

Communications and Engagement Strategies

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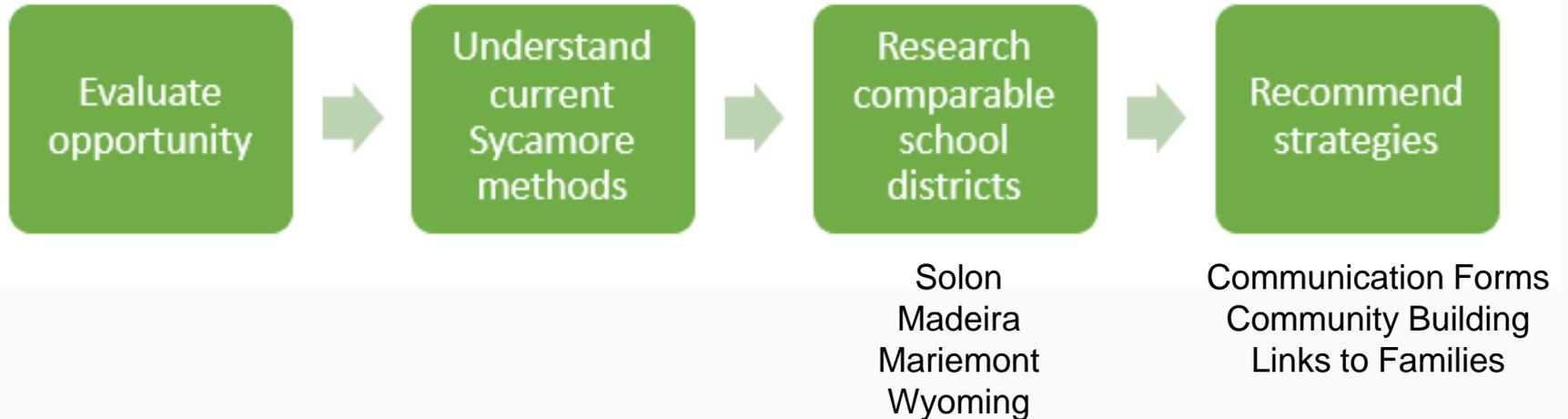


Objective: Essential Questions

How do we **better connect with senior citizens, empty nesters, and private school families?**

- What is the preferred method of communication for non-parent residents?
- How do other districts engage residents who do not send students to schools?

Methodology



Opportunity - District Demographics

Oct 2016 Levy Data: (12411 households with at least 1 registered voter):

Households with...	Number	Percentage
at least 1 person over 65 years old	4162	34
private school student	393	3

2011 - 2012 SAC Project: School Choice: **85% of those are in religious schools**

What Sycamore is doing now...

1. **Quality Profile** - emailed to all Sycamore families as well as to Chambers, cities and other business organizations in the area. Link also provided on school website. 1,000 print copies were also distributed throughout the district in waiting rooms, etc. <http://www.sycamoreschools.org/Page/2894>
2. **District monthly newsletters (S'more)**. E-mailed to Sycamore families monthly. There is a link on the school website for any residents to sign up to receive these monthly. City newsletters and the NE Suburban Life have also been sent “blurbs” to inform residents that they can sign up for these monthly updates via e-mails. <https://www.smore.com/mx6w9-sycamore-community-schools>

What Sycamore is doing now...

3. **Social media** presence, including:
 - Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/sycamoreschools/>
 - Twitter <https://twitter.com/SycamoreSchools>
 - YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSte160Qx-RfMilMb90DChQ>
 - Instagram account (in process)
 - NEW! Purchasing low-cost targeted facebook ads.
4. **Media presence**, including local television, newspaper, magazines, and press releases - various “good news” is provided to the media to publish.

What Sycamore is doing now...

5. **Mailings** -- as needed (i.e. targeted mailing for kindergarten registration). NEW this year -- a holiday mailing to private school families in the district.
6. **Links on other websites** - General school information and/or links to the school website on the City of Blue Ash, City of Montgomery, and Symmes Township websites.
7. **Gold Cards** - available to residents that are 62 or older. These cards offer free admission to concerts, plays, and athletic events. Link on the school website and ran an ad in the NE Suburban Press advertising the cards.

<http://www.sycamoreschools.org/domain/767>

Comparing Communication Methods

- Sycamore uses similar methods as other districts
- Strengths are in green
- Opportunities are in yellow

	Sycamore	Solon	Madeira	Mariemont	Wyoming
Quality Profile	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Newsletters	Monthly / Weekly	3x/year	Weekly	semi-annual	Monthly
Social Media	Y	#1 communication form	Y	Y	Y
Community 'club'	SAC	Key Communicators Group	N	Warrior Club (targeted communication)	N
Mailings	As needed (e.g. levy) Holiday mailing	3x/year	When quality profile done	semi-annual	3x/year (quality profile, district calendar, etc)
Special part of website	Y	Y	N	N	Y (prospective families)
Links from city websites	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Printed calendar	Sycamore Schools Families	N	All residents	N	All residents
Sr Citizen Connection	JHS (annual visit) Gold cards	Free events for Senior	Semi-annual coffee with SI Free theater shows 2x/year		
Media Presence	Y (via news)	Solon TV			
Surveys	Occasional	Y		Y	Occasional (phone, focus groups)

Recommendations: Forms of Communication

Sycamore's Website:

- Needs to be easily accessible and link-friendly
- Have a special tab for the Community Residents
- Develop the website as “the hub” to find out about key events that are non-academic/non-administrative. For example: athletics or fine arts (theater, music, arts)

Periodic Mailings with upcoming events...theater, music programs, athletic games.

Recommendations: Forms of Communication

Media Presence

- Provide a link for recorded performances and athletic events.
- This could be a student led group at high school.
 - Technology Class or Digital Club
- Needs to be marketed to all community residents (children or not)



Recommendations: Community Building

- **Evaluate the possibility of opening school facilities to the public.**
 - Theater stage, gyms, and meeting spaces
 - Consider a link on Sycamore website to increase visibility/traffic
- **Community Night:**
 - Invite the community to a music performance or athletic events 2-3 times a year
 - Target specific groups: seniors, new families to community, families with young children, local businesses

Recommendations: Community Building

Mobile Classroom

- STEAM Mobile with project based activities for K-6
- Homework Help after school hours in 3 locations
- Going to district and community events
- Community members could help facilitate at events or mentor students

Continue to use the **Sycamore Banners** to tie the community and schools...look for opportunities to expand.

Recommendations: Links to Families

Sycamore Communicators Group

- Possibly set-up a key contact person in each school (possibly a person in each PTO) that has knowledge of community partnerships. Liaison to Mallory so that if there is a need for certain community member help, etc. that information can be sent out.
- Utilizing the SAC in other capacities.
- Input for ideas and to communicate ideas out into the community.

Sycamore Welcome Packet to new residents

- Magnets with key phone numbers and website
- Free tickets to an athletic or fine arts event

Recommendations

Easy to find information when you need it

Improve website, mailings, and media

School district that is for every family

Open up schools (e.g. 'community nights')

Leverage STEAMobile

Connect with each family

Build an advocate network

Connect with all new families

Questions

What are other districts doing...

Madeira City Schools

Diane Nichols, Director of Public Relations

After a Quality Profile is completed, a postcard is sent to every address in Madeira. It includes highlights and a QR code to access the complete report on their website.

- Through the city's newsletter and their list serves, a printed district calendar is offered to any interested resident who doesn't have children in Madeira schools.

What are other districts doing...

- The district has a list serve, that residents can subscribe to, that is separate from the specific schools and alumni. They mainly receive the Blue and Gold Newsletter that is sent out electronically almost every week.
- Twice a year Madeira City Schools holds a Superintendent's Senior Citizen coffee. They invite senior citizens, retirees and anyone who considers themselves a senior citizen to hear what's going on in the district over free coffee and scones at a local coffee shop or school.
- Twice a year, Madeira City Schools invites local senior citizens to a free performance of their Theatre Arts productions. An honorary Leading Lady and Leading Man are selected who ride as honored guests in the the Homecoming parade.

What are other districts doing...

Mariemont City Schools

Josephine McKenrick, Director of Communications

- Warrior Club
 - implemented a couple of years ago to connect specifically with non-parent residents who are empty nesters and/or seniors
 - members receive:
 1. a monthly email and/or phone call about upcoming activities
 2. a newsletter specific to them twice a year
 3. they host a breakfast for them once a year
- Warrior Club website: <http://www.mariemontschools.org/about/Warrior-Club.cfm>

What are other districts doing...

- Community survey and/or a focus groups
 - The only time in the recent past was a community survey with Paul Fallon before their last levy.
- Annually, sends **all** residents: two newsletters, an annual report, and the quality profile. This year, an invitation to the annual State of the Schools was also sent.
- Mariemont City School's website does **not** have an area that is geared towards non-parent residents. Though, they have a “community education” and “moving to the district” page under the “about” tab.

What are other districts doing...

Wyoming City Schools

Suzy Henke, Director of Communications

1. Hard mailing to all residents about 3 times a year as follows:

- Quality Profile
- District Calendar mailed in the summer
- Currently, they partner with the city on a portion of their mailer. The school typically provides about 4 to 6 pages of the material they refer to as “Know Your Schools”. This replaced a school mailer that went to all residents called “Know your Schools” which was 2 to 6 pages long and probably went out about quarterly.

What are other districts doing...

Surveys used periodically, including:

- A survey prior to a bond levy for the schools
- A phone survey conducted by an outside company using a representative sample of the residents (approx. 1/3 were residents with students and the other 2/3 were other community members).

COSTLY!

The school information in the city mailer is getting “buried” – a much smaller percentage of people were getting information from the “Know Your Schools” section in the mailer than in previous surveys when Wyoming mailed this information directly.

- Electronic survey to residents with students only (over 500 responded). The majority of the residents cited direct e-mail and blogs by the school principals as the main information source.

What are other districts doing...

The only Focus Group they used pertained to a prior bond levy to address the school buildings.

Direct mail is Wyoming's most successful source today in reaching residents without students (empty nesters and seniors).

School Website – Has a section for prospective students.

City of Wyoming Website - There is limited information, but does include a link to view the Quality Profile.

Other Committees – Wyoming most likely will have a levy on the ballot later this year. As such, similar to Sycamore, they will utilize some sort of “Yes” Committee. They also have a Citizens Advisory Committee that reports to the Board. The members are represented by all of the voting precincts and have 2 year terms. This Committee is used to get direct feedback from the Community; however, it is believed to only include residents with students in the district.

What are other districts doing...

Solon School District Tamara Strom has been in the position since 2002.

Goal of the district is to keep everyone in the community involved and updated.

Any publication will have the website link or **TV Channel** for the school.

Hard mail to all residents and businesses about 3 times a year.

- Newsletters focus on large scale issues...for example, tax issues

Social Media found to be the #1 preferred mode to receive communication.

Secondary Modes of Communication is the Website

- Build the bank of members each year
- Always try to connect people back to the social media

What are other districts doing...

- Key Communicators Group
 - The PR Director carefully selects the members of the group.
 - Members have been around and are good volunteers who are able to get the message out...They are the VOICE.
 - Emails are distributed on key topics for the community to be aware of and to get a jump start on communications.
 - Economic Standards Report
 - State Standards
 - Digital Citizenship and Technology
 - No meetings...difficult to plan for so emails are best way to push information out.

What are other districts doing...

- Leadership of Parent Groups
 - PR Director attends meetings to mention key topics to be aware of.
 - Booster Meetings for Athletics, Music, and Academic groups
 - PTO meetings once a month
- Leadership person at the Chamber of Commerce is contacted/involved.
- Have resources available all the time...not just during a levy. The Levy Committee is continuously involved to avoid having to re-engage members.
- PR Director meets with all new families in the district before families can visit the school for a tour/meeting.

Solon Education TV

- Stream information for all programs K-12
- K-8 will need a username and password to have access.
- Pre-recorded programs are available for multiple areas
- Sporting events, concerts, arts, school board meetings, PTO Meetings
- Access the channel or pre-recorded programs via phone, tablet, TV, etc.
- The City will split the cost of the channel with the district.
- There is a channel for the city and a channel for the school.

What are other districts doing...

- Senior Citizens Center
 - Senior Citizens can go to sporting events for free.
 - Free Play Performance. Eat dinner in the cafeteria.
- Mayor's Office
 - Always keep Economic Director for the city updated on the good things in the district to promote the PRIDE for Solon Schools.
 - Promote Solon Schools at City Council Meetings. Show the positive things going on...athletes, students winning awards, etc.
- Political Clubs are informed, especially concerning tax issues and levies.
 - Democrats
 - Republicans
- Businesses are informed