

Building Capacity: How Mentor Public Schools Combines Websites & School Mobile Apps to Enhance School Connections in Their Community

Dr. Joseph Glavan and the other leaders of Mentor Public Schools are working hard to build capacity for real-world learning and innovation for their students. Dr. Glavan helps manage the websites for the district, the career & technology center, and a new site for business partnerships. Tying all of that information together, Dr. Glavan worked with Edlio to create an app for Lake Shore Compact Center to make sure that school updates reach their intended audience.

A User-Friendly Experience Across All Sites

Your school website is the hub of information, events, and updates for your entire community. In Mentor, Ohio, they've taken this one step further by building multiple websites to serve their community and connect their stakeholders to the information they need most. Sometimes, one website can be overloaded if you're trying to make it the source of information for all people about all things.

"It's all about the different avenues and the different people that we're trying to reach," explains Dr. Joseph Glavan,

Director of CTE and Business Partnerships for Mentor Public Schools. "Our main thing was being consistent. We want the view that our families have in the interactions to be similar, in a way that makes sense for them. So whether you're going to the website for Lake Shore Compact, or Mentor Public Schools, it's very similar. The tabs are the same. The parents understand it. It's just a question of who you are marketing it to," he adds.

The Mentor Public School System started with one parent website for their schools, with individual sites for each school that connect back to their district site. They also have a separate site for Lake Shore Compact Center, a career & technical education center which they run with two neighboring districts.

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Outreach in the Community At Large

There was a population of the Mentor community that was left out of the loop with the existing website configuration: the business and government leaders. Dr. Glavan had the idea to build a new website specifically to reach that segment of the community. “Our third tier of this would be our Cardinal Connect website, which is something we're rolling out this year. So this came out of the question, how do we reach out to community members that do not have students in the school?” he explains.

As part of his role as the Director of Business Partnerships, Dr. Glavan wanted to build a centralized hub for the partners he had connected to in the local community. “Community stakeholders, if they don't have kids in the district, they don't want to see the lunch menu at Ridge elementary school, but they want to know how to connect with us and help inspire the next generation of engineers and scientists,” he says. The Cardinal Connect website empowers them to do just that.

This is an example of thinking ahead and using technology to further your school goals. “Our goal is to embed real world learning K-12; and to do it well, we have to build capacity. And how do we build that capacity? That's going to be through a tremendous outreach into the community. And that's where we hope that this new website will help us build that capacity to roll it in the community more extensively,” says Dr. Glavan.

Reaching the Whole Community Through an App

Building a hub of information is the first step to connecting your community with important school updates. But what happens when they don't check the website to receive those updates? This was especially essential for Lake Shore Compact, Mentor's career & technical education center, because the students in that school come from three neighboring high schools, so the information has to get distributed in the same way to all of them.

“I love the website—it's been great to share information. The question is, how do we get that information out to families? We are dealing right now in a society that is inundated with information. So when we go ahead and send an email, it's not getting through. And there's actually important information that people need to see right now,” explains Dr. Glavan.

The solution Dr. Glavan found was to partner with Edlio, the company powering their websites, to design a Lake Shore Compact school mobile app.



“Now we still send everything via email because we have to make sure we catch everyone. But in addition, with our school mobile app, it allows them to have those push notifications. When our programs were closed on Wednesday, September 14th, I sent a push notification at 8:00 at night on September 13th. Everybody who's got the app got a notification on their phone,” explains Dr. Glavan. In this way, the Lake Shore Compact app allows him to keep everyone in the loop in a timeline that is effective.

“We are just in our first school year using the app, and I think we're going to continue to see the benefits of that. Everybody's on their phone. They don't have to have a computer or to go through the website,” says Dr. Glavan.

Technology has evolved significantly over the years, and forward-thinking schools are moving to a mobile app to keep up with that trend. Dr. Glavan explains: “Five years ago people were filling out paper copies, and three years ago we had a set of computers in the building set up for kids to come and apply to our programs. A year ago everybody was having to set up their computers to do it at home. And now you can be standing in the classroom on your phone, submitting your application. So for us, I think that makes a lot of sense, and they're gonna make a lot of sense for others, too.”

The mobile app supports Lake Shore Compact's recruitment and enrollment efforts, and makes it easy for them to connect with their prospective students and families. “We do recruitment in the fall and in January they tour programs. I'm really excited about the idea that they're going to be able to download the app, get all the information about the programs, and then within that app click, and they can instantly apply. That to me is a game changer,” adds Dr. Glavan.

Final Thoughts: A Partnership Built for Growth

Edlio has been partnering with Dr. Glavan and the Mentor Public School system since 2019, and Edlio has been there to support the growth and innovations that Mentor Public Schools have created in that time.

“The most important thing is, your technology has to work. It's about the customer service that you're receiving, and a lot of the success that you're going to have with those programs is dependent on that. I've loved our experience with Edlio. You guys have been fantastic partners, really quick to respond, really quick to help us. I mean, you came up with that app, I said I wanted to go, and within a couple of months we were up and rolling,” explains Dr. Glavan.

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Bonus: Getting Started with Business Partnerships for Schools

The success that Mentor Public Schools have seen with business partnerships is largely due to the efforts of Dr. Glavan and the other central office staff. However, this type of success is possible in any district, with a little bit of creative thinking and some dedicated effort.

Dr. Glavan recommends that the CTE programs in any school or district are a natural extension into the world of business partnerships. The coordinators for those programs already have relationships with the businesses and organizations where the students participate in work-study, internships, and more—so that's where you can leverage those relationships to build partnerships.

How to Get Started

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Start with an Advisory Committee

Dr. Glavan recommends establishing an advisory committee, with a few representatives from local businesses & government organizations in your community. “Go to the business chambers and reach out to the businesses, say that you’re looking to just collaborate and get some feedback, and then once a month, host a meeting. That's a pretty easy way to get started. There's a lot of these different groups, and people are very receptive to wanting to help,” Dr. Glavan explains.

Use these meetings as an opportunity to find real-world learning opportunities for your students, partners who can sponsor school events, and more.

Put Your Website to Work

Dr. Glavan uses his school websites to their fullest potential. As he says, “the website can only be as good as the resource you put into it. If the content isn’t great, it isn’t going to be a good website.”

Use your resources to their fullest potential with this step-by-step guide to creating business partnerships using your school website:

1. Use the **homepage widgets** to showcase the different partnership opportunities you offer. Create an image and header and display these directly on your homepage.
2. For each partnership opportunity, build a **separate inside page** containing:
 - A success story of an existing partnership of this kind
 - A profile of a student who benefitted from the partnership and how it helped the school or student (use video if you can!)
 - A profile of the business partner and how it benefitted their business (another video opportunity!)
 - A timeline for this partnership
 - An outline of the expectations and any associated costs, if applicable
 - A button to link to the interest form or application to start this partnership

It will take time to establish a baseline for these relationships, but once you build the hub of information, you will see that these programs tend to take off. Direct traffic to this website and ask your business advisory committee members to share it with their friends in the community. Soon you may have more partnerships than you know what to do with!

If your website isn’t built for this type of engagement, Edlio can help! Get in touch and we’ll help you build a website that supports your goals and helps you build capacity for the future of your school or district.

Build Relationships with Edlio

For over 20 years, Edlio has been simplifying the way schools communicate with their families and communities through their website, broadcast messaging, and online school payments.

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