



# Communications Audit

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**VOSS & ASSOCIATES**  
COMMUNICATING EDUCATION

# Why Communicate?

- Need to be accountable
- Board is link between community, district
- Provide leadership, direction
- Your Strategic Plan goal



## *Strategically Speaking 2012-2017*

### *Engage Families, Communities, & Businesses*

The district and schools communicate with and engage all stakeholders in the educational process.

The district provides a mechanism for continuous communication between and among stakeholders

# Why Communicate?

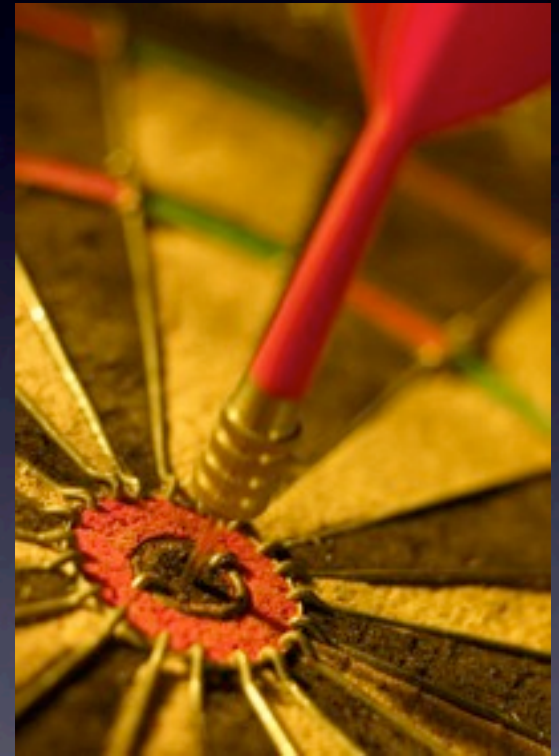
## FOR STUDENT SUCCESS!

- Build community support
- Positive image helps local economy, real estate value, business growth
- Raise money, partnerships
- Better decision-making
- Increase family involvement
  - Better attendance
  - Fewer discipline problems
  - Higher achieving students
- Recruit/retain quality staff
  - Morale, reputation, great place to work
- Spend money wisely
  - Internal efficiency, use of technology
- Differentiate schools
  - Answer why they should attend



# How Should We Communicate?

- **Strategically**: Hitting right audience with right message through right channels
  - Must go where they are
  - Must be meaningful to them
  - Must be understood by all
- **Pro-actively**: We must reach out, not just respond



Who  
We Are



Audits  
Plans  
Production  
Training  
Consulting

A Communications  
Company With Its  
Heart in Education.

[vossandassociates.net](http://vossandassociates.net)

CUT THROUGH. BE HEARD.

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COMMUNICATING EDUCATION



# Charge

- Assess current communications
- Conduct interviews with board/staff
- Conduct confidential focus groups
  - Teachers
  - Administrators
  - Support Staff
  - Parents
  - Community/business
- Report findings in slide show format
- Provide recommendations, gap analysis

# Summary Findings

## *3 Urgent Issues Emerged*



Crisis Communications



Social Media  
Policy/Guidelines  
& Training



Branding and Marketing of  
Career Academies

# Summary Findings

*The elephant in the room.*



- Historically good brand is tarnished
- The routine has become controversial
- Dysfunctional board/supt. relations must be fixed



## AUDIT RESULTS

# Internal Brand Summary

- High quality
- Excellence
- Conservative
- Family oriented
- Attractive
- Small town feel
- Close knit
- **What Others Would Say:**
  - Turmoil, mess, contentious
  - Political, uneasiness
  - Lost focus, confused
  - Parents don't care as much
  - Backwards, country
  - Serious problems

## AUDIT RESULTS

# External Brand Summary

- “A” Schools”
  - Educationally excellent
  - It’s why we live here
  - Political, conflicted
  - Need more training
  - Better communications
  - Technologically stunted
  - Dedicated teachers
  - Dedicated parents
  - Leadership dysfunctional
  - Serious problems
  - Don’t move to Clay  
(outsiders are now saying)
- “The brand has been tarnished.”*

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Information Sources

- Internal Audiences
  - Personal experience, history of success
  - A-B schools, reputation, parent's trust, friends
- External Audiences
  - Media, board meetings
  - Rumor mill, social media, union
  - Personal experience, disgruntled parents
  - Faculty, administration, board meetings
  - Test scores, data, web

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Administrators

- Media makes it sound like we've forgotten children and we haven't
- Media coverage poor, biased, unfair. "Things that were routine are controversial"
- We sound disjointed
- Different dept. don't understand each other
- Need to sell our story, more pro-active, use cable station, more consistency
- Want training, consistent policies, messages for audience, email etiquette, media, crisis

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Parents

- Teacher and administrators don't see eye to eye
- Want to hear vision/direction from new supt.
- Media: biased, not the true picture, "scares" kids
- Engaged parents can find/get materials
- Some schools make you feel welcome, others not
- Love the idea of a mobile app; love phone notices; love being able to set preferences
- Facebook for school news would be "phenomenal"
- District web is a "treasure hunt"; unattractive
- School sites are cluttered, out of date, hard to search

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Business & Community

- Schools still good, perception is changing
- We're feeding into the media frenzy
- They're all villains; people don't care who's right, who's wrong; just get together, move forward
- We must market our system, especially Academies
- The negativity affects our brand and economy
- Staff does great job of reaching out to business
- Don't get enough communication; willing to be help out; love Key Communicators idea
- Web needs an upgrade

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Teachers

- Give us unfiltered info, we'll make our own decision
- People don't understand how many hats we wear
- Collegial conversations have changed; instead of talking about Common Core, talking about politics
- When we win awards, students should get credit
- Give elected officials opportunity to ask us questions
- Was proud to work here; now I'm embarrassed
- Other districts have clear message district-wide
- Admin. needs to filter emails before sending

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Support Staff

- We're embarrassed by board behavior; paints a picture of bad environment for all of us; we do care, we work hard, we are competent
- Disagreement okay, but way it's being portrayed in media is embarrassing
- Put out summary of principal's meeting
- Standardize the enrollment package for everyone
- Not ready for crisis situation; no rehearsals
- Try a suggestion program; people want to be heard
- It's impacting departments; tug-a-war; divisive;



## AUDIT RESULTS

# District Staff

- We have “misguided paranoia” working here
- We must get our vision out there or it will fail
- Talk to community about our goals, direction
- Needs to be a board/supt. shared vision
- A million brochures won't do it
- Community engagement meetings focused on topics
- Better interpretation/presentation of budget, audit

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Board

- Transparency, no surprises, open communication
- More recognition events
- Need a Master Calendar
- Resolve policy on public presentation limits
- Support marketing of Academies
- Need Social Media policy; must be monitored
- Family Involvement: We need to go to them
- Support Key Communicators Network

## AUDIT RESULTS

# Wish more people knew...

- Tons of opportunities for students
- Good things kids are doing every day
- What's going on in the classrooms
- Hard working teachers, dedicated employees
- State and federal unfunded mandates
- Rewards and recognitions we receive
- Money that's brought in through scholarships

## AUDIT RESULTS

# Crisis Communications

- Are you ready? No! (unanimous)
- Emergency Response Manual -- 81 pages
  - Talks about out-dated “telephone tree” and MNS, not current technology
  - Does not cover crisis communication, nor has it been rehearsed
- Parents find out from kids before us
- Inconsistent usage among schools/admin.
- Need training, know who’s supposed to talk

## AUDIT RESULTS

# Academies

- Old perception of Vo-Tech still out there
- Only parents in the academies know about it
- Information gap; don't understand flexibility
- Parents only go to feeder school for explanation; don't get whole picture
- IB and AP parents don't consider Academies
- Information not equally distributed
- Need to “push” information out

# AUDIT RESULTS

*“We need to go where they are.”*

## Social Media

- Leverage new district facebook page
- Need facebook policy and guidelines for schools and usage
- Consider limited facebook & Utube access
- twitter, Instagram

*“Stop telling us why we can’t and tell us how we can.”*

## AUDIT RESULTS

# Family Involvement

- Need more support from district
- For some, we need to go where they are
- Involved in elementary, not so much in secondary
- Parents used to come to teacher; now they go to media, or go on attack
- Parents would love mobile app, social media
- They don't all have computers, but they all have

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Media Relations

- Misquoted. Negative only. Take one situation and make it look common. Goes viral. Creates misconceptions.
- We're not responding strongly enough
- Not getting the good news out
- Take package of information to ed boards



## AUDIT RESULTS

# Internal Communication

- Receive conflicting information from different sources; conflicting schedule requests, etc.
- We start something, then stop it
- Master Calendar hard to find, people don't use it consistently
- Filtering down depends on principal
- Need summary of principal's meeting, major board decisions

## AUDIT RESULTS

# Issues to Communicate

- Pre-K Learn to Read...standards, volunteers
- 3 diplomas...clear up confusion
- Choosing a career pathway in middle school
- Understanding 15 academies...options
- Transportation issues
- High performing, low per pupil spending
- Taking curriculum to 50% digital
- Impact of end-of-course tests

# AUDIT RESULTS

## Web

- Old fashion, hard to search
- Lack of branding, consistent messaging
- Revisions and upgrades are coming
- Links around Home page photos don't work
- Why use stock photos instead of local photos?
- Put Board bios on web



## AUDIT RESULTS

# Consequences of Discord

- Totally lost focus of the children; gridlock
- Their disagreements are now permeating us
- Time to make good policy taken up by personal agendas
- Enrollment decline; charters/privates gain; data drops
- We're in the middle; lots of mistrust; fear
- Lost confidence in leadership (board and admin.)

*“Mom, they can’t tell us what to do because look at how they act.”*

-- Student in Ethics Class

## AUDIT RESULTS

# Consequences of Discord

- We're in limbo; lowers morale; hurts recruiting teachers
- Wouldn't be tolerated in business
- We wouldn't let our students behave like this
- SAC accreditation: board/supt. relationship counts
- Losing teachers to St. Johns

## AUDIT RESULTS

# How Important is Communications?

- Scale of 1-10. Everyone in each group said 10, except one community member said 8.

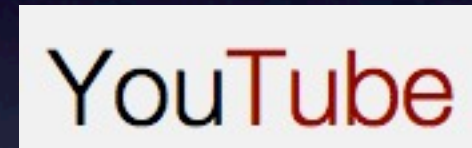
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# Leadership Requirements

- Transparency and openness becomes commonplace
- Reach agreement on policies, roles (Board Retreat?)
- Adopt a Strategic Communications Plan
  - Board supports, funds, participates, holds staff accountable
  - Includes goals, audiences, strategies, timetable, budget

# STRATEGIES

## Social Media, Mobile Apps



- Must engage where they are...they are on facebook
- Adopt Social Media Policy, clear guidelines, monitor
- Research results: Moving toward mobile
- Instagram provides a photo blog on mobile devices



# STRATEGIES

## Branding District, Academies



- Go through branding process
- Create logo, slogan, core branding messages
- Create “elevator conversation”
- Incorporate it into everything we do



*Innovate. Engage. Empower.*



# Signature STUDIES

FIND YOUR FUTURE HERE

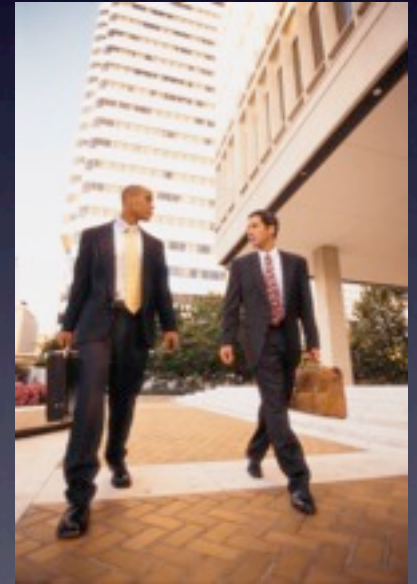
**IRVING**  
*Independent School District*



# STRATEGIES

## Key Communicators Network

- People who other people listen to
- Direct line to superintendent
- Make it prestigious; in the loop



# STRATEGIES



IRVING *Independent School District*

Item II G - Election of Board of Trustees Officers for 2013-2014 School Year

Item II G  
Election of Board of Trustees Officers for 2013-2014 School Year

- Shift to “on demand” video service
- Search board meetings by agenda item
- Optional remote “switcher”
- Saves staff time
- Improves efficiency, accessibility, quality, transparency

**OneClay TV**

## STRATEGIES

# Communications Boot Camp

- Branding and Marketing Your School
  - Brand/logo/slogan, Web/CMS, family connections, signage, messaging, customer service
- Crisis communications
- Social media usage
- School Messenger usage
- Media relations
- Speech and presentation



# STRATEGIES

## Speaker's Bureau

- Select a few capable people
- Provide “stump speech” and slides
- Provide handouts, information package
- Conduct speaker training
- Pro-actively schedule in community
- Evaluate results and feedback



## STRATEGIES

# Internal Communicators

- Launch “Friday Report” for Board
- Launch “ITK” (In the Know) for staff
  - eNews bullet points
  - Summarize Principal’s Meeting
  - Include staff on crisis calls
  - Revise, use Master Calendar

# Potential Resources

- Sponsors, foundations, realtors
- Professional Development budget
- Title I: Family Involvement funds
- Shift current spending, expenses
- Other people's web, newsletters, databases
- Consider Foundation Executive Director  
(free up communication specialist's time)



# Summary Findings

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For  
more information

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## Needed Services

Strategic Planning  
Crisis Communications  
CTE Academies  
Social Media  
Communications Training  
Board Relations  
Branding and Marketing  
Key Communicators  
Web Content  
Video production  
Internal Communications  
Parental Communications

## Current Capacity\*

None  
25% Emergency Plan  
50% CTE/Schools  
75% (implement)  
None  
FSBA, members, supt.  
50% (implement)  
75% (implement)  
90% (implement)  
  
75%  
75%

## Gap

100%  
75% (write, train)  
50% (creative)  
25% (expertise)  
100%  
0%  
50% (creative)  
25% (design, manage)  
10% (branding)  
  
25% (expertise)  
25% (creative)

\*With PR Position in Place

Must Outsource