



AC 2018 Communications Strategy

CONTEXT:

In 2015, the Washington Township Schools Foundation and the North Central High School Alumni Association united as The Advancement Center for Washington Township Schools and North Central Alumni working as a community to empower students. Our mission is to advance the achievements of world-class public education by connecting private funding to innovative programs that benefit our schools and community.

Established in 1985, the core mission of the Foundation lives on in The Advancement Center as we continue to assist in meeting the changing needs of the Metropolitan School District of Washington Township (MSDWT). MSDWT is located in the northern section of Indianapolis, Indiana in Marion County. It is a dynamic community with broad diversity in cultures, religions, ethnic groups, races and socioeconomic levels as over half of our 11,482 students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Washington Township has been an educational leader in Indiana for the last sixty years and offers a comprehensive educational curriculum with special activities and programs geared to provide enrichment, exploration, and instructional support for students. The mission of MSDWT is to develop lifelong learners and globally-minded citizens by fostering the academic, creative, and social skills needed to achieve excellence in a multicultural environment. Washington Township is the first school district in Indiana to offer International Baccalaureate education to EVERY student, making it one of only six public school districts in the world to accomplish this.

The Advancement Center makes a difference in the school lives of students and teachers by funding grants that provide innovative programs designed to enrich curriculum. We also support professional development, staff recognition and projects that enhance district resources and help make MSDWT a sought-after place of employment for the best and brightest teachers. Scholarships and designated gifts are provided to graduating seniors from NCHS and in servicing the needs of North Central alumni, The Advancement Center is a resource for class reunions, North Central Homecoming, the North Central Alumni Hall of Fame and alumni outreach.

Today, The Advancement Center, a 501(c)(3) organization, distributes approximately \$500,000 annually in grants, scholarships and designated gifts to the students and teachers in Washington Township Schools. Working closely with supporters to obtain funding for programs that would not otherwise be available, we have invested over \$6,000,000 in our district since 1985.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this document is to establish key communication messages and flesh out the objectives, audience and best communication channels for each. Additionally, in this document The Advancement Center is setting an action plan for 2018 communications goals as well as establishing major national holidays and marketing opportunities.

KEY MESSAGES:

- A.) **MISSION:** The Advancement Center for Washington Township Schools and North Central Alumni's mission is advancing the achievements of world-class public education by connecting private funding to innovative programs that benefit our schools and community. The funding is focused on four main areas: supporting activities to enrich MSDWT student programs; establishing endowments that further educational excellence in MSDWT; providing scholarships that give college opportunities to dozens of North Central graduates and funding grant requests for teachers to use in the classroom or on professional development.

- The Objective: This is the guiding principle of the organization and clearly communicates who we are and what we do.



The Advancement Center

for Washington Township Schools and North Central Alumni

Serving students—past, present and future

advancementcenter@msdwt.k12.in.us

<http://www.advancementcenterwts.org>

 @AdvancementCenterWTS

 @AdvancementCtr

- The Audience: The mission statement needs to be included in every piece of communication The AC sends out whether internally or externally.
 - Best Communication Channels: printed material, website, newsletters, business cards, invitations. Social media is rather limiting but elements of our mission can be included.
- B.) **THE MERGER MESSAGE:** The Advancement Center serves students – past, present and future. Whether you are a parent of a current Washington Township student, an alumnus of North Central High School, or a Washington Township community member we all have pride in what our schools have done and will continue to do. While our community is wide, our focus is narrow. By merging the resources of both the Washington Township Schools Foundation and the North Central Alumni Association, supporters of the entire district now have a central place to connect.
- The Objective: This gives historical perspective about our organization. It explains where we came from and who we represent now.
 - The Audience: Donors past and present, parents of MSDWT, community, and alumni first and foremost.
 - Best Communication Channels: class reunion mailings, donor communications, verbal face to face communications, events, and press releases
- C.) **ALUMNI:** With over 40,000 alumni living around the world, our network is strong. Tapping into that network and realizing its potential is the job of The AC. North Central alumni are a diverse and unique group connected through shared experiences and The Advancement Center is the only organization within Washington Township that is a resource for NCHS reunions. We provide resources for reunion execution, networking of alumni and storytelling of your high school's successes today. Whether it is helping your class come together for a reunion, re-uniting at Homecoming, or recognizing our best through the NCHS Hall of Fame, we want to bring alumni together.
- The Objective: We want alumni to know that the AC is their spot for all things reunions. We are the source of information for alumni.
 - The Audience: All MSDWT alumni
 - Best Communication Channels: alumni communications, social media, class reunions, Homecoming messaging
- D.) **GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS:** The Advancement Center gives an average of \$500,000 in grants, scholarships and designated gifts each year. Gifts to the Annual Fund make up the majority of that amount. Alumni, parents, teachers and community members make annual gifts to The Advancement Center. As a generous sign of their belief in our grants process, approximately two-thirds of the district's faculty pledge a percentage of each paycheck to support The Advancement Center! Additionally, each year, The Advancement Center sponsors two large fundraising events: The Great North Run & Fitness Fair and the BASH.
- The Objective: This message highlights the amount we give, how we give it and who we give it to.
 - The Audience: Interested donors and sponsors
 - Best Communication Channels: face to face communication is the key to this message, social media, website, newsletters, and annual fund
- E.) **WHY WE NEED PRIVATE FUNDING:** Public schools need the support of private money because public education funding has not kept up with the cost of providing the latest technology, teaching materials and supplementary enrichment experiences that parents have come to expect for their children. Every year public school funding decreases yet the needs of our students and teachers increases. The Advancement Center provides private dollars to help maintain the quality of education Washington Township residents have come to expect.
- The Objective: Education



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- The Audience: community members, donors, sponsors, alumni
- Best Communication Channels: social media, website and face to face communications

F.) **WAYS TO GIVE:** The Advancement Center has many ways to give money.

- The Annual Fund is a great way to give unrestricted money and is the main vehicle to support classroom grants. The Annual Fund allows The AC to direct grant funding to the areas of greatest need and impact.
 - i. If a donor gives over \$1,000 to the Annual Fund they are enrolled in the 1955 Society.
- The Advancement Center manages endowed gifts that are used to provide annual support for great programs throughout the district. Donors can give to support the lasting legacy of those programs or can choose to have their entire gift benefit a unique cause or organization in Washington Township.
- Thank-a-Teacher honors a special person in your child's school with a minimum \$10 donation. The honoree will receive a special card and notepad. Thank-a Teacher gifts are especially appropriate during the holiday season and at the close of the school year.
- Memorial and honor donations are a fitting way to memorialize and recognize a loved one.
- Order an Indiana education license plate for \$40, and designate Washington Township Schools as your beneficiary. A portion of your fee covers plate administrative costs, \$6.75 funds elementary school counselors and \$18.75 goes directly to MSDWT.
- The Legacy Society is a way to include Washington Township Schools in your estate plans.
- Buy-A-Brick for \$60 for 4" X 8" and \$100 for 8" X 8" that will be placed in Brick Plaza, located at the north end of the North Central High School football stadium. You may inscribe the brick with a name or saying and enjoy it for years to come.
 - i. The Objective: To highlight the many ways to give to The AC and the different amounts that can all make a difference.
 - ii. The Audience: potential donors, alumni, MSDWT parents
 - iii. Best Communication Channels: newsletter, website, face to face meetings, annual fund, back to school nights, individual school communications and business cards

G.) **GRANTS:** As of spring of 2017, The Advancement Center has awarded over \$3.4 million in total to grants that have directly supported our students and classrooms. In the 2016-17 school year over \$114,000 was awarded in classroom and professional development grants. The Advancement Center Board of Directors dedicates up to 35% of The Advancement Center's annual grants budget for the professional development of our staff and as of spring 2017, we are proud to have awarded over \$900,000 in PD grants that directly support the advancement of our teachers.

- The Objective: AC staff, board members and MSDWT staff should all have these numbers at their fingertips.
- The Audience: MSDWT staff, potential donors, sponsors, AC board
- Best Communication Channels: annual fund, website, any and all communications, social media, any press releases, PR and advertising

H.) **SCHOLARSHIPS:** Each year, The Advancement Center oversees a portfolio of over 15 scholarships, providing college opportunities for dozens of North Central graduates looking to further their education. In 2016-17, The Advancement Center awarded or distributed a total of 18 Scholarships for a total of \$28,500.

- The Objective: MSDWT alumni, board members and AC staff should all have these numbers at their fingertips.
- The Audience: MSDWT alumni, students, staff, donors, sponsors and board
- Best Communication Channels: annual fund, website, any and all communications, social media, any press releases, PR and advertising, alumni communications



I.) EVENTS:

- The Great North Run and Fitness Fair is The Advancement Center's spring fundraiser and raises over \$38,000 for our organization. Typical attendance exceeds over 2,100 people. This is a great event to not only raise money for our mission, but to create goodwill within our community, promote a healthy agenda and positive brand awareness. This event is put on by a committee of volunteers led by The Advancement Center's director of development. The event is a 5K, 10K & Fun Run that takes place on the North Central campus and surrounding neighborhoods and includes a celebrity guest race starter, full Fitness Fair and free food and drink provided by sponsors.
- The Advancement Center's annual fall BASH is our primary fundraiser. This event features a performance by the North Central Counterpoints, food, drink and a large expertly cultivated silent auction and other interactive ways to donate. The BASH raises over \$75,000 for The Advancement Center and is coordinated by a dedicated committee of both board members and volunteers led by the director of development.
- The Homecoming Pre-Game Party is an annual event sponsored by The Advancement Center that takes place during North Central's Homecoming in September. This event features music, food, alumni meeting points, giveaways and spirit activities for all ages. Reunion committees are encouraged to schedule their reunions for this Homecoming weekend.
 - i. The Objective: Spread the word on the events the AC hosts and the good these events are doing. Your support of these events is essential.
 - ii. The Audience: local community, MSDWT community, board of directors, MSDWT staff
 - iii. Best Communication Channels: social media, radio, newsletter, website, internal MSDWT communications

J.) GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS PROCESS:

- **Grants:** Grant requests are considered in the fall and winter. Applications are online accessible through the grants page on The AC's website. The committee, consisting of members from the board of directors, review applications and interview the grant writers to gain a deeper understanding for the grant. The entire committee then reviews each grant application to allocate support as funding allows. Additionally, The AC works with Donors Choose to provide a match (up to \$30,000 in aggregate) for teachers in Washington Township who submit a proposal of \$1,500 or less. That allows grants to be possible outside of our normal bi-annual cycle and incentivizes donors outside of our own community to support Washington Township Schools.
- **Scholarships:** Scholarship applications are considered once a year in the spring. North Central seniors can visit The AC's website starting in mid-December and complete the online application. Once the application process closes the committee reviews and interviews finalist. Once scholarships are awarded, funds are then sent directly to the student's bursar account for the institution of which they will be attending. Funds are never directly distributed to students. Distributed awards are coordinated through the North Central college counseling office and North Central faculty pursuant to the guidelines for each individual endowment.
 - i. The Objective: This message answers the question: how do we determine who gets the money. This question is asked to board members and AC staff often.
 - ii. The Audience: MSDWT staff, NCHS alumni/students/staff, donors, sponsors
 - iii. Best Communication Channels: internal MSDWT communication, website, this document

K.) STRUCTURE OF THE AC: The Advancement Center is made up of a board of directors typically consisting of alumni, community members, business owners, parents or staff in the district. Each board member is an active participant on two committees. These committees and the business of The AC is overseen by the



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C.E.O. and development director, both full time staff members.

- The Objective: Transparency
- The Audience: donors, sponsors, alumni
- Best Communication Channels: face to face communications, website

2018 COMMUNICATIONS GOALS:

- Four newsletters sent electronically
- Three email blasts
- Update content on the AC website
 - Updating the grants section of the website to be more on par with other organizations
- Create a 2018 marketing calendar
- Use the holidays and this document to develop a robust social media approach
- Engage board members to contribute more content
- Develop more content from outside sources
- Continue WJEL Panther Profiles
- Annual Report in the fall
- Increase the AC's brand awareness with seniors at NCHS by including AC information in the graduation packet or develop clever marketing material to distribute

2018 HOLIDAYS:

Celebrate the 100th Day of School: January

Library Week: April 8 – 14

Martin Luther King Junior Day: January 15

Earth Day: April 22

Black History Month: February

Children's Book Week: April 30-May 6

Valentine's Day: February 14

Physical Fitness Month: May

President's Day: February 19

Teacher Appreciation Week: May 7 – 11

Women's History Month: March

Last Day of School: May 23

Music in Our Schools Month: March

First Day of School: August 1

Read Across America Day: March 2

Homecoming: September

Great North Run: March 10

BASH: November 3

April Fool's Day: April 1

Thanksgiving: November 22

Math Awareness Month: April

Giving Tuesday: November 27

Poetry Month: April