



# Creating an effective communication management plan

The purpose of a communication plan is to define who needs to be aware of and informed about the project, how and how often information will be distributed and who will be responsible for the distribution.

A good plan should address:

- What information will be communicated — to include the level of detail and format?
- How will the information be communicated — in meetings, email, telephone, web portal, etc.?
- When will the information be distributed — the frequency of project communication both formal and informal?
- Who is responsible for communicating project information?
- How will any sensitive or confidential information be communicated, and who must authorize this?
- What standard templates, formats, styles or documents must the project use for communicating?

In the table below, you'll find some of the essential elements of a school district communication plan. While each district will have its own set of stakeholders and manage its communication plan differently, these elements can help you get started on the path toward effectively communicating your district's key messages.

The plan can be created monthly, quarterly or annually — just be sure to review it regularly to ensure your stakeholders receive targeted communication and as a reminder to include any hot topics that may arise. Perhaps most importantly, be flexible and adapt after evaluating the effectiveness of your district's messages and stakeholder reception of the information.

Stakeholder	Key message	Priority	Communication vehicle	Time frame	Person responsible
Students					
Teachers/staff					
Parents/caregivers					
Community					
Residents without children in school					
Area businesses					
Others					

# MY TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

# COMMUNICATION PLAN

## **Mission:**

## **Vision:**

## **District Profile:**

### **Communications and Community Relations**

Community participation in our schools is essential for promoting and maintaining the quality of education for our students. A planned school communication program encourages stakeholder participation in and support of the educational program as it:

- encourages stakeholder decision-making and participation in school functions;
- communicates district educational goals, strengths and challenges;
- provides information regarding school activities, accomplishments and successes;
- enlists community resources to support educational programs.

### **Communication Strategies**

On an ongoing basis, the district will commit to the following strategies:

- to demonstrate that what is happening in the schools is meeting the desires and standards the community expects;
- to demonstrate widely recognized qualities of an exemplary educational program, both in terms of practices and evidence of student learning;
- to demonstrate specifically what excellence looks like in programs that result in high-performing students and what teachers and staff do to encourage and support these students;
- to demonstrate to all taxpayers, with tangible evidence, that their money is being well spent;
- to invite the community into the school facilities to see firsthand the stewardship of the physical and relational environment that supports student learning;
- to reach out to all stakeholders with easily understood, timely information and punctual responses;
- to maintain a strong relationship with current families.

### **The district commits to accomplishing these strategies through the following objectives:**

- sharing information quickly, openly and accurately; it should be factual, using summaries and drawing implications as needed to improve understanding;
- promoting the positive aspects of issues and events and include how negative implications will be addressed;
- sharing ordinary successes and progress as well as the culminating evidence of successes;
- taking responsibility for what the district does or does not do toward ensuring a high-quality education for all students;
- focusing on thoughtful planning, attention to factors of quality and the involvement of many in successful implementation;
- highlighting the ongoing conduct of the school district as a benefit to the community in general and the various stakeholders in particular.

### **Identification of Stakeholders/Target Audiences**

Every person who is a beneficiary of the endeavors of the district is an audience member. Each should have ready access to information and/or be able to collaborate in decisions about the schools and support of school efforts. The district needs input from these audiences and feedback about the benefits of these efforts.

- Internal audiences include: teachers and substitute teachers (those who live in the district and those who live outside of it); administrators; school secretaries; cooks, custodians, maintenance staff, technology staff and bus drivers; coaches and athletic directors; parent booster groups supporting athletics, music, theater, art and gifted education; school and special needs PTOs and PTO Council; and Board of Education members.
- External audiences include: parents of students in the district; nonschool parents who have raised families, have young children or grandchildren in the district; retired citizens; residents without children; area businesses and employees; Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, service organizations and local realtor groups; various religious groups and institutions; early childhood day care programs; programs providing before- and after-school care, such as YMCA; village or city councils, public library and recreation department; colleges or universities; and news media, both print and electronic.

## **Formulating the Message**

Effective communication should feature knowledge of the audiences' beliefs, attitudes and concerns, rely on reinforcement and repetition and convey information in a variety of ways. Expert spokespersons add credibility so it is important to identify the appropriate messenger.

## **Tactics**

- Maintain an attractive website with timely and up-to-date information and news articles.
- Control the message with appropriate social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Solicit news coverage of school events, achievements and programs in both print and broadcast media (make a list with their contact information). Write a regular column for local paper.
- Send regular communications via U.S. mail to every household, with additional quantities in brochure holders at public locations, such as retail businesses.
- Maintain an email/telephone voicemail network that channels school information to district families and the community.
- Create fliers, posters, banners and electronic signage.
- Offer public forums/town halls to communicate the district's mission, vision and priorities.
- Maintain a presence at meetings of all parent groups, including music parents, athletic boosters or special needs PTO.
- Seek input from and follow activities of leadership teams and staff committees that meet regularly.
- Conduct a biannual online survey of internal and external audiences.
- Produce a written annual report and post on website, have copies available in the offices, deliver with PowerPoint and include in the school calendar.
- Add a section to the board of education meeting agenda for open discussion.
- Implement a well-conceived awards program and alumni events, such as a Hall of Fame ceremony.
- Strategically place suggestion boxes in the central office and school buildings.
- Recruit a champion to be a spokesperson, write letters to editor, etc. for controversial topics or levy issues.
- Develop talking points for important messages that all will use.

## **Evaluation Tools**

- Timing, timeliness and content
- Maintenance of website, social media
- Expansion of email network
- Rate of public participation
- Anecdotal information and feedback
- Home values in the area
- Successful ballot issues
- Awareness research
- Use year in review to plan for hot topics