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McMinnville High School  
**Welcome Home School  
Friends Campaign**

Melanie Johnson | Principles of Public Relations Final Project | December 11, 2019

## Situation Analysis

### *Client Overview*

McMinnville High School (MHS) is a public school in McMinnville, Oregon. It is in Yamhill County, about halfway between Portland and Salem. The school educates district students in ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

According to the school's 2017-18 Oregon At-A-Glance Profile, it "strives to achieve academic excellence through high standards of teaching and learning" (Oregon Department of Education, 2019, para. 2). The profile also reports that the school's staff "is dedicated to supporting all students to develop the critical thinking skills that will enable them to achieve at high levels so they can successfully pursue their individual aspirations in school, college, career and life" (Oregon Department of Education, 2019, para. 2).

Dr. Amy Fast, the school's principal, said the school's mission is "Ignite Passion. Pursue Purpose. Rise to Your Worth," (A. Fast, personal communication, October 9, 2019). Or, in other words, "Whatever it is the student wants, we want to help them get it," said student support counselor Michelle Green at the school's Freshmen Parent Breakfast (M. Green, personal communication, September 7, 2019).

While all students, whether public, private or homeschooled, who live in the district and meet the Oregon School Activities Association requirements can take part in interscholastic sports and activities, state law has left the decision about homeschooled students' access to other educational services up to the discretion of individual school districts (Oregon Department of Education, n.d.). McMinnville School District #44 is one that allows it.

## ***External Environment***

McMinnville High School is the best—and only—high school in its district. It is well funded, as is seen by the recent construction and remodel of the school's campus over the last two years, as well as the district's current budget. "The McMinnville School District staff prioritizes quality educational practices every day," and the 2019-20 budget allows those practices to continue, the district's superintendent, Maryalice Russell, said in this year's budget proposal (Russell, 2019, p.VI).

One of the external factors that affect the high school's enrollment is that some McMinnville parents choose to educate their children exclusively at home. The number of Oregonians who do so is growing, even while the rate of growth has slowed in the U.S. overall (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017, as cited in Coleman, 2017). As KATU reported August 14, 2018, "The number of homeschoolers is rising in nearly every district in Oregon," (Labreque, 2018, para. 8). This affects the school's budget because the state funding it receives is based on the number of students that are enrolled. Currently, that amount is about \$10,000 per student (Dooris, 2019). It varies depending on whether a student requires general or special education (S. Escure, personal communication, November 19, 2019).

A second factor affecting enrollment is that there are homeschooled students who bypass the high school entirely by enrolling at Chemeketa Community College through Estacada's Summit Learning Charter (V. Foster, personal communication, October 15, 2019).

Another possible external factor is that 34% of the high school's students are Hispanic/Latino (Oregon Department of Education, 2019). President Trump's new immigration policy could affect enrollment if those parents withdraw their students because they fear deportation.

### ***SWOT Analysis***

#### Comparison

There are not any private schools in the city of McMinnville that go beyond middle school. In fact, the nearest ones that do are the Delphian School in Sheridan and C.S. Lewis Academy in Newberg—and both are about 30 minutes away, even in the best of driving conditions. In addition, Delphian school's yearly tuition for day school only is over \$35,000 per year (Delphian School, n.d.). C.S. Lewis's is over \$8,000 (C.S. Lewis Academy, n.d.). According to Kim Eubanks, the academy's admissions coordinator, the school has on average just five McMinnville students enrolled in its K-12 school each year (K. Eubanks, personal communication, November 13, 2019).

Another potential competitor is the state's online Willamette Connections Academy, which provides a public-school education via the internet. While students in the program study from home, it is in all aspects a public-school program and receives state and federal funding that would normally go to a local public school (R. Roberts, personal communication, November 18, 2019). However, McMinnville School District finance director, Susan Escure, reports there were just two local high school students

enrolled in the state program at last report (S. Escure, personal communication, November 18, 2019).

This makes private homeschools MHS's main competitor for students seeking a high school education in McMinnville. Each type of schooling has advantages.

While homeschooling provides one-to-one instruction, students in a traditional classroom share the teacher's attention with other students, which means they may struggle if they learn faster, slower or differently than the rest of the class. In a home environment, curriculum can be customized for each student and parents can use the teaching approach best suited to their learning style. In addition, homeschooled students have more time to spend out in the community socializing with those of all ages, while public school students' daily interactions are more limited to those their own age and a few teachers.

However, students studying at home do not often have the opportunities that MHS students do. At the school, teenagers can study a foreign language with others, learn woodworking and fabrication skills, take part in the school's Career Pathway Program, sing in a choir, take part in a marching band, work on a school newspaper or yearbook, or participate in a host of other learning experiences.

#### Internal Resources

The school's resources include its large staff. During the 2017/2018 school year, there were 105 teachers, 37 aides and six counselors that served 2,029 full-time students (Oregon Department of Education, 2019). At the Freshmen Parent Breakfast this fall,

Michelle Green reported that number has grown to 195 staff members this year (Green, 2019 [PowerPoint]).

The school's Public Relations Program, adopted February 11, 1985, called for "meetings, letters, circulators, seminars, publications and personal contacts" to be used "to efficiently and effectively inform all citizens of the district" (McMinnville School District, 1985, para. 1). The school is still using these resources in 2019 to communicate with its publics and stakeholders. In addition, it now uses automated phone reminders, texts and emails, as well as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

### Strengths

The school is strong, healthy and has a lot going for it. It is warm and welcoming toward parents and students. One example of this is the first day of classes each year, which are set aside for freshmen only. As the first-year students enter the building, teachers and staff line both sides of the hall, whistling, cheering and applauding them as they walk by. Parents can watch the video on the school's Twitter account.

The theme carries on with a yearly Grizz Fest in October, which serves as a back-to-school night. In large red capital letters, the words on a small flyer for the 2019 event announced, "Everyone is welcome here" (McMinnville, [flyer] 2019). One side of the card is in English and the other side is in Spanish. Throughout the school year, posters and signs are scattered on the walls that re-enforce the school's acceptance of its students' diversity.

The school has many great resources available to students. The Grizz Fest flyer listed remodeling and construction highlights including its new Career Technical Center,

which features welding and construction classrooms (McMinnville High School, [Flyer] 2019.). It also informs parents about the school's new science and engineering labs, state-of-the-art video production tools, performing arts area, sound lab, gym, wrestling and weight rooms, as well as a spacious new dance and Yoga studio (McMinnville High School, [Flyer] 2019). The remodel also created a dedicated section of the campus for its Engineering & Aerospace Sciences Academy (EASA).

In addition to EASA, the school offers 16 other Career Pathway Program options that students can select from. Each student who successfully completes a pathway receives a \$500 scholarship (Green, 2019 [PowerPoint]).

Another strength is the school's class size. While the district's budget for the last two years, as well as this year, is based on 29 students per classroom at the high school level (Russell, 2019), the average class size is just 25 (Oregon Department of Education, 2019).

In addition to its large main grounds, the school offers classes at Cook Alternative School, its satellite campus. Students there can take part in its online credit recovery program called Willamette Mid-Valley Online. Both are designed to help students who fall behind get the help they need to graduate.

Oregon Public Schools has a statewide goal of reaching a 90% on-time graduation rate by 2025 (Oregon Department of Education, 2019) and this is a standard the high school met with its 2018 class, which boasted a 90.64% overall graduation rate (Oregon Department of Education, 2018). That is more than 14% higher than the state average (Russell, 2019). The school surpassed state averages in graduation rates for all categories

including Hispanic students, English learners, students with disabilities, and career and technical participants (Russell, 2019). This is remarkable, considering that 11% of the students have a documented disability (Oregon Department of Education, 2019).

Another strength of the school is that it offers more than 20 OSAA sanctioned athletic teams and activities (Green, 2019 [PowerPoint]).

Lastly, the school makes effective use of its resources in communicating clearly and effectively with its publics including students and their parents.

### Weaknesses

While there are many positive things about the school, it is not without some weaknesses. Though the school's overall graduation rate is high even for disabled students, a 2017-2018 Special Education Report noted that just 62.7% of the MHS students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) graduated on time, and even when allowed a fifth year, the rate only rises to 72.4%, which is well below the state goal of 84% (McMinnville School District, 2019). This is significant because 11% of the school's students have documented disabilities (Oregon Department of Education, 2019).

Another weakness is that while the construction at the school over the last two years greatly improved the building, it also affected students' feeling of esprit de corps, particularly because of the gym remodel that rendered it useless for home games and student assemblies, according to a student who led a tour of the high school during Grizz Fest. Julianna Leonard, who graduated in 2019, echoed the same thought (J. Leonard, personal conversation, June 2019). She said the construction put a bit of a damper on her



senior year. However, spirits are beginning to rise again now that the construction is completed, and the construction mess is gone.

Also, though MHS offers a Career Pathway Program and many classes and activities that would benefit homeschool students such as fabrication and welding, business, fire and emergency services, performing arts, health services and a myriad of other great opportunities, it is not actively communicating that to their parents. The only current outreach the district does regarding homeschooling is to inform parents that it will test their children free of charge—but that is not a service most parents are interested in.

### Opportunities

The school is doing an exceptional job of educating its full-time students and fulfilling its mission of igniting passion and helping students rise to their worth. However, it could be even more successful by including homeschool students in that mission. It is noteworthy that only six homeschooled students are currently attending classes at MHS, according to school registrar Roseanne Roberts (R. Roberts, personal communication, October 14, 2019).

### Threats

A threat to the school is the growing number of homeschooled students. This is because for each child who is taught at home, there is one less student on its campus. This could eventually affect the school's operating budget because it receives some of its funding from the state and federal government based on how many students are enrolled (Clemmitt, 2014).

The U.S. Department of Education reported that the number of homeschool students in the U.S. jumped from 850,000 to 1.7 million from 1999 to 2016 (Wang, Rathbun, & Musu, 2019). Oregon alone accounts for 22,000 of those students (Labreque, 2018). About 263 of those students live in McMinnville, according to the school's district office. This is not an exact count because not all parents notify the district that they are homeschooling their children. This is because they do not believe the state has a right to know how their children are being educated.

Since 78% of parents surveyed plan to teach their children at home throughout high school (Home Education Family Association, 2012), the growing rate of homeschoolers could eventually affect funding. This is especially a threat considering high school students are homeschooled at a higher rate than their younger siblings (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017, as cited in Coleman, 2017).

Also contributing to this threat is the fact that parents and their children who enroll in public school classes, even part-time, risk losing the support of their homeschool community. For example, CHERISH, a local homeschool mothers' support group, does not allow students who are enrolled in public school classes their senior year to take part in its graduation ceremony. The other local support group, Enjoy Learning Together, is not opposed to students taking classes at MHS. However, it does not encourage it either.

### ***Opportunity Statement***

The district's public relations policy states, "The ultimate goal of school public relations is to improve the quality of education for *all children*" [emphasis added] (McMinnville School District, 1985, para.1). However, the school is currently missing the

opportunity to improve the education of children who are schooled at home. This is because most parents are unaware that part-time enrollment is a possibility. The few parents that do hear about it are often confused about how the process works. When they are told to register online, they think the school is telling them to enroll in an online school. It is a difficult process for those whose children have never attended public school before.

With the development of a targeted public relations campaign, the school can bring awareness to homeschooling parents about what it has to offer their children. Such a campaign would also help the school communicate how to sign a student up for a class or two. In this way, the school can further its goal of achieving academic excellence for students in the McMinnville area.

### ***Target Audience***

Thus, the target audience for a proposed McMinnville High School public relations campaign is parents who homeschool their ninth through 12th grade children.

The stereotypical homeschool family is religious and white. When seen in public, which is thought to be rare, the mother and her half-dozen daughters wear long hair—and even longer matching homemade jumpers. The boys in the family sport buzz cuts and dress shirts buttoned up under their neck, making them look very much like miniatures of their father. However, while that description may have been at least partially true back in the early days of the homeschool movement, it is not an accurate depiction today.

## Age and Home Life

So, who are these people who break from the norm and instruct their children at home? A survey of 20,000 homeschooling parents found that their median age is 38 and that they have three to four children on average (“Homeschool Family Profile,” n.d.). Seventy-six percent of homeschool parents report there are two parents in their household, 19% said there is one parent, and the remaining four percent are said to be headed by a guardian other than the children’s parents (National Household Education Surveys Program, 2012, as cited in “Homeschool Demographics,” 2018).

## Ethnicity

While the homeschooling movement was predominantly white when it began, it has become more diverse over time. The Coalition for Responsible Home Education reported in 2018 that 59% of U.S. homeschooled students are white, 26% are Hispanic, eight percent are black, three percent are Asian and Pacific Islander, and four percent are other (National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016, as cited in “Homeschool Demographics,” 2018 ). The coalition also reported that 11% of the homeschool families have at least one parent or caregiver who doesn’t speak English (National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016, as cited in “Homeschool Demographics,” 2018).

## Educational level

Seventy percent of homeschooling parents have an education beyond high school (National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016, as cited in “Homeschool Demographics,” 2018). That percentage includes 30% who have a bachelor’s degree, 25% who have attended vocational or technical school and 15% who have a graduate or

professional school degree (National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016, as quoted in “Homeschool Demographics,” 2018).

### Income

Homeschool parents are slightly more likely than the rest of the population to be living below the poverty level (National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016, as cited in “Homeschool Demographics,” 2018). This is not surprising because in most families, the parent instructing the children does not work outside the home.

### Psychographics and Attitude

In general, such parents tend to be leery of any school staff and administrators. This is because parents who homeschooled in the 1980s faced a great deal of opposition from school officials. And while the Homeschool Legal Defense Association, which supplies legal advice and advocates for parents in court, reports no active or even archived cases in Oregon on their website, opposition to homeschooling is still strong in some states. Many homeschool parents belong to the association and read stories in its quarterly magazine about how school districts in other states have overstepped their bounds with homeschooling families. This causes many to be fearful of any involvement with a public school.

### Lifestyle, Religion, Principles and Beliefs

Parents homeschool their children for several reasons. A 2016 study by the U.S. Department of Education found one reason is their concern about the environment at schools, particularly violence, drug use and negative peer pressure. (McQuiggan, Megra,

& Grady, 2017). This includes parents of LGBTQ children who are being educated at home to escape bullying (Hirsh, 2019, as cited in Lake & Pillow, 2019).

Another common reason is the desire to include religious instruction in their child's studies (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017). This has long been the case. An overwhelming 95% of homeschooling parents identify as Protestants ("Homeschool Family Profile," n.d.). Many opinion leaders who started homeschooling in the mid-80s did so for religious reasons (Lake & Pillow, 2019). However, only about half the parents do it for religious reasons today (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017, as cited in Coleman, 2017).

At third reason, which over 60% of parents report, is that they are not satisfied with the quality of the academic instruction they believe their child would receive in a school (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017).

And then there are parents who just don't want to be tied down to a traditional school schedule. They say they like having the freedom to take day trips and having time for their children to explore life outside of a classroom. About half do not follow a traditional school year schedule and 36% teach their children year-round (Homeschool Family Profile, n.d.).

While many people worry that children being educated at home do not get enough socialization, homeschool parents are not among them. Most believe their children are better socialized by being at home with their parents, older and younger siblings, and out in the community around people of all ages, rather than sitting in a classroom six hours a day.

Homeschool parents, in general, appear to be excellent teachers based on their children's testing scores. The National Home Education Research Institute reports that homeschooled children usually score above average on standardized achievement tests by anywhere from 15 to 30 percentile points (Ray, 2019). They also score above average on SAT and ACT tests and are actively recruited by colleges (Ray, 2019). The report also says that state control and regulation of home educators is not related to how well the children do academically (Ray, 2019).

#### Activities and Interests

Homeschool parents spend a fair amount of time with their children out in public. Their children take part in community sports, church youth groups and co-op classes, such as Enjoy Learning Together. In addition, parents take their children on extended cross-country road trips, day trips to museums and other adventures that do not fit well in a more traditional school structure (Hirsh, 2019, as cited in Lake & Pillow, 2019).

#### Why Target this Group?

Homeschooling parents are a prime target for a public relations campaign because most are not aware of the amazing learning opportunities available to their children at McMinnville High School. It is worthwhile to reach out to them because they are the ones making educational decisions for their home-educated high school students and generally want to do whatever it takes to help their sons and daughters reach their full potential.

#### Possible Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders for such a campaign are parents who are current and/or past members of the homeschool community, whose children have taken or are taking classes

at the high school. They, along with former homeschool graduates who took classes at MHS, would be effective spokespersons. Two former students to consider are Manny Humlie and Bethany Blanchard, best known in McMinnville as members of the musical group, We Three. Both attended classes part-time at McMinnville schools and come from a family that the homeschool community respects.

## **The Plan**

### ***Goal***

To address the facts that so few homeschool parents are aware of what MHS has to offer their children through part-time enrollment and that some school staff are not well-equipped to respond to the few people who are aware and reach out for more information, the following public relations campaign is needed.

The goal of the Welcome Home School Friends campaign is to raise homeschool parents' awareness and interest in enrolling their high school student in a class at McMinnville High School and to equip staff to respond to their inquiries.

The desired result of the campaign is that 10 interested parents will connect with high school staff about the possibility of enrolling their student at MHS within the next two years.

Before we move on to the plan, there are a few things to note. The first is that getting parents interested in the possibility of enrolling their child will be a slow process. It will take some rebranding of the school's image in the eyes of homeschoolers and that will take time. Another thing that makes it a slow process is that those who have



educated their students at home through middle school generally feel fairly confident that they can continue to teach through high school without the help of a government school. However, if we make them aware of how the high school can enrich their children's education and help them reach their full potential, some will eventually become open to the idea.

The second thing to note is while there is some cost related to the campaign, the ROI, that is, the return on investment, is good. If just one homeschool student enrolls in one class for one year the school will gain \$1,000 in funding, so that makes it well worth the expense.

One last note is that this campaign is phase one of two. We will look at the parts of the campaign that prove most effective the first year and repeat them the second year. In addition, we will contact those who provide their contact information to the school the first year, whether at an event or by way of another tactic, by phone calls and targeted mailings.

### ***Objectives, Strategies and Tactics***

#### Overview of Objectives

There are three objectives for this campaign. The first is to generate awareness among 40 homeschool parents of what the high school offers their students as well as the part-time enrollment option. Awareness is difficult to measure. The second objective is to generate interest among 10 parents in the next two years. A third objective is to equip staff to respond to parents who inquire about enrolling a child.

The three objectives are based on Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, which says there is a five step process all people go through when making a major decision, such as a lifestyle or behavior change. The theory says they go through it in a particular order. Those steps are awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption.

Here's what it will look like in the campaign: Parents will become *aware* of the part-time enrollment option. Then they will become *interested*. They will *evaluate* the idea by considering the usefulness of the classes. After that, they will initiate a *trial* by talking to others about the idea. And finally, they will *adopt* the idea by contacting the school for more information about enrolling their child. These will only happen as a result of the strategies in this campaign, which will gently move parents through the steps.

#### Objective 1

There are two strategies to generate awareness among homeschool parents. The first is a media relations campaign using local mass media to get the word out about the homeschool option. While mass media is a distant, rather than personal, form of communication, it is an effective way to bring awareness to many people.

Two tactics will be used, the first is a news release, which MHS will send to the News-Register in hopes they will print a story that parents will in turn read. The release will include contact information for the school's registrar, an attachment containing a photo of a homeschool student taken at MHS, a fact sheet with background information about homeschooling and a list of the Career Pathway courses offered at the school. This tactic is an excellent choice because, unlike advertisements, most people trust earned

media. Not all homeschool parents will see the story, but someone they know will, so there is a good chance they will still hear about the story second hand. To evaluate the tactic's effectiveness, MHS will look at the number of subscribers the News-Register has, which circulation manager Connie Crafton estimates is 10,000. Again, though the school cannot be certain exactly how many will read the story, parents who do not subscribe to the paper will still hear of it by word-of-mouth.

The second tactic is creating and airing a program on public access MCM-TV about homeschool students who are or have taken classes at the school. This type of tactic works well because hearing from others who have done something is a type of social proof, making it more likely others will follow suit. Guests to include are Bethany Blanchard, Josh and Manny Humlie from the music group We Three, as well as Bethany's husband Josh Blanchard. Others to interview are Sofia Mullian, Ashton Brewton, Tony Johnson, Morgan Brewton, Brody Foster and Nathanael Porter. Parents who will be interviewed are opinion leaders, that is, people other homeschool parents respect. They include George Humlie, Susan Blanchard, Sonja Mullian and Tracy and Rob Porter. Guests will invite other homeschoolers to watch them on the TV and online. Because MCM-TV is not ad driven, executive director Jerry Eichten explained it does not track the number of views any given program receives. However, Eichten said that 3,730 people visited MCM-TV's website in 2018 and that 6,600 households have access to its television programming via Comcast so that gives some indication of the potential reach of the program. Eichten said they do not have any numbers from Frontier. The station typically airs each show two times a week for at least a month, giving viewers eight opportunities

to watch it on air or stream it from the MCM-TV website. Most of the guests are part of the local homeschool group, which consists of about 40 families, so assuming each guest tells a few friends to watch the show, a substantial portion of its member families will see it. Evaluating the program's effect will also be tracked after the show is aired and the school posts it on YouTube. There, the social media site's analytic tools will track the exact number of views it gets.

The second strategy used in the campaign to generate awareness entails using owned media, which is media self-published by the school. This is an effective way to make parents aware of all the school has to offer because there is no gatekeeper in owned media, such as an editor or reporter, involved in deciding what or how much information is included.

The first tactic is colorful posters and brochures. Both printed pieces will point readers to the school's registrar and the campaign's Facebook page for more information. Parents spend a lot of time in waiting rooms and often read whatever is handy to pass the time—that makes this a great tactic. MHS will display the material at the public library, community center and pool, as well as at orthodontists,' dentists' and chiropractor's offices. In addition to placing the flyers in the waiting room, willing professionals and staff will personally hand out one out to those they know are homeschooling middle or high school age children. To measure the tactic's effectiveness MHS will note how many flyers people took.

The second tactic is postcards that MHS will mail to every residence in McMinnville. By blanketing the entire city with the mailings, the postcards are certain to

get content directly into the hands of its target audience, that is, homeschooling parents. And even if parents do not actually read it, someone they know will. Odds are good those people will strike up a conversation about it. The postcards will feature a short “Homeschool Friend Focus” story. Each will feature the photo of a current homeschool student and information about a class they are taking, why they are taking it and a quote about their experience. Many homeschool families know each other, so seeing a face they recognize increases the chance that a parent is going to stop and read the post card. The mailing will include the name and phone number for the school registrar, as well as information about the campaign’s Facebook page and YouTube video. For measuring purposes, it will be assumed that all parents who received the postcard will have at least taken a glance at it.

#### Objective 2

There are also two strategies to accomplish the Welcome Home School Friends campaign’s second objective, which is to generate interest among 40 homeschool parents. The first strategy is to use social media to get parents to start a conversation about part-time enrollment. Social media is inexpensive, but powerful because it can accomplish a great deal. Such a tactic generates interest better than mass media, flyers and direct mailing because it is more personal and provides a way for interaction. Social media allows MHS to communicate directly with its audience—24 hours a day.

One of the planned tactics is a Facebook page called Mac High Homeschool Friends. It will feature more photos of past and current MHS homeschool students and serve as a place to upload flyers and events generated as part of other tactics and

strategies. It will also have a link to the YouTube Virtual Tour video introduced in the social media strategy's second tactic below. The school will sponsor the page monetarily to "boost" its posts. That way it can better reach its targeted audience. In addition to serving as a wonderful way to get information to its audience, the page creates opportunities for feedback. Visitors can engage with its content by commenting, posting or sending a message to the page's moderators. A bonus feature of the Facebook page is that it enhances the effectiveness of the overall PR plan by pointing visitors to every other tactic in the campaign.

The other social media tool to generate interest is a virtual tour of the high school. The video will be created on campus in the school's new video recording studio and posted on YouTube. It will feature the school's Career Pathway classrooms and equipment, interview clips of homeschool students currently taking classes, as well as their teachers, and scenes of the band, choir, yearbook staff, etc. This tactic gives viewers an inside look at the school. It is also a way for them to interact with the content by starting, stopping, and even rewinding the video to re-watch parts if they like. The video posting will allow comments and include a link to the Mac High Homeschool Friends Facebook page to create the opportunity for two-way conversation.

To evaluate the two tactics' effectiveness, MHS will check Facebook's analytic tools which measure user engagement such as comments, shares and clicks. The tools also provide information about the time of day people view the site, so administrators know when to monitor the page more closely. The number of messages from visitors will also indicate if the tactic is working. The number of "likes" the page gets will be noted, but not

used for measuring purposes, because they are not a true measure of how many people viewed the page.

Likewise, YouTube's analytic tools record shares, comments, discussions, average view duration and information about its audience including age and location. Such records will help determine if the tactic is meeting its objective.

Another strategy to generate interest in the part-time enrollment option is three events. MHS will create two of them. The third will be a yearly community affair that the school will take part in. Events are an important piece of the campaign because they make a way for face-to-face conversations—the most persuasive form of communication.

The first event is “Bring a Homeschool Friend to School Day.” The day will serve as a homeschool student “test drive” at MHS. It will pique students' interest in taking classes and they will go home and talk to their parents about it. The day will start with a tour of the high school. After that, guests will attend classes with the friend who invited them. At the end of the day, there will be a question and answer time and visitors will fill out a short feedback form. After they complete it, they can choose a full-size candy bar from a basket and enter in a contest to win an MHS beanie. They will go home with a flyer containing information about the Career Pathway program and the many elective classes the school offers. The flyer will also include information about the Facebook page as well as a contact name and number where parents can learn more about the part-time enrollment option. To measure the effectiveness of the day, MHS will ask all parents who reach out to the school for information about classes if their children attended the homeschool visitor's day.

Another event MHS will use to generate interest is a free daytime homeschool showing of a family friendly play's dress rehearsal. Programs will include information about the high school's drama and other performing arts classes that are open to homeschoolers. The handout will also have a slip attached that parents can fill out to enter in a drawing to win a one-day family pass to McMinnville Community Center. To promote the event, MHS will send an email flyer to the leaders of the local homeschool co-op ELT to send out to their members. Flyers with tear off tickets, each good for one family's admittance, will be posted at the city's library, pool and community center. To measure the event's effectiveness, the contest entry form will have a box parents can check if they would like to learn more about part-time enrollment.

The third event is a table at the town's Fourth of July celebration at the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum. The booth, which will be manned by school staff and a homeschool student who has taken classes at the school, will have a large banner that says, "Welcome Home School Friends!" and a stack of flyers about what the school has to offer to homeschoolers. A big bowl of fun size candies will draw children—and their parents—to the table. Two computers will be set up and the Virtual Tour video will be playing on both. Parents who watch the video and complete a quick survey will receive a free family swim pass for a day at McMinnville Aquatic Center. The survey will have a place for parents to provide an email address so they can receive more information. The event's effectiveness will be measured by the number of parents who stop at the table to ask questions and/or provide contact information.

Objective 3



To meet the third objective, which is to equip staff to respond to parents who inquire about enrolling their students part-time, the campaign will use the strategy of “gamification” and a training event. This strategy will change the way school staff view homeschoolers and therefore enable them to better meet the needs of parents who contact them. This strategy is a great one for the campaign because it will equip staff with cultural intelligence about the homeschool community. Having a more accurate understanding about where parents are coming from will help staff who communicate directly with parents present themselves in a better light. This is important, because as public relations pioneer Arthur W. Page and others have explained, the way an organization is viewed depends on the people within it.

The game will take place during a short staff meeting with the school’s principals and deans, along with their assistants, front desk staff, counselors, registrars and others who have direct contact with homeschool parents who call. The meeting will begin with attendees writing down everything they “know” about homeschoolers. After that, they will play the game “Who was Homeschooled? Talking about how the game changed staff member’s assumptions will be the measure of its effectiveness. Each staff member who participates will receive a home-made chocolate chip cookie.

The second tactic is a training event for the same group of people. It will familiarize them with the demographics of the homeschool community. The training will also cover how to process parent requests for information. After that, each attendee will complete a mock online registration. At the end of the session, the instructor will ask staff if they feel better equipped to field and process calls. Those who participate in the

training and complete a mock registration will receive a \$5 Dutch Bros gift card. MHS will repeat the training the following year for the benefit of any new employees and as a refresher for those who attended the first year.

To evaluate how effective the training is, MHS will ask parents who call the school if the staff person they spoke with answered their questions to their satisfaction and if they received the information they needed about part-time enrollment.

### ***Evaluation***

At the end of one year, we will evaluate the campaign. We already looked at how its strategies and tactics will be measured for effectiveness earlier on, so we will turn now to the bigger picture.

If there is an unquantifiable but observable marked increase in awareness of the part-time enrollment option, then we will have met the first objective of generating awareness among 40 parents. We will know we have met the second objective of generating interest if 10 parents have contacted the school by phone or in person about the possibility of their child taking a class.

And, if upon follow up with parents who inquired about part-time enrollment, they report their questions were answered and that they received the information they needed, then we will have met the third objective of equipping staff to respond to parents.

The plan presented is phase one of a two-part campaign, so during the one-year evaluation, it will be determined which strategies and tactics worked well and which did not. We will cut those that had an insignificant effect the first year and repeat those that are successful the second year.

We will re-examine the campaign's overall effectiveness again at the end of year two. At that time, if its three objectives are met, we will know we have reached the campaign's goal of raising homeschool parents' awareness and interest in enrolling their homeschool student in classes at MHS and equipping staff to respond to their inquiries.

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