

# MEMO

To: Mike Riggle

Fr: Karen Geddeis

Re: Communications Audit Proposal

Date: September 7, 2010

The Communications Committee has evaluated the need for a formal audit to assist in the development of a strategic communications plan. After investigating several different approaches to a review process, the committee directed the administration to focus on a proposal from a public affairs firm, Jasculca/Terman (JT), with whom the district has a relationship.

| Component  | Description  | Cost                  |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| Expert Analysis                                  | The team at JT will review current communication tactics and make recommendations for improvements. This works in conjunction with in-house assessments and informal feedback from stakeholders.   | \$5,000               |
| Community Telephone Survey-<br>Strategic counsel | JT will assist in the development of both the telephone survey and in-house online surveys to ensure we receive the correct input to inform an effective plan.   | \$3,000               |
| Community Telephone Survey-<br>Action            | A statistically sound formal telephone survey will be conducted on community residents. (300 residents/25 questions)   | \$8,750               |
| Opinion Leader Interviews                        | This vital piece provides a more in-depth look at concepts that are difficult to explore in a survey. The interviewees will also serve as the basis for a long-term group of stakeholders who will be engaged on various issues in an on-going manner. | \$5,000               |
|  |  | <b>Total \$21,750</b> |

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Board of Education approve a communications audit, to be conducted by JT in conjunction with the community information office. This would include expert analysis, a statistically sound community telephone survey, and opinion leader interviews. The total cost for this comprehensive communications audit is approximately \$21,750.

**Rationale:** Formal and information research is a necessary first step toward crafting an effective, strategic communications plan. By utilizing the expertise and resources of JT, along with our own in-house abilities, the district will be poised to improve targeted communication and outreach with our school communities.

In addition, sound research sets a benchmark of what the current perceptions, expectations and needs of our stakeholders are and then can be re-evaluated in the future to determine the effectiveness of our strategies.

**MEMORANDUM/August 27, 2010**

TO: Dr. Michael Riggle  
Karen Geddeis  
*Glenbrook High School District 225*

FR: Holly Bartecki and Jessica Thunberg, *Jasculca/Terman and Associates, Inc.*

**RE: Revised Scope of Work/Budget and Public Opinion Research Methodology**

Karen and Mike, thanks again for the opportunity to talk further with you about District 225's goals for the communications audit and to revise our proposal scope/budget accordingly.

Per your request, we have also contacted a professional public opinion research firm that we often work with on school district surveys to solicit broad methodology insights from them, based on your sense that a growing number of District 225 residents rely solely on cell phone and no longer maintain a landline.

**REVISED PROPOSAL SCOPE AND BUDGET**

It was helpful for us to hear from the District about its goals and intent for the communications audit. We understand that while the target audiences considered in our scope of inquiry should be broad and inclusive, including both parents/students, staff and nonparent community members, the District has the ability to solicit insights from the first two groups in-house and would prefer that JT and our research partner focus our efforts primarily on the latter audience. Again, insights from all District 225 stakeholders, including those solicited by the District, will be considered and reflected in our summary report and strategic recommendations to enhance the District's communications moving forward.

That said, given that the District feels it has the in-house capacity to replicate the survey work with internal audiences (parents, students and staff) and to maximize the District's limited resources for this project, we recommend a revised scope of work for JT that includes only the following elements of our original proposal. For your consideration, we have broken out the professional fees associated with each component:

- **Expert analysis** **\$5,000**

This is a foundational component of all communications audits conducted by JT. It includes our professional review and analysis of all District 225's current external communications tools and tactics, focusing on content, distribution and visual design, with expert feedback on ways to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives.

- **Community Telephone Survey** **\$3,000\***

*\*Please note that this fee is for strategic counsel, vendor oversight and coordination of the public opinion research only. Actual costs to conduct the research are indicated in the **PUBLIC OPINION METHODOLOGY AND COSTS** section below.*

JT has significant experience managing and coordinating public opinion research. We would serve as District 225's liaison with and strategic partner to a research firm in the design of survey approaches, development/refinement of survey instruments, and editing and analysis of research findings. Additionally, JT will provide hands-on assistance to District 225 in developing and analyzing the findings from its complementary surveys to be conducted in-house among parents and staff. This will ensure our ability to gain a 360-degree view of current perceptions and awareness among all District 225 stakeholders.

Our initial suggestion is that District 225 conduct telephone survey of District 225 community members who do not currently have children in the District on key communications topics and issues.

We will work with District 225 to determine whether the pool of respondents should include parents with children in feeder school districts. Another consideration is whether we should restrict our respondents to only those District 225 residents who own their homes and therefore directly support the District through their property tax assessment.

This quantitative research component will seek to gauge the effectiveness of the District's current communications and outreach efforts, the kinds of information that residents and parents want to know about the District, and the format and frequency with which residents prefer to receive this information.

It is our understanding that District 225 would like to closely replicate previous public opinion research conducted in approximately 2005 to assess shifting perceptions and attitudes over time. Thank you for providing those materials for our review.

Please see **PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND COSTS** below for additional details on this aspect of our proposed scope of work.

- **Opinion Leader Interviews** **\$5,000**

JT proposes scheduling and conducting 30-minute one-on-one phone interviews with 12-to-15 local opinion leaders, including chamber of commerce presidents, local board presidents, business, civic and faith community leaders and the mayors of communities District 225 serves.

In our professional opinion, given the District's goals and priorities for this project, this is one of the most critical components of our proposal. These individuals often serve as key sources of information about the public schools, particularly

among nonparent taxpayers, and can serve as critical influencers and/or ambassadors. Therefore, it is valuable to assess their current awareness and perceptions of the District and its communications initiatives. The very act of inviting these individuals to share feedback also sends an important message that the District prioritizes ongoing, substantive two-way communications with the community.

We consistently find that the impartiality and confidentiality associated with coordination and facilitation of these interviews by a third-party allows encourages more candid and insightful feedback.

We will work with the District to develop and prioritize the interview list. In our experience, an initial personal contact from a District representative to each opinion leader greatly increases their willingness to participate and share candid feedback. JT can advise in the outreach by providing talking points.

## **PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND COSTS**

During our August 12 conference call, the District expressed some concerns regarding the growing number of residents who rely solely on cell phones and no longer maintain a landline. Specifically, the District questioned the ability to achieve a representative sample of residents given that the proposed public opinion research among nonparent taxpayers is to be conducted by phone.

As discussed, JT contacted Public Opinion Strategies, a Washington, D.C.-based firm with whom we have often collaborated on public school district communications audits, to discuss these issues and to solicit broad price quotations to conduct the research in a manner that closely replicates the District's previous 2005 public opinion research.

POS traditionally sources survey participant contact information through the voter registration records. Preliminary research indicated good news that confirmed the ability to identify residents of the school district on the voter file and plenty of numbers from which to dial. While this approach excludes District 225 residents who are not registered voters, it is a standard methodology for public opinion research regarding taxpayer-funded entities.

POS has suggested a 300 sample 10-minute survey of approximately 25 questions for a cost of \$8,750.

With regard to the cell phone only issue, they also have a possible solution. Interestingly, the voter list actually contains a fair amount of cell phone numbers for District 225 residents. For the district-wide survey of 300 interviews, POS suggests completing 30 or 10 percent of the interviews among cell-only/mostly residents. Please note that best estimates for the State of Illinois indicate that 15 percent of all households are cell-only. Because these cell numbers must be dialed by hand and have a lower response rate, including these 30 interviews would push the survey cost to \$9,750.

Further refinements to the sample size (for example, to exclude parents with children in

District 225 and/or feeder school districts, to include only residents who own their homes, etc.) are possible and may be recommended, but would require additional effort to achieve desirable response rates due to fewer respondents qualifying for the survey. As a result, these options would increase costs slightly.

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Holly will follow-up with Karen by phone early next week to talk further with you about the contents of this memorandum, as well as appropriate next steps. In the meantime, please feel free to contact us at 312-337-7400 or [hollyb@jtpr.com](mailto:hollyb@jtpr.com) if you have questions or if we can be of further assistance.

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