



Kanawha
COUNTY SCHOOLS

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Kanawha County Schools + Marshall University

- ❖ **Briana Warner, Communications Director**
Kanawha County Schools – Charleston, WV
26,000 students, 3600 employees
67 schools
USDA CEP program participant – 100% free meals
- ❖ **Dr. Allyson Goodman, Associate Professor/Internship Coordinator, Marshall University W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communication – Huntington, WV**
Marshall University – 13,178
A unit of the College of Arts and Media
AEJMC accredited school
Offers 3 majors with eight emphases

What We'll Cover

- ❖ How we found each other
- ❖ How we established expectations and a goal
- ❖ How we set up the course
- ❖ First class – focus group in 2018 / Data presentation
- ❖ Second class – focus group in 2019 / Data presentation
- ❖ Development of district survey
- ❖ What is being done with the data
- ❖ Themes that arose
- ❖ Lessons learned
- ❖ Handout

How we found each other

- ❖ **Background** on client need
- ❖ **Project meeting** for another community education activity
- ❖ **Ask** if students could help
- ❖ **Match** for an upcoming course



Expectations and goals

- ❖ **Start Small**
Audit vs. small targeted project

Small focus group first vs. full survey
- ❖ **Meeting Needs of Both Groups**



The Course



**W. Page Pitt School of
Journalism and Mass Communications**

JMC 408/508
Research and Analytics

- ❖ Mostly undergraduate juniors, seniors and some graduate students
- ❖ Advertising/Public Relations major requirement
- ❖ Applied research for planning and evaluation of communications.

Setting up the course

- ❖ Initial meeting - set reasonable expectations
 - Review course outcomes
 - Set timeline
 - Identified research needs
 - Establish limitations
 - Determine deliverables
- ❖ Began with instruction in how to conduct research



Course activity

❖ **Research project assignment**

- Secondary research
- Qualitative research
- Quantitative research

❖ **Students meet with Briana**

- First set expectations
- Second report progress
- Third plan details

❖ **Research process**

- Created research plan
- Conducted research
 - Background report
 - Focus group guide
 - Survey question test
- Analyzed research
- Reported results

2018 Class Research

- ❖ **2 Focus Groups (Teachers / Parents)**
Nov. 17, 2017 at noon
Only Elementary teachers
Parents were Middle/High/Elementary
- ❖ **Takeaways**
For school district
For college students
- ❖ **Presentation**
District director of educational technology
Superintendent

2019 Class Research

- ❖ **1 Focus Groups (Parents)**

Nov. 30, 2018 at noon
Parents K-12

- ❖ **Takeaways**

For school district
For college students

- ❖ **Presentation**

District administrators and principals

Results reported in infographic

Parental Communication in Kanawha County Schools

General Research Questions

- What do parents think of KCS?
- What are parents' opinions of KCS's communications abilities?
- What do parents think of Schoology?
- What does KCS do well and poorly?
- What can KCS do to improve communication with parents?

Secondary Research

28 parents in a New Jersey school district were surveyed in a study, titled, "Use of Technology Among Educational Professionals and Families."

- 72% said that the typical communication with teachers is done via email
- 24% received communication at least once a month from teachers.
- 72% feel their child's teacher is accessible via technology

A similar study of parent-educator communication, titled, "Parent Adoption of School Communications Technology: A 12-School Experiment of Default Enrollment Policies" looked at a text message communication system to parents from schools.

6,979 students grades 6-12

- 39% opt-out group
- 38% opt-in group
- 23% control

97% REMAINED ENROLLED in the opt-out program for the entire school year

References: Nadeau, K. & Lubniewski, K. (2017) Use of Communication and Technology Among Educational Professionals and Families. International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 10(3), 1-8. DOI: 10.26907/ije.2018.103.196. Bergman, P. & Rodgers, T. (2016) Parent Adoption of School Communications Technology: A 12-School Experiment of Default Enrollment Policies. Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness 6 pp. (025-7339)

Social Media Analysis

The following graph represents a social media sentiment score for Kanawha County Schools, compiled using Meltwater over a period of four weeks.

The majority of social media posts related to KSC were classified as **neutral** during this time period.



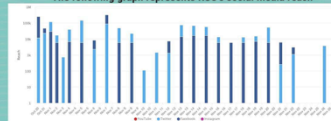
Figure 1.0 from Meltwater Social

Some **negative** post topics included weather-related school closings, problems with the Schoology app, and the ongoing mold issues in multiple KC schools.

Social Media Analysis (Continued)

The following graph represents KCS's social media reach

KSC's social reach ranged from 113 users solely through Twitter on November 10th



to 326,160 users on Facebook and Twitter combined on November 7th.

Figure 1.1 from Meltwater Social Dashboard

It is evident that Twitter and Facebook are the most active and likely places to engage users in a consistent use of the platform is an effective way to connect with the regional population. An effective strategy for future twitter use could be to engage with accounts like Teacher2Teacher and Filgrid as much as possible for their social media reach extends further into networks untapped by KCS.

Primary Research

Focus Group with KCS Parents

On Friday, November 30th, a focus group consisting of 14 parents of children in the Kanawha County Schools district was conducted at the Board of Education in Charleston, WV. Various topics regarding the parents' overall feelings toward the KCS system were discussed. The most prevailing themes in the discussion were **INCONSISTENCY** and the lack of **STANDARDIZATION** of communication from KCS. There were also in-depth discussions regarding the positives and negatives of the Schoology system and app.

11

3

14

"Standardization fixes inconsistency."

"It seems difficult to find the information. In this fast paced culture, what would be easier would be if they were using frequent social media tools. For those of us in our 20s and 30s, that's how we roll."

"It seems difficult to find the information. In this fast paced culture, what would be easier would be if they were using frequent social media tools. For those of us in our 20s and 30s, that's how we roll."

"There was one designated person who is in charge of communication at each school. That would make things easier."

What do parents think of Schoology?



"It is not a parent friendly app at all. So difficult to navigate."
 "If I really want to find something, I have to log on to Schoology on my computer. It's not all on the app."

I use Schoology on my computer and I love it. You can find anything and you can communicate. But that's on my computer at home. The mobile app they need to work on

Common themes among respondents about KSC's communication

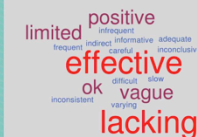


Figure 1.3

Select Survey Responses

A trial survey was created by Briana Werner, edited by the research team and distributed to the parents in the focus group

What impact do you think Schoology has had on communication?

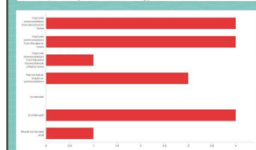


Figure 2.0 Qualtrics Survey Question #6

- Improved communications from the school to the home (4)
- Improved communications from the class to home (4)
- Improved communications from Kanawha County School's office to home (1)
- Has not had an impact on communications (3)
- is overused (0)
- is underused (4)
- Should not be used at all (1)

What do you believe Kanawha County Schools is doing really well and what do you think needs to be improved?

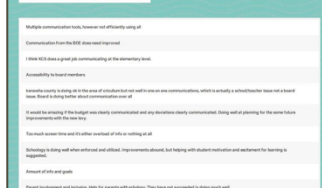


Figure 2.1 Qualtrics Survey Question #29

What grade would you give the following:

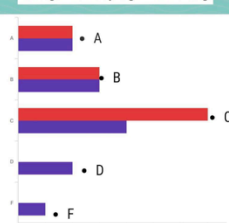


Figure 2.2 Qualtrics Survey Question #23

■ Kanawha County Schools (consider everything curriculum, quality of education...)
 ■ Kanawha County Schools communication?

Recommendations for Further Research

- To address the Schoology mobile app issues, an in-depth survey, focused solely on Schoology should be created and distributed to parents
- Include faculty and staff in future focus groups and surveys
- for more comprehensive results, continue to monitor social media through Meltwater for a period of up to one year

Conclusions

Through the use of mixed method research, it can be determined that parents want consistent, timely, accurate, and standardized communication from educational professionals. Further research is necessary to address the issues regarding the Schoology system and mobile app. A focus group and survey that centers on Schoology and social media communications would be beneficial in addressing specific issues raised by parents.

The results of this research study were compiled using multiple quantitative and qualitative research methods. Historical academic research methods were used to gather background information on topics relating to our main research questions. Social media monitoring was applied by each researcher using Meltwater over a period of four weeks to gather and analyze primary quantitative data. A focus group was conducted and a comprehensive trial survey, created with Qualtrics was distributed in said focus group to gather qualitative primary research.

Emerging Themes focus groups

Parents 2017/2018

- ❖ "It seems difficult to find the information. In this fast paced culture, what would be easier would be if they were using frequent social media tools. For those of us in our 20s and 30s, that's how we roll."
- ❖ "There was one designated person who is in charge of communication at each school. That would make things easier."

Teachers 2017

- ❖ "If they could just send me one text message- because for me that would be my ideal way to get information versus an email when I only get to sit, you know, for three seconds at any given time..."
- ❖ "They don't tell us why they're doing these things; it's just 'you're doing it; learn it; do it'."

District online survey

- ❖ 1,391 respondents
- ❖ 67 schools had respondents
 - 540 elementary school parents from 42 schools
 - 368 middle school parents from 13 schools
 - 405 high school parents from 10 schools
- ❖ 53% hold a bachelor's degree or higher
- ❖ 50% earn \$50,000 to \$150,000
- ❖ 85% describe themselves as White/Caucasian
- ❖ 73% are 35-54 years old

(Some responses were not parents and were excluded from results)

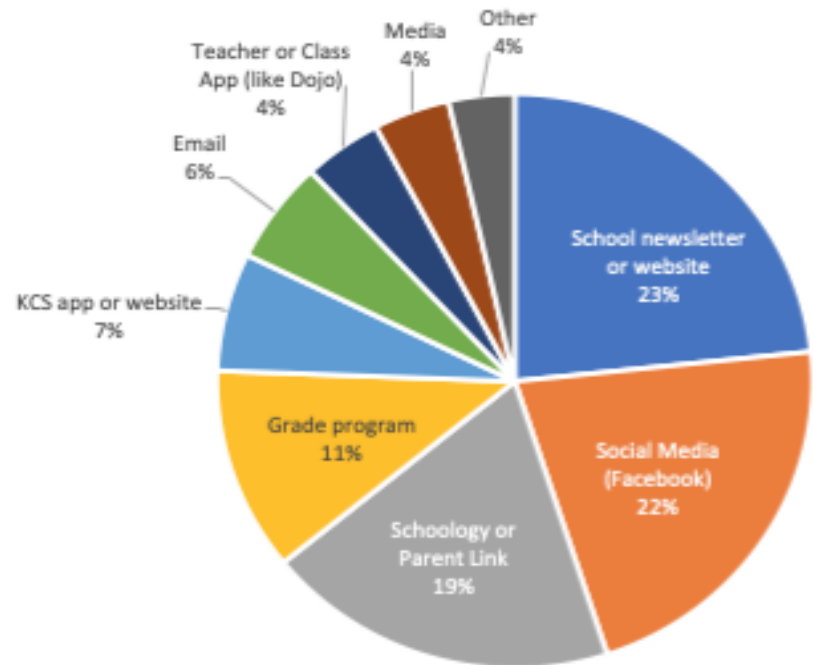
Survey Link

Used University access to Qualtrics software

https://marshall.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5cDy8jfxQIVCI8h

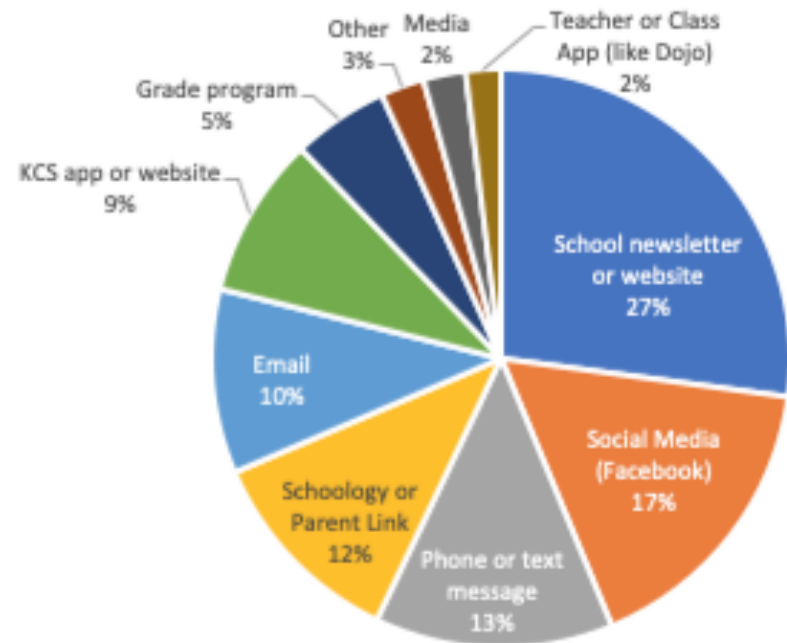
Emerging themes survey

- ❖ Parents are more connected to schools rather than districts
- ❖ 45% of parents said they get most of their information about KCS from their school newsletter, website or social media, primarily Facebook.
- ❖ Parents are comfortable with district communication software, but it is their third method of connection
- ❖ District app and website are low on the list of communication methods



Emerging themes survey

- ❖ Parents prefer easy access and direct communication methods through their school
- ❖ 44% of parents said they prefer to get information through their school newsletter, website or social media.
- ❖ Parents would like to have district communication through phone or text message but district software is a close fourth
- ❖ Parents would use email before a district app or website



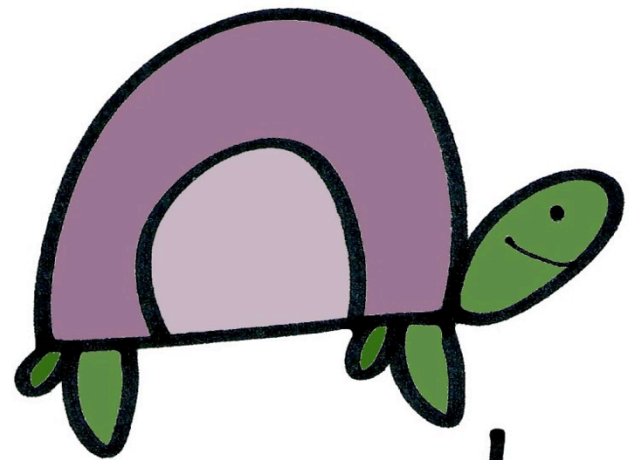
What will be done w/data

- ❖ Superintendent
- ❖ Principals
- ❖ District Directors
- ❖ Public
- ❖ Professor



Lessons learned

- ❖ Kanawha County Schools
- ❖ Marshall University



go, go, go! 

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.COM

Handouts,
Presentation
and survey
link



Survey link:

https://marshall.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5cDy8jfxQIVCl8h

Questions / Contact Info

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