



## **Dover Public School District**

**Referendum Date:** December 9, 2003 **Total Referendum:** \$18,187,295

Contact: Robert Becker, Superintendent (973) 989-2000

When crafting a strategic communications plan to support the Dover Public School District referendum, Zander Consulting had to ensure all communications were produced in Spanish and English for this bilingual community.

The information campaign Zander Consulting developed included a variety of projects to educate the community about the needs behind the plan as well as its development, details, and potential impact on residents. A staff awareness program was created to apprise district personnel of the referendum details and a key communicators group was formed to spread the word throughout the community. Open houses and tours were held so the public could see both the issues the plan would address and the plan itself.

To provide voters with a choice at the polls, the referendum was divided into two proposals.

- Proposal 1—additions and renovations to the district's middle school and an expanded library/media center at the high school with a total cost of \$17.2 million.
- Proposal 2—a new health and wellness center at the high school with a total cost of just over \$973,000.

An unstable political climate that had the potential to divide the public presented a significant challenge. In addition, Zander Consulting had to overcome the district's history for defeated annual budgets as well as deal with the potential fallout following Mine Hill School District's threat to pull its seventh- and eighth-grade students out of Dover's middle school. With concerted effort, a host of bilingual communications pieces, and much focus on the community's pride in its schools, Zander Consulting was successful in unifying residents. The referendum passed with an exceptionally high voter turnout.

