



# Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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**TO: Members, Board of Education  
Dr. Albert Roberts, Superintendent**

**FROM: Chris Jасulca**

**RE: Plan for communicating with Oak Park residents**

**DATE: January 22, 2013**

As part of its effort to increase the flow of information to stakeholders, the District 97 Board of Education charged the administration with identifying ways technology can best be utilized to enhance communication with Oak Park residents. The following plan outlines the strategies that are either currently being used or might be used moving forward to achieve this goal.

## **Community Listserv**

The district created a community listserv that we use to disseminate information to more than 6400 members of the general public (staff, parents/guardians, residents, reporters, etc.) on a weekly basis. The messages sent via the listserv feature important school and district news, details about student and staff accomplishments, updates from the board meetings, and links to flyers posted in the digital backpack. They also include information from other local governing bodies (Village of Oak Park, District 200, Park District of Oak Park and Oak Park Public Library).

While the listserv has been an effective communication resource for the district to date, there are steps we can take increase/enhance its use in the future. One step is to use other local print and electronic publications to publicize the availability of the listserv and attract additional subscribers, especially individuals who have no direct connection or affiliation with our schools. For example, we are including information about the listserv in the February edition of the Village's OP/FYI newsletter. Another step is to measure the success of our messages and identify topics of interest for our stakeholder groups by better utilizing the analytics we receive after we send each e-mail (total opens, click performance, etc.). An example of one of the analytics reports that is generated by the system we use can be found in Appendix A (people's personal e-mail addresses have been redacted from the document).

In terms of using this resource to strengthen the board's relationship with the community, we will continue to include updates from its meetings in our messages. We also suggest including information in each message about ways people can communicate with the board (d97board e-mail address, mailing address for letters, public comment, etc.).

## **Websites**

The district's family of websites is one of the primary resources we use to communicate with the general public. The pages on the district's main and school sites feature static information that either rarely or never changes (mission, vision, history, etc.), changes on an annual basis (e.g., student and parent handbooks) or is updated on a regular basis (e.g., news/announcements, calendars and digital backpack).

The sites also feature RSS feeds that enable users to subscribe to the digital backpack, news and calendars. RSS, otherwise known as Rich Site Summary, allows people to stay informed/updated by retrieving the latest content from the sites they subscribe to. People can subscribe to any of these feeds by visiting those specific sections on the school or district sites and selecting which option they would prefer to use to receive updates. These options

include, but are not limited to, Live Bookmarks, Microsoft Office Outlook, Yahoo and Google. There will also be other options available if the feed is accessed via a mobile device. You can access an example of these feeds by visiting <http://www.op97.org/rss.xml>.

While we have done a good job of keeping most of the pages on these sites up to date, our goal/objective is to be more consistent in our efforts across the family of sites. For example, we will post more of the updates from the board meetings on the home page of the main district site, as well as in the news section on the Board of Education pages. We will also more heavily promote the use of the RSS feeds (e.g., include reminders about them in our listserv messages).

In addition, we will identify other opportunities to establish links between our sites and those of our community partners (we currently have links to our main site on the ones for organizations such as the Village of Oak Park, Park District of Oak Park and Oak Park Public Library); and take better advantage of online resources such as Live Here Oak Park (<http://www.livehereoakpark.com/>) and our resource page on OakPark.com (<http://www.livehereoakpark.com/>).

Lastly, we talked to several other governing bodies about the possibility of creating a community web page where news and information from each organization would be made available to the general public in a central location that is easy to access. We recommend resuming the conversation about this idea with these organizations.

### **Digital backpack**

During the 2009-2010 school year, we created and launched the digital backpack, which we have been using to keep parents/guardians informed about what is happening in the schools and community, while also reducing the amount of paper we use. The Web-based backpack features links and PDFs containing information that had previously been distributed in a hard copy format. Links to this information are disseminated via the district and PTO listservs on a weekly basis.

Although use of the digital backpack has steadily increased during each year of its existence, we are currently investigating how we can make it more accessible to the entire community beyond including links to it in our listserv messages and on our websites. We also plan to better utilize the district section of the backpack by including more information (board reports, minutes from public meetings, etc.) that corresponds with our commitment to transparency.

### **Webcasts and Podcasts**

A number of residents have requested that we webcast our events (board meetings, study sessions, forums, etc.). At the request of the board, we researched a number of companies and systems providers that offer webcasting services, including the one currently being used by the Village. While we believe it is worthwhile to pursue this endeavor, we recommend waiting to complete the various steps involved in the process (contracting with a vendor, ordering and installing equipment, training staff, etc.) until after a decision has been made regarding the district's administration building. In the interim, perhaps we can make the audio recording of the open session from the board meetings more accessible to the community so people can benefit from hearing the discussions that are taking place at the board level.

As for podcasts, we utilized this resource effectively when Dr. Roberts wanted to share his thoughts about the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (<http://www.op97.org/superintendent/>). However, we can and should use it more frequently because it enables us to expound on important issues and provide people with clearer explanations of complex topics (e.g., TIF). While producing podcasts can be time consuming, whether they are narratives like the one by Dr. Roberts or recordings of presentations, we believe engaging in this activity will open up new channels of communication that will enable us to build stronger connections with the public.

## **Online Forums**

During the school year, we host a number of forums regarding a variety of topics. Unfortunately, people's schedules do not always afford them the opportunity to attend these events. While we can certainly make them more accessible to our stakeholders through the use of webcasts and podcasts, perhaps we can take it one step farther and hold a live, moderated online forum or town hall meeting in which we participate in a question and answer session with citizens that takes place in real time. By doing so, we can provide more people with the opportunity to participate in the event, and achieve our goal of engaging the community in interactive, two-way communication.

## **Feedback Forms**

When completing the recent climate survey, several parents/guardians and staff members commented that they wanted the opportunity to offer input about the district's websites. We responded to this request by creating an online feedback form that members of the general public can use to share comments, questions and/or suggestions about our sites (<http://www.op97.org/communications/Web-Requests.cfm>).

In addition, a group of teachers and administrators who serve on the district's Education Council are currently in the process of developing a similar form people will be able to use to provide feedback about our schools and the district as a whole. This form will include a drop-down menu that features a variety of topics on which people can offer their opinions. We are also looking into the possibility of incorporating measures/protocols into the form that would reduce or eliminate anonymity by requiring individuals to verify who they are in order to complete their submission.

We hope to create and test this form in the next few months so it can be ready for use in the summer or fall.

## **Social Media**

In August 2011, the district launched its Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/OakPark97>). Since then, we have posted nearly 200 Tweets and attracted more than 330 followers. While the results from the recent climate survey showed that a low percentage of our parents/guardians and staff members access information about our schools and the district via our Twitter account, our total number of followers, which includes members of the community who are not district employees or parents/guardians of students, has increased on a weekly basis. With this in mind, we will continue to use this resource as an avenue for sharing information with the general public. We will also strive to post items on the account more frequently (usually post a few times per week; goal is to start posting on daily basis), and identify ways to promote the availability of the account to a wider audience (e.g., include the URL in the signature of e-mails, in print and electronic publications, etc.)

A number of community organizations use Facebook to communicate news and event information, including District 200 (<https://www.facebook.com/oprfhuskies>), the Village (<https://www.facebook.com/vopnews>), the Park District (<https://www.facebook.com/parkdistrictoakpark?ref=search&sid=34901378.3166490366..1>) and the Library (<https://www.facebook.com/oakparkpubliclibrary>). We recommend creating a page for the district and utilizing it in a similar fashion. We also suggest investigating the possibility of using the page to engage in cross promotion with the organizations mentioned above.

In addition, we believe there is value in researching the pros and cons associated with launching a YouTube channel for the district that would feature videos of school-related events and activities. BRAVO (<http://www.youtube.com/brooksbravo>) and CAST ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=1OT6xp1jQ34](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=1OT6xp1jQ34)) both use the site to showcase scenes from their performances.

## **Community Resources**

In the past, the district has used community resources to disseminate information. These resources have included the OP/FYI newsletter, the high school's HuskiEmail, the e-newsletters created by the Park District and Library, and Mom Mail. We will continue to use these resources whenever possible, and seek out similar ones in Oak Park that we can use to communicate with citizens.

## **Mobile app**

We created a mobile application that smartphone owners can download and use to access important school and district-related information at any time (news, calendar, digital backpack, Web store, etc.). We disseminated a link to the app via our SchoolMessenger notification system and community listserv; and are including information about it in the February edition of the OP/FYI insert in hopes of generating increased awareness/use of the resource. We will continue to monitor how many people are utilizing the app, and assess whether it's an effectiveness means for communicating with the general public.

## **Guest Column or Blog**

Similar to Dr. Roberts' podcast about NCLB, writing a guest column for a local newspaper or maintaining a blog offer the chance to converse with residents on a variety of issues (our schools, the community, education in general, etc.). While both of these ideas feature possible challenges (difficulty of securing a regular guest column; time commitment associated with maintaining a blog), they also present an opportunity for board members and/or administrators to establish a connection with people outside the confines of their day-to-day duties with the district. We will research the options that are available if there is interest in either of these ideas at the board and/or administrative level.

## **Print Pieces**

While this plan is focused primarily on how technology can best be used to communicate with residents, and Oak Park has a reputation for being a tech-savvy community, we believe print pieces (newsletters, mailers, etc.) are still a valuable means for reaching people. For example, people still look forward to receiving the annual resource directory published by the Collaboration for Early Childhood, as well as the program guides produced by the Park District. In addition, the OP/FYI newsletter continues to be an effective way to deliver information to local households. With this mind, we recommend that the final version of the communication plan include the utilization of both print and electronic resources for sharing information with the public.

This plan is being presented to the board this evening for review in conjunction with the goals it identified in the fall and the most recent version of the measures of success timeline it discussed during its meeting on January 8, 2013. A revised version of the plan will be reviewed/discussed during the board's two meetings in February; and a final version of it is scheduled to be approved at the meeting on March 19, 2013.

# **APPENDIX A**

# OP97 Community Email 82

**Sent**  
1/11/13 9:55AM

## Table of contents

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Overview	1
Overview (continued)	2
Opens by location	3
Subscriber activity	4
Email domain performance	5
Facebook activity	6
Facebook comments	7
Click performance	8
Campaign reach	9
Performance advice	10

Sent  
1/11/13 9:55AM

## Overview

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### Recipients

# 6,410

**Sent To List**  
Oak Park Community

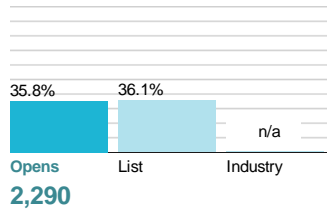
**From**  
District 97

**Reply-to-Email**  
d97feedback@op97.org

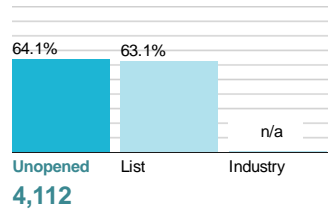
**Subject**  
News from 97

**Delivery Date & Time**  
1/11/13 9:55AM

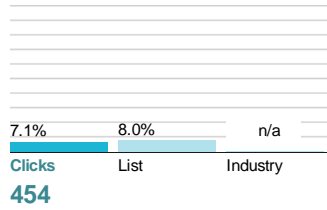
### Opens



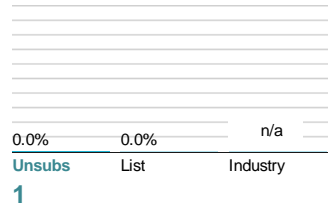
### Unopened



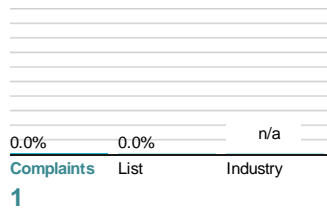
### Clicks



### Unsubscribers



### Complaints





Sent  
1/11/13 9:55AM

Overview (continued)

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Bounced

**8 (0.1%)**

Emails (Forwarded)

**0**

Total Times Opened

**3,717**

Total Clicks

**774**

Views On Twitter

**0**

Tweets

**0**

Views On Facebook

**0**

Likes On Facebook

**0**

Forward Opens

**0**

Clicks Per Unique Open

**19.8%**

Successful Deliveries

**6,402 (99.9%)**


Sent

1/11/13 9:55AM

## Opens by location

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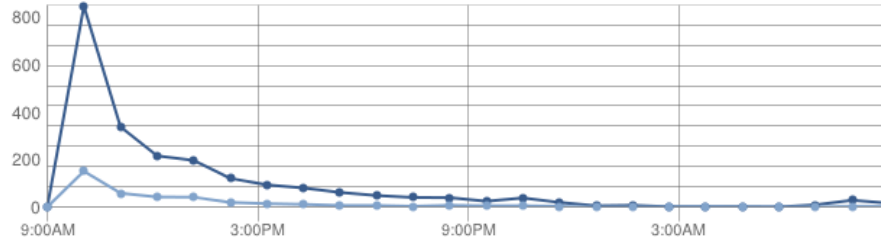
### Top Locations

Country	Opens
 USA	3,301
 United Kingdom	4
 Canada	4
 Mexico	3
 Switzerland	2
 Italy	1

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1/11/13 9:55AM

## Subscriber activity

### Opens & Clicks Over Time



### Opened the Most

Recipient	Opens
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█
[REDACTED]	█

### Most Clicked URLs

URL	Clicks
<a href="http://www.op97.org/YSC2013/index.cfm">http://www.op97.org/YSC2013/index.cfm</a>	164
<a href="https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicAgenda.aspx?ak=1000357&amp;mk=50070017">https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicAgenda.aspx?ak=1000357&amp;mk=50070017</a>	119
<a href="http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/BigFunSeries.pdf">http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/BigFunSeries.pdf</a>	48
<a href="http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/AYSORegistration.pdf">http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/AYSORegistration.pdf</a>	48
<a href="http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/HealthChallenge.pdf">http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/HealthChallenge.pdf</a>	41
<a href="http://www.op97.org/documents/OPEFOpenHouse.pdf">http://www.op97.org/documents/OPEFOpenHouse.pdf</a>	38
<a href="http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/ShrinersHospitalWorkshop.pdf">http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/ShrinersHospitalWorkshop.pdf</a>	36
<a href="http://www.op97.org/communications/documents/Playgrounds-FinalCostEstimates-1-8-13-Final.pdf">http://www.op97.org/communications/documents/Playgrounds-FinalCostEstimates-1-8-13-Final.pdf</a>	35
<a href="http://www.oprfts.org/news/Enrollment-and-registration-info-for-incoming-freshmen.cfm#.UO8lt6_AG7s">http://www.oprfts.org/news/Enrollment-and-registration-info-for-incoming-freshmen.cfm#.UO8lt6_AG7s</a>	34
<a href="http://www.nbpts.org/about_us/nbct_class_of_2012">http://www.nbpts.org/about_us/nbct_class_of_2012</a>	32
<a href="http://www.op97.org/documents/BRAVO-JuniorTheaterFestival.pdf">http://www.op97.org/documents/BRAVO-JuniorTheaterFestival.pdf</a>	24

Sent  
1/11/13 9:55AM

### Email domain performance

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Domain	Emails	Bounces	Opens	Clicks	Unsubs
gmail.com	1303 20%	0 0%	399 31%	89 7%	0 0%
yahoo.com	1237 19%	1 0%	509 41%	66 5%	1 0%
op97.org	841 13%	0 0%	164 20%	67 8%	0 0%
hotmail.com	474 7%	1 0%	182 38%	28 6%	0 0%
sbcglobal.net	452 7%	0 0%	222 49%	40 9%	0 0%
Other	2103 33%	6 0%	814 39%	164 8%	0 0%

Sent  
1/11/13 9:55AM

## Facebook activity

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Total Likes

**0**

Likes From Subscribers

**0**

Relikes From Facebook

**0**

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1/11/13 9:55AM

## Facebook comments

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Total Comments

0

Overall Sentiment



**Sent**

1/11/13 9:55AM

## Click performance

Url	Total Clicks		Unique Clicks	
http://www.op97.org/YSC2013/index.cfm	164	21%	131	20%
https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicAgenda.aspx?ak=1000357&mk=50070017	119	15%	97	15%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/AYSORRegistration.pdf	48	6%	37	6%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/BigFunSeries.pdf	48	6%	42	6%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/HealthChallenge.pdf	41	5%	34	5%
http://www.op97.org/documents/OPEFOpenHouse.pdf	38	5%	31	5%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/ShrinersHospitalWorkshop.pdf	36	5%	32	5%
http://www.op97.org/communications/documents/Playgrounds-FinalCostEstimates-1-8-13-Final.pdf	35	5%	30	5%
http://www.oprfhs.org/news/Enrollment-and-registration-info-for-incoming-freshmen.cfm#.UO8lt6_AG7s	34	4%	29	4%
http://www.nbpts.org/about_us/nbct_class_of_2012	32	4%	28	4%
http://www.op97.org/documents/BRAVO-JuniorTheaterFestival.pdf	24	3%	23	3%
http://www.op97.org	22	3%	19	3%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/index.cfm	21	3%	21	3%
http://www.op97.org/documents/SpecialEdResourceFair.pdf	17	2%	17	3%
http://www.op97.org/campusuite/modules/news.cfm?month=1&grp_id=6945&news_id=24524&returnTo=list	17	2%	14	2%
http://www.oprfhs.org/news/Parent-forums-to-explore-removing-class-rank.cfm#.UO8Kca_AG7s	13	2%	13	2%
http://us6.campaign-archive1.com/?u=72fa87ab10d9f54b3fad6716a&id=aa08af00db&e=	11	1%	11	2%
http://www.op97.org/School-Calendar.cfm	8	1%	7	1%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/ParentAdvisoryMeetings2013.pdf	8	1%	8	1%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/documents/ParentNight-January15.pdf	8	1%	8	1%
http://www.op97.org/business-office/Food-Service.cfm	8	1%	8	1%
http://op97.us1.list-manage.com/unsubscribe?u=32e3c3366c11f617482556f37&id=630c05788b&e=&c=172dc31b1...	5	1%	4	1%
http://www.op97.org/news/PING-and-District-97-Teachers-Presenting-at-State-Wide-Conference.cfm	5	1%	5	1%
http://muniweb.com/OakParkVillageMailingList/MailingList.asp	5	1%	5	1%
http://www.op97.org/hr/Registration.cfm	3	0%	3	0%
http://www.oprfhs.org/parents/Parent-Newsletter.cfm#.UJ1XpLAG7s	2	0%	2	0%
http://www.op97.org/digital-backpack/	1	0%	1	0%
http://twitter.com/#%21OakPark97	1	0%	1	0%
http://goo.gl/ROK4Y	0	0%	0	0%

Sent  
1/11/13 9:55AM

### Campaign reach

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Potential Reach

**2,290**

Emails (Forwarded)

**0**

Total Times Opened

**3,717**

Total Clicks

**774**

Tweets

**0**

Views On Facebook

**0**

Likes On Facebook

**0**

Clicks Per Unique Open

**19.8%**

Successful Deliveries

**6,402 (99.9%)**



**Sent**

1/11/13 9:55AM

### Performance advice

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Your click rate is lower than normal for this list. Did you do something different for this campaign?  
Download your master campaign report to compare campaigns.