

Communications Study for the Coxsackie-Athens Central School District

Conducted by the
Questar III BOCES
Communications Service

Timeline

- 1/09 Set as Goal of Board of Education for 2009
- 3-4/09 Contacted prospective providers
- 5/09 Selected Questar III BOCES to do study
- 6/09 Held focus group with administrators
- 7/09 Received input from Board members
- 9-10/09 Held three school/community focus groups
- 11/09 Completed draft report
- 11/09 Reviewed report by the Supt.
- 12/09 Convened meeting of Supt. and providers
- 12/09 Issued final report

What is this Communications Study?

1. It is an independent review of the present communications program.
2. It is a "snapshot" of what is in place.
3. It is a perception study.
4. It differs from a Communications Plan.

Procedures and Processes

1. Focus groups representing various constituencies
2. Responses to four questions
3. Review of District's printed materials
4. Meeting with Superintendent of Schools

Focus Group Themes

1. Enhance communication and be more timely
2. Lack of person directly responsible for communications
3. Desire for year round communication
4. Concern about timeliness, accuracy, and conciseness of printed materials
5. Revamp website as a news source

Focus Group Themes (con't.)

6. Perceive Board meetings as not community friendly
7. Utilize internal communication on an insufficient basis
8. Engage constituency groups beyond parents and guardians
9. Communicate openly about decisions
10. Improve relationship with local media

Review of Communications Materials

1. Develop a universal design for all publications and use consistent fonts
2. Put important information first and use concise language
3. Focus on academic successes and challenges
4. Use simple language and review copy for errors
5. Decrease letters from administrators
6. Use photographs and short stories

Recommendations and Initial Responses

Recommendations

1. Create a communications plan
2. Dedicate one person to communications program
3. Ensure consistent and frequent internal communications
4. Develop concise, timely, and accurate communications
5. Engage community in meaningful dialogue

Initial District Responses

1. Consider at Board retreat
2. Review internal staffing duties and budgetary priorities
3. Review distribution of internal documents and expand intranet
4. Focus immediately on this recommendation (e.g., newsletter for referendum)
5. Build on efforts in place (e.g., C-A Star Award, student involvement with Sr. Citizens, et al.)

Recommendations and Initial Responses (con't.)

Recommendations

6. Expand/improve website
7. Expand new technologies and communications
8. Provide communications training to admin.
9. Devise a consistent look for C-A communications
10. Consider a more welcoming format for Board meetings
11. Cultivate relationships with news and local news media

Initial District Responses

6. Con't. Review by Tech. Comm.
7. Expand use of Synervoice and reintroduce C-A Update
8. Explore training options
9. Develop and implement "branding" of publications
10. Consider initially at Board retreat
11. Increase use of press releases and increase personal contact

Summary

There are eleven recommendations within this Communications Study.

- A number of recommendations could be implemented in the relative short term.

- Other recommendations would take considerable time, effort, and funding to implement.

Conclusion

The Coxsackie – Athens Central School District is doing some good things in the way of communication.

The District needs to:

- publicize widely the communication strategies which are in place (e.g., availability in advance of Board agendas on the web page) and
- build on those strategies to enhance communication with the goal of the **Coxsackie – Athens Central School District being the best source of information about the District.**