

Stakeholder Engagement

Presentation to the Board of Directors Seattle Public Schools

Pyramid Communications

May 7, 2008



What We Are Covering Today:



- I. Research Methods**
- II. Key Findings**
- III. Recommendations**
- IV. Next Steps**

Pyramid developed engagement strategies while also supporting SPS outreach activities

Scope of Work

- Pyramid was initially retained by SPS to develop and help implement outreach activities around the strategic plan
- McKinsey & Company was initially retained to conduct a diagnostic for the entire plan, with 100+ interviews with a range of stakeholders serving as a key component of their research
- SPS determined that engagement strategies were best developed by a firm with a background in public education and in the Seattle community; Pyramid was asked to do this work
- McKinsey was directed to focus on other portions of the plan



We examined existing analysis of SPS and supplemented it with our own research

Methodology

- Reviewed Broad communications audit and other past research
- Reviewed McKinsey analysis about SPS
- Researched stakeholder engagement practices at six school districts outside of Seattle:
 - New York City Department of Education
 - Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
 - Portland Public Schools
 - Oakland Unified School District
 - Spokane Public Schools
 - Boston Public Schools
- Examined current SPS communications and engagement strategies



We then sought to better understand what is happening at SPS and in Seattle

Methodology

- Initiated outreach and conversations with community leaders
- Conducted an audit of all SPS media coverage and media related activities, comparing 2006 and 2007
- Collaborated with SPS to conduct an online survey of all instructional staff
- Supplemented all our work with knowledge based on Pyramid's direct experience in the public education field



Our discovery centered on how to build relationships with a range of audiences

Key Audiences

Internal

- Students
- Teachers, other educators and school-based staff
- Principals and other school leaders
- Central office staff and other district professionals
- School board

External

- Families
- Civic, business and community leaders
- General public

May 7, 2008



We also examined tools and methods used to communicate and engage with these groups

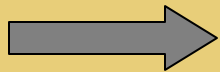
Tools and Methods for Engagement

- District website
- Newsletters/publications
- Television
- Surveys
- Call-systems
- Student tracking
- Multilingual options
- Media
- Strategic plan rollout
- Measurement of progress
- Transparency of resources



What We Are Covering Today:

I. Research Methods



II. Key Findings

III. Recommendations

IV. Next Steps

Good engagement for schools is based on five key approaches

Key Findings - Topics

- Engaging families
- Community outreach and engaging community leaders
- Engaging staff
- Partnering with community organizations and businesses
- Strengthening public confidence and awareness



We are recommending specific tools and strategies to support this approach

Outcome: All families support district efforts to provide students an excellent education

Key Findings: Engaging Families

- There is no easy answer to provide information to all families.
- SPS' School-Family Partnership Plan is an important family engagement tool that is based in best practices, but it is not focused on implementation.
- SPS currently does not evaluate whether or not current engagement practices are effective.



Outcome: Community leaders are informed about the district and support its vision

Key Findings: Engaging Community Leaders

- SPS community engagement efforts have been diligent during the current strategic plan process but these efforts need to be expanded long-term to improve relationships with key community leaders.



Outcome: All staff are well informed about the district and feel heard by key SPS leaders

Key Findings: Engaging Staff

- Successful communication is enhanced if internal staff are informed and engaged prior to the general public and there have been clear efforts to do so beginning with the first peer review commissioned by the CAO and throughout the SPS strategic planning process.
- Opinion surveys are the most frequently used method to gather information in other school districts but SPS's use is currently limited.



Outcome: Outside partners provide services that contribute to the success of every student

Key Findings: Partnering with Outside Organizations

- Portland Schools Foundation and Oakland's East Bay Foundation represent good examples of strong and positive partnerships with school districts and should be looked at for effectively engaging the business and civic community.



Outcome: Broad community knows about and appreciates the progress made by the district

Key Findings: Strengthening Public Confidence

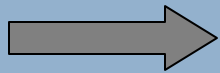
- The communications staff at SPS is understaffed and frequently overwhelmed by emergent internal communications demands and outside requests.
- Public affairs staff has taken important steps in the last year to initiate media outreach and coordinate internal communications on sensitive information. These efforts are equal, and in some cases better, than other comparable districts.
- There is confusion over multiple taglines, missions and visions. Other districts have been successful by using universal messaging.
- A number of school districts have used their strategic plan as a prominent roadmap for everything they do.
- The SPS website needs major functional improvements to become more user-friendly and “customer service”-oriented.



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I. Research Methods

II. Key Findings



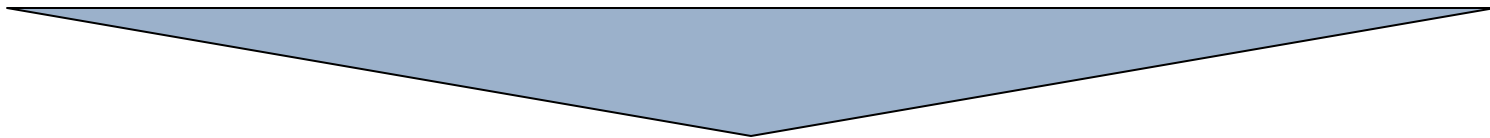
III. Recommendations

IV. Next Steps

Several key factors were considered in developing these recommendations

Criteria for Recommendations

- Sustainable
- High impact
- Transparent and clear
- Draws on community expertise
- Focused/prioritized
- Students/families are the core theme



SPS should continue to use these criteria to determine the relative merit of activities as they prioritize further

We recommend eight key activities to be initiated in this first 15-24 months

Key Recommendations

- Staff should formalize and implement engagement protocols system-wide
- Properly resource the proposed school-family partnership plan to ensure its implementation
- Continue efforts to treat staff as key internal stakeholders, informing them of district decisions prior to broad publication
- Conduct periodic surveys to accept feedback, acknowledging and using the input in district decisionmaking



We recommend eight key activities to be initiated in this first 15-24 months

Key Recommendations (Continued)

- Collaborate more closely with the Alliance for Education, allowing this organization to play a more central and integral role in the future success of our schools
- Hire an additional full-time, senior-level staffer dedicated exclusively to external affairs and realign the public affairs department to ensure this position is separate from internal communication
- Utilize the strategic plan as a roadmap for success
- Overhaul the look and feel of the SPS website



Work to reach all families, but particularly those most often not engaged

Recommendations: Engaging Families

- **Staff should formalize and implement engagement protocols system-wide.
- **Properly resource the proposed school-family partnership plan to ensure its implementation
- Commit to high quality communications for every contact between families and key school staff
- Strengthen relationships with established community organizations (faith and cultural) to gain access across cultural barriers
- Develop a handbook in multiple languages with all useful and necessary information for families
- Increase utilization of *The Source* with better support and training.



Develop and maintain an ongoing dialogue with key community leaders

Recommendations: Engaging Community Leaders

- Build on the communication channel that was expanded during the strategic planning process to reach more key community, business and civic leaders
- Convene periodic gatherings of community, business and civic leaders, hosted by a group such as the Alliance for Education.



Maintain regular, direct contact between the superintendent and all SPS staff

Recommendations: Engaging Staff

- **Continue efforts to treat staff as key internal stakeholders, informing them of district decisions prior to broad publication
- **Conduct periodic surveys to accept feedback, acknowledging and using the input in district decisionmaking
- Commit to high quality communication between and among staff.
 - Continue school visits and informal meetings with the superintendent and executive management team members
 - Build on tradition of superintendent and executive management team members meeting with other staff.



Work closely with the Alliance for Education and develop other key strategic partnerships

Recommendations: Partnering with Outside Organizations

- **Collaborate more closely with the Alliance for Education, allowing this organization to play a more central and integral role in supporting our schools
- Solicit business and other partners for loaned staff
- Strengthen relationships with the Mayor and City Council.



Be more proactive with the media, be clear and consistent, and better utilize the website

Recommendations: Strengthening Public Confidence

- **Hire an additional full-time, senior-level staffer dedicated exclusively to external affairs and realign the public affairs department to ensure this position is separate from internal communication
- Implement a media plan that anticipates and best handles immediate needs and allows more time for outreach and executing a blog strategy.
- Continue to implement plans to train SPS staff in crisis communications.
- Keep language simple and understandable.



Be more proactive with the media, be clear and consistent and better utilize the website

Recommendations: Strengthening Public Confidence (Continued)

- Determine an agreed upon tagline, mission and vision statement
- **Utilize the strategic plan as a roadmap for success
- **Overhaul the look and feel of the SPS website
- Dedicate a content manager and technical manager to ongoing maintenance of the website.



**Many more findings and
recommendations are included in the
engagement discovery report**

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Recommendations have been presented, discussed and modified based on feedback

Initial Input

Findings and recommendations for stakeholder engagement have been presented to several key groups for initial feedback

- Board workshops and retreats
- Superintendent and key SPS staff
- Local philanthropists and business leaders
- Key education organization leaders
- SPS School-Family Partnership Advisory Committee

Additional engagement will allow other stakeholders to help further shape this plan

Next Steps

- School board meetings - May 7, 21 and June 4
- Communities and Parents for Public Schools (CPPS) - May 8
- Community meeting - May 14, 15 and 20
- Seattle Council PTSA - May 19
- Business Leader Small Get Togethers - May 23, 29 and June 3
- Community Connectors Briefing - June 2
- Ongoing engagement, including web postings, email and e-newsletters



Pyramid will work with SPS to develop the stakeholder engagement portion of the strategic plan

Stakeholder Engagement

- Gather input through outreach activities on how to improve stakeholder engagement
- Continue to collaborate with SPS on the development of the stakeholder engagement portion of the strategic plan
- Submit input summary and analysis of how feedback supports and/or differs from recommendations in the engagement discovery report
- Refine proposed strategies for near term implementation, including a district-wide engagement protocol

Questions/Discussion

