



A Community of Learners

Informational Memo-Communications Update and 2016-2017 Communication Plan

TO: School Board
Superintendent Kocanda

FROM: Kate Hughes, Communications & Community Relations Coordinator

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Background & Overview

Strategic communications goals in 2015-2016 included the delivery of effective and efficient messaging surrounding “The Big 5,” proactive media engagement, the utilization of a journalistic writing style in District communications, the launch of a new District website, an enhanced social media presence for the District, and the initial communication of the Shared Vision.

Noteworthy activities and accomplishments included:

- ❑ Coordination with school committees to raise awareness within the District and community on Hubbard Woods School’s 100th Anniversary and Crow Island School’s 75th Anniversary;
- ❑ Oversight of content included on the new District 36 website;
- ❑ Communication surrounding Crow Island School’s Temporary Classroom initiative;
- ❑ Introduction of the *Alumni Spotlight* feature in the and on the District website to showcase how D36 alumni are making a meaningful difference in the world;
- ❑ 51% increase in media coverage on District news and activities compared to 2014-2015;

- ❑ Added new social media platforms (Youtube.com and Instagram) to create additional engagement opportunities; revamped existing social media platforms;
- ❑ 131% increase in Facebook followers (from 137 in June 2015 to 317 in August 2016); 416% increase in Twitter followers (from 76 in June 2015 to 392 in August 2016);
- ❑ Promotion of District parent education and engagement opportunities (i.e. WPI events, focus groups, and book talks);
- ❑ Coordinated media outreach on the Inaugural Preschool Kindergarten Summit;
- ❑ Updated and conducted the District's Annual Survey and analyzed results in order to help inform decision-making in 2016-2017;
- ❑ Developed District photo library for use in District publications and Board presentations, the website, and for media opportunities.

District communications platforms utilized include the following:

- ❑ (bi-annual magazine distributed to all Winnetka residents)
- ❑ (monthly e-newsletter)
- ❑ (e-newsletter recap sent within 72 hours of Board Meetings)
- ❑ (bi-monthly e-newsletter for staff)
- ❑ District 36 website
- ❑ 2016-2017 calendar
- ❑ Principal newsletters
- ❑ Teacher newsletters

Learners

- ❑ Annual Report (included in the spring issue of)
- ❑ Annual Survey (conducted each spring; may be modified due to response rate in 2016)
- ❑ Blackboard Connect (used for bus route communication and certain emergency situations)
- ❑ Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube.com, and Google+)

In 2016-2017, strategic communication efforts will primarily focus on defining and communicating progress toward the Shared Vision and annual District goals, promoting Parent Education opportunities (Parent Education topics will be informed by data that was collected during the 2016 Annual Survey), and outreach surrounding the Enrollment Balancing Project. Initial communication plans for these entities have been developed, along with a website calendar for 2015-2016.

Media and Social Media calendars that incorporate District news as well as coincide with interesting stories and trending topics are in development.

Alignment with the District 36 Shared Vision

- ❑ Effective communication is an essential component of everything we do in The Winnetka Public Schools. Defining the 2016-2017 District goals and updating the community on progress is vital to understanding growth and achievement in these areas.
- ❑ Communicating the Shared Vision in order to create awareness, understanding, and ownership of the statement is essential to its success.
- ❑ Engaging parents and community members, who are included in the “all learners” reference in the District Shared Vision statement is important as the District offers opportunities for engagement on Parent Education topics, the Enrollment Balancing Project, etc.

With the Shared Vision in mind, 2016-2017 goals include:

- ❑ Expanding community engagement efforts to reach community members who are not current parents (i.e. promoting Parent Education opportunities to preschool parents and grandparents; outreach to realtors regarding Enrollment Balancing Project; increased involvement by District Office staff in local civic organizations);
- ❑ Securing national press on the District (potential topics include STEAM program expansion, examples of Progressive Education in the 21st Century, etc.);
- ❑ Growing social media followers by 25%;
- ❑ Building District branding that clearly articulates the Shared Vision (i.e. updated Board Presentation and Memo formats) with improved alignment between communication platforms;
- ❑ Increasing use of infographics and video to convey messages and share data
- ❑ Provide staff with communication resources (i.e. providing talking points) to help address communication needs throughout the year;
- ❑ Incorporate parent, staff, and community feedback (both collected from the Annual Survey and shared anecdotally throughout the year) into continually improving communications efforts, and determining frequency and platforms used for communications.

Next Steps

Move forward with Communication Plans established for strategic areas of focus in 2016-2017.