



Carroll Independent School District

in Texas



thoughtexchange

Carroll Independent School District engages record numbers with Thoughtexchange

AS part of their new strategic plan, one of Carroll Independent School District's key objectives is to engage and communicate with their public. "Without being able to talk to your community in a broad-based manner, you don't know that you're doing the right thing," says Dr. David Faltys, Carroll's Superintendent of 10 years.

The District also recognized that attendance rezoning and build-outs would be needed in the near future. When it came time to inform the important decisions surrounding those issues, Dr. Faltys and his team wanted to be able to reach more people than they had in the past.

"One of the reasons we were excited about Thoughtexchange was that it was a new concept that married the ideas of an online survey, a town hall meeting, and online social media interaction. Those three elements of Thoughtexchange got us interested in what kind of participation rate we could achieve," says Julie Thannum, Carroll's Assistant Superintendent for Board & Community Relations.

3,936 participants

9,210 thoughts

256,577 stars

participants

thoughts

stars

stars

thoughts

stars

participants

A unique approach to communication

Dr. Faltys and Thannum believed that Thoughtexchange's ability to create an authentic, two-way dialogue would attract more participants than the surveys and town halls they had tried in the past.

"I like the combination of being able to ask open-ended questions with the ability to interact, see, and star other people's comments. As a communications professional I thought that was great," says Thannum who has worked in public relations and communications with the District for 18 years.

"It's an effective way to get people engaged. They don't have to go somewhere to find it, it just pops up on their phone, and you're able to click on it. I think it's really important because it can keep your community plugged into what's going on in schools with their kids," says Dr. Faltys.

Dr. Faltys and Thannum started the conversation by asking participants what they appreciated about the District and where they thought the District could improve.

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DR. DAVID FALTYS - SUPERINTENDENT, CARROLL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Record participation yields thoughtful input

"Our email list is a little over 11,000 emails. When we do a typical survey, we consider 10% to be a good turnout. With Thoughtexchange we had 35% participation. That's a huge increase," says Thannum.

"Not only did we have almost 4,000 participants, but they contributed 9,210 thoughts. Over 256,000 stars were assigned to those thoughts. It was very validating to see that what we thought might happen *did* happen," she adds.

The value of seeing the thoughts of others

Carroll credits Thoughtexchange's Star step for the success of their engagement. "Our parents loved the Star step and the ability to see other parents' thoughts. I think that is why we had such great participation," Thannum explains.

The Star step allows ideas to rise to the top as the community prioritizes what's important to them. This provided important context for what the community appreciated about the District and where they thought it needed to improve. "Going through the critical comments, it's nice to see that the top comments were very constructive, and ones that were less so, fell to the bottom," says Dr. Faltys.

When it came to what the community appreciated, reading the positive comments affirmed the District's efforts as well as those of its teachers. "For all the same reasons that we like to work here, they like to be here. And they like that for their kids," says Faltys.

The results of the Thoughtexchange also helped the District gauge the effectiveness of their communications efforts. "It was really exciting to see that what people were saying in the Thoughtexchange correlated with what our Strategic Planning Committee was saying to us," explains Thannum.



Carroll ISD is a K-12 public school system located in the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The 21-square-mile district consists of 11 schools serving more than 8,000 students and 1,000 employees. The district is one of the largest in the state of Texas to earn the top rating of "Exemplary" by the Texas Education Agency. Carroll offers a full array of Advanced Placement and Honors courses, a challenging curriculum for gifted and talented students, and special programs for students with special needs.

southlakecarroll.edu/pages/CISD



Looking ahead

Carroll plans to continue to explore ways to use Thoughtexchange and build on the enthusiasm expressed by their participants. “We plan on using Thoughtexchange to introduce bond election concepts and packages, discuss attendance rezoning, and we hope to find other ways that Thoughtexchange can be utilized throughout a school year,” says Thannum.

Dr. Faltys believes there is a direct link between student achievement and the dialogue he and Thannum have started. “It gives you an opportunity to ensure you’re meeting the needs of your community. With this particular tool, you can drill down to some real, critical elements of what’s keeping people from being able to collaborate with the school. Thoughtexchange is a bridge to get people engaged in conversation.”



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