



Date: June 5, 2008
 To: Board of Education Members
 From: J. Brian Sarvis, Superintendent
 Subject: **Board Workshop on Parcel Tax Survey Results**

Background

On March 11, 2008, the board approved a study of the feasibility of pursuing a parcel tax by contracting with Godbe Research to conduct a parcel tax survey.

Issue

Godbe Research will present the findings of the parcel tax feasibility survey so that the board can discuss the findings and provide direction on potential board action to pursue a parcel tax in either the elementary district or secondary district or both districts.

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| Attachment(s)? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes (if so, please attach) | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Powerpoint | <input type="checkbox"/> | Overhead | <input type="checkbox"/> | Consultant |
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- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Adams Elementary School | Harding Elementary School | Peabody Charter School | Goleta Valley Junior High School | Los Pueblos High School |
| Cesar Chavez Charter School | McKinley Elementary School | Roosevelt Elementary School | La Cota Junior High School | La Cuesta Continuation High School |
| Cleveland Elementary School | Monroe Elementary School | Santa Barbara Charter School | La Cumbre Junior High School | San Marcos High School |
| Franklin Elementary School | •Per. Alternative School | Santa Barbara Community Academy | Santa Barbara Junior High School | Santa Barbara High School |
| | | Washington Elementary School | | |



GODDE RESEARCH
Gain Insight



Santa Barbara School Districts

Parcel Tax Feasibility Survey

June 2008

- Conduct a survey of voters in the High School and Elementary School Districts to understand the feasibility of passing one parcel tax measure in each District, including:
 - Optimal tax rate for each measure
 - Optimal duration for each measure
- Prioritize potential educational programs to be funded based on voter reception;
- Test the influence of supporting and opposing arguments on potential voter support; and
- Identify any differences in voter support due to demographic and/or voter behavioral characteristics

- Data Collection Telephone Interviewing
- Universe 78,356 likely November 2008 voters in the Santa Barbara School Districts
- Fielding Dates April 25 to May 7, 2008
- Interview Length 18 minutes
- Sample Size 800 (500 voters in the Elementary School District and 500 likely March/June 2009 voters)
- Margin of Error Overall sample of 800 = $\pm 3.5\%$
ESD and Likely March/June 2009 voters = $\pm 4.4\%$ (n = 500)

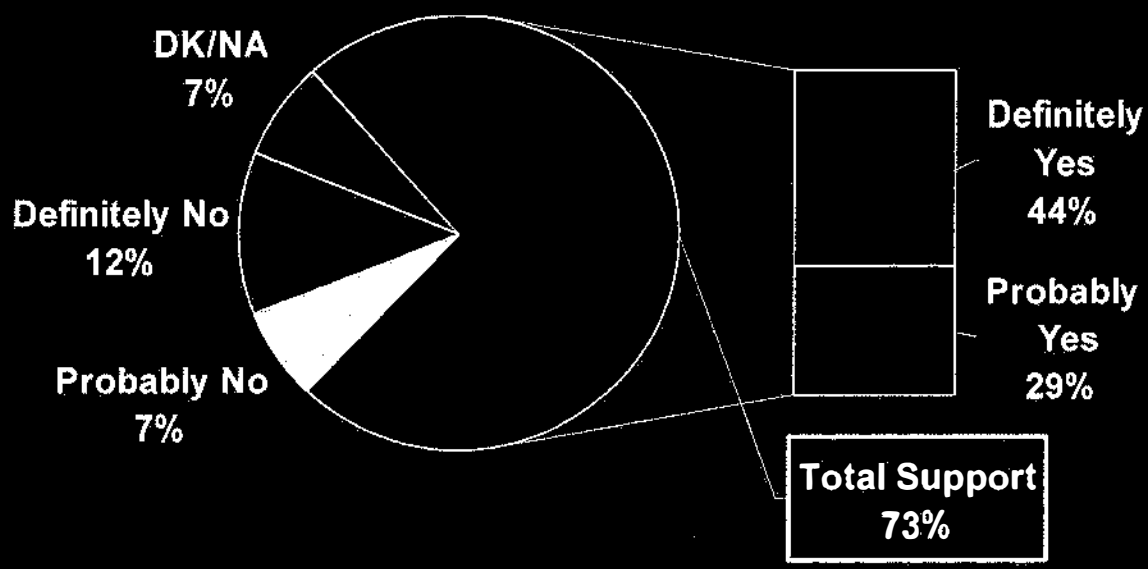
Sampling Plan

In order to maximize the statistical power for gauging voter support for the elementary school measure and the favorability of the 2009 off-year elections, the sampling plan called for over-sampling voters in these categories. The table below reflects the quotas assigned to each criterion in terms of the district boundaries and election timing. When analyzing all 800 cases for voter support of the high school measure for the November 2008 election, the data were weighted to reflect the actual voter representation in the overlapping school districts and the actual percentage estimated to vote in the 2009 elections based on voting history.

| | Sample Composition | | | Actual % of Voter Universe |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total | Elementary School District | High School District Only | |
| Total (Nov '08) | 800 | 500 | 300 | 100% |
| Mar/June 2009 | 500 | 300 | 200 | 45% |
| Nov '08 Only | 300 | 200 | 100 | 55% |
| Actual % of Voter Universe | | 45% | 55% | |

Initial Ballot Test – HSD Measure

Initial uninformed voter support for the proposed high school parcel tax measure of \$44 per year was at 73 percent (44% "Definitely Yes" and 29% "Probably Yes"), whereas total opposition was at 19 percent. Total opposition was at 19 percent, with another seven percent who did not render an opinion.



To improve the quality of public education, including [RANDOMIZE A THROUGH E]

- A. Restoring and maintaining art, music and theater programs;
- B. Providing after-school programs;
- C. Restoring reduced class sizes;
- D. Restoring and enhancing electives, including foreign languages;

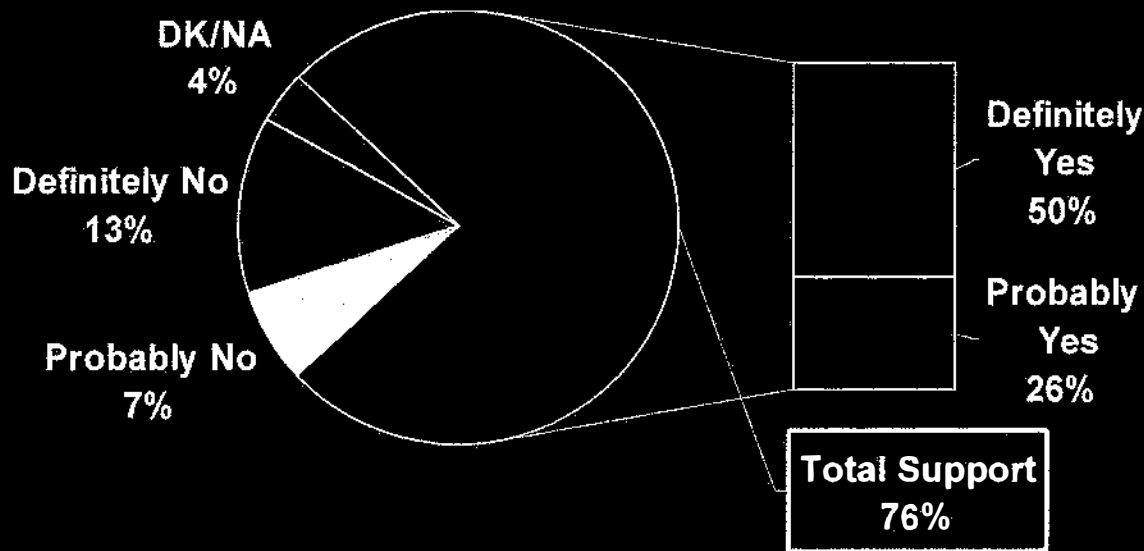
and

- E. Improving math and science education

Shall the Santa Barbara High School District be authorized to levy a parcel tax of \$44 dollars per year, with annual audits, expenditure monitored by an independent citizen oversight committee, and an exemption for senior citizens?

Initial Ballot Test – ESD Measure

Initial uninformed voter support for the proposed elementary school parcel tax measure of \$44 per year was at 76 percent (50% “Definitely Yes” and 26% “Probably Yes”), whereas total opposition was at 19 percent. Total opposition was at 20 percent, with another four percent who did not render an opinion.



To improve the quality of public education, including

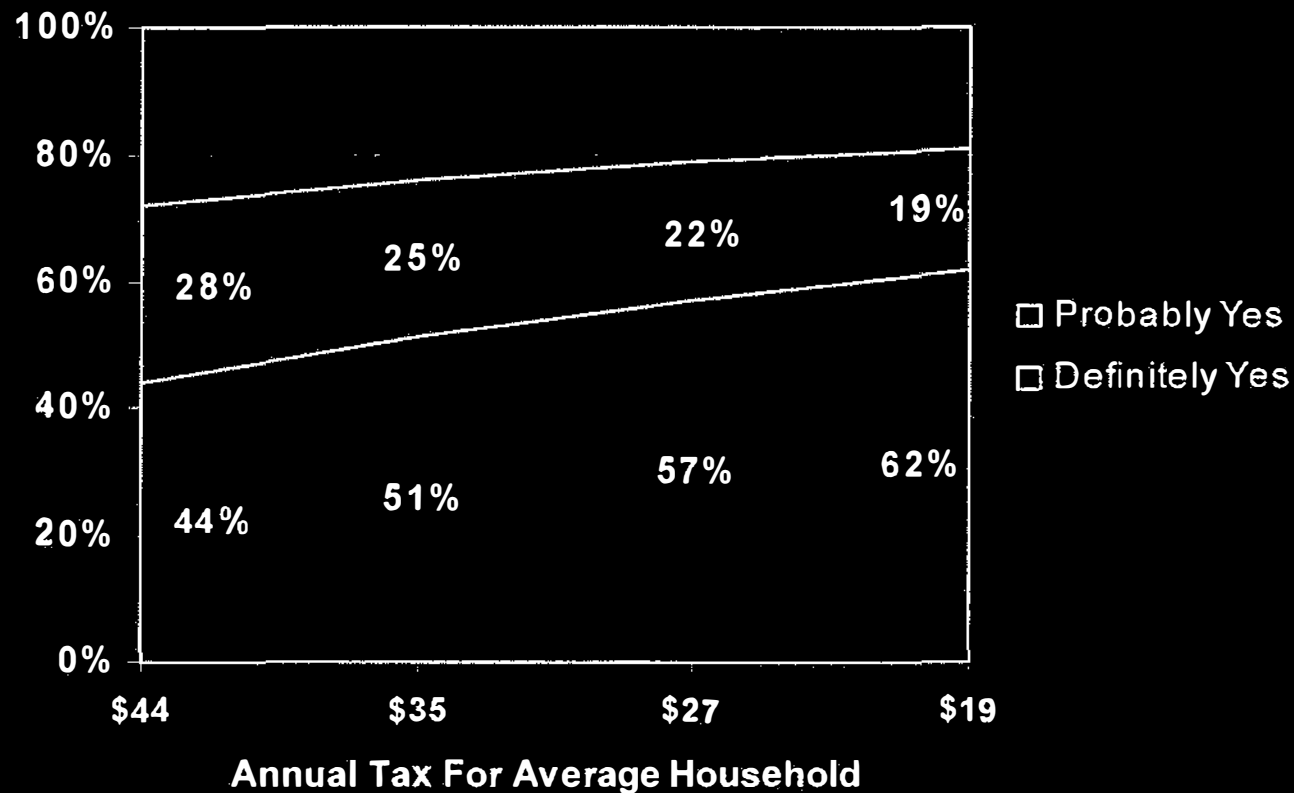
[RANDOMIZE A THROUGH E]

- A. Maintaining music programs;
- B. Enhancing art and theater programs;
- C. Restoring smaller class sizes;
- D. Reinstating and keeping school librarians; and
- E. Improving math and science education

Shall the Santa Barbara Elementary School District be authorized to levy a parcel tax of \$44 dollars per year, with annual audits, expenditure monitored by an independent citizen oversight committee, and an exemption for senior citizens?

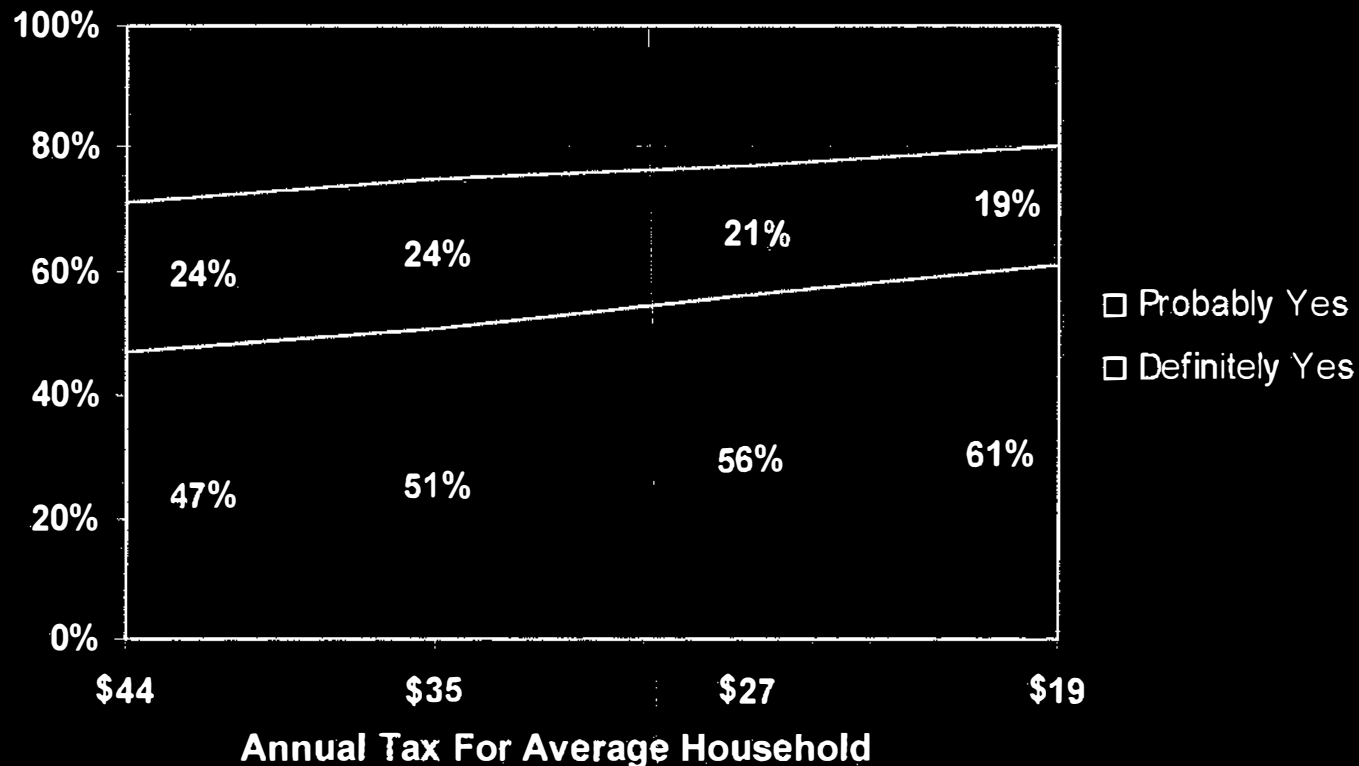
Support for Different Tax Rates – HSD Measure

Even at the highest tax rate tested, i.e., \$44 per year, which was also in the ballot question, expressed voter support totaled to 72 percent (44% “Definitely Yes” and 28% “Probably Yes”). With a margin of error of plus or minus four percent, total support for this rate was at 68 percent on the low end and 76% on the high end. This further indicates that an annual parcel tax of \$44 per parcel could get sufficient voter support in the High School District, barring any major changes in the economy or local conditions that may substantially affect voter priorities or sentiments.



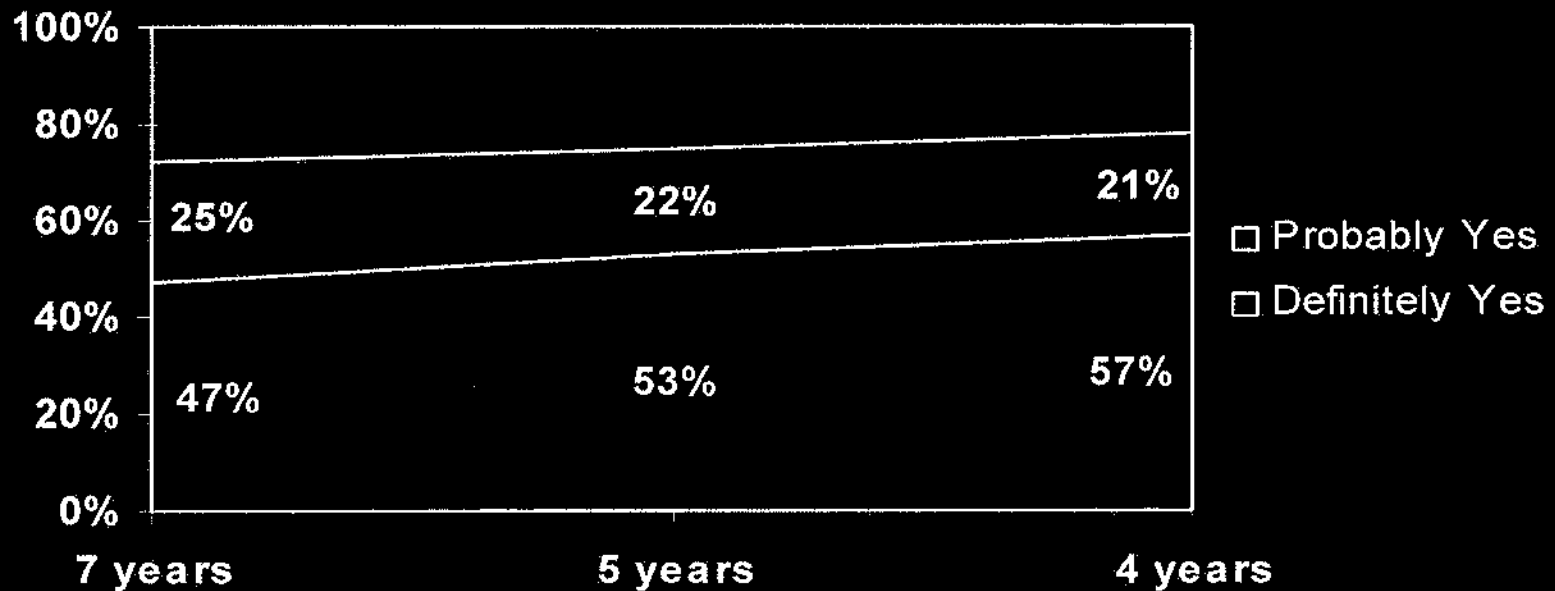
Support for Different Tax Rates – ESD Measure

Even at the highest tax rate tested, i.e., \$44 per year, which was also in the ballot question, expressed voter support totaled to 71 percent (47% "Definitely Yes" and 24% "Probably Yes"). With a margin of error of plus or minus four percent, total support for this rate was at 67 percent on the low end and 75% on the high end. This further indicates that an annual parcel tax of \$44 per parcel could get sufficient voter support in the Elementary School District, barring any major changes in the economy or local conditions that may substantially affect voter priorities or sentiments.



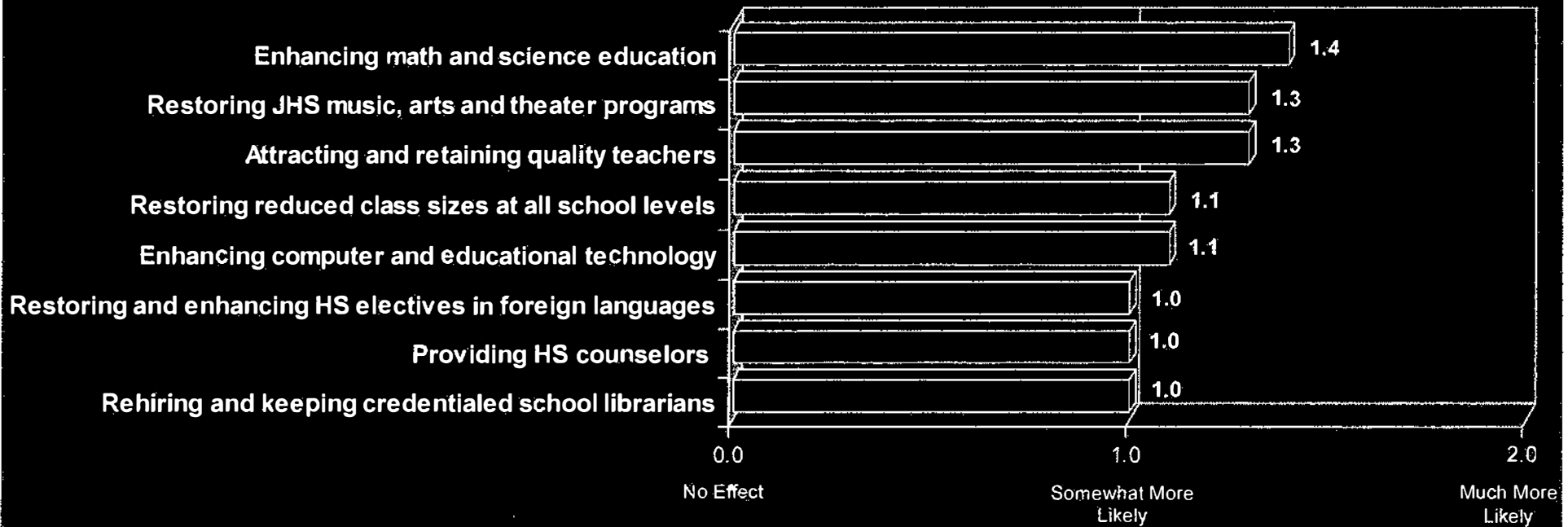
Support for Different Durations

As the chart below shows, the survey found sufficient voter support for a duration of seven years for both proposed measures, at 72 percent total support (47% "Definitely Yes" and 25% "Probably Yes"). Even with a margin of error of plus or minus four percent, yielding as low as 68 percent total support, the seven-year duration garnered the requisite two-thirds majority for the measure to pass.



Measure Features I – HSD Voters

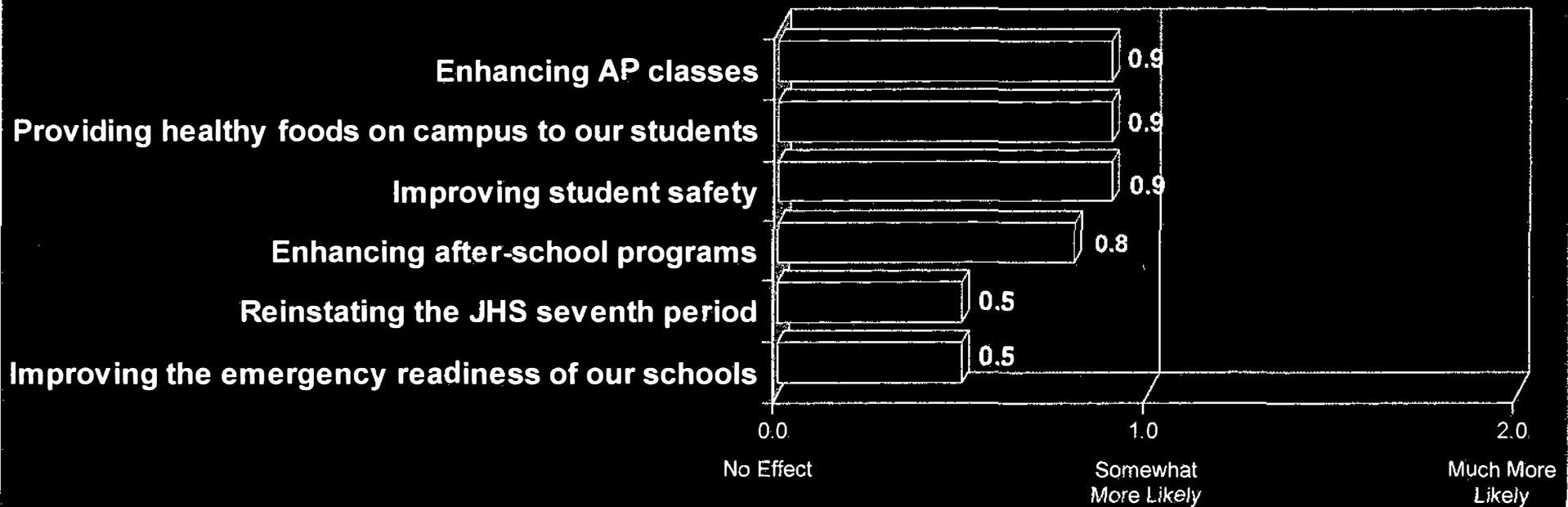
The voters living in the high school district were next presented with 14 programs to be funded, and asked whether they would be more or less likely to vote for the high school measure upon hearing each. As shown in the charts below and on the following page, eight of these programs made the average voter at least somewhat more likely to vote for the high school measure. Specifically, the chart below shows the most influential ones, including enhancing math and science education, arts and music programs at the junior high school level, attracting and retaining quality teachers, restoring reduced class sizes and enhancing student access to computer and educational technology.



Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes. For the exact wording, please see Appendix D. The responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

Measure Features II – HSD Voters

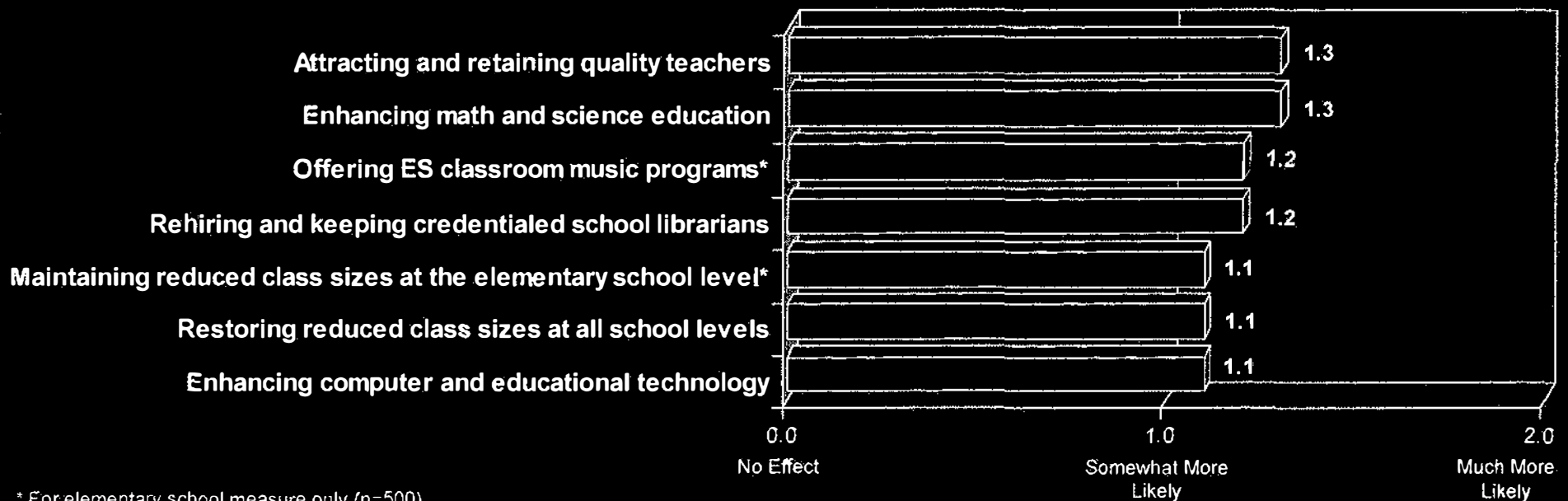
Here is a continuation of the responses to Question 6. As shown in the chart below, relatively speaking, the voters were less supportive of raising tax dollars to reinstate the seventh period at the junior high school level, or to improve the emergency readiness of our schools.



Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes. For the exact wording, please see Appendix D. The responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

Measure Features I – ESD Voters

Voters living in the elementary school district were also presented with some of the same 14 programs to be funded as detailed in the high school measure, and asked whether they would be more or less likely to vote for the elementary school measure upon hearing each. These voters also heard three additional programs specific to the elementary school level. As shown in the charts below and on the following page, eight of these programs made the average elementary school district voter at least somewhat more likely to vote for this measure (mean score of 1.0 or higher; continued on the next page). Specifically, the chart below shows the most influential ones, including attracting and retaining quality teachers, enhancing math and science education, offering classroom music programs at the elementary school level, rehiring and keeping credentialed librarians, maintaining and restoring reduced class sizes at all school levels including the elementary school level, and enhancing student access to computer and educational technology.

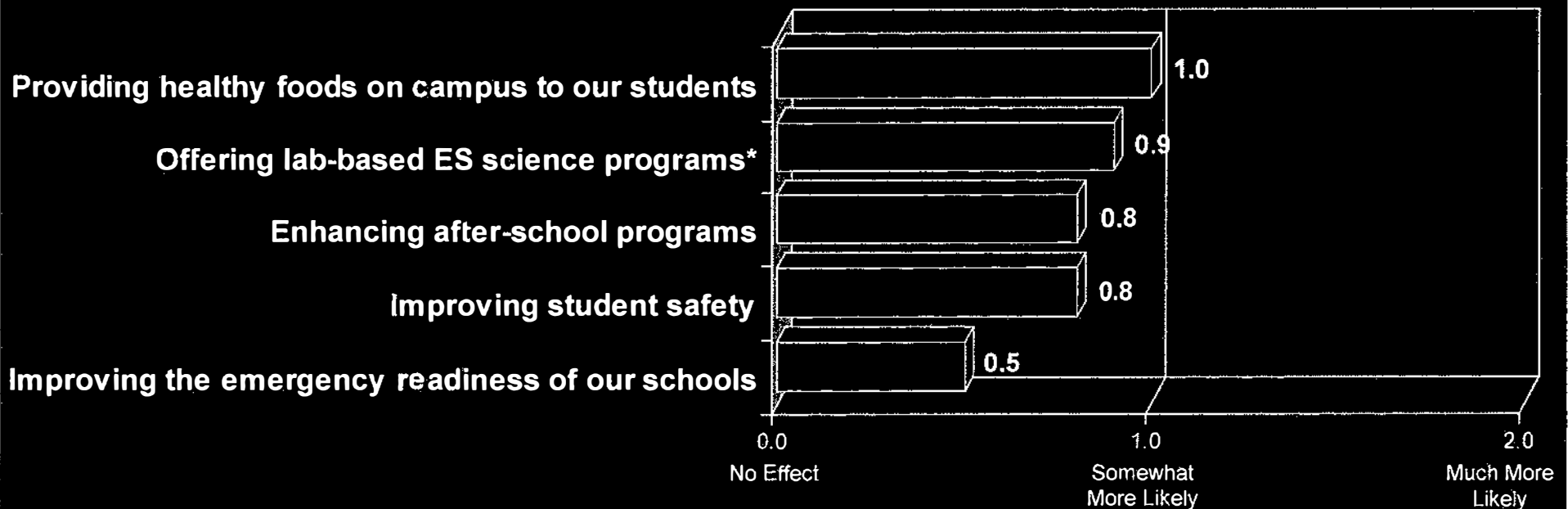


* For elementary school measure only (n=500).

Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes. For the exact wording, please see Appendix D. The responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

Measure Features II – ESD Voters

Here is a continuation of the responses to Question 6. As shown in the chart below, relatively speaking, the elementary school district voters were less supportive of raising tax dollars to improve the emergency readiness of our schools.

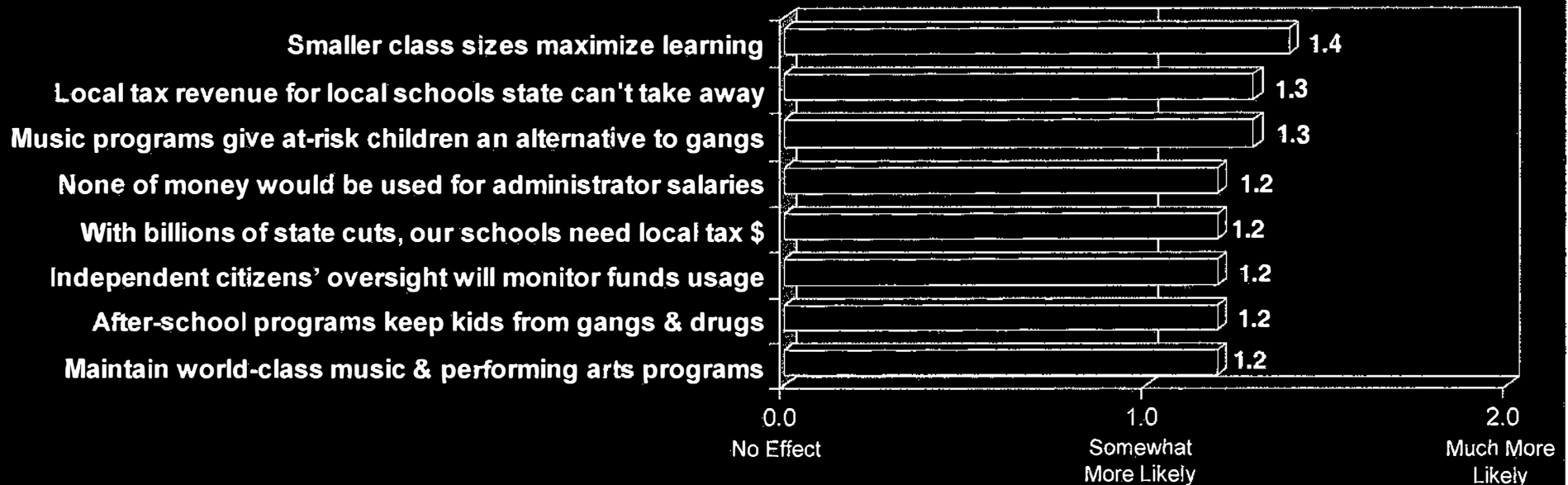


* For elementary school measure only (n=500).

Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes. For the exact wording, please see Appendix D. The responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

Positive Arguments I

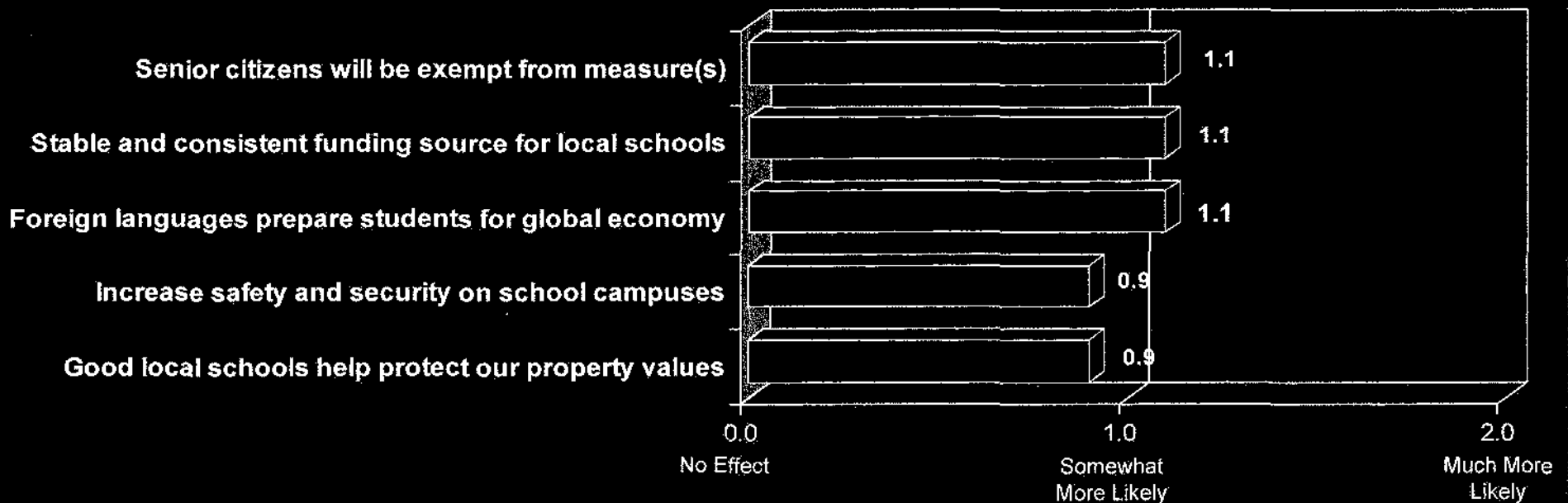
Overall, eleven of the 13 tested arguments in support of the two school measures made the average voter at least somewhat more likely to vote "Yes" (mean scores of 1.0 or higher; continued on the next page). The most persuasive arguments are charted below, especially the ones about small class sizes maximizing learning, the money raised staying local, as well as music and performing arts programs giving at-risk children an alternative to gangs. Other top-rated reasons repeat some of these themes, including local money being needed in light of substantial state budget cuts on public education, after-school programs keeping children away from gangs and drugs, maintaining the world-class music and performing arts programs at our local schools, as well as the safeguard of the independent citizens' oversight committee to ensure the money will be spent properly.



Note: The above rating questions have been abbreviated for charting purposes. For the exact wording, please see Appendix D. The responses were recoded to calculate mean scores: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, and "No Effect" = 0.

Positive Arguments II

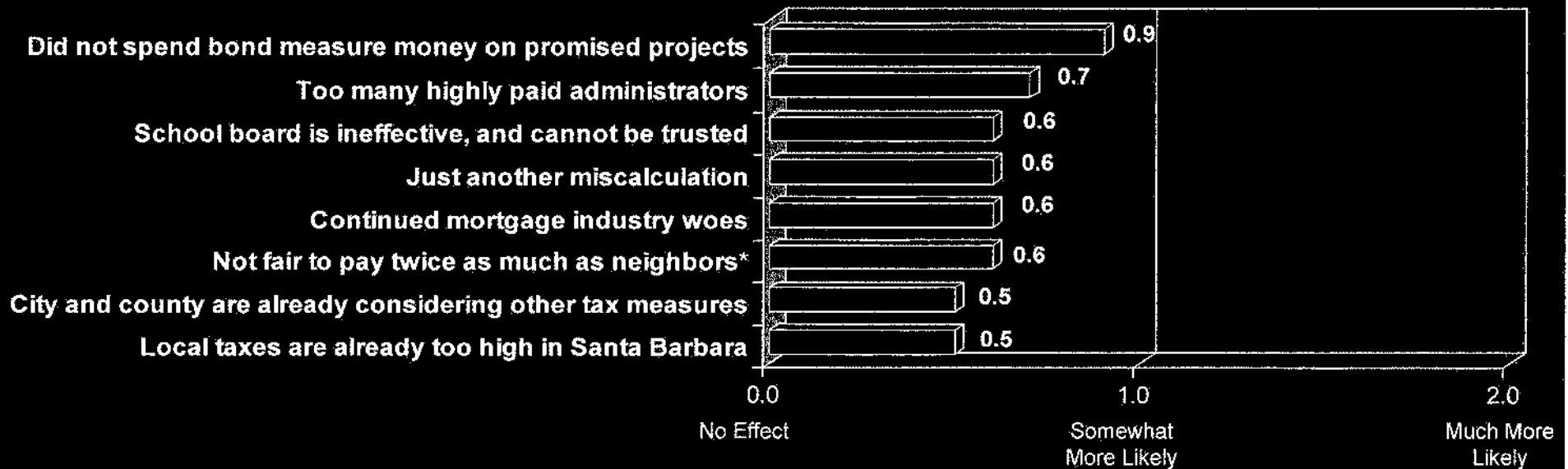
Here is a continuation of the responses to Question 7. The relatively less powerful arguments were about needing money to improve campus safety and security and that good schools help to protect property values.



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Negative Arguments

Eight potential opposition messages were tested to understand their potential impact on voter support. All but one of the messages could lead to the measure failing, as they incited opposition from 35 to 56 percent of the voters. Particularly troubling was the message that the school administration cannot be trusted to keep promises, as they did not spend the money on the last bond measure passed on the promised projects. Otherwise, voters were also vulnerable to the arguments that the school districts already have too many highly paid administrators, that the school board is ineffective and cannot be trusted to manage the money raised, and that this need for money is just another miscalculation following a long history of budget confusion. Concerns about the continued mortgage industry troubles affecting property values were also high. Last, but not the least, voters in both school districts were vulnerable to the message that it is unfair they should have to pay twice as much in property taxes for the schools as their neighbors residing only in the high school district.

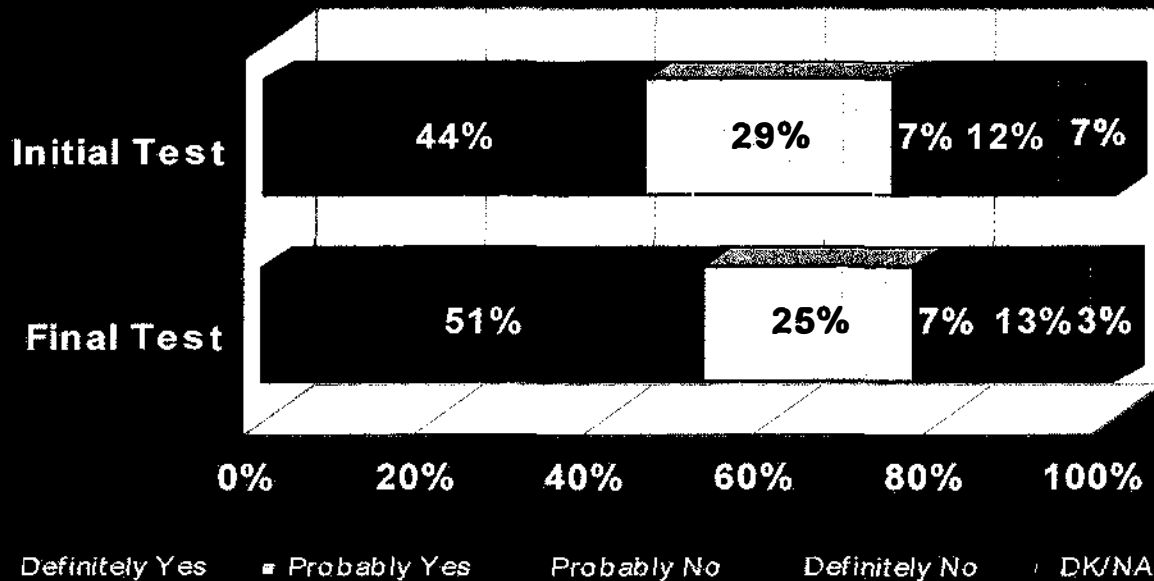


*For elementary school measure only.

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Final Ballot Test – HSD Measure

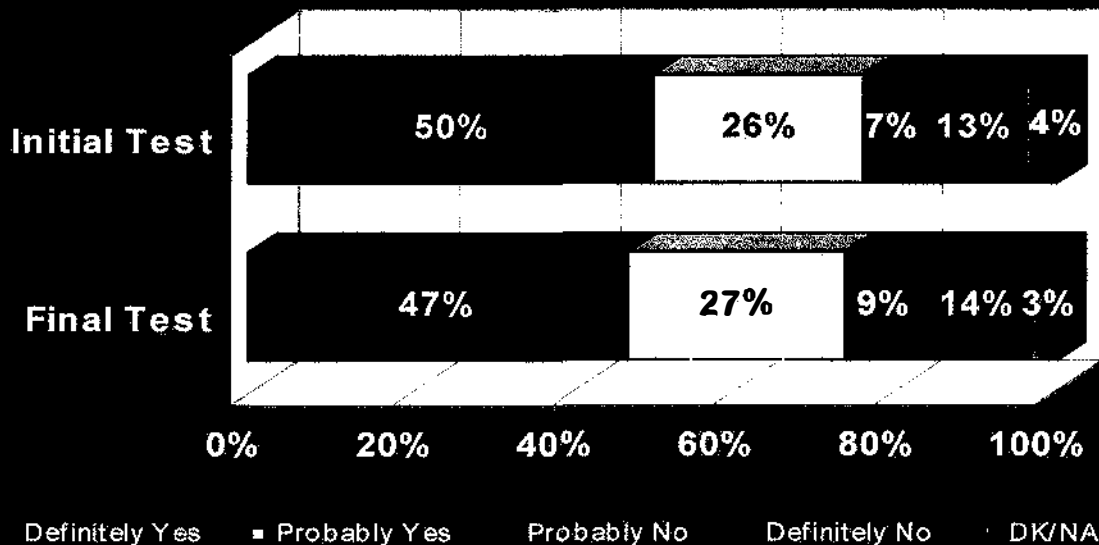
After simulated public information efforts, total support for the high school measure increased to 76 percent. More notably, there was a significant seven-point jump in “Definitely Yes” answers, suggesting that the simulated campaign had a net positive effect on voter support. Also, it should be noted that the “No” categories remained unchanged. It is also important to note that the 25 percent “Probably Yes” votes needs to be solidified for the measure to pass with a two-thirds majority.



To improve the quality of public education, including
 [RANDOMIZE A THROUGH E]
 A. Restoring and maintaining art, music and theater programs;
 B. Providing after-school programs;
 C. Restoring reduced class sizes;
 D. Restoring and enhancing electives, including foreign languages;
 and
 E. Improving math and science education
 Shall the Santa Barbara High School District be authorized to levy a parcel tax of \$44 dollars per year, with annual audits, expenditure monitored by an independent citizen oversight committee, and an exemption for senior citizens?

Final Ballot Test – ESD Measure

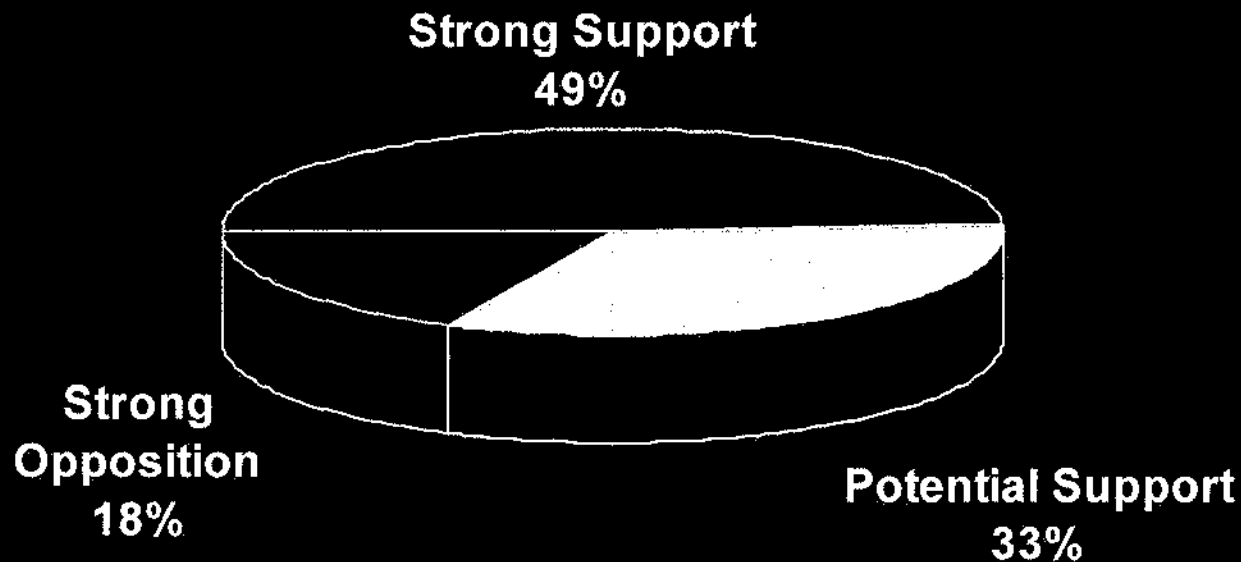
After simulated public information efforts, total support for the elementary school measure was at 74 percent, which is statistically the same as the 76 percent from the initial ballot test. Unlike with the high school measure, hearing about the reasons to support and oppose the elementary school measure did not yield a net positive outcome. Therefore, it is especially important to solidify the support of the 27 percent “Probably Yes” votes for the measure to pass with a two-thirds majority.



To improve the quality of public education, including
 [RANDOMIZE A THROUGH E]
 A. Maintaining music programs;
 B. Enhancing art and theater programs;
 C. Restoring smaller class sizes;
 D. Reinstating and keeping school librarians; and
 E. Improving math and science education
 Shall the Santa Barbara Elementary School District be authorized to levy a parcel tax of \$44 dollars per year, with annual audits, expenditure monitored by an independent citizen oversight committee, and an exemption for senior citizens?

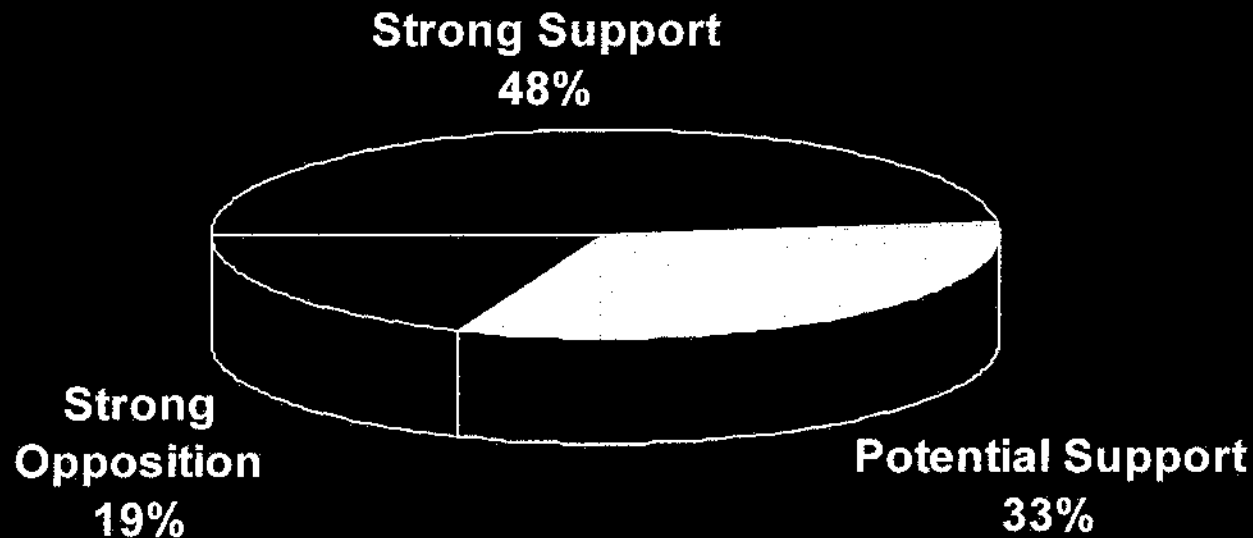
Profiling Voter Support – HSD Voters

Based on the responses to the initial and final ballot tests for the high school measure, Godbe Research created a profile of voters in the Santa Barbara High School District. Voters classified under “Strong Support” (49%) are expected to consistently support the measure under most conditions. Those classified under “Potential Support” (33%) can be influenced to support the measure, but their support is tenuous and should not be taken for granted. These voters have not made up their minds, and a concerted voter education campaign explaining the benefits of the measure and allaying their concerns is critical to solidifying their support. Finally, the “Strong Opposition” voters (18%) are expected to consistently oppose the measure under most conditions.



Profiling Voter Support – ESD Voters

Similarly, based on the responses to the initial and final ballot tests of the elementary school district measure, Godbe Research created a profile of voters in the Santa Barbara Elementary School District. Some 48 percent of the voters in the school district were classified as strong supporters of the measure, and 33 percent classified under the “Potential Support” group. The remaining 19 percent of voters comprised the “Strong Opposition” group, who are expected to consistently oppose the measure under most conditions.



Summary and Recommendations I

- Survey found sufficient voter support for an annual parcel tax of \$44 each for the high school and elementary school districts.
 - Total informed voter support (final ballot test) was at 76 percent and 74 percent for the high school and elementary school measures, respectively.
 - Total voter support for a 7-year duration was at 72 percent.
 - November 2008 is the optimal election for the measure.
- Critical considerations for placing the measure on the ballot:
 - Substantial communications needed to maximize success during the pre-electoral phase AND by an *independent* campaign committee after the measure has been placed on the ballot.
 - Head off voter concerns around distrust of the school district administration and school board, potential misuse of funds including administrative salaries, tax sensitivity related to the mortgage industry woes, as well as the burden of paying two school taxes for those residing in the elementary school district.

Summary and Recommendations II

- Ballot statements should feature the educational programs of most importance to voters:

For the high school measure:

- Enhancing math and science education
- Attracting and retaining quality teachers
- Restoring music, arts and theater programs at the junior high school level
- Restoring reduced class sizes
- Enhancing computer and educational technology for our students

For the elementary school measure:

- Enhancing math and science education
- Attracting and retaining quality teachers
- Offering classroom music programs
- Rehiring and keeping credentialed school librarians
- Enhancing computer and educational technology to students

- Emphasize the benefits of the measures most salient to the voters:

Proper Fund Management and Usage

- None of the money raised would be used for administrative salaries.
- An independent citizens' oversight committee will monitor the funds to make sure they are spent properly.
- Senior citizens, many of whom live on fixed income, will be exempt from the measure(s).

Locally Controlled, Stable and Consistent School Funding

- The measure(s) raise(s) local tax revenue the state cannot take away.
- With billions of dollars in educational funding cuts from the state budget, our schools need local tax dollars to help pay for the necessary programs to educate our children.
- The measure(s) provide(s) a stable and consistent funding source for our local school needs.

Maintaining Critical School Programs

- Music and performing arts programs give at-risk children an alternative to gangs.
- The measure(s) will maintain the world-class music and performing arts programs at our local schools.
- Smaller class sizes allow our teachers to work more closely with our students and maximize learning.
- Good after-school programs keep our children away from gangs and drugs. The money from this measure will fund these after-school programs.