

Leyden District 212

Communications Plan

2021 - 2024



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Introduction

Leyden High School District 212 offers two west-suburban public schools to serve the communities of Franklin Park, River Grove, Rosemont, Schiller Park, unincorporated Leyden Township and portions of Northlake and Melrose Park. The total student enrollment is approximately 3,500, distributed between East Leyden (1,840) and West Leyden (1,715). Northlake,

The term "Leyden Pride" is real. This is a school community that prides itself on their mission to *"Educate, Enrich, and Empower,"* and to *"Do What's Best for the Kids."*

The purpose of this communications plan is to bring focus to the most impactful and important activities that help Leyden continue to build support and trust for our schools.



Research

In order to gain a deeper understanding of our starting point, we conducted various listening sessions with parents, students and staff. We utilized surveys and secondary research findings to help us learn more about the communications preferences of our communities. We reviewed and analyzed our current materials, strategies, processes and then checked those against our visions for the future. Our goal is to continue to build trust and support with and for our Leyden families. We accomplish this by building awareness, establishing connections and inspiring action.

Highlights:

- Overall Parent Preferences:
 - Parents use their phones over computers
 - E-newsletters must be mobile friendly
 - Text is the best way to communicate
 - Mailings sent home get read
 - They like the translated voice by phone communication
 - Everyone has unique preferences; try to meet all needs

- Overall Student Preferences:
 - Students would like to receive any communications that their parents receive
 - Text is most useful - for students and for parents
 - (All) students are on Instagram and desire: logistical posts, days off, schedules, events, calendar-type
 - Highlight all stories, not just "big" accomplishments
 - Students cited parents language barrier as issue; They interpret messages
 - Calendar items are most significant/impactful for students

- Overall Staff Preferences:
 - Staff bulletins work really well
 - Staff are proud of Leyden, support each other
 - Desire a better process for communication requests, such as bulletins
 - Desire more promotion of offerings and opportunities
 - Celebrate staff and recognize efforts

For a full view of our findings, please visit the [Insights Report](#).



Analysis & Planning

We want to see if what we heard in our research matched with what we could see in our materials, practices, analytics and observations.

Observation Highlights:

- Heavy reliance on internal emails to communicate with staff
- Inconsistent utilization of mass emails to students and families
- Tendency to plan last-minute in our communications or requests for event promotion
- No coordination of mass communication channels between departments
- There are no specific strategies for our communication channels

Recommendation Highlights:

Communications Processes (internal)

- Coordination of building/district level communications
- Intranet form for promotional requests/news tips
- Publish a complete communications playbook
- Establish efficiencies in our information systems

How we communicate (Methods)

Implement strategies and enhancements for all of our communications channels:

- e-Newsletters
- Website
- Calendars
- Social Media
- Direct communication (mailings, emails, phone calls, text)
- Local Media

What we communicate (Content)

- Inclusive communication
- Crisis Communication

For a full view, please visit the: [Observations and Audit Recommendations](#)



Communication & Implementation

Overall Goal: continue building trust and support with and for our Leyden families.

Strategy 1

Improve communication and consistency between the two high schools

Tactics

- Launch the One Amazing Story campaign
- Commit to common communication of district-wide initiatives, events, and activities
- Explore a unified website design; one site, with school subpages
- Capture videos and images that combine the two schools, students, staff
- Continue to utilize and promote #LeydenPride in all publications, social media

Strategy 2

Improve inclusivity and access in our communications

Tactics

- Meet our families where they are/comfortable
- Improve utilization of mass communication channels with a focus on text messaging and subscription/preference-based content
- Increase and improve translations (text, graphics, subtitles)
- Consider freshman cohorts for families
- Explore micro-communities among our families
- Showcase all of Leyden, variety of stories, equality in features
- Utilize more video as an additional access point into Leyden



Strategy 3

Improve our internal communication processes

Tactics

- Create one internal form for all communication requests
- Develop an internal process for creating and delivering messages
- Design a Communications Playbook for staff
- Empower staff to engage with families by providing them important information, talking points, access to mass messages in advance, and answers to frequently asked questions.
- Promote the communications department as the place for brainstorming and ideation
- Provide staff training in website, social media, communication strategies

Strategy 4

Increase opportunities for connections; between students, parents, and staff

Tactics

- Collaborate with municipalities and partner schools on events and workshops; Host professional development and events
- Design parent, student, staff engagement series: (parent to parent) (student to parent) (student to student) (teacher to student) (teacher to parent)
- Promote news stories to/from local media
- Recognize staff
- Inclusion of alumni and retirees in communications
- Recruit student publicity liaisons
- Improve calendar integration (Google)
- Establish the communications department as the input/feedback/research hub of the district; develop processes for soliciting input and facilitating discussions on key topics



Strategy 5

Establish Leyden platforms as the official sources of information

Tactics

- Board of Education: Ensure our leaders have accurate and timely communication; talking points, in sensitive or detailed circumstances
- Website: improve quality and consistency of content, navigation and reinforce current strategy among staff; set-up and launch Google analytics
- Social Media: Formulate targeted strategies for each platform; continue to grow our engagement, especially on Instagram
- Newsletters: Continue weekly e-newsletter format, with a new combination design; focus on district news, building news, Leyden Pride, and community connections
- Mass Mailings: determine the rationale for postal mailings, and utilize as needed
- Crisis Communications Templates: develop proactive messages for common situations, pre-load into School Messenger; create a branded "Emergency" masthead; promote crisis communication expectations with families

Timeline

This is an aggressive timelines approach to the implementation of new initiatives. In addition, once something launches, "One Amazing Story" for example in year one, that activity is sustained in following years.



Budget

The communications department accomplishes most of its goals by utilizing existing programs and resources, staff time and professional development in the areas of best practices. The largest annual expense, other than staffing, is in the one print publication that is produced three times a year and is mailed to each household in the district. This continues to be a highly effective and valued publication that is scheduled to continue.

Additional significant expenses would be related to larger, one-time projects or initiatives such as a potential website enhancement. In this case the scope of the project plays a large role in the potential cost, with slight revisions costing little to nothing, to a full redesign and build from scratch upward of \$50,000 on the higher end.

Proposed Budget 2021-22

Account Description	2022 Proposed Budget
VIDEO EQUIPMENT< \$5000	3,000.00
ADVERTISING SERVICES EAST	00.00
ADVERTISING SERVICES WEST	00.00
PRINTING SERVICES EAST	17,000.00
PRINTING SERVICES WEST	17,000.00
COMMUNICATIONS GEN SUPPLIES	3,000.00
SUBSCRIPTIONS - COMMUNICATIONS	1,500.00
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3,000.00
MEMBERSHIPS	535
CONSULTANTS/FREELANCE	3,000.00
TOTAL	48,535



Evaluation

Strategy 1

Improve communication and consistency between the two high schools

Communication: Messages (content) and channels (outlets).

Consistency: same messages, offerings and opportunities.

Desired Outcome: Students, families and staff experience consistency in communication, offerings and opportunities and support one another.

Measurement:

- Evidence of joint messaging between the schools
- Cohesive, collaborative relationship between school leadership, faculty and staff as evidenced by number of meetings, gatherings, and combined professional development
- Evidence by the number of One Amazing Story campaign videos/features

Strategy 2

Improve inclusivity and access in our communications

Inclusivity: The content and information published is diverse in perspective and accurately portrays a representative view of Leyden.

Access: Information is equally accessible regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, education level, etc.

Desired Outcome: Our students, families and staff feel a sense of belonging, safety, connection and care.

Measurement:

- Number of opportunities for connection in our communities
- Number of translated materials and conversations
- Improvements in our ADA compliance score on our website
- Conduct a review of feature stories
- Analyze media coverage
- Response time to a call for action
- Number of website visitors, page views and click through rates (CTRs)
- Number of e-newsletter open rates, click rates, subscribers, and questions



Strategy 3

Improve our internal communication processes

Internal: Leyden faculty and staff.

Processes: How we identify and execute a communication need.

Desired Outcome: a consistent approach to who, what, when, why and how we communicate.

Measurement:

- Evidence of internal request form and the annual number of requests
- Evidence of staff training opportunities and participation rates
- Evidence of collaboration between staff and the communications department
- Tracking of number of phone calls/emails in response to a mass communication
- Evidence of the Playbook and its usage

Strategy 4

Build opportunities for connections; between students, parents, and staff

Connections: student to student; parent to parent; parent to student; parent to staff; student to staff; and everyone connected to Leyden.

Desired Outcome: Our students, families and staff feel a sense of belonging, connection, and know and utilize each other as resources as they navigate the high school experience.

Measurement:

- Evidence of parent and student engagement series; may include podcasts, articles, events, posts, and meetings
- Engagement on social media platforms evidenced by number of likes, comments, shares, retweets, direct messages and tags
- Increased number of parent/teacher conferences
- Increased attendance at school events
- Evidence of events and collaborations with municipal and partner schools
- Increased interest from alumni and retirees in receiving Leyden news
- Evidence of staff recognition in publication, media, social media, and internally
- Increased number of students participating in athletics, clubs and activities
- Number of respondents for input and feedback (surveys, focus groups)



Strategy 5

Establish Leyden platforms as the official sources of information

Platforms: website, social media, newsletters

Official sources: Leyden produced and controlled content and channel

Desired Outcome: Students, families and staff consider Leyden information as their first and trusted source of information.

Measurement:

- Evidence of crisis templates drafted and uploaded into School Messenger
- Evidence of combined weekly e-newsletter for the district
- Engagement on social media platforms evidenced by number of likes, comments, shares, retweets, direct messages and tags
- Number of website visitors, page views and click through rates (CTRs)
- Number of e-newsletter open rates, click rates, subscribers, and questions
- Number of postal mailings per year
- Evidence of talking points and materials provided to Board members
- Evidence of Google analytics and monthly review of data

