



WIDEFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT 3

Widefield School District 3

BELIEVE IN WIDEFIELD

BOND/MLO CAMPAIGN



*COSPRA Gold Medallion
Award Entry*

COLORADO PREK-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

- **COMMUNICATION TEAM OF 2**
- **EMPLOYEES - 1,500**
- **STUDENTS - 9,300**
- **SCHOOLS - 18**

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Synopsis:

Widefield School District 3 (WSD3) placed an \$88 Million Bond and a \$5.1 Mill Levy Override (MLO) on the November 2025 ballot to address critical infrastructure needs and attract and retain staff.

A facility audit identified \$311 million in critical repairs, including replacing 50-70-year-old major systems (HVAC, boilers, roofs) and the necessary rebuild of North Preschool to mitigate a chronic termite issue. Furthermore, as one of the lowest-funded districts in the state, the MLO is essential to provide competitive compensation and address significant teacher and staff shortages, particularly in specialized fields like Special Education and CTE.

The ask came amid high property taxes and economic uncertainty, necessitating a proactive approach to build voter trust and overcome economic anxiety.

Our communication plan focused on financial transparency by highlighting the district's track record as a responsible steward of taxpayer money, and delivering a clear, consistent message to every target audience. The campaign leveraged targeted digital outreach and in-person community conversations to demonstrate that this is a critical and responsible investment in the safety and future success of WSD3 students.

Research

The communication plan's research efforts were comprehensive, blending formal data collection with direct voter analysis over two years. Initial secondary research established the urgent need, confirming \$311 million in total facility repair needs (with \$89 million being critical) and the district's strong history of financial stewardship, notably passing the 2017 Bond/MLO with 67% support. This was followed by a series of quantitative, primary voter polls: the September 2023 Magellan survey showed high initial support for facility repairs (88%) and teacher pay (81%). However, the April 2024 Frederick Poll revealed that while the district's job rating was high, both the Bond (51% Yes) and MLO (48% Yes) were toss-ups, largely due to 81% of voters feeling property taxes were already too high. This critical data led to pushing the election back a year and refining the ask. Finally, the February 2025 Fredrick Poll validated the new messaging, showing support had rebounded to a favorable 64% Yes on Bond and 63% Yes on MLO. Complementing the polls, qualitative analysis of social media and community observations identified key resistance points, such as concerns about financial transparency and general government distrust, which directly informed the final messaging strategy.

Problem Statement:

The district does not have funds to make critical repairs to existing school buildings; maintain and expand student programming, or pay staff a competitive salary.

Goals:

1. Communicate and educate staff about the district needs for passing a bond and mill levy override.
2. Educate voters on state and local funding, marijuana tax money, property values, and the district's needs.
3. Encourage people to register to vote, fill out the ballot, and turn ballots in by the deadline.

Objectives:

1. By November 4, 2025, secure voter approval for both the Widefield School District 3 bond and mill levy override initiatives, achieving a minimum of 53% "yes" votes for each.
2. By October 31, 2025, implement a comprehensive communication strategy, including a minimum of 25 community presentations and distribution of informational materials to 80% of registered voter households, to inform and engage stakeholders, and achieve a 60% positive sentiment/understanding score.
3. Increase views to the Believe in Widefield webpage by 5% from March 3, 2025 to November 4 2025.
4. Digital Engagement: Increase the Click-Through Rate on all digital ads driving to the informational website to a campaign average of 1.5%.
5. In-Person Engagement: Achieve a total of 100 attendees across all scheduled Community Conversations and town halls by October 30, 2025.
6. Advocacy/Outreach: Recruit and activate a minimum of 30 "WIN" citizen advocates who complete a training session and commit to three outreach activities before Election Day.

Planning

The final phase of the communication plan, focusing on February through November 2025, kicked off with the February 2025 voter poll. This crucial survey provided favorable results, validating the refined messaging—which included detailed financial stewardship examples, specific at-risk programs, and a clearly defined outline of critical facility repairs. With a positive forecast, the district leadership proceeded with the ballot initiatives. This period was characterized by high-intensity execution of the strategy: the communication team leveraged the refined data to finalize all messaging, digital assets, and campaign talking points. The focus immediately shifted to extensive community outreach, utilizing the Widefield Information Network (WIN) citizen advocates and a commitment to numerous in-person engagements to deliver the clear and consistent "Critical Needs" message to the community and staff. This sustained, data-driven effort culminated in the successful voter approval of both the Bond and Mill Levy Override in November 2025.

Audiences

- Board of Education: we needed approval to ballot initiatives and support to educate and advocate
- School District Staff: we needed support for ballot initiatives; they are directly impacted by bond/MLO
- Voters with children: directly impacted by critical needs and student programs
- Voters without children: source of funding; benefit from increased property values.

Bond Key Messages:

1. **Aging Buildings:** The majority of our school buildings are 50-60 years old. The wear and tear on these facilities is significant, and repairs can no longer be made on most of the outdated equipment. This bond will address the critical need for building upgrades.
2. **Cost-Effective for Taxpayers:** The cost of repairs and replacement of equipment continues to rise each year. By investing in the bond now, we avoid much higher costs in the future, saving taxpayers money in the long run.
3. **Efficient Use of Resources:** The district has done all it can with the resources available, making every effort to be efficient and responsible with taxpayer dollars. We only go to voters when all other options have been exhausted.

4. **Safe and Comfortable Learning Environments:** Our students deserve safe, functional, and comfortable spaces where they can learn and thrive. This bond will help ensure their classrooms and facilities are modern and conducive to learning.
5. **Community Investment:** Improving our school buildings is an investment in the future of our community. Modernized facilities create a better learning environment and can have a positive impact on property values and community well-being.

MLO Key Messages:

1. **Maintain and Enhance College and Career-Ready Programs**
Families value having diverse programs that support students' needs, but these programs are costly to maintain. With more funding, we can ensure adequate staffing and keep all programs available, prioritizing student success without increasing class sizes.
2. **Attract and Retain High Quality Staff**
Retaining high-quality staff is vital for student success, and we are committed to supporting our team through competitive raises, better benefits, and a positive culture. By investing in our staff, we invest in the future of our students, schools, and community.
3. **Replenish Funds Dedicated to Safety and Security**
We need to replenish the \$2 million we reallocated for safety and security measures, so we can continue to invest in other critical areas such as student programs and staff resources that directly impact student success.

Implementation

Strategies

- Educate all key audiences on the current impacts of growth, necessary facility needs, and the fundamentals of school finance.
- Utilize a mix of district resources—staff meetings, town halls, and media (including WSD3 admin/staff, Connect with Widefield, and WIN)—to share timely information and address concerns.

- Educate and engage community and district leaders; and provide timely, accurate responses to all questions to build trust and support.
- Empower schools and departments to become referendum ambassadors, actively communicating the importance of facility repairs to their key stakeholders and parents.
- Focus efforts on maximizing parent and resident staff voter participation by emphasizing convenient methods, such as early voting.

Tactics

- Conduct regular, scheduled meetings (Monthly WIN and Connect with Widefield) and formal town halls (Spring and Fall) to engage directly with the community and key groups.
- Secure additional speaking engagements and meetings to present the core financial history and district needs narrative.
- Produce digital content (videos, graphics, and "Tuesdays with Terry" series) that illustrates critical facility needs.
- Run targeted social media campaigns focusing on specific school needs, FAQs, and a Get Out the Vote push.
- Develop and distribute standardized communication tools (FAQs on funding/needs/compensation, and presentation slides) to ensure the public receives timely, consistent information.
- Create unified talking points for all front-office staff, principals, and general district staff to align messaging.

Timeline

- **February 2025:** Conducted and validated the final voter poll, confirming high support for the refined "financial stewardship" and "critical repairs" messaging.
- **Spring/Summer 2025:** Finalized all campaign materials, messaging, and digital assets based on the favorable poll results.
- **Ongoing Execution:** Activated and deployed the WIN citizen committee for high-intensity, peer-to-peer outreach activities. Executed the core strategy of community conversations and in-person meetings to ensure broad voter education and understanding.
- **November 4, 2025:** Achieved successful voter approval of both the Bond and Mill Levy Override initiatives.

Evaluation

Objective #1: Voter Approval - By November 4, 2025, secure voter approval for both the Widefield School District 3 bond and mill levy override initiatives, achieving a minimum of 53% "yes" votes for each.

- **Results:** We passed the Mill Levy Override (4A) by 51.71% to 48.29% (11,285 votes). We passed the Bond (4B) by 53.72% to 46.28% (11,281 votes).

Objective #2: Community Education and Engagement: By October 31, 2025, implement a comprehensive communication strategy, including a minimum of 25 community presentations and distribution of informational materials to 80% of registered voter households, to inform and engage stakeholders and achieve a 60% positive sentiment/understanding score.

- **Results:**
 - We hosted 30 external community meetings and 46 staff meetings between the spring of 2025 and fall of 2025.
 - Poll Results: The \$88 million bond gains 64% yes vote, up 13 points from April 2024 poll. The \$5 million mill levy override gains 63% yes vote, up 15 points from April 2024.

Objective #3: Increase views to the Believe in Widefield webpage by 5% from March 3, 2025 to November 4 2025.

- **Results:** The Believe in Widefield webpage saw a major increase in visibility and engagement after launching the bond and mill levy campaign.
 - From March 17 to November 4, 2025, the page received 5,030 views, compared to 15 during the baseline period (March 3-15) - an increase of 33,433%, far exceeding the 5% goal. Active users also jumped from 12 to 4,110, showing strong and sustained community interest.
 - Engagement quality improved as well. Average engagement time grew from 9 seconds to 23 seconds (+137%), and the engagement rate rose from 87.5% to 96.71%, indicating users were actively interacting with the content.
 - Traffic sources show a healthy mix of programmatic ads, paid social, organic search, direct visits, and referrals from local media. This demonstrates that the district's multi-channel approach successfully expanded reach and improved access to bond and mill levy information.
 - Overall, the campaign delivered outstanding results, far surpassing expectations and driving strong awareness and engagement across the community.

Objective #4 Digital Engagement: Increase the Click-Through Rate (CTR) on all digital ads (Facebook, Instagram, Programmatic) driving to the informational website to a campaign average of 1.5%.

- **Result:** Digital advertising across Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, and Programmatic, gained a total of 744,602 impressions. We projected we would serve around 517,000 ads. The campaign reached 25,361 individuals 17 times each on FB/IG, fully saturating our audience with the ads.

Objective #5 In-Person Engagement: Achieve a total of 100 attendees across all scheduled Community Conversations and town halls by October 30, 2025.

- **Results:**
 - Feb. 2025 Community Conversation attendance: 60 (in-person and virtual)
 - Sept. 2025 Community Conversation attendance: 100 (in-person and virtual)
 - Feb. 4, 2025 - 34 responded to Facebook Event
 - Sept. 30, 2025 - 85 responded to Facebook Event
 - Presentation engagement rate
 - District Facebook posts: 3 shares, 12 likes, 2 comments
 - Vimeo views of presentation: 100

Objective #6 Advocacy/Outreach: Recruit and activate a minimum of 30 "WIN" citizen advocates who complete a training session and commit to three outreach activities before Election Day.

- **Results:** The number of individuals who expressed interest in WIN and received consistent communication was 65. We had between 10-15 members show up to each monthly meeting. Five WIN members followed through with three outreach activities before Election Day.

Objective #7: Track the number of times "Get Out and Vote" social media content distributed by the district include a direct link/QR code to the County Elections office website.

- **Results:** We posted four reels, and six posts on Instagram and Facebook with direct links to the county election website. The reels averaged 5,115 views on Instagram and 1,561 views on Facebook.

Links to materials:

- [Bond & MLO one pager](#)
- [Believe in Widefield webpage](#)
- [The Widefield Way Newsletter](#)
- [Critical Needs in WSD3 video](#)
- [Believe in Me FAQ](#)
- [Get Out & Vote Reel](#)

Media stories:

- Gazette, July 23, 2025 : [Widefield D-3 board approves ballot measures for bond and mill levy override](#)
- KRDO, July 28, 2025: [Widefield School District is asking tax payers to improve learning conditions](#)
- KOAA, July 29, 2025: [Aging schools, termites, no AC, District 3 needs funding to fix it](#)
- FOX 21, Nov. 7, 2025 [Widefield Voters Approve School Upgrades and Staff Pay Raises](#)