When they call

Special schools’ response to public & media inquiries

Transparency Task Force ■ April 5, 2013
Public Information Response

- Initial calls
  - Directed to superintendent/referred to most appropriate departments

- Superintendent and departments provide timely response; even when an answer is not readily available

- Popular general information/non-media requests
  - Student research – provide interviews and tours
  - Civic organizations – speakers assigned
  - Genealogy research – volunteers

- Parent/Students/Referring districts
  - Ongoing electronic communication provided for basic information
  - Immediate communication handled via phone/videophone, texts and e-mails often with paper letter follow-up
  - Individual communications/meetings held when necessary
Media Response

- Rarely receive open records requests
  - Enrollment & budget

- Accommodate reporters with students after consideration of minor privacy and interruption of class day

- Respectful of reporters and deadlines
Proactive access to information

- Websites/Facebook
  - http://www.iowa-braille.k12.ia.us/
  - http://www.iowaschoolforthedeaf.org/
  - http://www.facebook.com/ISDOFFICIALPAGE

- Publications disseminated to stakeholders/posted to web

- News releases sent statewide to radio, television and newspapers

- Follow-up letters mailed to specific audiences

- Meetings/presentations with various audiences

- State audit results/other reports accessible via Board of Regents website
Transparent Feasibility Study

Objectives:

- Provide public access to committee discussion
- Solicit public input for committee consideration
- Ensure equitable information access for deaf and blind stakeholders
Transparent Feasibility Study

- Electronic Access
  - Regents, IESBVI and ISD websites contained:
    - Dates, locations of meetings
    - Background documents leading to the study
    - Agendas, relevant presentation materials
    - Committee membership
    - Meeting minutes
    - Instructions on how to submit comments or attend public hearings
  - Monitored Facebook discussions/corrected misunderstandings with audiences
  - E-blasts contained committee decision information to stakeholders

- Meeting Access
  - Locations changed/stakeholders notified in advance to accommodate growing amount of observers.
  - Observers acknowledged at public meetings.
  - Access provided to deaf observers via interpreters.
  - Careful consideration given to accessibility needs of blind or deaf participants for public hearings
Transparent Feasibility Study

- Written Access
  - School publications carried preliminary stories in May; updated in monthly issues
  - Articles submitted to alumni newsletters
  - Letters were mailed to stakeholders (parents, referring schools and agencies, donors, etc.) regarding
    - Reason for the study/reiterate how to submit comments or comment publically
    - Committee recommendations
    - Board of Regents decision

- Personal Access
  - Face-to-face inquiries at public events (graduation, homecoming, etc.) were addressed
  - Employees informed of committee via all-staff meetings
  - Superintendent visited with several deaf clubs
  - Addressed services clubs regarding study
  - Day after committee recommendation, two staff meetings and one student meeting was held
  - Alumni meeting held in January, regarding study results, featured ISD administration
Transparent Feasibility Study

- Media Access
  - Statewide releases sent regarding the public hearings
  - Accommodated day-long reporter visits
  - Granted interviews/secured interpreters/matched interviewees to reporter angles
  - Provided a week ‘s notice there may be a committee recommendation and therefore a news conference (e-mailed and phoned)
  - Confirmed with stations/papers there would be a news conference the next morning (phoned)*
  - Had students, parents and others ready in news conference audience as well as interpreters to accommodate interview requests

*Just before local and statewide media was informed of committee recommendations, e-mails were sent to parents, staff and local legislators announcing the recommendations.