



Communications Audit Findings

FALL 2022

WALLINGFORD-SWARTHMORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

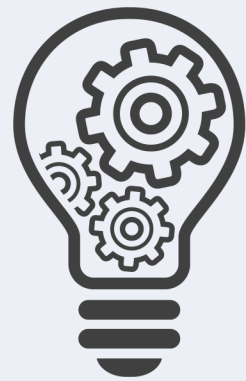
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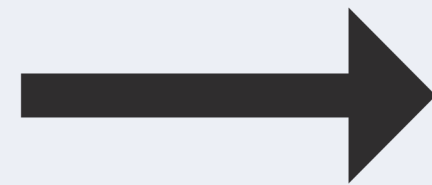
Process

In the **Spring of 2022**, NSPRA (National School Public Relations Association) was tasked with assisting Wallingford-Swarthmore School District in completing a **Communications Audit**. The audit comprised of the following objectives:

- **Collect data** about communications channels and efficacy
- **Gather stakeholder input** and perceptions
- **Provide recommendations** to improve District communications



MATERIALS REVIEW



**FOCUS GROUPS
& INTERVIEWS**



SCOPE SURVEY



NSPRA identified the following **SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis:

STRENGTHS

- Most believe the district is serving students well.
- Talented and well-qualified teachers are recognized as a key component of student success.
- There is appreciation for the superintendent's efforts to increase and improve communication.
- The wide variety of extracurricular opportunities for students is an enormous pride point.

WEAKNESSES

- Administrators, faculty, and staff are unable to articulate WSSD's brand or recognize a cohesive communication strategy.
- There are inadequate opportunities for staff to engage in two-way communication and provide input into key decisions.
- There is a lack of structure and consistency in District communications.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong community support with a desire for more information opens a window to share and engage.
- Having a community that is already supportive of the schools can be strengthened by the development of a strong brand presence.

THREATS

- Communication frustrations experienced by parents/families and staff can become the norm if not actively addressed.
- Without increased stakeholder/taxpayer engagement and transparency in school board decisions, it will be difficult for WSSD to address fiscal challenges.
- Word-of-mouth has become a primary source for district information.
- School safety is becoming an even greater concern of stakeholders and, if left unaddressed, could erode trust.



NSPRA identified the following **nine recommendations**:

- **Formalize** the WSSD communication function
- **Develop** a strategic communication plan
- **Develop** and implement strategies to keep staff members informed and engaged
- **Identify** and **communicate** WSSD's brand identity
- **Redesign** and **update** the website
- **Develop** a crisis communication plan as part of WSSD's overall crisis response plan
- **Develop** and **implement** strategies to strengthen the engagement of parents and community members
- **Formally support** social media use by the district and its employees
- **Expand** and **enhance** Board of Education communications



As recommended by NSPRA

1

Formalize the WSSD communication function

1.1 Elevate the communications and community relations liaison position.

1.2 Examine the district's current investment in the communication function and consider making additional resources available.



As recommended by NSPRA

2

Develop a strategic communications plan

2.1 Use the RPIE method to design the strategic communications plan.

2.2 Refocus strategies from increasing communication output to increasing stakeholder understanding and engagement.

2.3 Include proactive issues management as a component of communication planning.



As recommended by NSPRA

3

Develop and implement strategies to keep staff members informed and engaged

- 3.1 Establish communication guidelines and expectations for district administrators and principals.
- 3.2 Create input opportunities and set expectations.
- 3.3 Gather employee input on decisions that affect their jobs.
- 3.4 Keep support staff in the communication loop and reinforce their importance as frontline communicators.



As recommended by NSPRA

4

Identify and communicate WSSD's brand identity

4.1 Establish WSSD's brand identity.

4.2 Use targeted marketing campaigns to raise the visibility of the district.

4.3 Enhance branding with micro-campaigns.



As recommended by NSPRA

5

Redesign and update the website

5.1 Conduct targeted research on users' WSSD website experiences.

5.2 Research successful district and school websites.

5.3 Consider a redesign of the district and school websites.

5.4 Provide and maintain accessible website content.

5.5 Continue to evaluate the user experience.



As recommended by NSPRA

6

Develop a crisis communication plan

- 6.1 Designate a leader for crisis communication management.
- 6.2 Assign specific crisis communication responsibilities.
- 6.3 Emphasize preparation and training.
- 6.4 Clarify expectations regarding transparency and more comprehensive outreach.
- 6.5 Take advantage of social media capabilities.
- 6.6 Involve community agencies and identify available resources.



As recommended by NSPRA

7

Enhance strategies to strengthen the engagement of parents and community members

7.1 Develop a districtwide visibility plan and schedule.

7.2 Hold listening lunches or coffees.

7.3 Provide opportunities for input that don't require attending a meeting.

7.4 Create opportunities for participation in decision-making.



As recommended by NSPRA

8

Formally support social media use by the school district and its employees.

8.1 Create a social media policy and guidelines

8.2 Ensure all social media accounts reflect information regarding how the district will handle inappropriate comments.

8.3 Offer annual social media training to all WSSD employees.



As recommended by NSPRA

9

Expand and enhance Board of Education communications

9.1 Revise the current Board of Education policy on communications.

9.2 Provide prompt summaries of school board meetings.

9.3 Make the Board of Education more approachable on the website.

9.4 Create more opportunities for dialogue between the Board of Education and the public.

Identifying Priorities and Timeline

- Short-term wins
- Long-term effort
- 2-3 major recommendations advised a year
- Metrics to solidify progress

Roadmap Ahead: Focus Areas

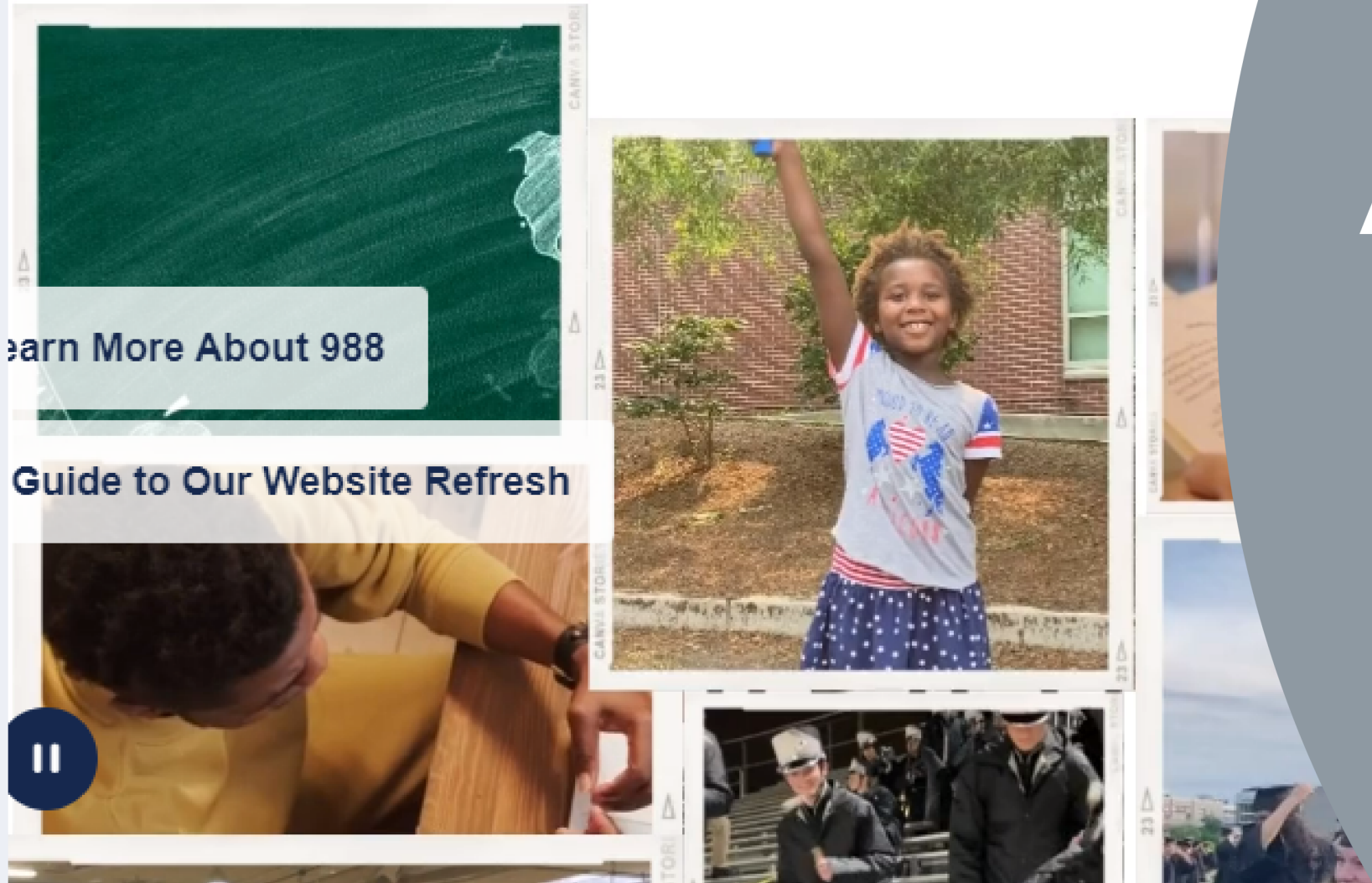
- Strategic Communications Plan - key to a proactive, system(s)-wide approach
- Website Upgrade Plan
- Community engagement
- Data-informed practices & improvements

Website Upgrade

www.wssd.org/website-refresh

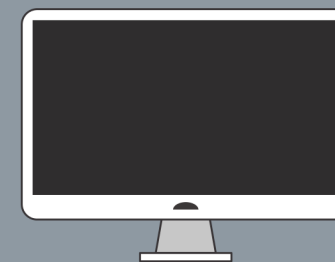


Wallingford-Swarthmore School District



A GUIDE TO OUR WEBSITE REFRESH

WSSD



Questions?

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Office of Communications