



Háganos saber lo que piensa acerca de los planes creados por la comunidad para actualizar nuestros edificios escolares y hacer avanzar nuestro Distrito Escolar U-46.
Tome la encuesta en línea en U-46.org/unitesurvey

SCAN TO TAKE SURVEY
Take a photo of this code with your smartphone and click the popup link to take the survey.

ESCANEA PARA TOMAR LA ENCUESTA
Tome una foto de este código con su teléfono inteligente y haga clic en el enlace que lo aparecerá para realizar la encuesta.



Unite46
Moving Forward Together

Unite46@u-46.org

update our schools. Learn how these plans will help us work toward academic success for all students and how they will impact our school district budget and local property taxes at [UniteU46.org](https://uniteu46.org).

▶ For a paper copy of the survey, visit the U-46 Educational Services Center at 302 E. Chicago St., Elgin, IL 60120, email UniteU46@u-46.org or call 847-888-5000, ext. 3003.

▶ U-46 is also conducting a random telephone survey of local community members, so you may also receive a phone call asking you to take this survey.

para actualizar nuestros edificios escolares. Conozca cómo estos planes nos ayudarán a trabajar hacia el éxito académico de todos los estudiantes y cómo afectarán el presupuesto de nuestro distrito escolar y los impuestos locales a la propiedad en uniteu46.org.

▶ Para una copia impresa de la encuesta, visite el Centro de Servicios Educativos del Distrito U-46 en 302 E. Chicago St., Elgin, IL 60120, envíe un correo electrónico a UniteU46@u-46.org o llame al 847-888-5000, ext. 3003.

▶ U-46 también está realizando una encuesta telefónica aleatoria de miembros de la comunidad local, por lo que también puede recibir una llamada telefónica preguntando que realice esta encuesta.

SCHOOL DISTRICT U-46

Unite46

DISTRITO ESCOLAR U-46

Únete46

Siguiendo Adelante Juntos

RESUMEN DEL PROCESO

▶ The Process
Unite U-46
A community-led initiative develop recommendation about the best way to implement the U-46 Board Education Vision.

▶ The Plan
In early 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, U-46 embarked on an Education Master Plan (EMP) process. The process assessed District:
 ▶ Infrastructure
 ▶ Classrooms
 ▶ Overall facility use
 ▶ Efficiency

▶ El proceso
Únete U-46
Una iniciativa dirigida por la comunidad para desarrollar recomendaciones sobre la mejor manera de implementar la visión de la Junta Educativa del Distrito U-46.


▶ El plan
A principios del año 2020, justo antes de la pandemia de COVID-19, el Distrito U-46 inició el proceso de Plan Maestro de Infraestructura Educativa (PMIE) con el Grupo U-46, una empresa de diseño con base en Chicago. Este proceso evaluó lo siguiente:
 ▶ Infraestructura
 ▶ Clases
 ▶ Uso general de las instalaciones
 ▶ Eficiencia

Anclas para lograr la visión del Distrito U-46:

- ▶ Mover el 6^o grado a las escuelas intermedias para mejorar la experiencia educativa
- ▶ Propiciar una experiencia equitativa a todos los estudiantes de escuela elemental
- ▶ Revisar la capacidad de las escuelas elementales para adaptar el programa preescolar del Distrito.

El Distrito Escolar U-46 organizó Sesiones de Participación Comunitaria como parte de Unite U-46 a la luz de la promesa y el plan de 2022 para explorar esta idea de cinco años y proporcionar la oportunidad a nuestra comunidad de desarrollar recomendaciones sobre la mejor manera de implementar este plan.

También proporcionó una evaluación de la preparación de nuestras instalaciones para cumplir con la visión del Distrito. El 24 de enero de 2022, la Junta Educativa aprobó en forma unánime una resolución que confirma su apoyo a un plan de implementación de cinco años que concuerde con la visión de nuestro Distrito. Entendemos que esta jornada no será una tarea fácil, y necesitamos la participación y el apoyo de nuestra comunidad.



CASE STUDY **SCHOOL DISTRICT OF UNIVERSITY CITY****SCHOOL DISTRICT OF UNIVERSITY CITY**

The School District of University City was faced with significant facility needs, mounting deferred maintenance and also exploring facility upgrades to support best practices in teaching and learning. Faced with challenges that could only be solved by a future bond proposal, our team conducted a series of input sessions among stakeholders to develop a community-wide public opinion survey.

We used a blended approach with the research, conducting both a 200-sample phone survey as well as an electronic survey, allowing every member of the U-City community the opportunity to share their thoughts and help the District set priorities.

The data from both surveys provided the District with a strategy for future direction and insight into what its community held as important, both of which resulted in the District passing its first ballot issue in more than a decade with 88% approval.



CASE STUDY **TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 211**



TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 211

Township High School District 211 is the largest high school district in the state of Illinois. It operates five high schools each with approximately 2,500 students. District 211 sought to develop a strategic plan with extensive citizen involvement. Our team developed a community engagement program designed for priority and goal setting.

We also conducted public opinion research by phone and electronically. Our research team also conducted more than twenty focus groups of various types of patrons — parents, students, business leaders, senior citizens, etc. After receiving input from a variety of sources, a final report, containing long term goals and priorities, was developed looking for the overlap, or commonalities, from each type of input. Using these goals and priorities, a member of our team then conducted multiple sessions with staff to develop an Action Plan with steps to be taken to achieve the goals and priorities, a timeline for those steps, and the staff member or members responsible.



CASE STUDY **ELMHURST COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 205**



ELMHURST COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 205

Elmhurst Community Unit School District 205 (IL) sought to involve the community in the development of a long range plan with a particular focus on facilities. This high performing district was facing a number of facility challenges — spaces needing renovation, enrollment driven challenges (some schools with crowding, others with available space), and the need to generate more operational efficiency from facility updates.

Our team developed a community engagement program primarily oriented to reach consensus on educational programming and then using that consensus to reach agreement on a facility improvement plan that would enhance the development of those programs. The program included conducting public opinion research so survey results could be compared and contrasted to feedback from the in-person engagement sessions.

A recommendation from the engagement program was for a second phase of engagement specifically devoted to facilities. That program was led by the District 205 architectural firm. Following that, the district passed a large bond proposal to complete the first phase of the improvements.

OUR CLIENTS

Since 2017, the Creative Entourage team has had the privilege to work with dozens of school districts throughout the country including:

SCHOOL DISTRICT	SURVEY	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE
Affton School District	•	•	•
Arlington Central School District (NY)	•	•	•
Avoca School District 37	•	•	•
Barrington CUSD 220	•		
Benjamin School District	•	•	•
Bradley School District		•	•
Central CUSD 301	•		
Champaign Unit 4 School District	•		
Clinton CUSD #15	•	•	•
Collinsville CUSD #10	•	•	•
Community Consolidated School District 89	•	•	•
Community High School District 94	•		
Community High School District 128	•	•	•
Decatur Public Schools	•	•	•
East Prairie School District		•	•
Edwardsville School District 7	•	•	•
Elmhurst School District 205	•	•	
Fox Lake School District	•	•	•
Geneso School District	•	•	
Glenbard High School District #87	•	•	•
Golf School District 67	•	•	•
Grayslake Community High School District 127	•	•	•
Hazelwood School District	•	•	•
Hillsboro School District (IL)			•
Huntley School District		•	
Indian Prairie School District 204		•	
Iowa City Community School District	•	•	
Iroquois West School District	•	•	•
Jasper County Schools		•	•
Jefferson City School District	•		•

OUR CLIENTS

SCHOOL DISTRICT	SURVEY	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE
Kirkwood School District	•		
Lisle School District		•	•
Mahomet-Seymour School District		•	•
Moroa Forsyth School District	•	•	•
Morton School District 709		•	
Mount Vernon School District		•	•
Naperville Community Unit School District 203	•	•	
New Berlin CUSD 16	•	•	•
Normandy School Collaborate	•	•	•
Platte County R-3	•		•
Parkway School District	•	•	•
Pattonville School District	•	•	•
Paxton-Buckley-Loda School District		•	•
Platte County R-3 School District	•		
Richland County CUSD 1	•	•	•
Ritenour School District	•	•	•
River Trails School District		•	•
Rockwood School District	•	•	
San Marcos CISD (Tx)	•		•
School District of Clayton	•	•	•
School District U-46	•	•	•
School District of University City	•		
Sergeant Bluff School District (Sioux City, IA)		•	•
Smithton School District		•	•
St. Charles CUSD 303	•	•	•
St. Joseph School District	•	•	•
Township High School District 211	•	•	
Waltham School District 185	•	•	
West Prairie School District		•	
Williamsville Sherman School District	•	•	•

RECENT CAMPAIGN EXPERIENCE

OVER
80%
SUCCESS
RATE

Our team has more than **50 years of experience** in election campaign consulting and management, research, communications and public engagement. In that period, we've worked on **hundreds of elections** for school districts, community colleges, fire districts and municipalities. Below is a sample of some of the campaigns we have assisted with since 2019.

CLIENT	ELECTION DATE	PROPOSAL	SERVICES PROVIDED			RESULTS	
			RESEARCH	INFORMATIONAL EFFORT	VOTE YES CAMPAIGN	YES	NO
School District of Clayton	4/2019	56-Cent Rate Increase	●	●	●	64%	36%
Lisle School District	4/2019	Stopped \$1.2 Million Rollback		●	●	31%	69%
Fox Lake School District	3/2020	59-Cent Rate Increase	●	●	●	57%	43%
Maroa Forsyth School District	3/2020	\$33 Million Bond	●	●	●	57%	43%
Williamsville Sherman School District	3/2020	\$45 Million Bond	●	●	●	75%	25%
Cottleville Fire Protection District	6/2020	\$16 Million Bond		●		82%	18%
Ritenour School District	6/2020	\$17 Million Bond	●	●	●	80%	20%
O'Fallon Fire Protection District	11/2020	Pension Tax		●	●	53%	47%
Cottleville Fire Protection District	11/2020	Pension Tax		●		52%	48%
Central County Fire & Rescue	11/2020	Pension Tax		●	●	51%	49%
City of Brentwood	11/2020	Use Tax	●	●	●	53%	47%
Godfrey Fire Protection District	4/2021	\$7 Million Bond		●	●	69%	31%
Kirkwood School District	4/2021	\$61.2 Bond	●			68%	32%
St. Louis Community College	8/2021	8-Cent Operating Rate Increase	●	●		58%	42%
Park Hill School District	4/0222	Bond Issue	●	●	●	74%	26%
Park Hill School District	4/0222	Operating Increase	●	●	●	66%	34%
Pattonville School District	4/0222	\$111 Million Bond	●		●	79%	21%
Hazelwood School District	11/2022	\$130 Million Bond		●	●	79%	21%
Hillsboro School District	11/2022	\$13 Million Bond		●	●	64%	28%
U-46 School District (Elgin)	4/2023	\$179 Million Bond	●	●	●	62%	38%
Edwardsville District 7	4/2023	\$100 Million Bond	●	●	●	64%	36%
Collinsville CUSD #10	3/2024	Tax Rate Transfer	●	●	●	56%	44%
Glenbard High School District #87	3/2024	\$179 Million Bond	●	●	●	51%	49%
Galena CUSD #120	3/2024	\$14 Million Bond		●	●	65%	35%
School District of University City	4/2024	\$65 Million Bond	●			89%	11%
Arlington Central School District (NY)	5/2024	\$179 Million Bond	●	●	●	71%	29%

As school districts pivoted to crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic, many planning and research projects were put on hold. During this time, while we did work with some school districts, we were fortunate to work with a number of municipalities and fire districts to continue our work.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

TAMA WAGNER

St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce
Community Alliance Director
3003 Frederick Avenue
St. Joseph, MO 64506
816-364-4109

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