

# Milwaukee Public Schools

Communications Audit Findings Report Presentation  
May 2022

Kane



**MEETING GOAL:**

To review the 2022 MPS communications audit conducted by Kane and share next steps outline for support.

# Agenda



SCOPE OF WORK REVIEW



FINDINGS REPORT INSIGHTS



NEXT STEPS

# SITUATION OVERVIEW

- **Scope of work:**

- **Phase 1:** Project kickoff and communications audit
- **Phase 2:** Communication recommendations and activation
- **Phase 3:** Measurement and analysis of communications support

- **Timeline:**

- **December 2021** - Kane began its engagement with MPS.
- **End of Jan. 2022** - Kane kicked off the communications audit.
- **Feb. - March 2022** - Kane met with MPS stakeholders and reviewed existing communications materials.
- **April 2022** - Kane developed the communications audit and shared it with Earl Arms, Interim Director of Communications and Outreach.
- **May 2022** - Kane presents the communications audit findings to MPS leadership and board of directors and begins activating the three agreed upon priority communications areas of focus.

# AUDIT PROCESS

1.

**Stakeholder  
interviews (7)**

2.

**Review of existing  
communications  
materials**

3.

**Digital audit**

4.

**Competitor  
analysis**

# *Executive Summary*

# FIVE PRIORITIES FOR SUCCESS

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The district is committed to the success of every child through the Five Priorities for Success. The priorities allow MPS to accomplish its overall goals of academic achievement; student, family and community engagement; and effective and efficient operations.

1. Increase academic achievement and accountability
2. Improve district and school culture
3. Develop MPS staff
4. Ensure fiscal responsibility and transparency
5. Strengthen communication and collaboration



# EVALUATION SCALE

MPS Average Score: **1.3**

0	Not Performed	Nonexistent
1	Ad Hoc	Uncoordinated, Unassigned, or No resources
2	Operationalized	Deliberate / managed; Resources allocated; Responsibility assigned; Progress tracked
3	Optimized	Regularly performed; "Best" practices; Coordinated; Regular reflection; Continuous improvement

## Critical Practice Strategies

Communications Strategy	Evaluated the use of strategy in communications and planning, tools for communications, communications plans, training for communications team members, consistency of messaging across communications.
Communications Materials and Messages	Evaluated how materials and content are developed and used including the use of brand standards, marketing materials, digital and social platforms and key messaging.
External and Internal Communications	Evaluated internal and external communications including coordination between these two functions and media relations.
Reputation Risk Management	This category evaluated preparedness and readiness to manage reputation risk during a developing or crisis situation.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. MPS has **countless positive** student, school and program **stories to share**. Developing and working from a content calendar and strategic plan will help prioritize what stories should be told and establish a cadence for proactively highlighting these stories.
2. **MPS has strong leaders at its helm**. Current and prospective parents, staff and members of the public would like to **see and hear from these leaders more** during times of celebration and crisis. These audiences want information quickly and straight from the source.
3. **Strategic planning, defined processes and documentation are key** so as staffing changes occur, there are paper trails left for successors and **prioritizing the Chief of Communications and School Performance position** will help give the department more structure and guidance. There is currently no coordination between internal and external communications
4. The **weekly internal and external newsletters are appreciated and valuable** to MPS stakeholders. Leverage the **metrics** from these newsletters to **create more customized content** that resonates with MPS' various stakeholder groups.
5. MPS has a **strong digital presence compared to its competitors**. There are opportunities to engage followers more and consider diversifying the content strategy and platforms to reach more people.



# *Observations and Recommendations*



## RECOMMENDATION #1

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Use a **strategic approach** to develop communication plans and templates that are **based on research, include goals and objectives** and address MPS **target audience groups**.

## OBSERVATIONS

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- MPS **leaders are eager** to do more and highlight the great work of MPS but without a strategic communications plan, the work tends to lack direction is more ad hoc and reactive
- There are opportunities to create more **customized messages** based on MPS' various **target audiences**
- MPS has so many great stories to tell and staff, teachers and parents are hungry for **positive, human-interest stories**
- **Competitor schools have increased their communications and recruitment efforts** and its impacting MPS' current and prospective target audiences
- The **fundamentals within the MPS Brand Book exist**, but <sup>100%</sup>the communications department **does not know where to access it or how to utilize the guidelines**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Provide **training to MPS leadership** on **goal setting and plan development** to create consistency across departments and ensure strategies can be measured and evaluated
- Conduct primary and secondary **audience research** to learn more about MPS' target audiences
- Develop shorter, **6-month communications plans** focused on important school milestones such as enrollment
- **Clarify the MPS brand positioning** with the communications department and **provide a training workshop** with the team on **how to implement the brand guidelines**



## RECOMMENDATION #2

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Create a **streamlined and documented process** that allows for the **timely approval** of communications and an **expedited review** for time sensitive matters. Ensure that the MPS **crisis communications plan** is in place.

## OBSERVATIONS

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- A **multi-layered approval process may delay the distribution of MPS communication**, which leads the media and the public to creating their own narratives
- **Internal and external communications are not coordinated.** Internal stakeholders learn about developments from media and others.
- **Decisions** about external announcements **are sometimes made without a communications specialist present** to advise on communications best practices

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- **Streamline the communications approval process** and **establish turnaround time frames** to ensure deadlines are met
- Develop **approved holding statements** that can be distributed immediately during times of crisis and **update** this document continuously **as new situations arise**
- **Establish goals** focused on the **timely dissemination of information**
- **Review goals** and approval processes **quarterly** to measure effectiveness




## RECOMMENDATION #3

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**Identify select spokespeople** and provide **media training** so they are able to communicate timely MPS information with the public and priority stakeholder audiences.

## OBSERVATIONS

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- Proactive **storytelling** and frequent and **timely information sharing are vital to increase trust in MPS communications**
- Spokespeople are prepped ahead of media opportunities but they are not fully **media trained**
- The district could benefit from consistent, **overarching organizational key messages** shared with spokespeople and key stakeholders who routinely speak about the district
- The **board may benefit from an onboarding kit** that shares district key messages and holding statements  for when they're contacted by media

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Identify **MPS spokespeople for specific topics**
- Conduct a **media training** workshop
- Establish **recurring media appearances** for MPS spokespeople
- **Fill posted positions, add additional support** to support MPS' communication and reputation management
- Update the MPS **crisis communication plan**
- Use **social listening** to monitor the MPS brand, messaging and competition



## RECOMMENDATION #4

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Update the brand book and guidelines and **activate the MPS brand throughout the district and in the schools**, in content, visuals and to build the MPS culture.



## OBSERVATIONS

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- **MPS brand book is missing key elements including** brand personality, a brand positioning statement, brand promise, brand messaging, brand behaviors and audience needs
- The **brand guidelines could offer more direction** on voice, tone and graphic standards
- **Marketing material samples** in the brand guidelines document are **text heavy** and sometimes **lack visual consistency**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Develop **standardized templates** for staff to create more brand consistency across district content and materials
- Create **annual marketing template toolkits** for the district and its schools to use throughout the year
- Conduct **audience-driven research** to understand how MPS' target audiences perceive MPS as a brand, establish **audience personas** and develop **customized key messages** to resonate with each audience
- Develop an MPS brand activation strategy



## RECOMMENDATION #5

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Provide **user-friendly**, and **engaging digital experiences on the MPS website**, including a **content strategy** focused on positive stories that are **shared across social channels**.

## OBSERVATIONS

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- The MPS **website is comprehensive** though **challenging to navigate**
- **Parents and prospective parents turn to schools instead of the District website** to find information and this bogs down the school administrative staff
- **MPS has a strong social media presence** though could benefit from more **diversified content and platform strategy**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Hire a **digital media manager** to oversee the MPS website and lead social media content strategy
- Consider **paid social media strategies** with targeted content to current and prospective parents to ensure information is reaching the right people at the right time
- Consider creating a **MPS TikTok account** to reach more students and parents
- Create more **student and teacher video spotlights** on social media to increase platform engagement
- Update and maintain **Superintendent Posley's LinkedIn** in alignment with his Twitter presence

# *Next steps*

# Plan Development

1. Develop **marketing and communications plans** with goals and objectives based on key MPS strategic priorities and initiatives
  - 6-month plan with a brand activation strategy
  - 1 year plan | 3 year plan
2. Use MPS' foundational brand elements of **mission, vision and core values** to shape **strategy, relationship building and engagement** and in **communications**
3. Develop **templates for communications plans** that can serve as a guide for plan development
4. Review newsletter **metrics** and provide **content recommendations** based on information and stories that perform best

# Media Relations

1. Proactive storytelling
  - Develop a six-month **media relations plan** with **bold and proactive pitches tied to MPS goals**
  - Provide on-site / **on-demand strategic media relations support**
  - **Leverage these proactive stories** to update the MPS homepage
2. Spokesperson media coaching
  - Develop **media training materials** for select MPS Department Chiefs to build their confidence speaking with media
  - **Conduct a media training workshop** for MPS department leaders.
  - Create **messaging that ties to MPS goals with proof points**. Introduce messaging to MPS leaders and community partners

# Brand Standards

1. Collaborate with MPS to **identify opportunities to enhance the brand language**, including the **development of an MPS brand platform**. Update or refresh **brand standards guidelines** and **provide templates** for more consistency across content materials (This could include flyers, social media graphics, email concepts, etc.)
2. **Develop templates** that the MPS marketing team can use and share with schools to provide more visual consistency on marketing materials.
3. Provide training to the schools on **how to use MPS brand language and standards**.

*Thank you!*

Kane