

Lancaster City School District Communications & Marketing Plan

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING PLAN VISION STATEMENT

Lancaster City School District's goal is to make LCSD-TV self sufficient. This can be achieved through sensitivity to customer service and a clear commitment to meaningful and effective communication among and between citizens, employees, elected leaders and community organizations. Additionally, the Lancaster City School District must use communications and marketing as a proactive education tool to keep the community informed about how the school district operates and the policies and procedures that are involved in that operation, and to encourage citizen participation in their local school district's day to day operations. Finally, the Lancaster City School District must strive continually to meet communications needs both internally -- among staff and the Board of Education-- and externally with the entire community.

GOALS

The Communications & Marketing Plan will support this commitment to customer service by achieving the following goals:

- Identifying customers and their information needs.
- Providing customers, including residents and employees, with timely and relevant information about LCSD-TV projects, activities and initiatives.
- Encouraging communication between customers, community groups, elected officials and district employees.
- Measuring the effectiveness of this plan to ensure communications methods meet community needs.
- Seeking the improvement of customer satisfaction with the school district's communications efforts.
- Generating sponsorship from local and national companies in order to provide funding for the station's upkeep and licensing fees.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Informed citizens who understand the mission and how to effectively access district services.
- Informed employees who can be ambassadors for Lancaster City School District at work and at home.
- Informed political and community leaders who view Lancaster City Schools as an ethical, efficient and effective school district.
- Fulfillment of concepts of Vision Statement and Goals of Communications & Marketing Plan.

Community receives and agrees with the Lancaster City School District's key messages that:

- Lancaster City School District provides quality, professional services to the community;
- Lancaster City School District is a good place to work and live;

- Lancaster City School District makes a positive and significant contribution to a safe, healthy, livable, prosperous, well-governed and unified community;
- Lancaster City School District is well run;
- Lancaster City School District is responsive to the needs of its residents;
- Lancaster City School District is trying to reduce costs;
- Lancaster City School District spends tax dollars wisely;
- Lancaster City School District does a good job of communicating with residents;
- Information provided by Lancaster City School District is reliable.

STRATEGIES

Lancaster City School District will concentrate on three core processes for implementing its communications and marketing plan: Media Relations, Direct Communications, Internal/Employee Communications. Sub-processes of Creative Design/Production Services, and Administrative Support Services will support these core processes.

Media Relations:

Lancaster City School District will develop and maintain a close working relationship with reporters and editors from the local news media, as a means of proactively and reactively communicating and marketing Lancaster City School District's messages to customers. When appropriate, Lancaster City School District will proactively and reactively work with regional and national news media, and trade news media to communicate Lancaster City School District's messages. However, the primary focus of the media relations strategy will be working with local news media.

Direct Communications:

Lancaster City School District will proactively communicate with local residents and selected target audiences to deliver the District's key messages, and to provide information customers want and need to be informed, educated and involved in their school district. Lancaster City School will encourage and promote two-way communication with its residents.

Internal/Employee Communications:

Lancaster City School District will invest in and use a variety of tools to educate and inform employees about communication programs, activities and policies. Lancaster City School District will encourage and promote two-way communication between all levels of the organization.

IMPLEMENTATION

Strategy #1: Media Relations

The intent of this strategy is to use news media relations as only one part of a comprehensive plan. In fact, more emphasis should be given to taking messages directly to residents rather than relying on the news media to provide this information. However, it is recognized that the news media will continue to report on government activities and therefore contribute to shaping ideas and opinions. The news media also can be helpful in communicating key messages. As result, ongoing media relations are needed. Successful

media relations are developed through personal interaction with reporters and editors, distribution of news releases and media advisories, planning and conducting new conferences and interviews, placement of stories in various media, and other methods of communications. Below are the media relations goals and descriptions of some of the tactics that Lancaster City School District will implement in support of its media relations strategy.

TACTICS FOR ACHIEVING GOALS

Strongly emphasize the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette as the District's first choice of news media to deliver messages to the community.

Community survey data indicate a significant majority of Lancaster City School District's residents look first to the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette as their primary source of information on Lancaster City School District. This strong emphasis on placing stories in the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette should involve placement throughout the newspaper (and Lancaster City School District's Neighbors), not merely via the school district's website and newsletters. This initiative should be supported by one of the direct communications tactics of purchasing advertising within the newspaper for specific topics, including purchasing special section inserts.

Television

As a medium, TV news was the second highest total response in the community survey data, when combining the three network TV news stations. It should be noted that twice as many respondents indicated that WCMH-TV was their primary and preferred source of information on Lancaster City School District as compared with WBNS-TV. Based on current ratings and survey data, WSYX-TV is simply not generating a large enough viewership to be a significant factor at this time.

Build Relationships

As mentioned, successful media relations depend on relationships with members of the news media. The school district's public information officers should regularly be in contact with reporters and editors to build these relationships.

Reinforce media relationships

Twice a month, Lancaster City School District's Office of Communications will provide the news media an advisory on the top ten news stories ideas on Lancaster City School District. The story ideas can be related to events and programs, or could be stories that have not specific timing. Focus of these story ideas should be those messages that have been identified as the highest priorities by departments and core businesses.

Good Schooling

This monthly one-page newsletter is sent to the news media and general public. The content is focused on positive aspects of the Lancaster City School District that is largely overlooked by the news media. It is mainly intended to inform residents but also serves to remind the news media that there are numerous stories about the school district that are not reported but which are important.

News Releases and Media Advisories

News releases and media advisories are provided on an as needed basis to begin the process of seeking media attention and coverage for story ideas. Releases and advisories should be followed up with personal phone calls or visits to maximize the potential for coverage.

Coordinating with other Departments

Lancaster City School District's structure for implementing communications and marketing is a mix of a small centralized department and several decentralized operations. In lieu of the more desirable fully centralized operation, coordinating services among the various operations is essential to a more effective and efficient approach to planning and implementing communications and marketing. With the appropriate resources, the Office of Communications will serve as the coordination point for public information services.

Collaboration with City of Lancaster and other agencies

The City of Lancaster and Lancaster City School District have numerous partnerships to deliver community services. Included among those services are some communications/public information/public involvement partnerships requiring media relations. In such cases, the City of Lancaster (and/or other City departments) and the Lancaster City School District's Office of Communications will collaborate to attain media relations goals.

Strategy #2: Direct/Citizen Communications and Outreach

Internet

As the popularity and use of the Internet grows, this medium will grow in its usefulness and applicability as a communications tool. The Lancaster City School District continues to invest in its Internet site as a method of conducting business with its customers. As more people acknowledge that service, more opportunity will exist to provide these customers with key messages using the Internet. Currently, the District's Office of Communications publishes a number of information items on its home page site, including other direct communications and media relations materials described in this communications plan. The Office of Communications will continue to seek opportunities to use the Internet as a communications tool, including interactive communications, as well as a method of promoting public involvement.

DIRECT/CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS GOALS FOR FY2004

- Internet information is useful as well as profitable.

TACTICS FOR ACHIEVING GOALS

TV programming

- **Public Information Shows**

Office of Communications produces a monthly, 30-minute TV newsmagazine titled, **Lancaster City School District's Forum**, which features community events, interviews, and department updates. The show is televised on the LCSD-TV. The Office of Communications also produces the live telecast and rebroadcast of **Board of Education meetings**. **Lancaster City School District Today or Keys to Your Class** can be a program for parents produced by students interviewing employees of the school district to explain job specifics. Advertisers pay the cost of production software and equipment (including upgrades), licensing fees, while the Office of Communications is responsible for the writing, design, format and photography.

- **Video Text**

When time and resources allow, Office of Communications will produce video graphics and text to air on LCSD-TV. Examples of this can range from simple billboards of information about who to call to get information regarding district services, to more sophisticated features like a community events calendar.

- **Videos and Public Service Announcements**

As a service to Lancaster City School District departments and senior management, the Office of Communications produces information and promotional videos that highlight various aspects of the district. Topical shows and public service announcements (PSAs) are produced periodically to highlight particular activities and to promote participation in the Lancaster City School District. Videos are used by district departments to show directly to their clients; the videos also appear on LCSD-TV as regular programming.

Use of videos is best considered as part of comprehensive communications & marketing plan. Video requests will be compared with departmental communications objectives and key messages. Priority will be given to those requests that are the highest priorities described within each department's communications plans, and those video projects requested as part of revising communications plans. It is estimated that with current resources Office of Communications can produce approximately 6-8 major videos in one calendar year.

- **Brochures and other printed materials**

The Office of Communications produces brochures and other printed materials for wide distribution throughout the school district. The Office of Communications also provides communications & marketing expertise to assist district departments in producing information/promotional brochures and videos. Use of brochures and videos is best considered as part of comprehensive communications & marketing plan. These service requests will be compared with departmental communications objectives and key messages. Priority will be given to those requests that are the highest priorities described within each department's communications plans.

- **Collaboration with City of Lancaster other agencies**

The City of Lancaster and Lancaster City School District have numerous partnerships to deliver community services. Included among those services are some communications/public information/public involvement partnerships. Currently, the City of Lancaster Communications Department and the Lancaster City School District's Office of Communications have several partnerships as follows:

- **TV Station Programming and Promotion**
- **Internet Marketing**
- **Special Projects**
- **Brochure Services**

As a result of these partnerships, the two departments must coordinate efforts to maximize potential.

BOE bio sheet

Upon the election of a new Board of Education, the Office of Communications produces a one sheet, two-sided "flyer" containing short biographies of each board member for distribution at public meetings and at various district facilities. The flyer also is inserted into the district's employee newsletter to inform and educate employees about the Board.

Newsletters

- **Chalkmarks**– This is a one-page monthly newsletter that is sent to the news media and residents highlighting an aspect of the Lancaster City School District that might not garner the spotlight of the news media but which extols the positive role and success of Lancaster City School District.
- **Curriculum Comments** – This two-page bulletin is sent to Lancaster City School District's residents as a summary of the major decisions made by the Board of Education at its regular meeting. The Curriculum Comments is "published" twice a month.
- **Calendar** – This publication is produced monthly, with several updates during the month, to inform the news media and the public about public meetings scheduled that relate to Lancaster City School District. This publication allows residents to learn what meetings are being held so they can decide to attend or follow up on the results of meetings.

Advertising/Fundraising

- **Ads**

Office of Communications utilizes paid and donated advertising as needed to reach target audiences with key messages.

- **Annual events/projects**

Selling copies of Senior Graduation to proud parents, Drama Club productions (plays), Band (concerts) and video yearbooks as an alternative option or to be accompanied with paper bound traditional.

- **Follow PBS' Business model**

<http://www.pbs.org/insidepbs/membership/howto.html?default>

Community Outreach/Public Participation Program

- **Homework Hotline** -- The program offers one-on-one homework help to students who call the hotline number at 740-687-#### (Voice/TTY). The program, which can be viewed on LCSD-TV, is scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on most Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays throughout the school year. By calling 740-687-####, a student will be connected to a teacher who can provide assistance in most academic subjects from kindergarten through 12th grade levels. Students will be able to watch the program and work through the homework question with the television teacher. During each program, two teachers are on camera, while several more answer telephone calls in the phone room at LCSD-TV studio. The technical crew consists mostly of student and community volunteers who are trained by the Office of Communications staff members.

Each program includes various learning experiences such as brainteasers, current events summaries and video clips, as well as direct instruction. An Internet connection is available in the phone room in case callers raise research issues.

While most questions come from elementary and middle school students, "Hotline" teachers represent all levels and most subject areas. Mathematics questions are the most frequent, and there is usually a certified mathematics instructor on staff during broadcasts.

- **Students & Parents Listserv/Forum**- Set up for better communication between parents, their children and the school district to work together to come up with new programming that focus on today's important issues.

E-Mail

The Office of Communications coordinates distribution of messages to all district staff and students with access to e-mail as needed to alert employees to emerging issues or keep them informed of current organizational goals and activities.

Marketing/Publicity: The success of this event is tied directly to both the quality of the activities and the extent to which the event is promoted. As a result, considerable direct advertising of the event is required, supported by the school district's public information efforts. This would require additional resources beyond current level funding. The Office of Communications will be responsible for developing and implementing an aggressive marketing and publicity program funded by additional resources.

- **Speakers' Bureau/Community Education** – The goal of this program is to average having at least one group each day receive information about Lancaster City School District. This can be accomplished by booking community leaders on radio and TV talk shows, speaking to PTOs or civic groups, or hosting special public meetings.

Strategy 3: Internal Communications

Educating and informing Lancaster City School District's employees about their organization's goals, achievements, failures and challenges is critical to employees understanding their role in the organization and how they can contribute to the organization's goals. Several means are used to keep employees informed.

TACTICS FOR ACHIEVEING GOALS

Employee Newsletter

Lancaster City School District publishes a bi-monthly newsletter distributed with pay stubs to every district employee. The goal of **VIEWFINDER** is to keep district employees informed of events and activities of the LCSD-TV and the Office of Communications. Enhancing employee knowledge and enhancing employee morale are key objectives in publishing **VIEWFINDER**.

Training Videos

The Office of Communications produces training videos for requesting district departments. These videos are used by the departments to train and educate district employees and clients.

NEW ITEM: Further consideration should be made to develop a systematic use of the training channel internally for video presentations and live or taped employee forums with the district's health and safety awareness expert and/or other trainers.

Equipment Training

The Office of Communications offers training to employees, as needed, on the use of video equipment available for loan to employees, so they may have access to communications tools. Loaner equipment is available to qualified employees (those who have received training). The Office of Communications has limited amount of equipment to loan. Additional promotion of this service would create a demand that exceeds supply capabilities.

Intranet

The Office of Communications posts the **VIEWFINDER** and other information on the District's Intranet, the District's internal web pages. As this function evolves, Office of Communications will place greater emphasis on posting information to the District's Intranet and promoting the service to employees.

Miscellaneous Strategies

1. Issues Management

Office of Communications Supervisor is to provide input and consultation on communications and other issues. This access to senior level information and the organization's decision makers allows the District's information officer to be aware of emerging communications issues, offer timely and pertinent recommendations, and develop strategies and tactics to deal with these issues proactively, rather than reactively. In addition, Office of Communications should be consulted in a strategic mode to assist departments in developing communications & marketing plans that feature proactive functions. Such a proactive initiative can serve as a means to get messages to residents and to seek feedback from residents before issues become controversial. Office of Communications also will continue to work with departments and senior management in tactical communications as crises situations arise.

2. Emergency Public Information

Office of Communications serves the Lancaster City School District's All Hazards Plan by coordinating communications services in the event of a community emergency or disaster. Many times this is done in cooperation with the City of Lancaster and/or other government agencies' public information operations. This effort combines media relations, direct communications and internal communications.

MEASUREMENT

External Audiences

- **Annual Surveys**

As the cornerstone of its communications & marketing plan, Office of Communications will acquire questions on an annual survey, repeating questions each year if necessary, for use in measuring the ongoing and annual success of the district's communications & marketing plan in reaching desired outcomes. Various projects also may require the use of surveys or some other audience measurement tool to both assess pre-project opinions/customer satisfaction, and post project opinions/customer satisfaction. When resources allow, such measurement tools will be included in project communications plans.

Internal Audiences

- **Surveys**

The Office of Communications uses surveys of district employees to assess employee satisfaction with internal communications, including **VIEWFINDER**, e-mail, etc.

Those with questions about or suggestion for this plan should contact:

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