

CASE STUDY

How Weston School District Built a Digital Strategy with Digital Signage, 15 Minutes at a Time

Weston School District is a K-12 school district, with all grades working together in one building. It's a small district, so despite serving the three rural communities of Cazenovia, Hillpoint, and Lime Ridge, Weston has only around 300 students. While Weston doesn't face the problems a very large school does, it does face difficulties of its own.

Weston has to communicate with a small number of students, but they're spread across the whole 12 years of compulsory education. The same messaging will affect different age groups very differently.

We spoke with Weston School District's Amanda Keller, social media and public relations director, about how the school's managing its signage and communications.

COMPANY PROFILE



Weston School District
Cazenovia, Wisconsin



Starting From Analog

Four years ago, communication at Weston relied on printed formats. Physical newsletters were mailed to families to keep them updated about the school. On the school site, bulletin boards were used to communicate with students. These approaches had obvious shortcomings. Traditional communication tools like these were slow to respond to changes, cumbersome, and time-consuming to produce. They also suffered from the notorious ‘ad blindness’ effect that makes us disregard signs we see every day. ‘Messaging did not reach all those we wished to target,’ Keller explains, and ‘messages were often outdated before they reached our target audience.’

‘It was frustrating to put so much time into communication we knew would be outdated before it reached our families and community,’ Keller continues. ‘It was also time-consuming to create bulletin boards that were very limited in how we could use them. These bulletin boards also had to be recreated often to keep the images current.’

Now, Weston has multiple digital communication channels: there’s a [school website](#), social media channels, and a school [app](#).

Rather than paper, weekly digital newsletters are emailed to parents. Event promotional materials are created for upcoming events and in-school, day-to-day communication is handled on digital signage.

A Simple Transition

The search for an in-school solution to communication led Weston Schools to Rise Vision. The process of adoption was relatively simple, says Keller, with ‘a short learning period.’ ‘Premade templates make it easy to create new messages and routinely update each program on the three different monitors we have within our building very quickly.’

The transition was eased by Rise’s device agnosticism. ‘The original TVs we used for the Rise Vision monitors had been previously used in classrooms,’ says Keller. This allowed the school to experiment with, and experience the value of Rise Vision for themselves, without making significant investments in hardware. We’d recommend that schools looking for a digital signage solution seek something that lets them utilize the assets they already have.

After several months, however, the TV monitors Weston was using began suffering from resolution issues, reaching

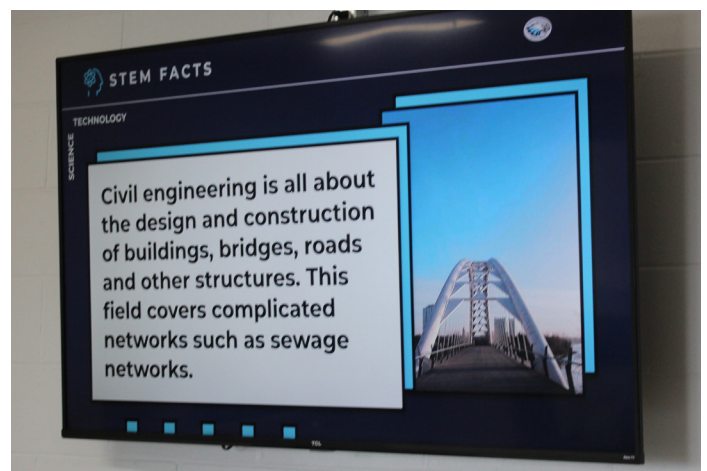
the end of their service life, and the district decided to invest in new, significantly larger TVs. This reflected the increasing primacy of digital signage in Weston’s in-school communications strategy, based on early successes with their initial hardware. Now, says Keller, the two monitors near our main entrances can be seen without entering the building and the systems rarely need resetting.’

Rise Vision’s signage lets the school directly address the ad blindness problem too. Keller says she uses Canva to create images and animate them, increasing the attention students give the Rise Vision boards around the school. Keller also creates custom videos that mirror promotional materials for upcoming events in the school and community.

Scheduling Basic Signage

Weston displays a weekly lunch menu, along with content oriented to students’ needs and interests at the school: student reminders, event details, and a fact/trivia template. The school displays a ‘this day in history’ sign with easily-digestible facts.

Weston also shows more complex STEM fact boards:



These constitute a pre-arranged schedule that routinely updates. Lunch menus are a key use for digital signage in schools, because menus change weekly, meaning static signage is inconvenient to manage.

Signage around Weston’s campus is placed near locations that students (and visitors) are likely to slow or stop, such as water fountains, to improve attention and retention.

Signage also needs to keep students aware of upcoming events. Signage for this can be made specifically for the event, giving details that students will need to know in advance. It's often displayed to students in school while parents are informed via the newsletter, with information also available on the app and website.

However, not all signage can be scheduled in advance.

Agile and Responsive

In addition to making scheduled changes easier, the school's digital signage can respond quickly to changes. 'When there are events hosted at the school, it has been very easy for me to take down the regularly scheduled messages and add welcome messages, event information, and even concessions lists or game schedules,' Keller told us. Schools with diverse student bases need to be responsive and agile, able to change what's on their screens as circumstances alter and situations develop.

Keller remembers a particular case when 'a member of staff contacted me on a weekend and asked to have event information posted on the monitors right away.' Keller had not known of the upcoming event, and had made no plans for messaging. Nevertheless, from a standing start, she was 'able to get the information on the monitors within a half-hour,' and staff reported that it was a great help to everyone who attended.

Start Where You Are

Weston's results can be attributed to a certain approach to digital signage implementation. It fits with Rise Vision's ethos, so it's a good match. Here's how Keller explains it: 'Don't be paralyzed by what you do not know.' A good digital signage solution should offer you immediate value, meaning basic tools (like lunch menus and greetings) should be at your fingertips. The 15 minutes Keller quotes

is something we've heard before from other users; signage should be quick to schedule and change.

For school media teams (overwhelmingly composed of just one or two people), Keller's advice is equally valid: 'do not try to spread yourself too thin, get to a certain level of understanding with one form of communication before adding or learning another.'

About Amanda Keller

As the Social Media Director at Weston School District, Amanda handles the majority of all district communications, online and within the school building. She has been in this role for the past 4 years, and over this time the school has worked to shift how they communicate with students, families, and the community. Weston School is a collaborative district between three rural communities, so centralizing communication is beneficial. Having effective and efficient forms of communication is absolutely necessary. Therefore Weston looks to utilize technology that assists in that goal. Although the school is small, there is always much going on and as a one-person department, Amanda endeavors to provide the most useful information and updates to all those in the building in a timely manner.



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