Milwaukee Public Schools

Communications Audit - Findings Report

May 2022

Kane

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this communications audit was to better understand existing marketing communications activities and channels at Milwaukee Public Schools so that Kane can provide informed recommendations regarding marketing communications activities on an ongoing basis. Kane reviewed marketing communications materials developed by/for MPS and interviewed seven individuals from MPS staff, leadership, teachers and board members to evaluate critical components needed for communications success. Kane evaluated their findings against a communications "practice maturity scale". This scale helps to determine areas of strength and areas for development and opportunity within the communications discipline.

Upon evaluation, MPS' communications efforts averaged a score of 1.3 on a scale of 0-3 (from "Not Performed" to "Optimized") - meaning that critical practices for success in communications are largely ad-hoc. MPS is most advanced in the areas of communications materials and messages, and internal and external communications - scoring a 1.6 out of 3 on the maturity model scale. A 1.6 score shows that these categories are priorities for MPS and that effort is being made, but that there is work to be done to create systems to facilitate consistent communication, to root communication in the MPS brand, to resource this work and build consistency. Communication Strategy and Reputation Risk Management each scored approximately 1.0 out of 3, showing that there are needs for strategy aligned with district goals and strategic reputation risk management opportunities.

Kane suggests that MPS dedicate resources toward developing more mature communications strategies first, which will naturally have an impact on implementation and materials. A number of key components critical for success (such as an annual strategic communications plan, a crisis communication plan that leaders are trained to implement, and media trained spokespeople) were nonexistent or uncoordinated.

INTRODUCTION

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is the largest school district in Wisconsin. MPS has approximately 150 schools from Head Start through high school including charter and partnership schools. The organization employs more than 8,000 staff and teachers and educates approximately 74,000 students each year. Nine individuals serve on the district's Board of Education.

MPS plays a central role in the Milwaukee community, educating the region's future workforce and providing enriching programs and vital support for students and their families. The district is committed to the success of every child through the Five Priorities for Success. These priorities include: Increase academic achievement and accountability, improve district and school culture, develop our staff, ensure fiscal responsibility and transparency, and strengthen communication and collaboration. These priorities are designed to allow MPS to accomplish its overall goals of academic achievement; student, family and community engagement; and effective and efficient operations.

Considering the size, complexity and diversity of the organization and its stakeholders, consistent communication that reflects these stakeholder groups and is rooted in MPS' authentic voice is extremely important to building trust and achieving key organizational goals including the attraction and retention of students, teachers and staff. Organizational communication "reflects the relationships between all organizational actors; creates those relationships, and defines, shapes and explains them to ourselves and others."[1] Studies show that organizations with strong communication perform better. [2]

Earl Arms, interim director of communications and outreach for MPS, currently oversees the communications department and reports to Chief of School Administration, Dr. Katrice Cotton. Today, MPS does not have an overall strategic marketing and communications plan or clear alignment between external and internal communication. In addition, the Chief of Communications position is currently vacant, leaving a

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[1] Hargie, O. and Tourish D. (2009). Auditing organizational communication: A handbook of research, theory, and practice. New York, NY. Routledge Publishing.
[2] Baldoni, J. (2009, November 19). New Study: How Communication Drives Performance November 19, 2009. HBR. Retrieved June 17, 2022, from https://hbr.org/2009/11/new-study-how-communication-dr

leadership and authority void when it comes to key communications decision making.

While the desire to strengthen communications exists, questions remain about the capacity to develop and implement the strategies. One way to understand MPS' current strategic marketing and communications performance and gain a realistic sense of what is possible to develop is to perform a communications audit.

Kane Communications Group conducts communications audits for organizations like MPS. They regularly work with executives as their trusted advisors to diagnose communications challenges and needs, design strategic solutions and deploy plans. This research will provide the organization with a better understanding of existing marketing communications activities and channels and areas of opportunity.

METHODOLOGY

Audit Goals

- Assess existing MPS communications materials for use of brand tone, language, consistency in messaging, frequency and timeliness.
- Understand challenges facing MPS communications.
- Gather qualitative and quantitative feedback from MPS stakeholders regarding access to, reach and effectiveness of communications.
- Evaluate existing communications assets against best practices.

Methods

Kane audited Milwaukee Public Schools' marketing and communications practice areas using the following methods:

Primary Research: Kane facilitated five (5) one-on-one and small group discussions (two people per meeting) to learn about current communications practices, understand communications processes and platforms used and discuss opportunities for enhancement. Interviews included the following individuals:

- MPS Leadership
    - Dr. Keith P. Posley, Superintendent
- MPS Board of Directors
    - Bob Peterson, President
    - Marva Herndon, District #1
    - Jilly Gokalgandhi, District #5
- MPS Communications Department
    - Earl Arms, Interim Director, Department of Communications and Outreach
- Administrative staff/educations
    - John Sanchez, Fernwood Montessori School Principal
    - Kelsey Robison, Samuel Clemens School Support Teacher

Secondary Research: Analysis and audit of existing communications as supplied by MPS and a review of two MPS competitor schools

- Kane reviewed recent MPS communications including marketing materials, news releases, graphics and brand standards, the MPS website and social media channels.
- Kane identified and reviewed two MPS competitor schools' social media channels.

Evaluation

Public schools and school districts are constantly challenged to be more strategic with their marketing and communication efforts and to adopt modern best practices. There are a number of specific practices associated with strategic marketing communications that organizations from business and non-profit to government should be performing at some level - whether by a single individual or a team within the organization[3].

Scoring and Evaluation Measures

Kane used the Communications Maturity Model to evaluate Milwaukee Public Schools' communications. This model assesses areas of strength and areas for development within the communications discipline. This scale helps us measure not only whether these critical practices are in place, but where your organization stands in terms of its performance within the communications discipline. By assessing communications through the lens of a structured maturity model, it provides you with a benchmark against which you can evaluate capabilities, a roadmap for improving them and a sense of prioritization when aligned with your organization's business goals.

Evaluation Scale: Communications Maturity Model Scoring Key

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

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[3] Quality criteria are adapted from Bonk, K. Griggs, H, and Tynes, E. . Strategic communications for nonprofits. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; Spitfire Strategies. SmartChart 2.0. Washington D.C.

The audit found that Milwaukee Public Schools' communications averaged a score of 1.3 on a scale of 0-3 (from "Not Performed" to "Optimized") - meaning that critical practices for success in communications are largely **ad-hoc**.

Kane grouped our major findings into four critical practice categories:

Communications Strategy
This category 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
This category 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
This category 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.

OBSERVATIONS
Communications Strategy

Category Score: 1.1

Expectations/Standards:

The marketing communications plan aligns with the organization's strategic plan and drives business goals. It contains measurable objectives, audience definitions and targeted key messages, aligned strategies based in research, realistic tactics, a detailed implementation timeline, defined roles/responsibilities and a plan for measurement and evaluation. Mini-plans or initiatives align with the annual plan.

Observations:

Milwaukee Public Schools has an opportunity to strengthen its communications, relationships with stakeholders and ability to achieve district goals by incorporating a strategic mindset through all of its communications efforts. **Communications strategy at MPS is ad hoc today**.

Significant staffing transitions in the district's communications department within the last five years have impacted the team's ability to be strategic. This turnover has led to gaps in strategic guidance, historical context, training, and availability or understanding of MPS communications processes. Regularly scheduled communications team planning meetings do not take place today.

Staff are not using research, goals and objectives to align communications work to achieve MPS' strategic goals. The current team is aware of some previously developed communications plans, content calendars and other assets, however, the documents available to them were not all created using a consistent process that the team can follow. Well organized digital files organizing historical communications are not in place today.

In addition, the audit showed that MPS' target audience groups are defined, but there is a need to better understand the decision making criteria for these groups and their communications preferences. Audience personas have not been developed. MPS' mission, vision and values are understood, but not used to guide communications.

Consistently communicating an organization's brand builds buy in, culture and engagement and helps the organization achieve its goals. MPS' mission, vision and values are foundational brand elements but are not widely used in communications and are absent from communications strategy. Key brand elements are also missing from the MPS brand guidelines, these are highlighted later in this report. When used to shape messaging, strategy and engagement; mission, vision and core values can improve recruitment and retention of teachers, staff and students and strengthen community relationships as well as the overall culture of an organization.

OBSERVATIONS
Communications Materials and Messages

Category Score: 1.6

Expectations/Standards:
Materials are developed in attractive, accessible and varied formats for maximum exposure and visibility. They follow and conform to documented standards and utilize key messages. Messages are specific, clear, persuasive, reflect audience values from personas, and include a solution or course of action.

Observations:
MPS' communications materials and messages are ad-hoc but nearly operational today. The district's website is comprehensive and content rich. Interviews for the audit with teachers, staff and prospective parents found these groups struggle to easily find the information they need. This results in parents calling schools directly to ask questions about information they should be able to find efficiently on the website. Taking additional time to call schools to find information is frustrating to parents and it puts additional work and stress on schools.

MPS has increased its social media presence in recent years, outperforming many of its competitors in the quantity of posts. MPS is posting daily about student success stories, staff highlights and upcoming events. Stakeholders have noticed MPS' dedication to creating more of a presence on social media where a key target audience (parents) turn to for information. Customized messaging and posting format diversification would help increase engagement. Currently, posts are created uniformly for all social media platforms. Social media best practices call for more customized content that leverages each platform's unique capabilities and will rate this content higher in users' feed.

Flyers, publications and promotional content samples provided also appear text heavy and lack visual consistency, some lack the MPS logo. They also incorporate real-life or relatable visual representation of MPS target audiences and many materials are translated in multiple languages. The 2021 return-to-school guide for parents was very comprehensive and easy to navigate.

The MPS branding guidelines document was recently updated. This document and the visual identity system are comprehensive. However, they lack key brand elements including brand personality, a brand positioning statement, brand promise, brand messaging, brand behaviors and audience needs. The fundamentals exist within the brand book, such as mission and vision statements, voice and tone, imagery and sample marketing messaging, but the communications team do not know where to access this or how to use the guide as a resource for implementation. Combined with audience research, they also guide the development of audience specific messages. These are critical elements for creative assets and content creation to ensure brand and language consistency and an overall polished, professional voice.

Category Score: 1.6

Expectations/Standards:

Internal and external communications are seen as an integral part of every organizational project or strategy. Communication channels, including media outlets, are chosen for their access and availability to target audiences. Their use is research-informed.

Observations:

When internal and external communication consistently relay messages from leaders, a common identity, experience and perception is created that connects people with the organization. **MPS' internal and external communications are ad-hoc and nearly operational today**.

Today, internal and external communications at MPS are managed by different departments that do not meet regularly. A cross departmental communications workgroup existed at one point, but is no longer functioning. Messages relayed externally are not always the same as those relayed internally. In some cases, internal audiences do not receive information before it's shared externally. One individual interviewed for the audit described internal communication as "siloed." For communications to be effective, departments must work together toward the same strategic goals and use the same language. When this happens, a unified brand image of the district is projected, strengthening the organization and its reputation.

Internal communications in place today include "Thursday Updates." This email communication is sent weekly to staff and teachers with information from the district along with positive stories and upcoming events.

External communications to families and broader communities include Friday email updates to families, Backpack Mail/Tuesday folders and occasional text, email and phone calls. Media relations play a significant role in the district's external communications. Earl Arms, interim director of communications and outreach for MPS receives approximately five requests from the media each day. As interim director,

managing these requests on top day to day to day work is challenging. Modern media list building and media tracking software is not available to his team, messaging documents and holding statements need updating. There is a strong desire by target audience members to hear more positive stories and more MPS success stories. These stories abound, but the communications team needs greater capacity in order to identify these stories, develop them and share them strategically.

Amplifying internal and external communications by setting goals and objectives, using strategy and delivering content important to target audience groups will be important for MPS. Consistently include MPS brand elements. One stakeholder interviewed for the audit stated, "Enrollment is going to be a serious issue in the coming years. If we don't start engaging more prospective parents, MPS will be in serious trouble. There is a lot of competition."

OBSERVATIONS
Reputation Risk Management

Category Score: 1

Expectations/Standards:
A workflow and processes are in place to facilitate the timely flow of information, those responsible understand their roles. The organization is operating proactively to manage reputation risk.

Observations:
Timely communications are universally expected from organizations and leaders today. The various layers of approval for communications at MPS today challenge the district's ability to respond to issues in a timely manner. This delay can impact the district's ability to control its message and can hurt its reputation. **Reputation Risk Management today is largely ad-hoc**.

The audit found that not having a clear process in place has delayed official communication from MPS to key members of its target audience including families and teachers. When delays happen during developing situations, parents and teachers learn information from one another or the media, and the media reach out to individuals who may not have accurate information. Misinformation can spread in these cases, causing confusion, frustration and possibly a change in the narrative that is inaccurate or damaging.

MPS will benefit from having a communications representative at the table when important decisions are being discussed. This individual will help assess stakeholder risk and identify and deploy strategies to mitigate those risks. Their knowledge of MPS' target audience and stakeholder groups provides context that can shape strategy, messaging, tactics and the distribution channels for information.

While MPS Superintendent Dr. Keith Posley and Interim Director of Communications and Outreach Earl Arms are the primary spokespeople for MPS, they have not received formal media training.

Minimizing reputational risk also includes having an updated crisis communication plan that the organization's leaders are trained on. The audit identified that MPS' communications staff are not sure if a documented plan exists with outlined approval processes and holding statement templates. The use of social listening can actively monitor MPS messages, key conversations, potential issues and competitive activity.

Risk management also includes proactively sharing positive stories and valuable information in line with the organization's strategic goals. MPS' communications team is increasingly sharing stories on MPS' website, in email and digital communications and through work with the media. This should also be done in person with MPS leaders interacting with key stakeholders and building these relationships. Individuals interviewed for the audit believe proactive storytelling efforts will strengthen MPS' reputation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Kane will work with Milwaukee Public Schools to further clarify and assist in prioritization of recommendations. Following is a summary of Kane's recommendations, though further tips can be found in the previous findings section.

1. **Use a strategic approach to develop communications plans and templates that are based on research, include goals and objectives and address MPS target audience groups.**
    - Ensure MPS' communications team understands the district's strategic goals and priorities.
    - Develop annual strategic marketing and communications plans.
    - Conduct primary research to learn about MPS' target audiences and their communications preferences. Consider incorporating the Net Promoter Score.
        - Establish <u>audience personas</u>.
    - Catalog a digital inventory of all marketing communication collateral material and copy, specifying the target audience and date of last update. Create folders for each year. This will help minimize reinventing the wheel during times of transition and provide easy to find historical context.
    - Set a goal to tell a story monthly from the "submit your story" form on the MPS website to establish a more consistent cadence of success stories highlighted in the media.
        - Showcase the skill of teachers in school communications, the relationships between the school and staff and the relationships between the staff and students.
    - Establish opportunities for internal and external communicators to collaborate on strategy, messaging and implementation.
        - Clarify the MPS brand positioning with the communications department and provide a training workshop with the team on how to implement the brand guidelines.

2. **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.
- ○ Establish goals for the timely dissemination of information and communications. These goals should be set on an annual basis and reviewed at the end of Q2 each year to evaluate the metrics of achieving this goal.
- ○ Create a workflow process for approving communications. Ensure that individuals who are accountable for reviews and approvals understand their role in the process and receive training, if needed. These individuals should also be familiar with MPS' overarching strategic plan, communications plan and goals.
- ○ Develop a comprehensive crisis communications plan for the district and its schools. Include holding statements, key messages and a template news release. Provide crisis communications training for those involved in crisis response.
- ○ Have a communications representative at the table during developing situations and discussions about decisions that will impact internal and external stakeholders.
- ○ Make it a priority to strengthen the communications team. Fill open positions, provide training and professional development.

3. **Identify select spokespeople and provide media training so they are able to communicate timely MPS information with the public and priority stakeholder audiences.**
- ○ Develop organizational key messaging rooted in the MPS brand and brand process.
- ○ Conduct a media training for all department leaders to help them understand how the media work and how to prepare to speak with the media if they have to. Invite members of the board to attend training.
- ○ Establish recurring media appearances for selected MPS spokespeople to appear routinely with various outlets to provide monthly updates about the district, its students and program highlights.
- ○ Develop a media one-pager with spokespeople and their areas of expertise and post it on the MPS newsroom page so media are familiar with the different subject matter experts.
- ○ Appoint a fully-dedicated media relations and content support team to handle both proactive and reactive media relations opportunities.

4. **Update the brand book and activate the MPS brand throughout the district and in the schools, in content, visuals and to build the MPS culture.**
   ○ Review the research used to create the brand guidelines document and update it to include missing elements.
   ○ Develop standardized template concepts for frequently created materials such as parent/student flyers, social media graphics, emails and outdoor advertising for staff to create more brand consistency across district content.
   ○ Conduct audience-driven research to determine the communication channels best to reach MPS' target audiences (e.g., social media, text message campaigns, email, phone, backpack flyers, etc.). Certain audiences are more likely to listen to specific radio stations and specific times of day, scroll through select social media channels.
   ○ Review the MPS mission, vision and core values and determine if they are up to date or in need of a refresh.
   ○ Make "bringing the values to life" an assignment for an individual in the organization. Consider developing a "Values Committee". Ideally, this committee would lead efforts to develop and recognize "on-brand behaviors" in staff, even the development of a recognition program.

5. **Provide user-friendly, and engaging digital experience on the MPS website, including a content strategy focused on positive stories that are shared across social channels.**
   ○ The MPS Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn social platforms have a significant amount of followers but the content being posted is the same across platforms. Use the audience personas to develop content strategies for these priority platforms and diversify the content based on audiences.
   ○ <u>TikTok is now the most popular social media platform</u>. Knowing MPS engages with and shares students' stories, this could be a useful platform for reaching more students and their parents. While Millennials and older audiences are more likely to use YouTube, Instagram and Facebook for product research, <u>30% of Gen Z social media users prefer using TikTok</u>
   ○ "Go live" with MPS spokespeople on social media to announce

school-wide news or to promote key school campaigns or initiatives.

- ○ Create more student and teacher video spotlights so that the individuals being featured share the post on their channels and help boost overall post engagement.
- ○ Update and maintain Dr.Superintendent Posley's LinkedIn profile in alignment with his presence on Twitter. In addition to utilizing Dr. Posley's existing Twitter account, establishing his professional LinkedIn page will help enhance his executive brand and should serve as a place to share MPS success stories and comment on industry news as well as engage with community and business leaders' announcements on the platform.

APPENDIX

Communications Strategy
This category evaluated the use of strategy in communications and planning, tools for communications, communications plans, training for communications team members, consistency of messaging across communications.

Category	Average Score	Common Themes
Communications planning process	1	- There is no dedicated communication planning process. - There are ad-hoc efforts to plan content for emails, social media and regularly scheduled communications to staff, teachers and families.
Strategy in communications planning	1	- There is not an annual strategic marketing and communications plan in place. Goals, objectives and KPI's are not used. - At the district level, the communications goals and outcomes are not always clear. At the school level, school-based communications goals and processes appear more clear to staff. - Each chief sets goals for their department at the beginning of the year but implementation and measurement of these goals vary and are not consistently tracked. - Communications is largely reactive.
Content strategy	1	There is a content calendar, though it is not always followed/implemented and not everyone is aware of how to use it.
Target audiences	1.3	- Target audience groups are identified, but audience personas do not exist. Communications are not strategically tailored to target audience groups. - There is interest in a targeted plan to engage with prospective parents so that MPS attracts and retains more students. - Competitor schools are recruiting students from MPS.

Communications planning templates	1	● Templates to guide planning and communications activities do not exist.
Mission, vision, core values	1.5	● These key brand elements are fairly well known by leadership, but they are not used strategically in communications planning and content.

Communications Materials and Messages

This category evaluated materials and content including brand standards, marketing materials, digital and social platforms and key messaging.

Category	Average Score	Common Themes *Additional insights can be found below.
Website	1.9	● The website is rich in content and information but challenging to navigate. ● Parents struggle to find information on the website so they call individual schools. ● Teachers struggle to find information on the website such as grading and performance metrics.
Social Media	2	● The channels are frequently updated but there's opportunity to incorporate more strategy into postings. ● There has been significant improvement on the social channels. ● MPS social media does a good job telling positive stories about MPS students and schools. ● The videographer has been proactive about capturing stories and content that help tell more positive stories on social media.
Brand platform (voice, tone, brand standards, audience definitions)	1	● Brand standards exist but staff are not sure how to use them. ● Key brand positioning elements are missing as noted in this report.
Use of brand standards	1.4	● Marketing materials and graphics do not always use brand standards and guidelines.

Category	Average Score	Common Themes
		• The brand architecture between MPS brand standards and school brand standards could be made more clear. • The Brand Book conflicts with guidelines in the Visual Identity System. • Template concepts are not provided in the graphic standards. • There is not a photography guide. • MPS logo placement in materials is sometimes inconsistent.
Organization key messages	1.2	• District core messages do not exist. • Key messaging is occasionally used for media and other interviews.
Newsletter	1.8	• Central Office's weekly Thursday updates are valuable and said to be read by staff. With so much content, it is hard for staff to sift through. • Weekly Friday parent updates are also appreciated and an important touch point with parents.
Translations	2	• Materials are translated in multiple languages.
Flyers and marketing materials	1.8	• Flyers incorporate real-life or relatable visual representation of MPS target audiences. • Most marketing materials are very content-heavy. • Calls to action can be made more clear.

External and Internal Communications
This category evaluated internal and external communications including coordination between these two functions, cadence of communications, use of key messaging and media relations.

Category	Average Score	Common Themes *Additional insights can be found below.
Internal communications	1.6	• Internal communications are siloed and layered. • Timeliness is an issue.

		- Communication materials are delayed in the approval process and sometimes are no longer relevant by the time they've received all the necessary approvals. - The communications department will benefit from a chief of communications role with someone who has extensive experience in the communications field. - There is currently no coordination between internal and external communications.
External communications	1.6	- External communications appear uncoordinated and are not rooted in strategic objectives. - Parents receive a lot of their information from social media or the local news. - There is a degree of micromanaging that slows down the process of communicating important announcements to stakeholders. - Timeliness and response time are issues.
Coordination	1	- Today there is no dedicated coordination between internal and external communications. - There are efforts to share positive news and developments.
Media relations policy	2	- Generally, there are policies and processes in place but a refresher would be helpful since there have been significant staffing transitions.
Media materials	1	- A template for media materials exists but there's not a well-defined process for saving and organizing content.
Media lists	2	- Media materials exist and remain up-to-date.
Identified success stories	1.8	- More success stories are being highlighted via social media but there's opportunity to share even more great content on the district's websites, newsletters and other social channels.

Holding statements	1.5	● High-level holding statements exist but only a select few use them
Media tracking system	1.5	● Media coverage is monitored but there is not a formal process for reviewing and measuring coverage
Boilerplate language	1.5	● Boilerplates exist but have not been updated in quite some time.
Media coverage	1.7	● Media coverage should be just as proactive as it is reactive in this climate. ● MPS is covered frequently but the stories are not always positive. It would be great to take the initiative on creating and generating more positive stories. ● Media should be leveraged as a way to increase enrollment.
Online newsroom	2	● News releases are regularly posted. ● MPS could increase its posting of positive news stories on its website so that current and prospective parents can view it.

Reputation Risk Management
This category evaluated preparedness and readiness to manage reputation risk during a developing or crisis situation.

| Category	Average Score	Common Themes *Additional insights can be found below.
Communications leadership is involved in critical decisions	0	● The Chief of Communications position is vacant with no interim in place. ● A member of the communications team is not involved in discussions about critical issues.
Online reputation management	1	● There is not a formal process for managing negative comments made online. ● Generally, headlines and stories about MPS online are negative but there is not a proactive strategy to identify and pitch positive stories to improve MPS' online

|		reputation.
Crisis communications plan	1	• Communications staff manage crisis communications frequently, but are not sure if a documented plan exists with outlined approval processes and holding statements and other necessary templates. • A crisis communications response team has not been identified or trained.
Trained spokespeople	1	• MPS leaders have not received media training. • There is not a process for identifying spokespeople for key MPS issue areas and other opportunities with the media. • It sometimes takes several days for MPS to do a media interview and by that point, the story is old news.
Use of key messaging	1	• Individuals who speak with the media on behalf of MPS know the organization's messaging points but they are not recorded/written down anywhere.
Regular use of surveys, research to measure reputation	0	• This is not done today.
Proactive story telling	1	• Proactive storytelling is done inconsistently. • Proactive storytelling to build specific reputational elements for MPS is not done today.

Digital Audit

Facebook

<u>Engagement</u>

From November 1, 2021 - January 31, 2022, the MPS Facebook page shared 27 albums, 24 links, 237 photos, and 2 videos. Overall, the page received more reactions, than comments or shares. By increasing the number of stories shared and tagging specific schools and partners involved, this can help increase the likelihood the posts are shared by page followers.
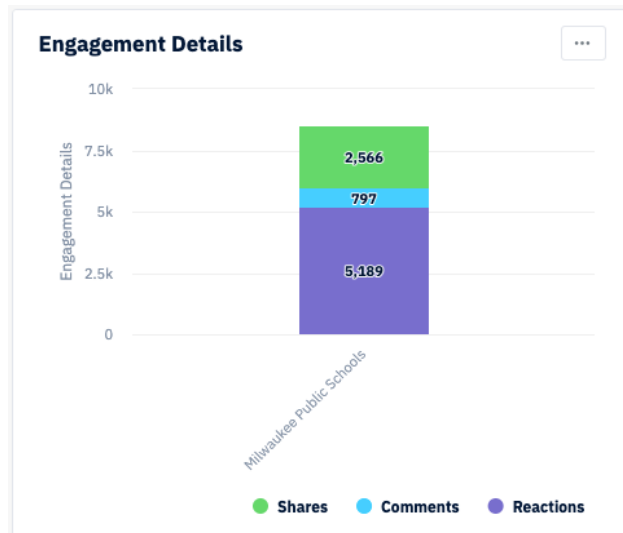
<u>Type of content</u>

[Photos and links received the most engagement](#), whereas most engagement ought to be coming from video. However, this may be accounted for by the low number of videos shared during this period. Since the end of January, knowing this can be a quieter time for schools given winter break, the number of videos posted has increased and boosted page engagement.

Engagement By Post Type
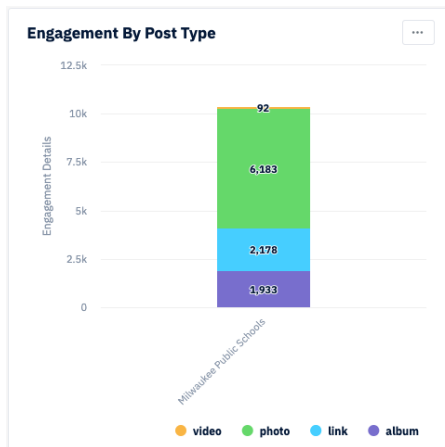
The top three most popular hashtags used on MPS social channels during this analysis were #MPSProud, #MPSProud Read #GivingTuesday. These hashtags are indicative of the timeframe in which the digital analysis was performed. Diversifying hashtags and using trending hashtags will continue to drive engagement for MPS channels.

Strengths
- The Facebook page usage is active and sophisticated, meaning that it is using the platform to tell engaging stories with text, images, and video on a regular basis.
- By January 31, 2022, there were over 31,500 followers.
- The platform shares a lot of photos and videos; more than its competitors - Nicolet and Pius XI Catholic High School.
- There is an active events section that students and parents are engaging with and checking in when they attend MPS events.

Opportunities
- The overall engagement on posts isn't very high considering the number of followers. Facebook has a large, captive audience, so consider doing more parent and student spotlights. This personal touch can encourage followers to share and comment on the posts.

- The content posted on Facebook is diverse, highlighting programs, teachers, news articles, updates from Dr. Posley and event details, but there is little to no difference regarding the content posted across platforms.
- Given the large number of followers, continue posting a variety of content - both fun and informative. Parents value the "Family Friday Newsletter" so posting a link to it weekly on Facebook is another great way to share timely information with MPS parents.
- Look for ways to diversify content formats and create more animated content, slideshows and albums to keep the content fresh.
- Milwaukee Public Schools makes regular use of hashtags that help to brand its posts. Use more popular hashtags to expand upon existing audiences.

LinkedIn

Strengths
- The LinkedIn Company Page is active and sophisticated.
- There are multiple posts per day, which is unusual for this platform but can help improve follower reach and engagement.
- There are over 300 jobs posted here.
- The majority of videos are uploaded natively, which improves the algorithms and gets in more followers' feeds.
- Life section with video and employer branding to aid recruitment
- By January 31, 2022, there were over 13,700 followers and over 6,250 employees, which is excellent.

Opportunities
- There is an opportunity to diversify this content from the other platforms. As LinkedIn is a more professional platform, consider posting thought leadership content and blogs from MPS leaders on this channel. Also, consider including more teacher and staff quotes about what they love about their job, knowing that LinkedIn can be a great recruitment tool and personal testimonies are valued by job seekers.
- While the page is active, a few sections need updating including the life section video needs a thumbnail and the life section references 2018 statistics could be updated.
- The majority of posts include an off-platform link. When possible, make sure to upload content natively; otherwise, LinkedIn will not promote posts as highly in followers' streams.

Instagram

Strengths
- By January 31, 2022, the platform had over 5,050 followers.
- New stories are posted almost daily and are engaging and visually appealing.

Opportunities
- The content exists but there's opportunity to create more video reels instead of just stories.
- The use of hashtags in posts is another way to boost engagement.
- Posts with polls, music, emojis and trending sounds dramatically increases engagement and boosts posts in followers' feeds on this platform.

Twitter

Strengths
- By January 31, 2022, there were over 14,000 followers.
- There were 371 tweets and 175 mentions between November 1 and January 31.

Opportunities
- Content would benefit if it's more diversified from other platforms. Twitter polls can be a great way to engage this audience.

YouTube

Strengths
- The page had over 11,300 views between November 1 and January 31 with over 196K views over the lifetime of the channel (started 2013).
- There were 80 subscribers during this period (2.38K subscribers total).
- There were 172 videos, 14 new videos published during this period.

Opportunities
- The "About" page is not fully branded and needs a cover image.
- There are more configuration opportunities available such as spotlighting a welcome video.
- The video thumbnails would benefit from more branding consistency.
- There were no trending videos during the time of the audit. Trending videos is a great way to boost page awareness.

**Competitor Observations**

Nicolet

- Facebook - Over 2,500 followers and 15,200 check-ins (students?)
- Instagram - Over 1,100 followers, 257 posts
- Average posting cadence - posting once or twice a day

Pius XI High School
- Facebook - 6,400 followers and 12,303 check-ins (students?)
- Instagram - 954 followers
- Average posting cadence - posting several times a week

Comparisons

Comparing Twitter profiles for all three entities shows that over time, Milwaukee Public Schools is far more active and has increased its number of tweets significantly throughout the year.

Total Tweets Posted for Milwaukeemps, Nicoletknights & Piusxihigh
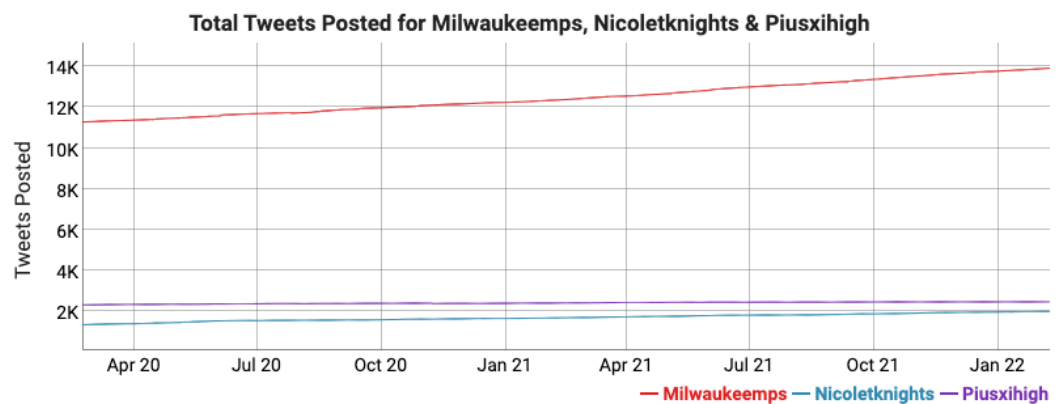
Next Steps

Kane will review these findings with Earl Arms, MPS interim director of communications and outreach, and other MPS leaders, including members of the board of directors.

The findings from this report will serve as the foundation for communications planning support that Kane will provide to MPS. The next phase of Kane's engagement will focus on goals setting, plan development and template creation to establish measurable departmental goals and objectives to achieve in six months, one year, two years and three years from now.