

DISTRICT PLANNING

Surpassing social media with crowdsourced community solutions

Superintendent Dr. Lorna Lewis faced a considerable communication challenge. Divisive social media commentary on a Facebook Group called Plainview Moms was dominating discourse in her district around contentious issues and polarizing the school community.

In the fall of 2018, the district focused its attention on its two middle schools, one with increasing enrolment and the other with a declining student population. Dr. Lewis needed a solution to the enrollment challenge that would get broad-based community support. She also wanted a new engagement approach that would ensure all voices were heard on the issue, not just the loud ones in the room.

Thoughtexchange allowed Dr. Lewis and her team to cut through the social media noise and find a solid community-backed decision. At the same time, the platform set a new bar for engagement.

“We had been in a reactive approach, rather than setting our own course, which is what Thoughtexchange allowed us to do,” Dr. Lewis explains.

A lively and engaged community discourse

Past engagement efforts consisted of community forums and conventional survey tools. This time, in the weeks leading up to the district’s middle school community forum, Dr. Lewis and her team used an exchange to ask for thoughts about the district’s enrolment challenges and solutions. By the night of the forum, about 1,000 people had shared and rated more than 11,000 thoughts.

” *Thoughtexchange is a tool that says we’re a 21st-century school district...It helps address an issue we all face as superintendents: to allow all voices, not just the loudest, to be equal partners in the conversation.*

Dr. Lorna Lewis, Superintendent

“Previously, when we used surveys, I would have to sift through and try to glean what’s important, what’s repeated, and what’s a priority,” she notes. “With Thoughtexchange, I didn’t have to do that, and it was live at the forum. People could see the thoughts coming in.”



Thought Leader

Dr. Lorna Lewis

Title

Superintendent



Industry:

K-12 Education

Location:

New York

Size:

5200 students

Use Case:

District Planning
Communications



CHALLENGE

Biased social media commentary was setting the agenda on important issues.

SOLUTION

Thoughtexchange allowed the district to move past the loud voices in the room and have open and transparent discussions with its entire school community and crowdsource what's truly important.

RESULTS

The district has earned the trust of school community members who now feel that their voices matter and social media no longer sets the agenda.

Following the forum, the district was able to present the school board with 11 options that were crowdsourced directly from the school community.

“We had a very lively and engaged discourse with the community. Thoughtexchange allowed for creative ideas to flow from places we never expected they would flow from,” Dr. Lewis shares.

21st-century district communications

Thoughtexchange is proving to be a gamechanger in how the district engages with its community. The software ensures social media chatter from the loud few doesn't trump the thoughts and bright ideas of the many. It has replaced cynicism with trust between the district and the community it serves.

Also, the ease and simplicity of the platform proved to be a huge selling point for the district's well-educated and tech-savvy community.

“Thoughtexchange reinforced for the community that the board is willing to listen and welcome ideas. The benefit is that we have a community that feels that what they say matters more,” Dr. Lewis explains. “Consequently, our forums are richer. Our conversations are richer.”

Since the district held its first exchange in 2018, Thoughtexchange has become Plainview-Old Bethpage's go-to communication platform. For example, Dr. Lewis and her team have held exchanges to solicit ideas on how to improve school evacuation protocol, special education, and student grading and evaluation.

“Communication is key in the 21st-century world. Thoughtexchange is a tool that says we are a 21st-century school district and we are looking for innovative ways to run our district,” Dr. Lewis shares. “It helps address an issue we all face as superintendents: to allow all voices, not just the loudest, to be equal partners in the conversation.”

Thoughtexchange provides software solutions that bring people together, build trust and make progress on important topics. Whether it's employees, customers or whole communities, our solutions effortlessly connect you to your stakeholders. People can confidentially and independently share their thoughts, appreciate other points of view and understand how their perspectives are connected to decisions. Our patent-pending data analysis gives you the insights to make informed decisions and take action. Learn more at www.thoughtexchange.com

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