



## Engaging record numbers to deeply understand the district climate



A K12 public school district in the heart of Texas' Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, **Carroll Independent School District's** (CISD) 1,000 staff serve 7,500 students in 11 schools.

In its new strategic plan, CISD set a goal to better engage and communicate with their public. So, the district went looking for a way to reach more people than they had in the past.

"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 CISD Superintendent, Dr. David Faltys.

With attendance rezoning and build-outs anticipated for the near future, Dr. Faltys and the CISD team saw an opportunity to broadly engage the community and let people inform the conversation around these important decisions. They partnered with Thoughtexchange to deeply engage more of their constituents in less time and learn what was most important to the whole community.

"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.

### A unique approach to communication

The CISD team launched an interactive network discussion with their community using Thoughtexchange that asked families what they appreciated about the district and where there was room for improvement.

"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," Thannum says.



*"With Thoughtexchange, 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."*

**Dr. David Faltys, Superintendent**



The exchange let parents confidentially share their thoughts and rate those of others in the Star Step, from any device. The thoughts that got the most collective support from the community came to the top and let the district know what was most important to their constituents.

With Thoughtexchange’s data analysis and visualization tools, CISD could dig into the data to discover trends, interest groups and other insights that helped them take action.

“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,” says Dr. Faltys. “Thoughtexchange is a bridge to get people engaged in conversation.”

### Record participation yields thoughtful input

CISD’s leadership team was confident the exchange would attract more participants than the surveys and town halls they had tried in the past, but were still blown away by record participation.

“Our email list is a little over 11,000 emails. When we do a typical survey, we consider 10 percent to be a good turnout. With Thoughtexchange we had 35 percent participation. That’s a huge increase,” Thannum says. “Not only did we have almost 4,000 participants, but they contributed 9,210 thoughts. Over 256,000 stars were assigned to those thoughts,” she adds.

Because they successfully reached more people and got feedback from a broader range of their constituents, the CISD team was able to gather insights that would inform the conversation around their attendance rezoning and build outs.

“Thoughtexchange is an effective way to get people engaged,” Dr. Faltys says. “They don’t have to go somewhere to find it. It just pops up on their phone, and they’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.”

Carroll continues to explore ways to partner with Thoughtexchange and build on the participant enthusiasm they experienced.

“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.

## CHALLENGE

- Find a new way to communicate with constituents and increase engagement
- Create an open dialogue and gather feedback to support conversations around attendance rezoning and build outs

## SOLUTION

- An exchange that let the community openly share thoughts and collectively prioritize what was most important
- Data analysis and visualization tools for digging into data to discover trends, interests and actionable insights

## RESULT

- Nearly 4x more public participation than traditional methods
- Clear action items to help the district move forward and build a conversation around important topics

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