

Mequon-Thiensville School District Communication Plan Update September 2011

Follow up

A communication plan was developed and implemented by the district consultant, the Donovan Group, informed by a community survey and communication subcommittee input. The Donovan Group, assisted by the subcommittee, has executed most of the goals and tasks set out by the communication plan and reported on at the August 15, 2011, BOE meeting. The focus of first year efforts was primarily upon the creation of numerous systems, infrastructure, and templates for communication. The second year saw an expansion, revision, and enhancement of efforts to date

Where are we?

In the two years of the relationship with the Donovan Group, the initial communication plan was expanded to include:

- the development of a District and HHS e-newsletters,
- district and individual school fact sheets
- more press releases updating the community and media on District happenings
- realtor brochures
- expanded use of video messaging and establishment of a video portal for board meetings, fine arts events, community meetings, and others.

The board subcommittee recommends the district maintains all of the services and communication efforts from the 2010-2011 school year (a list of completed tasks can be found in Appendix A) with additional efforts directed to institutionalize and enhance these efforts where appropriate. An itemized list of communication efforts suggested for the 2011-2012 school year can be found in Appendix B.

Where do we want to be?

The vision of the board subcommittee is two-fold: (1) to maintain, enhance, and evaluate the communication services executed during the previous school year and (2) to maximize the use of the Donovan Group to communicate the District's efforts related to strategic planning. Please see Appendix B.

How are we going to get there?

The budget for each of the first two years was \$27,000. In reviewing the plan for 2011-2012, there are several significant additions (see Appendix B for details) which necessitate increasing the budget to \$36,000. The most significant addition relates to work that will be done surrounding the Strategic Planning Process, a one-year commitment. In other words, the increase to \$36,000 is, at this point, considered to be a one-time increase. The board subcommittee for communication recommends that the District allocate a total of \$36,000 for the two-fold communication plan outlined in Appendix B.

How long will it take the District to achieve our goal of effective communication and how will the goal be measured?

Communication is an ongoing responsibility of the District with both internal and external audiences. Annual communication goals will be recommended to the BOE for approval, along with respective measurement criteria, and a supporting budget. It is further recommended that this be accomplished within the regular budget cycle going forward.

Financial Implications

The school district has the ability to assume the full responsibility of the communication plan costs recommended for 2011-2012 because of two factors:

1. The school district's change in prorating insurance benefits for part-time teachers has created a surplus in the approved budget for the 2011-2012 school year.
2. The school district has witnessed a higher than anticipated number of new hires who have elected to take the cash in lieu of the option for insurance.

Alignment to District Goals

The goal of increasing the effectiveness of communication is in direct alignment to District Goal #2: *The Mequon-Thiensville School District will continually embrace a shared leadership model, which supports the growth of educational leaders including faculty, staff, administration, parents and community.*

Finally, it is recommended that communication responsibilities, goals, and objectives appropriately become part of the upcoming district strategic planning process.

MEQUON-THIENSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Communication Plan Review
2010-2011 School Year
Appendix A

Communication Task for the 2010-2011 SY	Objective of the communication task	Measurement- Evidence the initiative was successful
Regular communication tools:		
Video updates from superintendent (monthly)	Communicate common information to all stakeholders (internal and external)	New to the school district. A great deal of foundation work was spent creating an infrastructure to develop the 3 to 5 minute updates Monthly videos posted with viewers & opportunities for comments and ratings.
District e-newsletter (monthly)	Create a timely written communication tool on breaking news and District events. The newsletter also became a tool for groups like Board of Education, Administrators and MTEF to provide updates to the school community and local residents	New to the school district A great deal of foundation work was spent creating an infrastructure to develop the document There are currently 3,691 subscribers to the newsletter. Five editions were sent during the 2010-2011 school year.
Homestead e-newsletter (monthly)	Create a timely written communication tool on breaking news and school events. The newsletter also became a tool for groups like the Homestead PTSO to provide updates to the school community	New to the school district A great deal of foundation work was spent creating an infrastructure to develop the document. Currently, there are 1,077 household subscribers to the Homestead e-newsletter
News releases (regularly, as needed)	Convey the good news of the District Provide additional information about newsworthy issues Assist the media with the point of view of the District	A total number of 41 were released during the 2010-2011 school year, surpassing the 2009-2010 total by 17.

Budget document	Legally Obligated	Qualitative feedback-by the MTSD Business Advisory Council & others –resulted in an enhanced version from the previous school year to include an executive summary which revised complicated financial data into key facts of interest to community members. Annual meeting suggested financial facts from the report were well understood (no questions). 10,650 copies were mailed out to the community; also available on website.
Performance document	Legally Obligated	Similar feedback as the budget document; Enhanced from the previous school year. 10,650 copies were mailed to the community this past July; also available on website.
Special Projects:		
Recruitment materials for Homestead High School Principal Search	Within a two-day period, the Donovan Group developed recruitment materials, including a video announcement, which allowed the District to create a deep candidate pool late in the hiring season	The hire of Brett Bowers from a first-tier high school (Brookfield East) in late July/early August
Strategic Communication work related to the Mequon-Thiensville Forward effort (which transformed into the Community Conversation)	The work was an out-growth of the MTSD Business Advisory Council. The Donovan Group met with city, village, business leaders and District officials to develop a common message about a new vision for the community	The development of the community conversation materials in no short order can be attributed to the hours (20 hours) invested by the Donovan Group on this topic. The end result (the community conversation on May 25, 2011) has generated significant discussion and work around the future of the Mequon-Thiensville community
The initial realtor document	This document was introduced to the Donovan Group in February 2011 with a completion date of mid-March 2011	The realtor document has been used at spring school events, employee recruitment fairs and shared with prospective home buyers during the spring and summer months 2011 in the community. One thousand copies were printed; about 400 were distributed personally to area real estate offices during meetings with local realtors; the remainder were used at spring school events and employee recruitment fairs in addition to being put in the local library, village hall and city hall for citizen information.

Support to other groups	The Donovan Group has helped Voices develop a new handout highlighting the organization. The Donovan Group has also assisted the MTEF in creating talking points for its fundraising efforts.	An increase in communication tools from support groups A more unified message about the objective and mission of the school district
Media/Policy Counsel	The Donovan Group has been used to problem solve and develop specific messaging around difficult issues (e.g. 4K, budget reductions, budget repair bill discussions and other)	The school district has been involved in a number of media and newsworthy issues over the past 12 months. The District has handled the issues with a high level of professionalism due in large part to the counsel provided by the Donovan Group .
Website Enhancement	Increase access to communication tools	Newly established video updates & offerings via video portal including BOE meetings, the Community Conversation event, Fine Arts Performances, district newsletter, etc., along with viewer counts.

MEQUON-THIENSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Communication Plan
2011-2012 School Year
Appendix B

Communication Task for the 2011-2012 SY	Objective of the communication task	Measurement: Evidence the initiative was successful
Regular Communication Tools:		
Video updates from superintendent (monthly)	Communicate common information to all stakeholders (internal and external)	Monitor the number of hits on the District website to view the video message, also number of comments
Video updates from principals (monthly); New for 2011-2012 SY	Highlight local leadership of buildings Provide school-specific information for buildings Increase traffic for school websites	Monitor the number of hits on the District website to view the video message
District e-newsletter (monthly)	Create a timely written communication tool on breaking news and District events. The newsletter also became a tool for group like Board of Education, Administration, MTEF and to provide updates to the school community	Number of citizens that subscribe to the e-newsletter Number of opened e-newsletters monthly Create a qualitative feedback measure (e.g. internal survey question)
Homestead e-newsletter (monthly)	Create a timely written communication tool on breaking news and District events. The newsletter has also become a tool for groups like the Homestead PTSO to provide updates to the school community	Number of citizens that subscribe to the e-newsletter Number of opened e-newsletters monthly Create a qualitative feedback measure
News releases (regularly, as needed)	Convey the good news of the District Provide additional information about newsworthy issues Assist the media with the point of view of the District	How often reporters use the content of the press releases The press releases are posted on the website; therefore, the number of visitors on the website & number of visitors to the individual press releases

School and district fact sheets and folder	Completion Date: November 1, 2011 Provide school-specific information to prospective parents. The school and District fact sheet and folder information was requested by local realtors and recently relocating parents.	Number of visitors on the District and school-specific websites Insert directing readers to an online survey
Realtor brochure	Update version completion date: September 19, 2011	Insert directing realtors to provide feedback and suggestions
Budget document	Legally Obligated	Continue to solicit qualitative feedback regarding readability, etc. from advisory groups; # of online hits to document
Performance document	Legally Obligated	Same as above
Social media	An effort to communicate in the ever-expanding social media world (Twitter and Facebook)	Number of followers or "likes"
Special Projects:		
Updating the district's logo	Completion Date: March 31, 2012 The District's logo has not been updated in years. The logo is not in a digital form. In an effort to better brand the district, a new logo is necessary	Administration and the Donovan Group will develop a survey on the front end to determine what people are seeking in a logo. Three to four final logos will be shared with the community for feedback and selection.
Enhancing the district's website (this long-term effort will include creating a separate plan with the technology director)	The District's website is considered one of the best in the area. In an effort to make the navigation of the website more user-friendly, the District recommends an enhancement of the site.	An analysis of how difficult it is for users to find information on the website will be conducted by the Donovan Group; compare and contrast with other district websites; ease for various info links & organization, e.g. BOE links, what is provided
Strategic Planning Communication	In an effort to communicate on the front-end about the ongoing activities, opportunities for engagement and events surrounding the strategic plan, the Donovan group will develop a series of communiqués to keep community members informed	Once the Board of Education selects a vendor to work with, the Donovan Group will coordinate with the vendor to highlight specific events or opportunities for citizens to get involved in the process. Once the strategic plan is developed, the Donovan Group will align the communication plan to support the strategic plan. In short, the communication plan will highlight the important messaging points from the strategic plan.