



Communications Plan

Project: Lakeville Area Public Schools strategic communications plan

Status: Draft

Developers: Amy Olson and Stephanie Kass

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Communications team members: Amy Olson, communications director; Stephanie Kass, communications specialist

Goal, initiative or opportunity to support through communication:

Develop a district communications plan to support the district's strategic plan, meets constituents' needs and guides use of communications and marketing resources.

Situation analysis and background:

Lakeville Area Public Schools is among the top 10 school districts by enrollment and serves about 11,000 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. Its two senior high schools, Area Learning Center, three middle schools and eight elementary schools serve a population of students from increasingly diverse ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The district also has robust early childhood education programming. These audiences should be considered in planning and creating communications strategies and tools.

The strategic communications plan will analyze audiences, messages, challenges, opportunities and resources of the Lakeville Area Public Schools district in an effort to provide a thoughtful and deliberate approach to support the district's strategic direction and district-wide communications efforts. The intent is for this plan to be a document that is actively used to guide communications planning and resource allocation. As such, it will require regular updates to ensure it meets the needs of the district.

The plan starts with a qualitative assessment of district strategic goals and objectives, analysis of internal and external audiences, and an outline of opportunities and challenges facing the district. Where possible, statistics will be analyzed to inform strategy and tactic recommendations. This plan also will include recommended approaches to maximize efficient, effective use of limited resources including staff time and funds.

NOTE: Separate editorial, marketing and social media plans are in development. They will dovetail with the communications plan.

The district's strategic goals and objectives include:

- 1) Academic achievement:

- Expand opportunities for students to meet unique, personalized needs and passions
 - Develop economically relevant pathways for students to be career- and college-ready
 - Personalize learning and ensure future ready skills by leveraging digital tools and resources
 - Provide social/emotional learning to maximize success
- 2) Community connectedness
 - Communicate strategies, challenges, achievements and facts to positively impact the district
 - Establish a branding identity and leverage multiple communication mechanisms to meet the needs of our diverse stakeholders
 - 3) Fiscal responsibility
 - Utilize Academic Return on Investment and other aligned methodologies to analyze programmatic and operational effectiveness
 - 4) High quality workforce
 - Provide shared leadership and collaboration among all employees for higher levels of empowerment and productivity
 - Provide continuous improvement through Teacher Development and Evaluation processes to support student achievement and engagement

Communications goals and objectives:

Primary goals:

- 1) Academic achievement
 - Share student-centered stories celebrating academic achievement
 - Highlight innovative programs in communications and marketing materials
 - Define terms such as future readiness, personalized learning, etc. for community members/stakeholders
 - Demonstrate the role of technology in personalized learning
 - Highlight joint efforts between the district and community to support and improve the emotional and social health of students
- 2) Community connectedness
 - Communicate strategies, challenges, achievements and facts to positively impact the district
 - Establish a branding identity
 - Identify and leverage multiple communication mechanisms to meet the communication and information needs of diverse stakeholders
 - Continue to build on existing relationships and build new relationships within the Lakeville area
- 3) Fiscal responsibility
 - Communicate ongoing efforts to deliver effective academic programming resulting in student successes
 - Help business services department report back on district financial performance including how the district has kept its promises with successful levy referendums (includes reporting back regularly in articles for newsletter, etc.)
 - Communicate district's fiscal responsibility, including efforts to save money/improve value

- Explore, define and forge mutually beneficial partnerships with community entities in development and marketing/promotion that fit with and support the district's strategic direction

4) High quality workforce

- Establish district communications channels as key sources of news and information about Lakeville Area Public Schools
- Equip staff with news and information needed to understand and embrace the district's strategic plan
- Celebrate staff members' many successes through recognition events, news coverage and other opportunities
- Equip staff with information to be ambassadors and champions for Lakeville Area Public Schools

Secondary communications goals:

- Identify most effective means of promoting the district within limited resources allocated (funds, staff, etc.)
- Identify and employ the most efficient and effective means of communicating with key stakeholders
- Position communications staff to serve as stewards of the brand and culture in support of the district's mission

Communication plan objectives:

Audiences:

Primary audiences include:

- Parents/students
- Staff members
- District residents
- Business leaders
- Board of Education
- Strategic partners
- Volunteers
- State and local media

Secondary audiences include:

Community organizations: Partial local list includes Stray Cats, Lakeville Area Chamber of Commerce, Elko New Market Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Lakeville Business Association, city of Lakeville Parks and Recreation Department, Lakeville Area Arts Center, Lakeville Area Historical Society, 360 Communities (contracted social work/social service agency), Rotary Club, Lakeville Lions Club, Heritage Center, seniors and various community athletic organizations.

Government officials/policymakers: City council and county board members; state and federal lawmakers; state and federal education policy makers

Draft key messages:

Key messages help organizations talk about who they are and what's important to them. Draft key messages will be developed to include:

- Description of the district
- What we're known for
- Points of differentiation (e.g., Why choose Lakeville Area Public Schools?)
- Mission, vision and values (already completed)
- Tagline: Transforming learning (already completed)

Challenges, opportunities and assets

Lakeville Area Public Schools faces a number of challenges and opportunities within the next six- and 12-month periods.

District challenges	District opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New programs opening/expanding • Planning for technology improvements, infusion of needed supplies and addition of a limited number of staff members (2015 levy referendum) • Concerns about the process of reshaping the Area Learning Center and delivery of education services • Potential for legislation that would change required programming (e.g., Pre-K) • Enrollment changes (projection is for slight decline to continue) • Potential for a number of staff members to retire • Managing large numbers of changes and perceptions that such changes are big changes for staff • Budget issues • Perceptions about the emphasis on digital learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue communicating strategic direction • Continued focus on systems thinking to ensure the work we do effectively and efficiently addresses issues of academic achievement, equity and other primary values
Communications challenges	Communications opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited staff (full-time director and full-time communications specialist) • Completion of Phase II development of the website to add a staff directory, lockdown the intranet and improve functionality • Complete implementation of visual identity and new brand to support the district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great overall story to tell • Great programs to market • Great community to engage • Additional funding for marketing

District and department assets include:

- Great educational programming and success record
- Terrific academic and co-curricular reputation across the state
- Our staff and students
- Dedicated, hardworking, experienced staff with a breadth and depth of experience in communications and marketing disciplines including:

- Strategic planning
- News delivery and storytelling
- Media relations (e.g., press releases)
- Marketing
- Social Media
- Video
- Community engagement
- Web development/use as a strategic communications tool
- Fresh, new visual identity to support brand
- New website that is more responsive for mobile users
 - Built in blog and social functions to communicate with public
 - Ability to communicate specifically with our staff (Intranet)
 - Search Engine Optimization/metrics to track and analyze user experience

Recommended strategies:

- Create our own news engine (internal and external communication)
 - Telling our own story through district vehicles (editorial strategy to follow)
 - Academic successes and innovations
 - Student successes
 - Where possible, student achievement in co-curricular activities
 - Great work by teachers
 - Highlight volunteers
 - Sharing this content for media relations purposes
 - Developing a comprehensive Social Media strategy to inform and engage the public and promote news content (note: marketing/advertising features could be harnessed, too)
- Develop internal communications strategy to help staff stay informed and inspired (frequency TBD)
 - Board updates as needed (good news/crisis)
 - Continue publishing weekly administrative update
 - Develop secure intranet site (Employee resources and tools, such as HR, etc.)
 - Develop publication or vehicle to meet all staff needs for updates from School Board and administration -- format TBD
 - Possible email newsletter
 - Leadership message
 - Top five things you need to know
 - Department update/tips
 - Kudos section (from principals)
 - Holiday/periodic email message from superintendent
 - Two-way communication between leadership and staff (welcome back staff event, listening sessions, etc. -- not to duplicate shared leadership, etc.)
 - Support district leadership and shared leadership efforts (TBD)
- Build upon strengths of recent rebrand and continue to market key programs and the district (strategy to follow)
 - Develop cohesive look and feel among publications and collateral materials
 - Develop overarching marketing strategy for the district and strategic priorities

- Develop and apply style guidelines for communications and marketing communications
- Complete rollout of the rebrand/visual identity (replace old logo on all signage, etc., to foster new brand)
- Refine community engagement
 - Ready, Set, Achieve/Back to School, I Love to Read month, community celebration parades, staff recognition, student recognition, volunteer recognition, friends of education, etc.
 - Partner with other organizations (MNCAPS program, Chamber/City marketing partnership) where there's a good fit
 - Volunteer strategy (in partnership with Community Education)
 - Maintain and enhance relationships with PTOs and PTO Roundtable

Budget:

Many strategies already have support through current budget. Through the addition of funding for marketing, some additional support will be provided for efforts to build awareness of the district and its programs and to support recruitment efforts. Those recruitment efforts could include:

- Students within the district currently enrolled in other schools/districts
- Prospective residents and families who are new to the district
- Potential students from outside the district

Tactics could include print, broadcast (e.g., radio sponsorship) and online advertising, as well as events and promotional opportunities.

Communications measurements:

Communications Department staff members intend to create a dashboard to report back on efforts, results and impact:

- Social Media (Hootsuite)
- Website traffic/impressions and other metrics (Google analytics)
- Qualitative news analysis (e.g., are they reading stories about district strategic priorities?)
- eNewsletters (open rate, clickthroughs, who opens, etc.)
- Media relations: Number of stories, positive/negative/neutral, etc.
- Attendance at events
- Public opinion survey

Marketing metrics will be developed separately and could include:

- Impressions
- Conversion rate
- Cost per impression
- Unique visitors (website)