



*A Community of Learners*

## **Informational Memo: Communication Plan 2017-2018**

TO: School Board  
Superintendent Kocanda

FROM: Kate Hughes, Communications & Community Relations Coordinator

September 19, 2017

### **Background & Overview**

Strategic communications efforts in 2016-2017 included raising awareness on the District's Shared Vision, managing communications efforts surrounding the Enrollment Balancing Project, proactive media engagement, managing and promoting the Winnetka Parents Institute (WPI) program, and streamlining school messaging to align with the District's Shared Vision.

Noteworthy activities and accomplishments included:

- Public relations efforts to raise awareness of the District's Shared Vision with parents, staff, and the Winnetka community;
- Oversight of communication surrounding the Enrollment Balancing Project and the implementation of Extended Day Kindergarten;
- Coordination and alignment of weekly newsletters to share consistent messages from the three elementary school Principals;
- Introduction of a video series showcasing District stories at Board Meetings;
- 14% increase in media coverage of District news and activities in 2016-2017 compared to 2015-2016 (following a 51% increase in media coverage in 2015-2016 compared to 2014-2015) including 10 cover stories;
- 174% increase in social media followers (1,040 followers in June 2017 from 737 followers in August 2016);

- Increased District parent education and engagement opportunities through the WPI Program (2016-2017 Year-End Update);
- Implemented District branding that clearly articulates the Shared Vision (i.e. updated Board Presentation and Memo formats, refreshed school newsletter templates);
- Wrote 10 new Alumni Spotlight features in the *Winnetka Wire* and on the District website to showcase how D36 alumni are making a meaningful difference in the world;
- Coordinated media outreach and social media efforts surrounding the Annual Preschool Kindergarten Summit;
- Improved alignment between communication platforms and established systems to create better efficiency (i.e. RSVP process for Winnetka Parents Institute events);
- Production of eight videos to highlight elements of the Shared Vision and Winnetka Experience;
- Continued development of a District photo library for use in District publications and Board presentations, the website, and for media opportunities;
- District 36 was selected as a winner in the 2017 Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association's Communications Contest in the following categories:

*Newsletters (The Winnetka Wire)\**

*Writing (LEARNERS)\**

*Social Media \**

*District 36 Annual Report*

*Financial Information*

*Marketing/Advertising Materials (Extended Day Kindergarten in District 36)*

*Newsletters (LEARNERS)*

*Electronic Publications (The Winnetka Wire)*

*\*Award of Excellence*

District communications platforms utilized include the following:

- Learners* (bi-annual magazine distributed to all Winnetka residents)
- The Winnetka Wire* (monthly e-newsletter)
- Board Highlights* (e-newsletter recap sent within 72 hours of Board Meetings)
- Connect 36* (bi-monthly e-newsletter for staff)
- District 36 website
- 2017-2018 calendar
- School newsletters

- Teacher newsletters
- Annual Report (included in the spring issue of *Learners*)
- Post-conference surveys
- Blackboard Connect (used for bus route communication and certain emergency situations)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube.com, and Google+)
- Video
- Direct mail

In 2017-2018, strategic communication efforts will primarily focus on continuing to highlight progress toward the Shared Vision and annual District goals, enhancing and promoting the District's Home/School/Community partnerships and WPI opportunities (topics will be informed by data that was collected via parent input forms during 2017 sessions), and outreach surrounding *Future Ready D36*.

### **Alignment with the District 36 Shared Vision**

- Effective communication is an essential component of everything we do in The Winnetka Public Schools. Defining the 2017-2018 District goals and updating the community on progress is vital to understanding growth and achievement in these areas.
- Engaging staff, parents, and community members, who are included in the “all learners” reference in the District Shared Vision statement is essential as the District undergoes *Future Ready D36*.

With the Shared Vision in mind, 2017-2018 goals include:

- Increasing engagement efforts to reach community members (i.e. continuing outreach to realtors regarding *Future Ready D36*; maintaining strong relationships with local civic organizations such as Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce; inviting area neighbors into District schools; expanding alumni network.);
- Growing social media followers by 10%;
- Providing staff with resources (i.e. talking points) to address communication needs throughout the year, specifically *Future Ready D36*;

### **Next Steps**

Move forward with Communication efforts underway for [strategic areas of focus in 2017-2018](#).