Communications Audit Report

February 25, 2008
Background

- **June 2007** - Board of Education of Harford County commissions communications audit
- **October 2007** – National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) conducts 20 focus groups and compiles school system communication data through review of materials and surveys
- **January 2008** – NSPRA provides HCPS with audit recommendations
Key Findings

• Strong sense of community and tradition
• HCPS is known for stable leadership and community-oriented focus
• District publications sited as best source of news and information
• Focus groups found the district website useful but sometimes difficult to navigate
• HCPS operates from a reactive rather than proactive position with regard to communication
• No clear articulated marketing strategy
• Focus groups expressed a strong desire for more outreach and dialogue with district leaders
Audit Recommendations

1. Develop a strategic communication plan
2. Transition the focus of the Public Information Office from information delivery to strategic communications and engagement.
3. Become more proactive and systematic with communication efforts
4. Identify and frame issues to ensure clear, consistent messaging.
Audit Recommendations

5. Improve communication with employees
6. Expand opportunities for parent/community communication and involvement.
Audit Recommendations

7. Evaluate and update publications to improve effectiveness and key messaging.
Audit Recommendations

8. Continue to develop and expand public engagement/outreach efforts.
Audit Recommendations

9. Update and revise the crisis communication plan and improve communication about school incidents.
10. Emphasize the role of employees and retirees as ambassadors of education.
11. Conduct communication training for staff.
12. Continue to improve the effectiveness and usability of the district and school websites
Audit Recommendations

13. Develop a comprehensive branding/marketing strategy
The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education of Harford County provide direction on the implementation of the findings of the Communication Audit.