

## **District U-46 Communications/ Public Relations Plan for 1991-92**

### **Communications Policy:**

The Board of Education and administration of District U-46 have a long-standing and deep-seated commitment to open, honest communication. The depth of this commitment is clearly illustrated in district policies. Section K of the Board of Education's Policy Manual contains goals which guide the procedures and practices of the School-Community Relations office. Section KA of the Board Policy Manual reads as follows:

"The success of District U-46's educational program depends on strong support from the residents of the communities we serve. Members of the Board of Education and district employees shall maintain channels of communication with the citizens of School District U-46 through a systematic, two-way communications effort.

The goals of the school/community relations effort shall be:

- a. To establish procedures that will increase articulation and understanding among district personnel.
- b. To facilitate a program by which district personnel will become aware and efficiently utilize various means of communication with the community.
- c. To encourage a climate which is open for positive change.
- d. To encourage district staff to become involved in community activities.
- e. To disseminate information throughout the school/community.
- f. To facilitate programs by which the community will become aware of and efficiently utilize various means of communication with the district.
- g. To establish methods which provide for school/community involvement in educational concerns.
- h. To actively seek community participation in the local schools and attendance areas.

- i. To encourage cooperative participation between community members and district staff to work with the district on special projects.
- j. To solicit information valuable to the district from the community and other informed sources.
- k. To prepare an ongoing plan for evaluating all phases of school/community relations."

## **What will we communicate?**

Several communications themes will be integrated into our communications efforts.

### **Communications Theme # 1:**

**We are delivering quality educational services.**

- Our graduates are successfully competing for admission to the finest colleges and universities in the country.
- We have numerous success stories of student and staff achievements and awards.

### **Communications Theme # 2:**

**Our goal is that all students will graduate from District U-46 with internationally competitive skills.**

- We have developed specific Learning Objectives in Fine Arts, Mathematics, Reading/Language Arts, Physical Education/Health, Social Studies and Science.
- We assess student performance annually.
- We have decreased high school truancies and improved attendance.

### **Communications Theme # 3:**

**Based on input from parents and from our staff, we are improving our educational program.**

- We re-implemented the elementary school art program.
- We improved our middle school and high school libraries.
- We increased building budgets for all schools.
- We structured many opportunities for parent and staff involvement in decision-making.

### **Communications Theme # 4:**

**We are adapting to meet the needs of our growing and changing student population.**

- We hired about 135 additional teachers for 1991-92.
- We are providing much-needed classroom space through a well-planned construction program.
- We need to begin modernizing some of our facilities.
- We are increasing opportunities for at-risk students.
- We responded to the needs of our communities by providing Project SAFE, a program for latch-key students, at seven schools.

## **Communications Theme # 5:**

### **We are being fiscally responsible and we are using tax dollars efficiently.**

- We are operating on a balanced budget.
- Our operating cost per pupil remains below the state average.
- We have taken steps to provide balance between residential and commercial/industrial growth.
- Our finances are still largely dependent on the level of funding the state provides for public education.

## **With whom will we communicate?**

We attempt to reach a variety of publics through our communication efforts. Here are the major "publics" with whom we will communicate during 1991-92:

### **Business Leaders**

Our business leader mailing list includes the President/CEO of most major industries located in the school district. The mailing list also includes major industries located in neighboring communities outside District U-46 boundaries. In addition, the business leader mailing list includes representatives of the Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park and Streamwood Chambers of Commerce. All people on the business leader list receive the "Business/Industry Newsletter."

### **Community Leaders**

We use a broad definition of community leader. Our community leader mailing list includes:

- elected municipal officials (such as Mayors/Village Presidents, City Council members and Village Trustees);
- appointed municipal officials (City/Village Managers, Police and Fire Chiefs, etc.);
- library district and park district representatives
- community organization presidents (Kiwanis, Jaycees, Rotary; AAUW, Junior Women's Club, Centro de Informacion, etc.)
- state legislators as well as Congressional representatives serving District U-46 communities

All of these community leaders will receive the "Key Communicator Newsletter."

### **Parents**

We communicate with parents in several ways. Much of the communication comes when parents participate in the Citizens' Advisory Council, parent/teacher organizations and the Parent Councils. All CAC members, PTA/PTO officers and Parent Council members will receive direct communication through the "Key Communicator Newsletter." The Community Relations Office also offers assistance to Principals to facilitate building-level efforts to communicate with parents.

## Realtors

Our realty mailing list began eight years ago as a simple list of member offices from the Elgin Area Association of Realtors plus non-member offices located in District U-46. Over the years, the realty mailing list has more than tripled to include realty offices located in Arlington Heights, Bloomingdale, Elk Grove Village, Geneva, Glen Ellyn, Hoffman Estates, Palatine, Rolling Meadows, Roselle, Schaumburg, St. Charles, West Dundee and Wheaton. We also have developers on our realty mailing list including representatives from Centex, Kimball Hill, Hoffman Homes, Pulte and The Zale Group.

All people on the realty mailing list receive the Realty Newsletter and are invited to our Realty Seminars. Last spring, more than 100 realtors participated in Realty Seminars.

## Senior Citizens

We maintain a sizeable mailing list of senior citizens composed of people who have signed-up for our Gold Card Club. This mailing list is used for the "Gold Card Club Newsletter" and for mailing invitations to periodic special events for senior citizens.

## Staff Members

Most communication with staff members takes place at the building/departmental level. The primary central office initiatives for communicating with staff members are the *Staff Bulletin*, published monthly, and *U-46 Staff News Update*, published as needed. This communication is supplemented by the Superintendent's building visits and other face-to-face communication efforts.

# Methods of Communication:

The Communications/Public Relations plan will use a variety of communication methods and media outlets including...

**Shotgun Communication:** Shotgun communication methods attempt to reach everyone with a universal message. Examples would be news releases and the *Your Schools* community newsletter. Shotgun communication methods help raise public awareness but do little to change attitudes.

**Targeted Communication:** "Targeting" directs specific communication activities to particular audiences. Targeted communications recognize that each audience filters its impression of the school district through that audience's unique opinions and biases. Through targeted communication, it is possible to address the specific concerns of a particular group in a succinct, professional manner. Examples include the targeted newsletters and the Realty Seminars.

**Two-Way Communication:** Face-to-face communication is essential. Communications research clearly shows that people quickly forget much of what they read but remember much of what they experience. Accordingly, the PR plan contains several two-way communication activities designed to provide an opportunity for face-to-face communication with staff members and our various publics as well as to invite feedback and input from these people. Examples include Realty Seminars, Citizens' Advisory Council meetings and Board/Staff Meetings.

**One Way Communication:** Although written communication is not as effective as face-to-face communication, news releases, newsletters and brochures are still important components of the communications mix. Thus the communications plan includes many newsletters, brochures and fact sheets designed to compliment the face-to-face activities. The plan uses broadcast media to supplement the print media activities.

## **Communication Objectives and Activities for 1991-92**

(Objective numbers are listed for reference only. The objectives are considered to be of equal priority.)

### **OBJECTIVE # 1:**

**Strengthen public confidence in School District U-46.**

#### **ACTIVITIES...**

- 1.1 Publish "Your Schools" semi-annually
  - 1.1.1 February 1992
  - 1.1.2 May 1992
- 1.2 Plan and conduct annual random telephone survey of District U-46 residents (not presently budgeted)
- 1.3 Maintain close relationship with Citizens' Advisory Council
  - 1.3.1 meet with Exec. Comm. to assist with planning
  - 1.3.2 in consultation with Executive Committee, schedule speakers and/or programs for monthly meetings
  - 1.3.3 revise membership recruitment brochure annually
- 1.4 Publish "Key Communicator Newsletter" monthly
- 1.5 Publish state-mandated "School Report Cards"
- 1.6 Continue utilization of WRMN radio through Dr. Wiggall's interviews the morning after Board meetings and through weekly events updates
- 1.7 Produce Cable TV show on a pilot basis
- 1.8 Demonstrate employee concern for the U-46 communities by coordinating the employee United Way campaign

## **OBJECTIVE # 2:**

**Maintain positive, professional relationship with news media.**

### **ACTIVITIES...**

- 2.1 Respond promptly to media inquiries
- 2.2 Prepare news releases in a timely fashion
- 2.3 Notify media of feature story and photo ideas
- 2.4 Schedule periodic meetings with newspaper editors/reporters to evaluate media relations efforts
- 2.5 Maintain regular telephone contact with editors/reporters between periodic meetings

## **OBJECTIVE # 3:**

**Enhance the business community's understanding of the educational programs of School District U-46.**

### **ACTIVITIES...**

- 3.1 Publish Business/Industry Newsletter quarterly
- 3.2 In coordination with Coordinator of School/Business Partnerships, develop targeted communication activities for businesses which have partnerships with District U-46 schools.
- 3.3 Participate in Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce's "Elgin Expo"

## **OBJECTIVE # 4:**

**Improve communication with parents and encourage parent involvement with our schools.**

### **ACTIVITIES...**

- 4.1 Conduct workshop for principals on how to improve the appearance and readability of building-level newsletters for parents
- 4.2 Upon request, provide individual consultation regarding building newsletters
- 4.3 Provide copy to principals suitable for inclusion in building newsletters
- 4.4 Provide support for CAC's Parent Group Network

## **OBJECTIVE # 5:**

**Provide realty offices and developers with up-to-date information to assist in the marketing of properties located in District U-46.**

### **ACTIVITIES...**

- 5.1 Continue Realty Seminars with special emphasis on major developers
- 5.2 Publish "Realty Newsletter" quarterly
- 5.3 Produce/revise printed materials which will assist realty agents in selling homes located in District U-46
  - 5.3.1 "Successful graduates" booklet
  - 5.3.2 "Who Can I Call?" brochure
  - 5.3.3 "A Tradition of Academic Excellence" fact sheet

## **OBJECTIVE # 6:**

**Develop and implement activities which will enhance employee communication and provide recognition for employees.**

### **ACTIVITIES...**

- 6.1 Publish "Staff Bulletin" monthly
- 6.2 Publish "Staff News Updates" as needed to supplement "Staff Bulletin"
- 6.3 Distribute "Press Digest" to schools to inform staff members of the nature and extent of newspaper coverage of the district and our schools
- 6.4 In cooperation with employee groups, plan and conduct annual employee survey (not presently budgeted).
- 6.5 In cooperation with employee groups, conduct focus groups with representative panels of employees (not presently budgeted).
- 6.6 Place suggestion boxes in all schools and establish a process for timely follow-through on suggestions and/or concerns which are placed in the suggestion boxes.
- 6.7 Provide employees in each school an opportunity to meet and speak with the Superintendent
  - 6.7.1 classroom visits by the Superintendent
  - 6.7.2 voluntary after-school staff meetings hosted by the Superintendent
  - 6.7.3 Superintendent's Open Door Coffees
  - 6.7.4 Quarterly meetings of Superintendent and all administrators
- 6.8 Highlight notable accomplishments of staff members
  - 6.8.1 articles in *Staff Bulletin*
  - 6.8.2 *Accent on Achievement* presentations at Board mtgs.
  - 6.8.3 participation in county and state awards programs
  - 6.8.4 "Employee of the Month" program

6.9 Plan and implement annual Board of Education "Recognition & Retirement Luncheon" for 25-year employees and retirees

6.10 Plan and implement annual Board of Education reception for staff members who have contributed to major district-wide committees.

6.11 Cooperate with Personnel office to provide orientation materials for new teachers.

## **OBJECTIVE # 7:**

**Help senior citizens feel more a part of the school community.**

### **ACTIVITIES...**

7.1 publish Gold Card Club newsletter (with schedule of activities) quarterly

7.2 sponsor special lectures/seminars for Gold Card Club members

7.3 Publish U-46 placemats for placement in local restaurants