

# Loess Hills Communications Campaign

## Tippie College of Business



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Course led by Prof. Amy Jo  
Reimer-Myers

Shannon Boshart

**In partnership with the Siouxland Interstate  
Metropolitan Planning Council**

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Shannon L. Boshart

JMC:5238:OEXW

April 26, 2016



## **CAMPAIGN PORTFOLIO**

**June 3-5, 2016**

**Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area**

**Onawa, Iowa**



January 31, 2016

**Charlie Cowell, Planner  
City of Sioux City, Planning Division  
405 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 308  
Sioux City, Iowa 51102**

Dear Mr. Cowell,

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the city of Sioux City to create a packaged curriculum about the Loess Hills. This campaign aims to engage current Sioux City students in an experiential learning seminar that will allow them to learn about and understand the awe of this geographical marvel. Through the course of this unit, students will learn about the Loess Hills and sharpen their poetry skills.

The target audiences of this campaign are middle school students in grades six through eight in the Sioux City Community School District, their teachers, administrators and parents. The goal of the campaign is to engage students in a meaningful learning experience that instructors can easily implement.

Specifically, the plan will include a pre-packaged, experiential curriculum about the Loess Hills. The curriculum will be built around a field trip to a site at the Loess Hills. The field trip component seminar will include hiking, writing and picnicking. Possible field trip sites include: the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, Chris Larsen Park or the Turin Nature Reserve. All materials will align with Iowa Core Standards, so teachers can be sure the experience meets state requirements for middle school students.

Boshart Educational Services is a marketing firm based in Des Moines, IA that specializes in the production of enriching, ready-to-use K-12 scholastic curriculum. It provides interesting and engaging differentiated lessons that help students understand material in innovative ways. Boshart Educational Services aims to engage every student in meaningful learning experiences.

I look forward to working with you. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Shannon L. Boshart  
Founder  
Boshart Educational Services

**I. Introduction**

- a. The purpose of this plan is to summarize the current status of the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar, an annual event organized and produced by the Northwest Area Education Agency. This year's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary seminar takes place at the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area June 3-5, 2016.

The seminar takes place at the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area during an early summer weekend. It aims to engage local “educators, students, park and conservation persons, community leaders and citizens” in a meaningful, experiential educational experience (“Loess Hill Prairie Seminar”).

This year's program will include many different types of activities. Participants can listen to guest speakers, attend campfires, take nature walks, learn about animals and take pictures of nature. Attendees are allowed to pick and choose which activities they wanted to attend. Participants are required to register for the event, however, it was free. Attendees can purchase meals or opt to bring their own.

Attendance for this event is usually around 300 participants of all ages.

## II. Situation Analysis

### a. The Industry

- i. The Loess Hills Prairie Seminar is an experiential learning opportunity for those in attendance. The experiential learning industry allows participants to learn through doing. Examples of experiential learning opportunities include: field trips, experiments and job shadowing. While experiential learning can occur in the traditional classroom, it often takes place in unconventional forums such as the outdoors. eLearning Industry says the need to pre-packaged experiential learning curriculums is increasing. This type of learning increases engagement, “bridges the gap between theory and practice,” and speeds up learning (Jayaraman). Experiential learning is a growing industry in the educational world.

### b. The Consumer

- i. The average consumer of this event is someone who works in education or is personally interested in the Loess Hill area. The event is geared toward people who work in education, as they can receive graduate credit needed to renew a teaching license from attendance. Educators who attend this event live in the area, are middle-aged and have a bachelor’s degree. Events taking place during the seminar are educational, so those interested in learning and education typically attend.

### c. The Product

- i. The Loess Hill Prairie Seminar is an annual event organized and produced by the Northwest Area Education Agency. The seminar takes place at the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area. This year’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary event takes place on June 3-5. The event aims to engage local “educators, students, park and conservation persons, community leaders and citizens” in a meaningful, experiential educational experience (“Loess Hill Prairie Seminar”).

Last year’s program included many different types of activities. Participants could listen to guest speakers, attend campfires, take nature walks, learn about animals and take pictures of nature. Attendees were allowed to pick and choose which activities they wanted to attend. Participants were required to register for the event, however, it was free. Attendees could purchase meals or opt to bring their own.

- d. Sales
  - i. Attendance for this event is usually around 300 participants of all ages according to the event website. The event is free, so sales numbers are not important to the success of the event. Attendance is a better measure of the success of the event.
- e. The Market
  - i. The market for this event is educators located in the area of the Loess Hills. Educators would be most interested in attending this event because of the opportunity to receive graduate credit necessary for maintaining a state of Iowa teaching license. Other people interested in the event include those living in the area of the Loess Hills who are personally interested in learning about nature and Iowa.
- f. The Competition
  - i. The competition of the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar includes other educational events related to the Loess Hills that take place in Monona County during June. These opportunities vary greatly in formality. For example, a self-guided bike ride through the Loess Hills could be considered competition. The area many of these competing activities occur in is called the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. Members of the market can “hike, bike, eat and play” in order to learn more about the Loess Hills (“Welcome to the Loess Hills”). These opportunities, however, differ from the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar because they are self-guided. The seminar event offers a more guided educational experience.
- g. Previous Promotion (“Loess Hills Prairie Seminar”)
  - i. Event Website: The Loess Hills Prairie Seminar website is hosted by the Northwest Area Education Agency. The website includes all the basic information about the event including a schedule of events and registration information. Also housed on the website are all other promotional materials used to promote the event.
  - ii. Letters to Educators: A formal letter of invitation is mailed to area educators promoting the event. The letter includes seminar information and graduate credit information. A copy of this document appears on the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar website.
  - iii. Posters: Premade posters advertising the entire event and each day specifically can be found on the event website. The posters are incredibly wordy and include ALL information about each day of the event.

h. Previous Budget

- i. Because the event is free and does not generate income, the past budget of the event is limited. Money was used to fund minimal promotional materials including printing and postage costs.

### **III. Research**

- a. A survey of Sioux City residents conducted by the University of Iowa's Office of Outreach and Engagement yielded the following information:
  - i. The internet is the majority of people's number one source for information about upcoming local events.
  - ii. Residents of Sioux City are looking for cheap, family friendly events that offer numerous different kinds of activities.
  - iii. Residents of Sioux City are looking for environmental themed events that allow them to experience nature in new and different ways.
  - iv. Overall, residents of Sioux City have a positive impression of the Loess Hills.

**IV. Target Market Profile: Monona County Teachers**

- a. Customer Profile: The average participant of the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar is a full time, female teacher living in Monona County. She is about 40 years old and makes around \$42,500 a year. She has a college education, but is unlikely to have an advanced degree. She will need to take graduate level classes, however, in order to maintain her Iowa teaching license. Advancing in her profession is important to her. The woman uses social media, especially Facebook. She values relationships with coworkers and family members. When seeking out entertainment opportunities, she is likely to search for family friendly events that are appropriate for children.
- b. Demographics

	<b>Maple Valley-Anthon Oto School District</b>	<b>West Monona School District</b>	<b>Whiting School District</b>
<b>Schools in district</b>	Maple Valley-Anthon Oto High School, Maple Valley-Anthon Oto Middle School, Anthon Elementary, Mapleton Elementary ("Maple Valley - Anthon Oto.")	West Monona High School, West Monona Middle School, West Monona Elementary School ("West Monona CSD: Home of the Spartans.")	Whiting Community School ("Whiting Community School District)
<b>Enrollment</b>	663	684	177
<b>Number of full time teachers</b>	57	53	24
<b>Number of part time teachers</b>	1	4	3
<b>Average full time teacher salary</b>	\$46,457.00	\$38,800.00	\$37,632.00
<b>Average years experiences</b>	11.9	12.5	6.1
<b>Average full time teacher age</b>	43.2	42.2	39.8
<b>Percentage of full time teachers with advanced degree</b>	19.3%	17%	16.7%

*(2014-2015 Iowa Public School and AEA Teacher Information)*

c. Psychographics

- i. The average age of this target market places them as members of Generation X. There are about 65 million members of Generation X living in the United States. These people are currently age 34-49 (Taylor). They are currently in the middle of their life cycles: raising families, working into more prestigious careers and improving homes. Sixty one percent of members of Generation X are white, while 36% get married between the ages of 18-32. They are moderate users of social media; they average about 200 Facebook friends and 24% report they have posted a selfie on a social media platform (Taylor).
- ii. Educators are very relationship-focused. They seek to build social change through their professional experiences (Price-Mitchell). This group wants to make a difference and leave a lasting mark on the world around them. Teachers are interested in building civic engagement in order to make their students good citizens of the world (Price-Mitchell). They aim to give students as many opportunities for real world application of information as possible. According to *Psychology Today*, "Teachers who weave meaningful service-learning into their classrooms help students turn empathy into action by building skills in critical thinking, planning, organizing, and problem solving."
- iii. Conversely, educators often feel inadequate in their professional lives. Education reforms and outside influences have left teachers feeling demoralized (Strauss). The best ways to combat this are through adequate support and appropriate resources (Strauss). Any new program introduced to teachers would need to be fully developed and funded in order for teachers to feel benefitted by it.

d. Behavioral

- i. When updating a Standard or Master Teaching Licensee in the state of Iowa, all educators are required to show proof of completion of continuing education credits. According to the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, teachers are required to complete four to six graduate credits in order to update their teaching license. Graduate credit is offered to teachers who participate in the Loess Hill Prairie Seminar ("Loess Hill Prairie Seminar").

**V. Campaign Objectives**

- a. Awareness Campaign: This campaign will increase the number of people who know what the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar is, when it takes places and the events that are offered during the event.
- b. Rationale: The Loess Hills Prairie Seminar's current messaging is very inconsistent. The website is very difficult to find and navigate. Print posters are wordy and hard to understand. Communication with potential educator attendees is long-winded. The event has no social media presence.

The first step in the campaign is to clean up and standardize messaging in order to raise awareness about the event. Increasing seminar attendance is the ultimate goal, but there are significant changes that need to be made before this goal will be the focus of a campaign. Because of this, the current campaign is just focusing on awareness.

## **VI. Creative Strategy**

### **a. "Image is everything."**

- i. The current marketing materials produced by the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar are very wordy and text-based. While the information they provide is very comprehensive, the products are often confusing and not visually appealing. The main goal of this plan is to streamline marketing efforts into a clean, image-based approach. The Loess Hills are one of the most beautiful areas in Iowa; their beauty needs to be the main focus on marketing efforts. A secondary goal is to redesign the event website and use all marketing efforts to direct users to it for more information.
- ii. Print materials will incorporate the headline "Live. Learn. Loess." as a way to showcase the area and event.

## **VII. Integrated Marketing Strategy**

### **a. Advertising**

- i. Posters: Posters will feature images of the Loess Hills and will be distributed to Monona County schools and businesses.
- ii. Handbills: Small, postcard sized handouts will be made for distribution at marketing events.

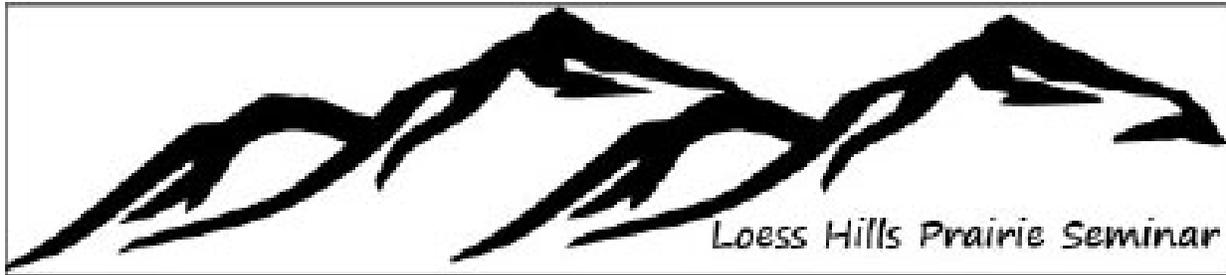
### **b. Public Relations**

- i. The event's advertising budget is minimal so public relations efforts will play a crucial role in publicizing the event. Because the event is free and does not generate income, the past budget of the event is limited. Money was used to fund minimal promotional materials including printing and postage costs.
- ii. Press Releases
  1. Current Status: The event's website is updated once each year to announce current seminar information. This is done after all booking and scheduling is completed for the given year. On the seminar's current website is a document titled "Introduction." This document is similar to a verbose press release. It is two pages and contains information about all three days of the event. The document jumps around from topic to topic and, while thorough, it is difficult to follow at times.
  2. Future Actions: Instead of releasing one long "press release" document, the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar needs to stagger its information releases and change the formatting to be more professional. For example, one press release could be sent out when the event dates are confirmed, another could be sent when one specific speaker is booked. This plan will be beneficial in a large number of ways. First, changing to a professional, standard press release format will make the document more recognizable and easier for media outlets to use. Second, staggering information announcements will give media outlets more opportunities to cover the event. This could lead to more publicity over a longer timeline. Third, by writing about less information, each press release could be more detailed. Again, this would aid media outlets and make it easier for them to cover the event.

Press releases would be sent to representatives from print, television and radio media. They could also be used in

email blasts to the newly created Loess Hills Prairie Seminar email list and be edited for posting on social media.

3. Sample press release.



**Contact:**

Shannon L. Boshart, Director of Marketing

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Loess Hills Prairie Seminar to offer free educational events**

**Onawa, IA (April 18, 2016):** The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary Loess Hills Prairie Seminar will take place at the Loess Hills Wildlife Management Area June 3-5, 2016.

This year's free event includes guest speakers, campfires, nature walks, animal learning opportunities and photography workshops. Attendees can register on the event's website: [www.loesshillprairieseminar.com](http://www.loesshillprairieseminar.com).

Educators can earn continuing education graduate credits through attending the seminar.

The annual event, organized by the Northwest Area Education Agency, provides experiential learning opportunities to participants. It aims to engage local educators, students, park and conservation persons, community leaders and citizens in a meaningful, experiential educational experience.

###

### iii. Media Kit

1. Current Status: Similar to the current status of the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar press releases, all information is housed on the event's website. There is however, no easy way to find information about the event's leadership team. Any news media searching for a contact person would have a difficult time doing so.
2. Future Actions: A formal media kit should be compiled. This would include photos and short bios of the event's leadership team, background information on the event including a mission statement and press clips from past year's events. This media kit should be mailed to all news media outlets that will receive press releases. An electronic copy of the media kit should also be housed on the event's website.

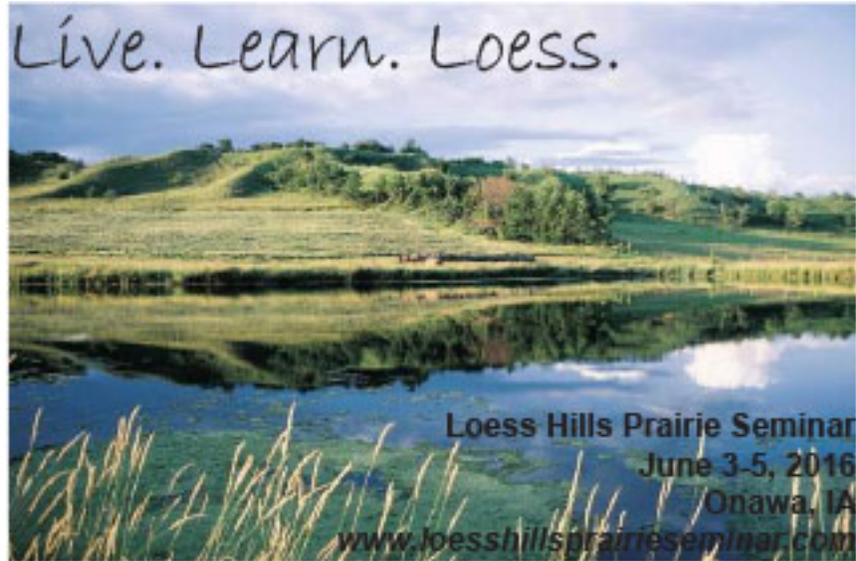
### c. Other Promotions

#### i. Posters

1. Current Status: There are a number of promotional "posters" available on the event webpage for printing. These documents include a number of small pictures from past years' events and lots of informational text. They are incredibly plain and difficult to read. Interested people can print a poster from the website.
2. Future Actions: Promotional posters need to be completely redesigned. They need to be image-based instead of text-based. One of the main selling points of the event is the beauty of this historical natural area. This needs to be a main feature of the poster. Resigned posters will include an eye-catching, beautiful image of the Loess Hills, the dates of the event, the event website and the event logo. Nothing more. This image-based campaign will draw audience's attention and direct traffic to the seminar website for more specific information.

Posters will be sent to schools and local businesses asking to be hung in classrooms and store fronts. Building mutually beneficial relationships with the community will result in more publicity and a more accessible image. Additionally, potential attendees will be able to see the posters at places they already go.

3. Sample poster.



ii. Promotional Tables

1. Current Status: The seminar does not incorporate much grassroots, in person marketing, including promotional tables set up at marketing or other relevant events. The promotional table would include a table covering with the event logo, small flyers and an electronic device with which to sign people up for the email list.
2. Future Actions: Promotional tables will be set up at relevant events. For example, inside lodges at parks located within the Loess Hills or farmers markets. Representatives from the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar will attend these events and hand out small flyers and talk to people about the event. This will allow Loess Hill Prairie Seminar organizers to become a larger part of the community while meeting face-to-face with potential attendees. They can answer questions, promote specific speakers or events and sign new people up for the email registry.

d. Social Media

- i. Social media promotion will play an integral role in preparing for the event. Social media and online promotion will allow event organizers to reach their target market easily and inexpensively. This plan will rely on the following promotions: an event website research, a direct email campaign, a promotional Facebook page.
- ii. Loess Hills Prairie Seminar Website Redesign

1. Current Status: The event's website is hosted on the Northwest Area Education Agency's website which can be found here:  
[http://www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/educators/loess\\_hills\\_prairie\\_seminar/](http://www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/educators/loess_hills_prairie_seminar/). The website presents users with basic information about the event including where and when it takes place. Additionally, there are links to a variety of informational PDFs. These include: an introduction, a program description, a list of presenters and speakers, a list of sponsors and various promotional posters. The information provided on these PDFs is extensive and difficult to follow because of the sheer volume of information. Furthermore, PDFs open in the same window as the website itself, making navigation incredibly difficult for users. Additionally, there is a link to an event registration form that users need to print out and mail in order to register for the event.
2. Recommendation: The Loess Hills Prairie Seminar website needs to be completely redesigned in order to make it more visually appealing, user friendly and easier to navigate. The organization should purchase [www.loesshillsprairieseminar.com](http://www.loesshillsprairieseminar.com). This webpage will be linked from the Area Education Agency's website, but will also allow for independent web traffic from users doing their own research. The front page of the new site should include the seminar's logo and a slide show of a variety of images showcasing the beauty of the Loess Hills. Information about where and when the event takes place will be found on the front page of the site. Finally, there would be a field available for users to sign up for Loess Hills Prairie Seminar newsletters. Along the top of the page, users will find a navigation bar that includes the following tabs: Home, Program Information, Presenters and Speakers, Sponsors and Supporters, Promotional Materials and Register NOW. This will take the existing information from the website and present it in a more contemporary manner. Furthermore, allowing people to register for the event online will make signing up *significantly* easier. Streamlining that process will hopefully lead to more attendance.

3. Justification: A clean and easy-to-navigate website will allow the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar to communicate information about its events more easily. The event takes place over the course of three days and provides the audience with numerous opportunities. It is crucial that this information be presented in an organized manner. According to *Forbes Magazine*, a succinct web presence makes a small business appear to be more trustworthy to potential customers. Additionally, the ecommerce opportunities provided by a website will allow potential event attendees to sign up more easily than the current system.
- iii. Direct Email Campaign
1. Current Status: As of right now, the seminar mails a letter to area educators with information about the event. The aim of this letter is to convince recipients to attend the event. The letter is lengthy (2 full pages long) and provides background and programming information.
  2. Recommendation: Instead of mailing a paper letter to educators only, the seminar needs to begin building an email database in order to send frequent email blasts. As stated earlier, users of the redesigned event website would be able to opt in to receive emails. Email addresses will also be saved from online registrants for the event. Finally, event organizers should research the professional email addresses of all educators in the event's target market. These email addresses will also be added to the list. The email list will continue to grow with each year of the event. Emails about the event will be sent out to this list year round, with frequency increasing as the event approaches. Email topics could include: speaker announcements, event details, graduate credit information, testimonials from prior participants and links to registration information. This will allow organizers to have a more constant string of communication with their target market.
  3. Justification: Email marketing is a cheap and easy way to build a consistent relationship with customers in the target market. It will allow the seminar to communicate information to the target market as soon as it happens. This will generate more interest in the event. About 91% of consumers check their email on a smartphone at least once

a day (Agius). This translates into more views than a one-time-only paper letter.

iv. Facebook

1. Current Status: The Loess Hill Prairie Seminar has an unofficial fan page that includes a link to the event's current website. The page also includes the city in which the event occurs, but that is the only information given. There are currently two fans of the page.
2. Recommendation: The seminar needs to create an official Facebook fan page through which it can connect with its target market on social media. The official page is free and easy to set up. It will be updated to include more specific information about this year's event and will also direct users to the event's new web page. Event organizers can then begin inviting people to "like" the page. As the seminar draws nearer, the frequency of page updates will increase. During this year's seminar, event organizers can post pictures and statuses live from the event in order to generate buzz and obtain more likes for future event promotion.
3. Justification: Facebook is the best social media platform through which to connect with the event's target market (women in their 40s with 6-10 years of teaching experience living in Monona County). According to Pew Research Center, 62% of the entire adult population uses Facebook. Of women all women internet users, 77% use Facebook and 79% of internet users age 30-49 use the site. The majority of them have some college or a bachelor's degree and some additional coursework. Finally, 67% of people who live in rural areas use Facebook. This data aligns well with the event's target market. At this time, the Loess Hill Prairie Seminar should begin using the free services on this social media site and should consider adding paid advertising after further establishing its online presence.

## VIII. Budget

a.

<b>LOESS HILLS PRAIRIE SEMINAR Advertising Summary</b>		
<b>Grassroots Campaigns</b>		
	\$75.00	5,000 handbills
	\$150.00	500 flyers
	\$50.00	Printing teacher letter
	\$50.00	Postage (teacher letter)
<i>subtotal</i>	<b>\$325.00</b>	
<b>Online</b>		
	\$12.00	Website registration yearly)
<i>subtotal</i>	<b>\$12.00</b>	
<b>Total Spent</b>	<b>\$337.00</b>	

**IX. Evaluation Criteria**

- a. Because this is an awareness campaign, its success will be measured by the number of visitors to the website and the number of Facebook fans. These numbers will be a good gauge of how many people are learning about the existence of the event. Once a strong awareness base has been established, future campaigns can focus more on attendance.

**X. Boshart Educational Services Boilerplate**

- a. Boshart Educational Services is a marketing firm based in Des Moines, IA that specializes in the production of enriching, ready-to-use K-12 scholastic curriculum. It provides interesting and engaging differentiated lessons that help students understand material in innovative ways. Boshart Educational Services aims to engage every student in meaningful learning experiences.

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