

**Twin Rivers Unified**  
*Leadership through*  
*Communication Award*

American Association of School  
Administrators

February 12, 2010



# Our Interesting Journey

- 60 years of acrimony and failed attempts
- November 2007 community vote to unify
- May 2008 State budget revise
- July 2008 new district begins
- November 2009 report to our community
- December 2009 additional State cuts announced
- February 2010 school consolidations, program realignment plan

# Communication Goals

- Approval of unification
- Establish a clear identity
- Establish a clear voice
- Create/re-establish positive stakeholder relationships
- Develop communication plan, strategies, policies
- Maintain trustee and leadership commitment to community engagement

# Key Messages

- Community input is welcome
- This is a new leadership team
- We want to work with employees, students, families, and community
- We are working hard to create a successful new district
- We are sharing the pain of the budget and trying to protect student programs

# Communication Strategies and Methods –Engagement

- Community name and logo contests
- Community, student, employee summits and forums
- Community event booths, community partner meetings
- Advisory councils, staff meetings, principal meetings, brown bag lunches, employee relations councils, student advisory councils
- Back to School and Open House events

# Variety of Communication Strategies and Methods – Empowerment

- District and school site web sites, special email address
- Phone messaging and surveying
- eNewsletters, content for print newsletters
- Discussion points for leadership and board
- Brochures, videos, powerpoints, fact sheets, banners, letters
- Media advisories, releases, stories for community papers/newsletters

# The Results

- Employee recognition activities
  - Decrease costs, increase involvement, 4 of 5 classified employees of the year
- Lunch application campaign
  - 28% improvement in return rate
  - Documented 15% increase in free and reduced status
- Electronic newsletters and surveys
  - More than 6,500 subscribers
  - Service Learning (471 responses)
  - Budget Savings (833 responses)
  - Early Retirement (825 responses)

# The Results

## Phone messaging

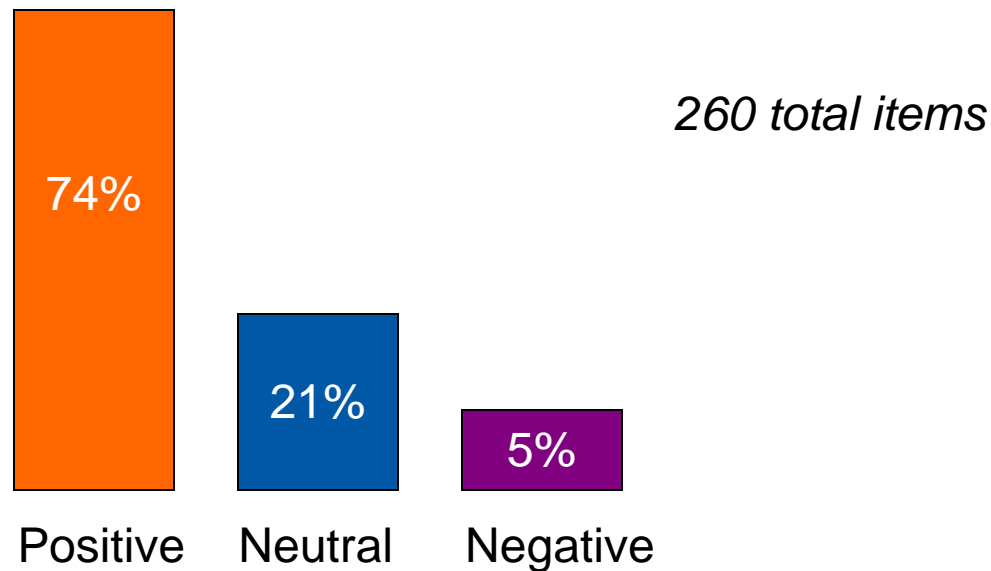
- 1.6 million calls, 17,305 messages
- attendance, parent outreach, flu, surveys
- 90% schools are active users, 291 senders
- Recent K-8 Survey (3,000 participants)

## Web site/school loop

- 5 million+ hits
- Calls direct families to web site

# Evaluation-Media

## Print Media Coverage Nov. 2007-Nov. 2009



# In the Face of Severely Reduced Funding

*Teachers, principals, and support staff have managed to:*

- Dramatically increase the number of high school students taking Advanced Placement courses and exams, along with a 38% increase in AP scores qualifying our students for credit before they start college
- Provide full – day kindergarten programs to nearly 100% of our kindergarten classes
- Increase pre-school programs to serve more 1,000 pre-schoolers in high quality pre-school programs
- Launch 4 new career academies at our high schools

# In the Face of Severely Reduced Funding

*Teachers, principals, and support staff have managed to:*

- Nearly double Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) sections
- Adopt and implement new English Language Development curriculum (7-12)
- Launch two new libraries and sustain support to our library-media centers
- Increase academic counseling services in grades 7 through 12
- Provide a summer school program when virtually every district in the region was reducing or eliminating summer school

# Going Forward

- Neighborhood Network Organizational Structure
- Continue Instructional Rounds/FAST
- Continue to develop staff and student communication liaison program
- Initiate *Communication Matters* monthly tool for principals

# Key Take-Away Lessons

## *Leading and communicating during times of change*

- Do the Right Thing – focus on data-driven decision making that benefits students
- Communicate how you're doing the right thing using multiple methods
- Stay on the same page – foster a close relationship between Superintendent and communications team
- Listen – look for opportunities to involve, engage, collect input
- Make time for face-to-face with communities – maintain those good community relationships
- Be transparent and responsive – share as much information as possible in every way possible
- A little help from your friends – share and take advantage of lessons learned

# Key Take-Away Lessons

## *Leading and communicating during times of change*

- Build capacity - model, coach, provide tools, and resources
- Challenge the status quo – never be satisfied
- Be nimble and flexible in your communication efforts
- Welcome critics – each one is an opportunity
- Maintain your sense of humor – step back and enjoy
- Be kind – demonstrate the way relationships should be cultivated and practiced in your district
- It's the little things – personal calls to employees, visits for school events
- Get out to schools to stay positive and remind you why you work so hard

# Questions?

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