



Communications Audit Report

February 25, 2008



Harford County Public Schools

Background

- **June 2007** - Board of Education of Harford County commissions communications audit
- **October 2007** – National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) conducts 20 focus groups and compiles school system communication data through review of materials and surveys
- **January 2008** – NSPRA provides HCPS with audit recommendations



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Key Findings

- Strong sense of community and tradition
- HCPS is known for stable leadership and community-oriented focus
- District publications sited as best source of news and information
- Focus groups found the district website useful but sometimes difficult to navigate
- HCPS operates from a reactive rather than proactive position with regard to communication
- No clear articulated marketing strategy
- Focus groups expressed a strong desire for more outreach and dialogue with district leaders



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Audit Recommendations

1. Develop a strategic communication plan



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Audit Recommendations

2. Transition the focus of the Public Information Office from information delivery to strategic communications and engagement.



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3. Become more proactive and systematic with communication efforts



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4. Identify and frame issues to ensure clear, consistent messaging.



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5. Improve communication with employees



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6. Expand opportunities for parent/community communication and involvement.



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7. Evaluate and update publications to improve effectiveness and key messaging.



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8. Continue to develop and expand public engagement/ outreach efforts.



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9. Update and revise the crisis communication plan and improve communication about school incidents.



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10. Emphasize the role of employees and retirees as ambassadors of education.



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11. Conduct communication training for staff.



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12. Continue to improve the effectiveness and usability of the district and school websites



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Audit Recommendations

13. Develop a comprehensive branding/marketing strategy



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Superintendent's Recommendation

The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education of Harford County provide direction on the implementation of the findings of the Communication Audit.



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