*Developed by members from
the following organizations:*

*Allegan Area ESA
Berrien RESA
C.O.O.R. ISD
Ingham ISD
Lenawee ISD
Muskegon Area ISD
Oakland Schools
Washtenaw ISD
Wayne RESA
Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators ISD PR Network
Michigan School Public Relations Association*

MAISA ISD Public Relations Network

Communication
Plan Toolkit

*How to engage your stakeholders and
reinforce the value of your ISD*

**ISD PR
NETWORK**
Intermediate School District
Public Relations Network

MAISA MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION
OF INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS
SUPPORTING REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES

MSPRA Michigan School
Public Relations
Association

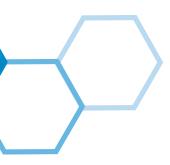www.gomaisa.org   www.gomaisa.org   www.mspra.org

This Toolkit is to be used by us - the leaders, administrators and school communicators of Michigan's 56 Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) - to collectively share our story.

In order for stakeholders to recognize what we do every day, we must work collaboratively to highlight our educational value and cost-saving services, showcase the scope of our resources and support, and feature the success of our vast array of programs while also celebrating our own unique offerings. It is recommended this Toolkit be used as a supplemental guide to further promote who we are and what we do. Updates will be made to the Toolkit annually. The Toolkit was initially issued in June 2022.

This resource highlights some of the ways school districts may choose to communicate about the value of ISDs. Always consider your ISD's policies, codes of conduct, local community needs, and your local climate as you address the information needs of your stakeholders.

All communication samples included in this document and in associated files have been used with permission.

Prepared by:

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Acknowledgments - Thank you to our collaborators in the development of this Toolkit:

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Ingham Intermediate
School District
A Regional Educational Service Agency

Thank you, Ingham ISD, for printing copies of the Toolkits for each ISD in Michigan.

Table of Contents

SECTION I: Sharing our Story

What is a Communication Toolkit?

A communication toolkit is a collection of suggested strategies, best practices and sample materials that can be used to build capacity for communication and marketing, which can promote organizational recognition and growth.

This Toolkit has been designed for the 56 Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in the state of Michigan to spread awareness and demonstrate the value that ISDs bring to public education. Designed to be customizable for each ISD, its contents include a detailed Communication Plan, complete with multiple objectives, strategies, tactics and activities, as well as a wealth of communication and marketing resources that will assist in the execution of the plan.

Who Created This Toolkit?

The Toolkit was created by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators [ISD Public Relations Network](#) (MAISA ISD PR Network). The MAISA ISD PR Network is a coalition of ISD/RESA/ESA communicators who collaborate on MAISA-related communication initiatives, coordinate planned ISD communication for identified education issues, and connect for professional development and networking to support ISD communication throughout the state.

What is Included in the Toolkit?
- **Section I** - contains an overview of ISDs and their history as well as key messages and data points to consider when sharing our stories.
- **Section II** - has an overview of the Research - Planning - Implementation - Evaluation (RPIE) process to support ISDs in developing a proactive communication plan.
- **Section III** - features a [customizable editorial calendar](#) that can be tailored to guide an ISD's internal and external communication over the course of a school year.
- **Section IV** - includes the common, statewide [Communication Plan for all ISDs to follow](#) as we share our stories now and in the future.
- **Section V** - provides a listing of Frequently Asked Questions as well as other resources to support successful communication.

History of Michigan's Intermediate School Districts (ISDs)

The Michigan Legislature created Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in 1962 to offer quality and equitable educational opportunities for students and schools throughout the state. Since then, Michigan's ISDs - they may also be called Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs), Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), Regional Educational Service Districts (RESDs) or Educational Service Districts (ESDs) - have led the way in educational innovation. ISDs are designed to provide and coordinate essential services with their local, constituent school districts to facilitate teaching and learning. They also conserve resources by providing consolidated administrative services in the areas of business, technology, and health and safety.

By coordinating efforts and resources, ISDs provide specialized services to students that would not otherwise be affordable or feasible. These services can include special education, vocational education, language programs, early childhood education, parent services, student wellness support, community involvement, equity and inclusion initiatives, special populations assistance, transportation, extracurricular

activities, lifelong learning and adult education, and other necessary and exciting offerings that are shared across districts for the success of every learner.

By law, Michigan's 56 ISDs serve all public schools in Michigan's 83 counties including rural, suburban and urban school districts and public school academies.

What Do ISDs Do?

For more than 60 years, ISDs have worked with local school districts, the Michigan Department of Education, business and industry and community groups to support student achievement and leverage resources by:

- **Focusing on Teaching and Learning**
  ISDs offer thousands of training sessions each year to educators, keeping them current on the latest research and teaching methods.
- **Offering Specialized Student Services**
  Local school districts depend on ISDs to meet the ever-growing needs in Early Childhood (birth to age 5) and Parent Education, Special Education (birth to age 26), Career and Technical Education, Career Preparation, Talent Development, Literacy and Math Essentials/Coaching, Online and Digital courses, Early/Middle College, Student Activities, Extended Day, Alternative and Adult Education programs, and Court-Involved Youth and Homeless Education programs.
- **Maximizing Resources through Shared Operational Services**
  Quality, efficiency and cost containment are the hallmark of ISDs as they help districts share services in technology, instruction, transportation, business, communication and support services, teacher and school staff training and purchasing.
- **Developing Partnerships**
  ISDs are often key partners in local economic development through their community ties with colleges and universities, businesses, industries and human service agencies.
- **Supporting Technology Services**
  ISDs are usually technology leaders in their region. ISDs often manage the area's fiber network, provide internet access, obtain lower costs for computer hardware and software, provide internet safety filters, purchase digital collections, promote online and digital learning options and provide technical support.
- **Assisting with School Improvement and Mandates**
  ISDs help member districts follow often-complex state and federal education standards, meet state and federal requirements, secure grants, measure student performance and growth, and assist low performing schools.
- **Customizing Services to Meet Unique Needs**
  Each ISD works with its local school districts and community partners to develop the mix of products and programs to maximize benefits for that area.

These are just some of the ways in which today's ISDs serve urban, suburban and rural K–12 districts, enabling even the most challenged schools to offer otherwise unavailable educational opportunities to its students. And, ISDs are being asked to do more for students, schools, and communities every day.

What is the Value of ISDs?

- Michigan's ISDs provide a readily-accessible, statewide system to meet current, future and unique education needs.
- ISDs add value to student learning, schools and communities by providing student-centered, data-driven and expanded educational opportunities.

- ISDs employ their six decades of successful experience to:
  - o Train teachers and support staff in the latest research-based methods and best practices.
  - o Pilot innovative programs districts couldn't afford on their own.
  - o Coordinate special education and other specialized student services across their region.
  - o Maximize resources for K–12 districts by providing shared operational services.
  - o Advocate for their constituents to policymakers and leaders at the local, state and federal level.
- Now, more than ever, Michigan's ISDs are ensuring high-quality, effective, efficient, equitable and essential education, everywhere in Michigan.

<u>Why are ISDs Important?</u>
- Michigan's ISDs are vital to Michigan's statewide education system providing critical infrastructure for and access to Michigan's public schools.
- ISDs are the only educational entities with 100% access to every public school to ensure implementation of six core services:
  - o Teaching and Learning
  - o Specialized Student Services
  - o Shared Operational Services
  - o Developing Partnerships
  - o Technology Services
  - o School Improvement, Assessment and Mandates
- ISDs are responsive to stakeholder needs - customizing services based on local conditions and educational requirements. As local school districts request specific programs and services, ISDs design ways to meet those requests; that's why services may vary from one ISD to another.
- ISDs often use their unique position - between local school districts and the state - to serve as liaisons, connecting local schools and community partners (like the health department) in collaborative work to benefit the entire community.

Key Messages

- ISDs are vital to the operation of Michigan's public education system.
- Since the Michigan Legislature created them in 1962, ISDs have provided student-centered, data-driven and expanded educational opportunities.
- Michigan's ISDs continue to successfully:
  - o Maximize resources for K–12 districts by providing shared operational services.
  - o Train teachers and support staff in the latest research-based methods and best practices.
  - o Pilot innovative programs districts couldn't afford on their own.
  - o Coordinate special education and other specialized student services across their region.
  - o Develop key partnerships to benefit the schools and community.
  - o Provide technology support.
  - o Aid school districts in meeting state and federal requirements.
  - o Respond to stakeholder needs, customizing services based on local conditions and educational requirements.
- Now, more than ever, Michigan's ISDs are ensuring high-quality, effective, efficient, equitable and essential education, everywhere in Michigan.

- ISDs are the only educational entities with 100% access to every Michigan public school district providing a readily-accessible, statewide system to meet current, future and unique education needs.
- To learn more about the integral role of ISDs in education, contact your Intermediate School District or visit the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators website at (www.gomaisa.org) or call MAISA at (517) 327-9263.

Statewide Statistics
(Data taken from Michigan Made ISDs - https://bit.ly/MImadeISDs, updated in October 2021.)

- Number of students in schools: **1.5 million (Pre K-12)**
- Number of school districts served by ISDs: **831**
    - **537** traditional public schools
    - **294** charter schools
- Number of students receiving Special Education services: **210,550**
- Number of children in Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP): **33,223**
- Number of children in Early On: **21,126**
- Number of Career and Technical Education (CTE) students: **111,073**
- Number of school board members (both local districts and ISDs): **4,000**

Local Statistics
Share your story! Localize data by including information specific to your service area. You may already compile these data points for your annual reports. Consider highlighting information like this to emphasize the role and impact of your ISD:
- Number of students in center-based programs and the cost-savings realized through those programs.
- Shared service opportunities including technology, business office, pupil accounting, communication and human resources.
- CTE enrollment numbers and the number of programs offered by industry.
- Early/Middle College data including credits earned and degrees achieved.
- Number of credit hours offered through professional development and/or the number of ISD staff teaching those courses.
- Number of children served through the Parents as Teachers program.

SECTION II: Using the RPIE Process to Share Our Story

What is RPIE?

The RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation) Communication Process

The following Communication Plan is organized according to the RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation) process used by school communicators across the nation. This process enables districts to design and maintain a comprehensive, planned, two-way communication program that helps build mutual understanding and support between the schools and their publics. The RPIE process involves four steps:

1. **Research:** Identify the issue and gather relevant information - through your own investigation/first-hand experience and/or that which is reported by others.
2. **Planning:** Use your research to develop a communication plan and messages; use identified tools to communicate with your target publics/audiences.
3. **Implementation:** Follow the steps in your communication plan to manage the information/seek input.
4. **Evaluation:** Examine your communication efforts to determine if communication goals were met. Use evaluation results to modify your communication plan, if needed.

If you have questions about the RPIE process or school public relations, please contact your district's school communicator or the [Michigan School Public Relations Association](http://www.mspra.org) (www.mspra.org).

Research

Identify information (re)sources.
- Seek out and use information from existing resources.
  - Identify and reach out to leaders within your ISD who can clearly articulate your district's work.
  - Glean information from existing documents and sources that may already highlight your services and key areas of work. These may include:
    - Your ISD's strategic plan
    - Your ISD's annual or mid-year reports
    - Regular staff, family or community newsletters or communications that feature your work
    - Any recent millage or bond campaign pre- or post-surveys or focus group data.
    - Social media posts
    - Audits or surveys about your district's communication practices
  - If needed, conduct your own additional research (surveys, focus groups, polls).
  - Make sure your school communication professional is part of the team leading this effort.

Planning

Use your research to develop a communication plan and messages that fit your individual ISD, and then use identified tools to communicate with your target publics/audiences.
- Set broad, overall goals of what you want to achieve through your communication.
- Identify target publics and key messages. What do they need to know about your ISD?
  - **Internal**: Board, staff/employees/contracted and third-party employees, parents/guardians of program students, students and volunteers.

- ○ **External**: Local districts and boards of education, community, media, legislators, Michigan Department of Education staff, other agencies and organizations, businesses and vendors, and local district parents/guardians.
- Identify effective communication tools. How does each group receive its information? You may list several methods per audience, such as email, voicemail or text message, notification system, social media, district website or app, meetings, announcements, fliers, newsletters, news releases, etc.
- Set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound) objectives. Identify strategies to help you reach those objectives, then tactics – the actual activities you will carry out. Each tactic should be assigned to a specific person or team with a due date to ensure completion.

Implementation (by Target Audience)

Follow the steps in your communication plan to manage the information you share. Use the sample suggestions from Section III of the Toolkit, the Communication Editorial Calendar (page 11), to integrate ideas into your storytelling objectives. Use the following table to help you chart your efforts. As each tactic is implemented, check off completed activities and record your results.

Example: Sharing the ISDs Professional Development (PD) Catalog for the upcoming school year with both internal and external audiences.

Audience	Communication Strategy	Messages	Tactics and Activities	Budget	Staff Responsible	Timetable	Evaluation
Internal-Special Education and Instructional Services staff	*Employ ISD PR Communication Toolkit pieces to inform internal stakeholders of ISD services and programs.*	*Michigan ISDs continually successfully train teachers and support staff in the latest research-based methods and best practices.*	*Share the upcoming PD catalog during all local district curriculum and principal meetings.* *Follow-up your conversations with registration details using Smore newsletter tool and QR codes.*	*No additional costs (Smore subscription paid annually)*	*Instructional Services team*	*PD catalog ready for publication by May 30. Available on district website by May 31.*	*Measure increased registration rates.* *Monitor questions about training sessions (phone, email and website inquiries).*

Audience	Communication Strategy	Messages	Tactics and Activities	Budget	Staff Responsible	Timetable	Evaluation
External- All local district teachers and support staff	*Employ ISD PR Communication Toolkit pieces to inform external stakeholders of ISD services and programs.*	*ISDs are the only educational entities with 100% access to every Michigan public school district providing a readily accessible, statewide system to meet current, future and unique education needs.*	*Share Annual Report via mini video series on Facebook and district website.* *Store videos on YouTube.*	*$2,000 for production and editing work.*	*Comm. Team*	*Begin filming in April.* *Edit raw footage in May.* *Close caption videos in late May.* *Release date set for the last week of school.*	*Review Facebook and YouTube analytics.* *Be responsive to engaged viewers.*

Evaluation

Examine your communication efforts to determine if overall communication objectives were met. Use evaluation results to modify your communication plan, if needed.

- What messages are you hearing from:
    - Your staff?
    - Your families?
    - Community members?
- Keep track of topic-related phone calls, social media posts, website clicks and other inquiries.
- Determine tone and type of any media coverage.
    - What worked?
    - What didn't work?
    - What would you do differently? Adjust your communication plan based on your evaluation.

SECTION III: Sharing our Story Throughout the Year with an Editorial Calendar

ISDs are service focused in all that we do. From supporting local district needs to providing individualized education opportunities for students in our center-based programs, we are busy! Unfortunately, with a service focus always in mind, we often miss opportunities to share our story consistently throughout the year.

In addition to your already-planned communication activities, consider using the following editorial calendar to further promote your organization. Suggestions are based on a school calendar cycle. Links to sample materials from across the state have also been collected for you to *"admire and acquire"* for your own community (https://bit.ly/MichiganISDs)! Use the QR Code (below) to access the samples as well!

Annual Topics:
- Progress on Strategic Plan
- Annual Report
- Awards, community recognition, grant presentations and other honors for both staff and the ISD
- Board resolutions, policy updates and board-supported projects
- Professional development activities (speakers, innovative presentations and success stories)
- Early/Middle College and dual enrollment events (open houses, signing days, graduations, celebrations)
- Celebration of business and community organizations and partnerships
- Special Education services and activities including classroom activities as well as therapeutic and diagnostic services (occupational and physical therapy, deaf and hard of hearing support, vision consulting services, speech-language therapy, etc.)
- Social-emotional health and mental health programming
- Instructional services for students and professionals
- Technology innovations and other assistive supports
- Student success stories in center-based programs or classrooms, Peer-to-Peer activities, community-based instruction opportunities, early childhood events and Career and Technical Education stories
- Transition services, events and success stories
- Retirees or longevity milestones
- Building construction notices and updates
- Graduation and completion ceremonies
- Field trips and other student outings
- Special program events and celebrations including McKinney-Vento Programs
- Public ISD budget hearings

You are already doing great work! Be sure to communicate about your accomplishments - share your story!

Editorial Calendar

*Note: Many topics suggested can be modified for both internal and external audiences. Be sure to always inform your internal staff of news and announcements first!

The following list is not inclusive of all recognitions and holidays.

Month	Internal Story Topics* *Board, staff, contracted and third party employees, parents/guardians of program students, program students and volunteers*	External Story Topics* *Local district staff and boards of education, community, media, legislators, state departments, other community agencies and organizations, businesses and vendors, and local school district parents/guardians*
July	● Board summer retreat or team-building exercises ● Long-term or strategic planning committee work ● School Improvement team sessions ● Special project workgroups	● Summer Read and Play groups ● Summer camps ● Summer school programming ● Required parent information and notifications ● Professional learning events hosted by the ISD ● Career and Technical Education summer activities ● Education outreach programs offered via snail mail (e.g. Math-in-the-Mail)
August	● Kick-off/ Back-to-School celebrations ● Job postings ● Welcome of new hires ● Reminder of Strategic Plan goals and School Improvement objectives	● National Immunization Awareness Month ● Welcome back to school messages ● Bus/Transportation safety reminders ● Back-to-School Celebrations
September	● World Physical Therapy Day ● National IT Professionals Day ● Attendance Awareness Month ● Constitution and Citizenship Day (always September 17)	● National Deaf Awareness Month ● National Hispanic Awareness Month (September 15-October 15)
October	● School Custodian Appreciation Day (always October 2) ● National School Principal Month ● World Occupational Therapy Day (always October 27) ● Coaches Day (always October 6) ● National School Lunch Week ● Digital Citizenship Week ● Walk to School Day	● National Farm to School Month ● National Bullying Prevention Month ● Dyslexia Awareness Month ● LGBTQ+ History Month ● National Book Month ● World Mental Health Day (always October 10) ● National School Bus Safety Week (third full week of October) ● National Disability Employment Awareness Month

		● Indigenous Peoples' Day ● DECA Week/Month
November	● National School Psychology Week ● Substitute Educators Day ● American Education Week (similar to May) ● Education Support Staff Professionals Day	● National Homeless Youth Awareness Month ● Veterans Day (always November 11) ● National Community Education Day ● Native American Heritage Month
December	● National Special Education Day (always December 2) ● International Volunteer Day (always December 5) ● Computer Science Education Week	● Winter break ● Semester end
January	● National School Board Appreciation Month ● National Mentoring Month	● Martin Luther King, Jr. Day events
February	● Career and Technical Education Month ● National School Counseling Week ● National Future Farmers of America Week ● National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day (always February 15)	● National Black History Month
March	● Youth Art Month ● Music in our Schools Month ● Read Across America Day (always March 2) ● Maintenance Worker Appreciation Day ● National School Social Worker Week	● Women's History Month ● International Women's Day ● Reading Month ● Pi Day
April	● Administrative Professionals Day ● School Library Month ● School Librarian Appreciation Day ● National Paraprofessional Appreciation Day ● Math Awareness Month ● Poetry Month ● National Assistant Principals	● Autism Acceptance Month ● Arab American Heritage Month ● Child Abuse Prevention Month ● Month of the Early Child ● Earth Day (always April 22) ● National Welding Month (CTE)

	Week ● School Bus Driver Appreciation Day	
May	● School Principal's Day ● Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week ● School Lunch Hero Day ● National Substitute Teacher Appreciation Week ● School Nurse Day ● National Speech Language Pathologist Day ● Bike to School Day ● School Communicators Day - (second Friday of May)	● National Mental Health Awareness Month ● Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month ● Better Speech and Hearing Month
June	● Track and Field Day ● Last Day of School	● National Safety Month ● LGBTQ+ Pride Month ● National Hunger Awareness Month ● Flag Day ● Juneteenth ● Summer camps

Expand your Story by Highlighting Collaborative Partnerships

Looking for additional ideas to aid in your storytelling? Consider the following Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators' (MAISA) Networks (https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/) and the work you may be doing with them:

- Early Childhood Administrators Network (ECAN) (https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/early-childhood-administrators-network-ecan/)
- General Education Leadership Network (GELN) (https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/general-education-leadership-network-geln/)
- ISD Public Relations Network (ISD PR) (https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/isd-public-relations/)
- Michigan Collaboration Hub (MiCH) https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/michigan-collaboration-hub-mi-ch/
- Michigan Education Technology Leaders (METL) (https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/michigan-education-technology-leaders/)
- Special Education Instructional Leadership Network (SEILN) (https://www.gomaisa.org/organizations/special-education-instructional-leadership-network-seiln/)

SECTION IV: ISD Communication Plan

This section of the Toolkit contains our statewide Communication Plan to engage our stakeholders and reinforce the value of ISDs. The following plan follows the Accreditation in Public Relations best practices using the RPIE process. While some of the deliverables produced were timebound (Communication Plan, Toolkit and launch of the Toolkit at the MAISA Summer 2022 Conference), it is expected that all ISDs in Michigan will make concerted efforts to share their story every year.

Issue and Opportunity Statements

ISDs provide valuable, equitable educational resources and support that impact families, students and communities across Michigan. A lack of awareness and understanding of ISDs can lead to lack of support and funding that affects families, students and communities.

At a state level, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators ISD Public Relations (MAISA ISD PR) Network and the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) have the opportunity to encourage and support ISDs across the state in promoting themselves and their services.

At the local level, individual ISDs have the opportunity to increase both internal and external stakeholder understanding and awareness of their services and value to their communities.

This dynamic Communication Plan and its related collaterals can assist ISDs with continuous, two-way stakeholder communication that helps increase awareness, understanding and support of ISDs and their services.

Note: Throughout this Communication Plan, the term Intermediate School District (ISD) is used per the Michigan School Code. This is intended to be inclusive of all Michigan regional educational service agencies, whether they are known as ISDs, RESAs, ESAs, or ESDs.

Ways to Address Issues and Opportunities
- Produce a dynamic, communication plan and related collaterals to assist ISDs with continuous, two-way stakeholder communication and present this plan at the MAISA Summer Conference in June.
- Focus on promoting ISD work regularly (e.g. using monthly calendar celebrations that may highlight efforts within MAISA's networks).
- Emphasize ISD core services and that each entity customizes services for its constituents.
- Revisit and modify this work (at least annually or as needed) to keep it relevant.

Communication Plan Timeline
- MAISA ISD PR Network will develop a Communication Plan by May 11, 2022.
- MAISA ISD PR Network will develop a Communication Toolkit for ISDs by June 1, 2022.
- MAISA ISD PR Network will create and provide a presentation at the MAISA Summer Conference held June 22-24, 2022.
- Identified individuals will implement and evaluate the Communication Plan on a recurring basis.

Communication Plan - Research

A subcommittee of the MAISA ISD PR Network reviewed existing data and other primary source material from across the state to shape the development of this Communication Plan and its accompanying Toolkit. Key data and sources reviewed included:

- Allegan Area ESA's Strategic Plan Survey
- COOR ISD's Strategic Planning Input Sessions
- MAISA's Michigan-Made ISDs Report
- MASA's 2021-22 Superintendent's Calendar
- Monroe County Intermediate School District: A Case Study (2008)
- Muskegon ISD's 2021-22 millage survey and focus group data
- Muskegon ISD's Strategic Plan Focus Group Process
- Michigan ISD Statistical Summary Data 2020-21
- Public Sector Consultants' 2012 White Paper
- State of Michigan's 2022 Office of Career and Technical Education Data
- Washtenaw ISD's 2021 Internal Communication Survey
- Wayne RESA's Annual Report (2015-16)
- Wayne RESA's 2020 Enhancement Millage Flier

SWOT Analysis

As part of its research, the MAISA ISD PR Network conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis related to awareness and understanding of ISDs at its March 2022 meeting. Themes identified are listed below.

Strengths (internal, organizational strengths):
- Financial resources to do things LEAs cannot do.
- Able to quickly and readily customize services.
- Experience of staff.
- Professional development.
- Access to a lot of data - leverage.
- Long history to draw from - documented public entity.
- Don't have vast amount of competition for our services.
- Equitable opportunities for all students.
- Services provided are unique to ISDs.
- Services are broad enough that there could be many touch points for a family to interact with the ISD.
- Cost savings for cooperative bid pricing.

Weaknesses (internal, organizational weaknesses):
- ISD staff do not understand what we do; both across departments and on a broad scale due to the evolution and growth of ISDs' services over time.
- Siloed services impact customer service.
- Educators are too modest.
- Funding is different across the state to support student needs - based on community votes.

Opportunities (in the external environment):
- Community-wide collaborations.

- ISDs have funds to help LEAs achieve their goals.
- Grants and alternative funding opportunities.
- High level of trust at the classroom level.
- Meant to be a collaborative service organization to LEAs and the local community.
- ISDs provide customizable services to LEAs.

Threats (in the external environment):
- Changing laws and directives.
- Different service models across ISDs/RESAs – Because we provide customizable services, it makes it harder to collectively communicate what we do.
- Lack of understanding of what an ISD is.
- Competing programming / funding - Early Colleges, Special Education programs and CTE.

Communication Plan - Planning

Research (outlined above) informed the development of this Communication Plan. Key publics, goals, objectives, strategies, tactics and activities have been broadly identified.

Identify Target Publics
- **Internal**: Board, staff/employees/contracted and third-party employees, parents/guardians (of program students), students, volunteers.
- **External**: Local districts and boards of education, community, media, legislators, MDE, other agencies and organizations, businesses and vendors, LEA parents.

Goal

The primary goal of this Communication Plan is to increase knowledge and support of ISDs so statewide ISDs are:
- considered an integral part of Michigan's educational system.
- known for coordinating essential services to their constituent school districts to facilitate teaching and learning.
- valued for providing specialized services to students that would not be affordable or feasible otherwise.
- seen as community conveners and builders of community collaboration.

Publics and Objectives

Publics are individuals or groups of people who: are mutually involved; have a common interest or aim, and/or are impacted by your actions. SMART Objectives are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.

Broad objectives are listed below for your reference. Individual ISDs should develop more specific objectives that are realistic, feasible and appropriate for their specific ISDs and publics.

Key Public: Internal
Choose specific key publics, such as: Special Education parents/guardians, CTE parents/guardians, ISD staff or contractors.
- Objective: Increase staff's (or parents/guardians') knowledge of ISD programs and services, so they may effectively communicate service scope to stakeholders.
- How will it be measured? Sample metrics are provided in the "Addendum" section. Choose what is

realistic and feasible for your ISD.
- By when? ISDs should choose implementation timelines that are realistic based on their own capacity.

Key Public: External

Choose specific key publics, such as: Businesses partnering with CTE programs, LEA superintendents, LEA staff, or LEA families.
- Objective: Increase knowledge of stakeholders about the value and importance of ISD services.
- How will it be measured? Sample metrics are provided in the "Addendum" section. Choose what is realistic and feasible for your ISD.
- By when? ISDs should choose implementation timelines that are realistic based on their own capacity.

Strategies, Tactics and Activities

- **Strategies**: How you will approach the challenge of working toward your objectives. How will you reach the objectives listed above (e.g. partner with ISD unions to deliver messages)?
- **Tactics**: Specific ways you will use your resources. These are specific elements of a strategy or tools for accomplishing a strategy (e.g. present at meetings of external publics).
- **Activities**: These are specific actions taken, tools created or work done to support or accomplish the tactic (e.g. six meetings, four social media posts, two publications). These are noted here, but not listed in the chart as they will be unique to your ISD.

Objective 1: Encourage ISDs to promote themselves and their services; support their efforts.

Who's responsible: MAISA ISD PR Network

Strategy 1: Help ISDs understand the value of outreach, building community relationships and storytelling.

Tactics:
1. Explain why ISDs need to continuously tell their story.
2. Indicate how they will be supported in this effort.
3. Review developed materials; emphasize individual ISDs should focus on the services they provide to their constituent districts and community.
4. Encourage participation in MAISA/MSPRA professional development offerings focused on communication best practices.
5. Present to partner organizations such as MAISA, MSBO, MASA, etc.

Strategy 2: Aid ISDs in continuously telling their stories throughout the year.

Tactics:
1. Help ISDs implement continuous, two-way, planned communication by developing and providing a user-friendly ISD Communication Plan and collateral materials including a Communication Toolkit.
2. Offer samples that could be used to highlight successes in their districts, including examples of first-person quotes, endorsements and testimonials from community members and groups.
3. Provide a calendar tool to use regularly to highlight service scope.
4. Build in a support component, especially for ISDs with fewer resources and/or new MSPRA members.

Objective 2: Over the next 12 months, increase stakeholders' understanding and awareness of the value of ISDs.

Who's responsible: Individual ISDs

Strategy 1: Increase knowledge of ISDs' work for internal stakeholders.

Tactics:
1. Employ MAISA ISD PR Communication Toolkit pieces for internal stakeholders.
2. Seek methods and/or design a medium to facilitate inter-departmental professional sharing. This may include targeted messaging to employee groups about other departments' work or accomplishments in your staff newsletter or other suggestions in the Toolkit.
3. Collaborate, as an institution, to compile and publish data that demonstrate the outcome of the work of your ISD.

Strategy 2: Increase knowledge of ISDs' work for external stakeholders.

Tactics:
1. Use MAISA ISD PR ISD Communication Toolkit pieces for external stakeholders.
2. Prioritize external stakeholders with highest impact and target communication.
3. Access, when needed, the MAISA ISD PR Network. The group offers communication plan review/consultation, especially for ISDs with fewer resources and/or new MSPRA members.

Objective 3: Ensure the Communication Plan continues in use.

Who's responsible: Both individual ISDs *and* MAISA ISD PR Network

Strategy 1 (for individual ISDs): Maintain regular check-ins about implementing your communication plan.

Tactics:
1. Appoint a chair or co-chairs to convene a committee to conduct check-ins on a regular basis.
2. Chair and/or committee to review what has been done, what has worked well, and seek areas of improvement. Plan and delegate upcoming work.
3. Continue referencing the Communication Plan, Toolkit and Calendar to keep telling your ISD's story. You will continually be educating existing and new stakeholders (new staff, new media, new parents, new legislators) about your current services.

Strategy 2 (for MAISA ISD PR Network): Continue existing MAISA subcommittee to maintain regular check-ins regarding the existing Communication Plan, Toolkit use and updates, and ways to support individual ISDs.

Tactics:
1. Confirm interest and participation on ISD PR Network subcommittee, and bring in additional members as needed.
2. Review what has been done, what has worked well, seek areas of improvement and plan upcoming work.
3. Work with MAISA staff to get feedback from individual ISDs re: actual Communication Plan and Toolkit use. Use feedback to make changes as needed.
4. Work with MAISA staff to ensure Communication Plan and Toolkit reminders are included in regular communication to MAISA members.

Communication Plan - Implementation

1. Follow the plan.
    - Review the data and research compiled earlier to identify targeted areas of work that may need to be highlighted. (For example, if you find that few people know of your CTE programs, you can focus specifically on increasing awareness and knowledge of your CTE programs. Use your data to help measure impact.)
    - Consider how you can strategically share your story with your stakeholders.
        - What's the state of your budget?
        - How much are you allocating?
        - How does this impact outcomes for your community?
    - Review strategies and tactics above and assign them to identified, responsible individuals.
    - Use regular check-in meetings to ensure work is completed and moving forward.

2. Focus on outcomes.
    - Know the difference between outputs vs. outcomes and focus on outcomes whenever possible. Outputs are actions or tasks completed (such as number of meetings held or social media posts), while outcomes focus on changes in awareness, knowledge, opinions or behavior (such as increased knowledge/support of what your ISD does). Consider surveying publics to see what their current knowledge/understanding is and then survey again in 6 to 12 months to see if changes have occurred.

Communication Plan - Evaluation

1. Evaluate the plan.
2. Review the plan's objectives, strategies and tactics.
3. Which ones were you able to accomplish?
4. How did members of each key public interpret the messages?
5. What data is available? [See sample ways to measure impact within each objective linked here](https://bit.ly/Sample_Ways_To_Evaluate) (https://bit.ly/Sample_Ways_To_Evaluate).
6. What worked?
7. What didn't work?
8. What changes need to be made for next year?
9. What additional resources are needed?
10. Continue to use this iterative process to implement, evaluate, adjust and repeat.

SECTION V: Additional Resources to Help Tell Your Story

Common Hashtag: #MichiganISDs

When sharing your ISD's story, include the universal #MichiganISDs hashtag in your social media posts in addition to your own unique hashtag. This will encourage others to understand that, while unique to our own communities, all ISDs are working together to support student success!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Michigan Intermediate School Districts

Consider adding these FAQs to your district website!

Q. What is an Intermediate School District?
A. An Intermediate School District or ISD is a regional educational service agency. When first formed, they were named Intermediate School Districts but now they may also be called Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs), Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), Regional Educational Service Districts (RESDs), or Educational Service Districts (ESDs).

Q. When and why were ISDs formed?
A. The Michigan Legislature formed Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in 1962 to offer quality and equitable educational opportunities for students and schools throughout the state.

Q. How many ISDs are in Michigan?
A. Michigan has 56 Intermediate School Districts covering 83 counties.

Q. Who do ISDs serve?
A. ISDs serve school districts, educators, students, families, and, ultimately, the community within their geographic service area.

Q. What is an ISD service area?
A. The service area or boundary of an ISD spans a designated number of local school districts. The number of districts varies among ISDs. Some ISDs serve districts in just one county, while others may encompass several counties.

Q. How do ISDs achieve their purpose?
A. ISDs provide quality programs, services, initiatives and support needed to help equitably and effectively educate all students by:
- Creating and promoting economies of scale (especially for programs and services that are highly specialized or that would be far too expensive for an individual district to offer),
- Sharing current and credible educational research, best practices and innovation,
- Providing oversight when required, and
- Serving as liaisons when needed.

Q. What do ISDs do for my local schools and community?

    A. ISDs work with local school districts, the Michigan Department of Education, business and industry, and community groups to support student achievement and leverage resources in the following areas.

- Teaching and Learning - ISDs offer thousands of professional learning sessions each year to educators, keeping them current on the latest research and teaching methods.
- Specialized Student Services - ISDs help local school districts meet ever-growing needs in Early Childhood (birth to age 5) and Parent Education, Early Literacy and Mathematics, Special Education (birth to age 26), Career and Technical Education, Career Preparation, Talent Development, Online and Digital courses, Early/Middle College, Student Activities, Extended Day, Alternative and Adult Education programs, and Court-Involved Youth and Homeless Education programs.
- Shared Operational Services - ISDs provide quality, efficiency, and cost containment when they help districts share services in technology, instruction, transportation, business, communication and support services, teacher and school staff training and purchasing.
- Developing Partnerships - ISDs are often key partners in local economic development through their community ties with colleges and universities, businesses, industries, and human service agencies. Many of these partnerships benefit our schools and students by readying them for 21st Century careers.
- Technology Services - ISDs are technology leaders in their region. ISDs often manage the area's fiber network, provide Internet access, obtain lower costs for computer hardware and software, provide Internet safety filters, purchase digital collections, promote online and digital learning options, and provide technical support.
- School Improvement, Assessment and Mandates - ISDs help member districts follow often-complex state and federal education standards, meet state and federal requirements, secure grants, measure student performance and growth, and assist low performing schools.

Q. What other programs and services can ISDs provide for my local schools and community?

    A. Each ISD customizes services to meet the unique needs of its service area. Each ISD works with its local school districts to develop a specific mix of products, programs and services to maximize benefits for that area.

Q. How do ISDs deliver programs and services?

    A. Michigan's ISDs help communities make the best use of resources in educating students by collaborating with school districts, higher education, non-profit organizations, business and others to bring key programs and services to our schools. Through this regional collaboration, ISDs can provide programs like Literacy and Mathematics Coaches, Early Childhood Education Programs, Career and Technical Education and Special Education. ISDs help educate students using specialized equipment, technology

and expertise that would be far too costly for any local district to fund. Support services like bulk purchasing, technology or payroll may also be on the list of requested ISD services. As school districts request specific programs and services, ISDs design ways to meet those requests. That's why services may vary from one ISD to another.

Q. How are ISDs funded?
  A. ISDs are funded from a variety of sources, including property taxes, state and federal departments of education, grants and awards from local, state or national organizations, and fees for services. Most ISDs levy a voted millage to help fund the programs and services offered to local districts.

Q. Who oversees ISDs?
  A. Each ISD has its own Board of Education which approves all official policies, budgets, staff and plans in open, public meetings. The school board hires and evaluates the ISD Superintendent, who then manages the services and staff of the organization. For most ISDs, members of this five-or-more-person board are elected by the school boards of local districts to serve for six-year terms. Typically, the community members nominated to an ISD board have previously served as school board members in a local district. ISDs serve the educational needs of their constituent local districts; therefore, local school board members elect ISD board members. Each local school board casts one vote. This provides for geographic representation that balances large and small school districts, as well as urban, suburban and rural. [These four ISD school boards are publicly elected by the voters in their region: Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD, Midland County ESA, C.O.O.R. (Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Roscommon) ISD, and Charlevoix-Emmet ISD.]

  Additional transparency comes through public meetings, along with the official documents, budgets, independent financial audits, and the extensive reports and large amounts of information posted on each ISD's public website. Plus, periodic elections to vote on millage renewals or other important issues keep ISDs accountable to their voters. Oversight can also come from the local association of school boards, the superintendents' association, special education administrators, parents/guardians and others.

  Plus, the Michigan Department of Education helps ensure ISDs comply with state and federal regulations and requirements.

Q. What laws govern ISDs?
  A. ISDs are accountable under state and federal laws and statutes, including (but not limited to):
       ● Michigan's Revised School Code
       ● Michigan's School Aid Act
       ● Open Meetings Act
       ● Annual public budget hearings
       ● Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

- Freedom of Information Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Michigan's Rules for Special Education
- Every Student Succeeds Act
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Q. Why are they called ISDs?

A. An ISD is an "Intermediate School District." The word "Intermediate" means "between two things." In this case, it refers to ISDs operating between the Michigan Department of Education and the local school district. Regardless of what they're called, today ISDs still fulfill this original purpose in many ways, including managing pupil accounting and pass-through funding from the state to the schools. They also help local school districts understand and implement regulations and requirements such as those contained in the Michigan Merit Curriculum and Medicaid reimbursement rules.

"School District" refers both to its legal function and to its primary customer, the local school district.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. Contact your Intermediate School District or visit the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) website at www.gomaisa.org or call MAISA at (517) 327-9263.

Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms

Are you new to the education community or heard an acronym but are not sure what it means? Be sure to check out this growing list of commonly used terms related to education services, state and national education associations and social media!

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- *Midland County Education Service Agency*

For specific resource information, please contact support@gomaisa.org.