

# COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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AFFTON  
SCHOOL  
DISTRICT

---

2023-24

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## OUR VISION

Affton School District empowers each student to become a confident, compassionate, lifelong learner prepared to thrive as a responsible citizen in their community and beyond.



**AFFTON**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

# 2022- 2027

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT PLAN

CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT



RELATIONSHIPS



CREATIVITY



OUR  
CORE VALUES



INTEGRITY



CUSTOMIZED  
LEARNING



INCLUSIVENESS



## OUR MISSION

We support the success and wellbeing of our students through opportunities for innovative learning, future readiness, and emotional growth to ensure they can reach their full potential as we do our part in making our community strong.

## OUR PILLARS

OUR STUDENTS  
OUR TEAM  
OUR CONNECTIONS  
OUR SYSTEM

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## Comprehensive Communications Plan Background

Affton School District is committed to open, honest and ongoing communication with our stakeholders. We understand that maintaining a two-way conversation with stakeholders is essential for building relationships. These relationships are the foundation for a strong school system.

This communications plan was designed to establish a comprehensive and integrated communications process for effective communication with all stakeholders. It aligns with the district's goals and is incorporated in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). Annual objectives are tied directly to the objectives set by the district for achieving its goals.

This plan is a working document that is reviewed on an annual basis by the Communications Department. In all communications, the Board of Education and Affton administration strive to disseminate accurate and timely information about district policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions, and critical issues. We strive to eliminate rumors and misinformation, observe confidentiality and other restrictions imposed by law and Board policy, and promote a climate of trust between the school district and its patrons.

## Communications Department Mission

The mission of the Communications Department is to support Affton School District's continuous journey toward excellence by promoting transparent and strategic communication, fostering connections, and extending our reach to hear the voices of all stakeholders in order to have a positive impact on all Affton students.

## Beliefs

We adopt the beliefs that are included in the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. We also believe we have a responsibility to communicate effectively with our constituents; that meaningful public engagement supports our goals, and that effective communication:

- Is a two-way process involving both internal and external publics.
- Is the responsibility of every employee in the district.
- Supports teaching and learning.
- Helps increase student achievement.

## Intent

The Comprehensive Communications Plan is intended to do the following:

1. Implement a communications program that directly helps the district achieve its strategic goals.
2. Foster strong relationships with district stakeholders
3. Provide focus and direction for messages/methods in support of the district's goals.
4. Enable the district to present itself accurately to audiences.

## Reaching Key Audiences & Desired Outcomes

Affton School District is committed to ongoing communication within our schools and with the community. The goals presented in this communications plan are based on meeting the communication goals of these main audiences:

### Internal

- Administration
- Board of Education
- Certified staff (teachers, counselors, librarians)
- Classified staff
- Support staff
- Special School District staff
- School Resource Officers

### Families and Students

- Students
- Families
- Parent Organizations
- Student Organizations

### External

- Taxpayers
- Senior citizens
- Business leaders
- Faith community
- Retired educators
- Chamber of Commerce
- Media
- Alumni
- Affton Education Foundation
- Government officials
- Law enforcement agencies
- Civic groups
- Community leaders
- New residents
- Private and parochial school parents
- Prospective residents
- Neighboring school districts

## Desired Behaviors and Attitudes

Through the implementation of this plan, the following desired behaviors and attitudes are the focus:

### Internal Audiences

- Take pride and ownership in the direction of the district, and keep informed on key issues.
- Show mutual respect, trust, and understanding, and value all roles within the organization.
- Work as a high-performing organization whose employees respect and value customer feedback.
- Exhibit district values of excellence, innovation, integrity, learning, and relationships.

### External Audiences

- Exhibit community pride and trust in schools and the school district.
- Be involved and engaged in public schools.
- Choose to enroll in Affton Schools because of its quality and innovative educational opportunities for students.
- Support the Affton School District.

## Communication Channels

The district can more effectively provide consistent and unified messages by identifying and managing all communication avenues. A multifaceted approach to overall communications helps ensure greater impact of messages. The following list details the internal and external communication channels Affton School District utilizes:

### Electronic

- Website: afftonschools.net
  - District homepage
  - School homepages
  - Department pages
- Social Media
  - Facebook–Affton School District
  - Instagram–@AfftonSchools
  - X (formerly Twitter)–@AfftonSchools
  - YouTube - @AfftonSchools
  - School and teacher social media pages
- *Access Affton*–external e-newsletter (weekly)
- *Affton Insider*–internal e-newsletter (weekly)
- *Board Brief*–internal and external e-newsletter (bimonthly)
- Google calendars–district, schools
- Peachjar eflyer distribution
- Principal weekly e-newsletters
- Apptegy & Thrillshare
- Remind
- Canvas
- Tyler SISK12

### Print

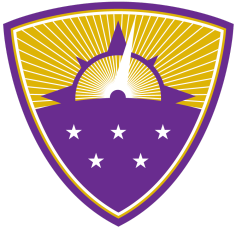
- *The Channel*–community newsletter (triannual)
- *All About Affton* fact sheet (annual)
- Brochures

### Media

- Print newspapers
- Broadcast stations
- St. Louis magazines
- Local news websites

### Interpersonal

- Board of Education meetings (bimonthly)
- After School Chats (semiannual)
- Administrative Council meetings (monthly)
- Cabinet meetings (bimonthly)
- Affton Education Foundation meetings (monthly)
- Back-to-School Opening Day celebration for staff (annual)
- SOAR Awards (annual)
- Affton Education Foundation Gala (annual)
- Legislative breakfast or luncheon (annual)
- #afftonstrong Community Day of Service (annual)
- Faith breakfast (as scheduled)
- Business Leader breakfast (as scheduled)



## Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Evaluation



**Communications Goal:** *Develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with all stakeholders to strengthen support for Affton School District.*

**District Goals:** Comprehensive School Improvement Plan 2022-2027, 2023-24 One Year Plans

**Objectives:**

- Maintain at least 94% satisfaction of stakeholders by the end of 2023-24: “Key information from Affton School District is shared in a timely manner.”
- Maintain at least 93% satisfaction of stakeholders by the end of 2023-24: “Which best describes your impression of the overall communications efforts within Affton School District?”
- Increase family and community knowledge of Affton School District’s vision, mission, core values, goals, objectives, and programs as measured by qualitative and quantitative data by the end of 2023-24.

Strategy	Audience	Person Responsible	Timeline	CSIP
Communicate key messages using a variety of media, including but not limited to district and school websites, social media, e-mail, e-newsletters, print media, and/or direct mail	Families Staff Students Community	Erica	Ongoing	Our Students: Plan 3; Our Team: Plans 6, 7; Our Connections: Plans 9, 10, 11; Our System: Plan 14
Target messaging around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Confident, Compassionate, Lifelong Learners</li> <li>● Core Values</li> <li>● Portrait of a Graduate</li> <li>● Updates on Capital Improvements</li> </ul>	Families Staff Students Community	Erica	Ongoing	Our Students: Plans 1, 3, 4; Our Team: Plans 6, 7; Our Connections: Plans 9, 10, 11; Our System: Plans 12, 13, 14
Facilitate connections among community stakeholder groups and district administrators: faith community, business groups, private/parochial/charter schools, area legislators	Community	Erica Travis/Chris D	Ongoing	Our Connections: Plan 10
Proceed with community webinars/forums and engagement around topics that affect students, families, and the community	Families Staff Community	Erica Travis	Ongoing	Our Connections: Plan 9
Continue to offer listening sessions and discussion group opportunities around topics of interest	Families Staff Students	Erica Travis/Chris D Department Leaders	Ongoing	Our Students: Plan 3; Our Team: Plans 6, 7; Our Connections: Plans 9, 10, 11; Our System: Plans 12, 14

**Evaluation:** Parent Experience Survey, Employee Experience Survey, Communications Survey





**Communications Goal:** Refine the use of current tools (social media, app, e-newsletters, etc.) to ensure they are utilized to maximum effectiveness.

**District Goals:** Comprehensive School Improvement Plan 2022-2027, 2023-24 One Year Plans

**Objectives:**

- Increase reach by the following (see chart).
- Maintain at least 85% satisfaction of stakeholders on Facebook by the end of 2023-24: “If you follow @AfftonSchools on social media, how would you rate the quality of communications on our social media platforms?”
- Increase satisfaction of stakeholders on Instagram by at least 10% (over 60%) by the end of 2023-24: “If you follow @AfftonSchools on social media, how would you rate the quality of communications on our social media platforms?”
- Increase family and community knowledge of Affton School District’s vision, mission, core values, goals, objectives, and programs as measured by qualitative and quantitative data by the end of 2023-24.

Medium	7/1/2023	Goal for July 2024
Facebook	5,918 likes (+18.7%)	6,214 likes (+5%)
X (formerly Twitter)	2,472 followers (+1.59%)	*Monitor
Instagram	1,832 followers (+17.8%)	1,924 followers (+5%)
Access Affton	114.23% visitor rate	114% visitor rate
Affton Insider	165.34% visitor rate	150% visitor rate

Strategy	Audience	Person Responsible	Timeline	CSIP
Continue editorial calendar to include all communications tools	District	Erica	Ongoing	Our Connections: Plan 9
Monthly analysis of FB, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, e-newsletter stats	District	Erica	Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Personalize/Humanize school via social media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #afftonstrong Students</li> <li>• Cougar Compliments</li> <li>• #TeacherTuesday</li> <li>• #afftonstrong, #afftonlearns</li> </ul>	Families Staff Students Community	Erica	Ongoing	Our Students: Plan 4; Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Use “invite” feature on FB for posts with large reach to add to fans	Families Community	Erica	Ongoing	Our Connections: Plan 9

**Evaluation:** See above statistics; Communications Survey, Monthly Social Media Report Cards



**Communications Goal:** Establish effective employee communication programs to improve internal communication, employee engagement, and district climate.

**District Goals:** Comprehensive School Improvement Plan 2022-2027, 2023-24 One Year Plans

**Objectives:**

- Increase mean by at least +0.10 over 3.81 by the end of 2023-24: “I feel that organizational culture supports open and honest communication.”
- Maintain the mean of at least 4.24 by the end of 2023-24: “I have a clear understanding of the mission and goals of my school district.”
- Increase recognition of employees internally and externally for their accomplishments as measured by quantity.

Strategy	Audience	Person Responsible	Timeline	CSIP
Continue 5 Things You Need To Know in the <i>Affton Insider</i> each week, promote as primary source of information for staff	Staff	Erica Department Managers	Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 6
Help plan Opening Day, targeting key messages	Staff	Erica Travis/Chris D/Kelly/Sarah	June/July/August	Our Team: Plans 5, 6, 7, 8
Continue Cougar Compliment employee recognition program, to shine a positive light on the people in our schools	Staff	Erica Claire	Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 6
Schedule and assist After School Chats with Superintendents to facilitate internal networks for communication	Staff	Erica Travis/Chris D	September/ November/April	Our Team: Plan 6
Implement annual employee experience survey	Staff	Erica Kelly	November	Our Team: Plans 6, 7
Provide professional development and training for team: communications, website/app, Apptegy, positive calls	Staff	Erica	August, Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 5
Continue targeted listening sessions, focus groups, work groups	Staff	Erica Travis/Chris D	Ongoing	Our Team: Plans 6, 7, 8

**Evaluation:** Employee Experience Survey, Communications Survey



**Communications Goal:** Achieve coordinated communication, both internally and externally, regarding safety issues and crisis management.

**District Goals:** Comprehensive School Improvement Plan 2022-2027, 2023-24 One Year Plans

**Objectives:**

- Counsel school principals and staff in managing crisis communication.
- Counsel school board members on appropriate roles in a crisis or emergency.
- Provide timely, accurate information to internal and external audiences.
- Work closely with the media to provide accurate, timely information.
- Serve as part of the district's Safety Task Force.

Strategy	Audience	Person Responsible	Timeline	CSIP
Update district Emergency Information Guide	Administrators	Erica Principals Chris D Jason W	August	Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Continue to develop and share crisis messaging for schools to use in emergencies	Administrators	Erica	Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Continue to develop holding statements and crisis communication plans specific to each major incident to include goals and key messages	Families Staff Students Community	Erica	Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Immediate and ongoing counsel to principals, area administrators, and other key staff	Staff	Erica/Chris D	As needed	Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Work with Safety & Security Committee to practice crisis scenarios, clarify procedures and communications	Administrators Staff	Erica/Chris D/Jason W	September/ January/April	Our Team: Plan 6; Our Connections: Plan 9 Our System: Plan 12
Pursue crisis management, communication training		Erica/Chris D/Jason W	Ongoing	Our Team: Plan 5

**Evaluation:** Family Experience Survey, Employee Experience Survey



## Appendix

## Working With the Media

Affton School District works with the media on a regular basis, including local newspapers, St. Louis regional broadcast stations and newspapers, and on occasion, national news media. Our goal is to be helpful and provide information in a timely, transparent manner.

### When the Media Calls

To protect our students' privacy and ensure that reporters receive all the information they need, staff are instructed to direct all media inquiries to the Director of Communications. The reference card below provides guidelines and helpful information for Affton staff.

Personnel authorized to speak to the media include the Director of Communications, Superintendent, Board of Education President, Director of Activities, and/or other team members as assigned on a story-by-story basis.

### Missouri Sunshine Law

The Communications Department works alongside the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent to handle Missouri Sunshine Law (<https://ago.mo.gov/missouri-law/sunshine-law>) requests, and we strive as a district to adhere closely to the requirements set forth by the law.

### Student Media Permission

Staff are familiar with their students' media permission status, which is listed in Tyler SIS. All parents/guardians must opt-out of photograph and/or biographical information permissions on an annual basis.

<p><b>When the Media Calls:</b></p> <p>To protect our students' privacy and ensure that reporters receive accurate, complete information about district events, please direct all media inquiries to:</p> <p><b>Erica Chandler, APR</b> Director of Communications Affton School District 314-633-5908 <i>direct</i> 314-401-0008 <i>cell</i> echandler@afftonschools.net</p> 	<p><b>Media Guidelines</b></p> <p>Reporters and photographers on Affton School District property should always be accompanied by the Director of Communications or designee.</p> <p>Students listed in Tyler SIS as NO media permission should not be included in photos, videos, interviews or web content.</p> <p>Once a media call has been directed to the Communications department, we will answer questions and set up any interviews, photos, etc.</p>
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## School Communication Using Social Media

Affton School District staff members are encouraged to communicate with students and families for educational purposes using a variety of effective methods, including electronic communication. Affton School District [Policy GBH](#) states that, as with other forms of communication, staff members must maintain professional boundaries with students while using electronic communication. This applies in all cases, regardless of whether the communication methods are provided by the district or the staff member uses his or her own personal electronic communication devices, accounts, webpages, or other forms of electronic communication.

### Social Networking Approval Request and Best Practices

The Communications Department, in collaboration with the Technology Department, provides an Information Sharing and Authorization procedure (see appendix) for staff members interested in utilizing social media as a means of communication with families and/or students. Social Media Guidelines for District Employees (see appendix) are also required for all staff. As professionals, all school district employees are expected to follow the staff guidelines updated and adopted by the Affton Board of Education.

Social media resources for staff can be found on our website: <https://www.afftonschools.net/page/social-media-resources>

### Affton Facebook Guidelines

All Affton School District Facebook pages include the following guidelines for our fans and visitors:

*Affton School District welcomes the opportunity to engage with parents and our community through the use of social media. This page is designed to celebrate the achievements of our students, teachers, staff, and community.*

*We encourage dialogue that is open, honest, and professional while being respectful of diverse viewpoints.*

*Affton's Facebook page and comments are reviewed daily by the communications department. We may remove comments that are inappropriate including:*

- *Spam;*
- *Selling a product or service;*
- *Inaccurate information;*
- *Off-topic or unrelated to the Affton School District;*
- *Personal attacks; and*
- *Language (comments including profane or provocative language; hateful, racially or ethnically offensive or derogatory content; threats; obscene or sexually explicit language will be removed)*

*We reserve the right to block users from Affton's Facebook page for inappropriate use and report these violations to Facebook.*

## Information Sharing and Authorization

Those employees wishing to create and maintain a Facebook or other social media profile as part of their job should complete the information sharing form below. (This includes pages for classes, teams, organizations, or groups of parents and/or students. It does NOT include personal profile pages.)

Employees setting up and/or maintaining a Facebook page or group also agree to add a supervisor and/or Erica Chandler, director of communications, as an administrator for the page. In case of emergency that prevents you from being able to access your page, this will ensure timely and accurate information is shared with your followers. Adding a page administrator is simple; click here for instructions: <https://www.facebook.com/help/187316341316631>

Completing this form will connect you with social media champions in your building and will allow the district to maintain a central directory of social media profiles in our schools to help parents and patrons.

### \* Required

- Your Name (First & Last): \*
- Your Email Address: \*
- I plan to represent the following class/team/club/project/etc. on social media: \*
- Your Building \*
- The social media tool I intend to use is: \*
  - Facebook
  - X (formerly Twitter)
  - Instagram
  - Other:
- The URL for my page (or my X/Instagram handle and/or hashtag) where some can find it is: \*
- Here is a description of the type of information or content I plan to share on my site: \*
- I plan to use the following privacy structure for my page: \*
  - Open public access to view and post
  - Open public access to view, with no ability to post
  - Viewing access limited only to invited members (private or secret Facebook group)
  - Other:
- I affirm that I have read and understand the social media guidelines for employees \*
- I acknowledge that I will be solely responsible for managing the information and posts on my page. I also affirm that I intend to give one of my supervisors, and/or Erica Chandler, administrator-level access to my page, group or account, to assist in case of emergency \*

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

At Affton School District, we recognize that many of our staff, students, parents, and community members are active social media users. As a school district, we are also incorporating social media as a strategic tool for communication, teaching, and learning.

The purpose of these guidelines is to help you to participate online in a respectful, relevant way that protects your reputation - and the reputation of the Affton School District - and that respects the relationship between teachers and students.

For the purposes of this document, social media includes, but is not necessarily limited to, social networking and media sharing sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, LinkedIn, Google+, Flickr, Tumblr, and YouTube. It also includes blogs, comments on websites, discussion forums, and any other activity online involving connecting or communicating with other users.

These guidelines complement, but do not replace, any existing policies regarding the use of technology, computers, email, and the Internet that are in place at Affton School District. Employees should specifically review:

[Affton School District Board of Education Policy GBH](#), which defines expectations of Staff/Student Relations.

[Affton School District Board of Education Policy EHB](#), which defines Acceptable Use of Technology.

### YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

We encourage responsible participation in social networking sites, subject to existing policies concerning the use of social media during work hours and other applicable policies, including, but not limited to, those concerning non-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and copyright/fair use. We ask that you carefully consider the very public forum you are participating in and act in a way that appropriately represents both your professional reputation and the Affton School District.

You are responsible for what you post; communications that would be deemed inappropriate or actionable if they occurred inside or outside of the classroom do not become acceptable merely because they are made online. Always bear in mind that once posted, you cannot take it back. Some specific guidelines we ask you to consider:

#### **Use Common Sense.**

Use common sense when posting online. While these guidelines are in no way intended to limit or infringe upon your rights to comment upon the workplace, it remains good practice never to post anything that would embarrass you or Affton School District or would call your professional reputation into question.

#### **Be Transparent.**

How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity or misrepresenting your identity. Be honest about who you are, where you work, and what you do.

#### **Be Respectful.**

While the Affton School District respects the rights of its employees to exercise their rights, employees should not make any derogatory statements about colleagues or students or other comments that would reflect poorly on your professional reputation or the reputation of Affton School District. You are ultimately responsible for your comments, and Affton School District recommends that you thoughtfully consider your rights and responsibilities before posting.



**Be Aware of Liability.**

You are personally responsible for the content you publish online or send in a private message. "Content" includes personal comments, links, photographs, audio or video, and content created by other users that you choose to share, send, or re-post. As an employee of the district, content you post should not include provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, content showing or promoting the excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol or use of drugs, or any activity students are legally prohibited from doing. Remember, even with privacy settings in place, your content could be seen by students or parents or find its way into the public realm.

**Know that "Delete" Doesn't Mean Gone Forever.**

Be mindful that any content you publish will be public for a long time. Not only can your content show up in Google and other search engines, but the FTC allows private corporations to store publicly accessible Facebook posts for a period of some seven years to be used in employee background checks made by current or potential employers. Moreover, even posts and messages that are "private" or designed to disappear after a short time may be subject to discovery in legal actions.

**Once Posted, You Can't Take It Back.**

You should be mindful that once something is posted, you cannot take it back. In most instances, deleting content will not make it disappear. Deleted content can still show up in online searches. Or, with the click of a button, other users can take a screenshot, re-post, or share your content with others. Even if you share your content with a very limited number of people, nothing prohibits your contacts from sharing the information you post.

**Be Mindful When Posting Photos.**

Special care should be taken when posting personal photographs. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality and professional reputation. All photographs should be posted with the assumption that they could end up in the public realm.

**Always a School Employee.**

The lines between public and private, personal and professional, are blurred in the digital world. Even when you have a disclaimer or use a different username, you will always be considered to be a district employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be identified as working for and sometimes representing the school in what you do and say online. Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration you apply offline.

**Build Community.**

Represent the District and the students and parents you serve in the best light. Respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) nor Affton School District in general. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. You are responsible for what you post, be certain it is accurate and supports your organization. Before you post or share content, ask yourself if you would want to see that content in the newspaper or on the evening news. Would you feel comfortable if your content was read by colleagues, your students, parents, or the Board of Education? If the answer is "no," then the content is best not shared.

**Do Not Share Confidential Information.**

Online postings and even private message conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. Do not write about colleagues or students without their (or their parents') permission. Photos and videos of students should be posted only with parental consent, which is obtained each school year as part of enrollment and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

(FERPA). It is an opt-out procedure that is coordinated at the district level and shared with employees each year to ensure proper information is withheld from social media release.

### **Protect Your Privacy.**

You are responsible for understanding and controlling privacy settings on each social network you use. Always assume default settings will make your profile and any content you share publicly accessible. You should also understand that even with maximum privacy settings in place, or in social media apps designed to make content disappear, content can still find its way into the public domain.

### **Responding to Negative Comments and Criticism.**

Employees should refer to [Our Guide for Responding Online](#) for help when responding to content or comments online. If you become aware of social media content that raises questions or objections about you or any other Affton School District employee, it should be reported to your supervisor without delay.

## **EMPLOYEE-STUDENT RELATIONS:**

Affton School District recognizes the role that communication and collaboration between employees and students play in the educational process and experience. The District further acknowledges that the advancement of electronic communication and social media technologies creates more significant opportunity for interactions between employees and students, and provides these additional guidelines for the protection of employees and students alike.

- Employees are never under any obligation to accept friend or follower requests from any student or to use personal social media accounts to engage with students or participate in district projects. In addition, you should bear in mind that depending on your account's privacy settings, everything you post may be publicly accessible to your students, whether you are connected to them or not.
- Employees must exercise great care in connecting with students on any social media channels. Do not send permission-based friend or follower requests to students, for example, Facebook friend requests. Use discretion and carefully consider the guidelines provided by the district before accepting any permission-based friend or follower requests received from students. Affton School District recommends that if an employee decides to accept friend or follower requests received from students that they should accept all such requests, and not selectively limit their interactions to what could be perceived as a few preferred individuals.
- Private messages, as well as direct messages, with one or more participants are commonplace in social media. However, employees should avoid using social media messaging tools to communicate with students and/or parents and should instead use official tools (such as district email or the Aptegey mass notifications or app) for such purposes. If a conversation with a student or family member does occur in a private message system, the employee is encouraged to document that conversation, such as with a screen capture image, to create a more permanent record of the exchange.
- Any employee-student communications or relationships via social media, including in private messages, should be of an appropriate professional nature, have content that is appropriate for both the communications medium and the audience addressed, and must not violate any provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). With each communication, ask yourself if it's something you would feel comfortable being printed in the newspaper, read by parents, colleagues, or the Board of Education. Always assume any communication can easily end up in the public realm.

- Employees who are connected to or communicate with students via social media must understand they may be granting those students access to all content in their personal social media profiles and should consider the guidelines the district has provided to ensure students are protected from exposure to inappropriate content or content that might compromise the employee's professional reputation.
- Employees are also responsible for ensuring any relationship and all dialogue with the student is kept professional in its nature, and for immediately reporting to the district any inappropriate communication received from a student. This is as much for your protection as the student's. Any content or communication generated either by you or by a student which would be inappropriate in the classroom should also be considered inappropriate when shared via social media or in private message.
- The district recognizes there may be certain limited exceptions to these guidelines, such as a student being a family member or relative, or in those instances when an employee's interaction with a student is a result of certain non-district activities, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious organizations, or other similar relationships.

## Our Guide for Responding Online



# OUR GUIDE FOR RESPONDING ONLINE

Seeing negative or false comments about our schools can be frustrating, but responding with another comment isn't always the answer. Follow this guide to decide what to do next to best represent our schools and district — and never hesitate to contact Erica Chandler, director of communications, for support: 314-633-5908 / echandler@afftonschools.net.

## DISCOVER

You have discovered a post about our district or schools. Is it positive or balanced?

YES

NO

## EVALUATE

**CONCURRENCE**  
You can let the post stand, or you can positively respond in support.  
Do you want to respond?

NO

YES

**LET IT STAND**  
Leave the post alone without a response.

**SHARE A POSITIVE RESPONSE**  
Do you wish to engage in the post to share your point of view? See considerations below.

Is the site credible with many viewers?

YES

Is this a site known for bashing or degrading others?

NO

Is the posting a rant, rage, joke, or satirical in nature?

NO

Does the post contain misinformation or blatant lies?

NO

Is the post the result of a negative experience?

NO

Write a response for current circumstances only, using the considerations below.

NO

YES

YES

NO

YES

YES

**MONITOR ONLY**  
Avoid responding to specific posts, but monitor the site for relevant information and comments. Notify your supervisor.

**FIX THE FACTS**  
Do you wish to respond with factual information directly on the comment thread?

NO

YES

Talk to your supervisor about possibly contacting the person who made the post. After a personal conversation, consider posting a clarification.

Follow considerations below before writing a response. Contact your supervisor for support.

## BEFORE YOU RESPOND...

If you see a post about a district- or school-level issue that could create mass concern — or if you have questions about any online comment situation — contact your supervisor or the communications director FIRST. And in all cases...

- Be transparent by stating your connection to Affton Schools.
- Cite your sources by using hyperlinks, video, images, or other references.
- Take your time to think through your response. Don't rush.
- Respond in a tone that reflects the professionalism, empathy, and mission of Affton Schools.
- Give thought to the most effective type of response. Don't debate an issue or get into a negative conversation online. If appropriate, contact the commenter privately for a resolution and follow up online with an update or apology.

## Emergency Communication

The Communications Department works closely with the district Safety & Security team in crisis situations to ensure that we are communicating with all appropriate audiences in a timely and accurate manner. When a crisis occurs, we use one or more of the following channels to communicate:

### External

1. District, school website alert
2. Principal email/text to families
3. District, building level Facebook
4. District, building level X (formerly Twitter)
5. District, building level Apage/Thrillshare text alert
6. Phone message/text to families

### Internal

1. Notify Cabinet, Board of Education
2. Send email to staff in the affected building(s) and/or all district

### Media

1. Talking points
2. Media release/statement
3. On-camera interview

### Administrator Crisis Checklist and Media Guidelines

In addition, administrators are instructed to follow the Building-Level Crisis Management Plan & Checklist, Stakeholder Checklist, and Communicating with the Media in a Crisis Situation (see appendix), as outlined in the district's Crisis Guide.

## Building-Level Crisis Management Plan & Checklist

1. Notify 911 or other authorities (if necessary).  
Be aware that civil authorities will assume control of the crisis upon arriving at the scene, but the principal and staff are still responsible for the building.
2. Notify the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and director of communications.  
**Note:** See [Stakeholder Checklist](#) (page 6).  
The superintendent will notify the board of education, any district administrators who are needed at the scene and, if necessary, attorneys for the school system.
3. Determine the facts surrounding the crisis.
  - Who was involved?
  - When, where and what happened?
  - Why did the crisis occur?
  - What is the status of the situation?
  - How many students/staff have been or will be affected?
4. Determine level of response required.  
Can site resources manage the crisis or will assistance be needed?
5. Notify other school sites that could be affected by the crisis.  
(siblings, spouses, other schools, etc.)
6. Designate an area where the media can receive information once they begin arriving on the scene.
7. Determine what information is to be shared with:  
**Note:** See [Stakeholder Checklist](#) (page 6).
  - Students
  - Staff
  - Parents/Community
  - Media
8. Determine how the information is to be shared with staff, students, parents, and community.  
**Note:** See [Stakeholder Checklist](#) (page 6).
  - Email and/or written letters
  - Appropriate phone calls/texts
  - School announcements
  - Classroom presentations/discussions
  - Assemblies
  - Parent/staff/community meetings
  - Press conference
9. Notify other support services if special arrangements need to be made:
  - Transportation

- Food Service
- Maintenance/Facilities
- Alternative Communication Needs
- Mental Health Crisis Response Teams (regional & local)
- Substitute Teachers
- Department of Educational Equity and Diversity
- Cougar Care

10. Establish a sign-out center for students and parents.

11. Initiate the counseling referral process:

- Make referral forms available to staff
- Designate who will maintain and coordinate the referral list
- Designate interview/counseling locations

12. Establish a sign-in and message center for those not normally assigned to the school:

- Set up a sign-in/sign-out system
- Set up a message board
- Give each member of the crisis team an ID badge so the individual is easily identified

13. Hold a staff meeting:

- Review facts of the crisis and provide periodic updates
- Review the intervention process
- Review the status of referrals
- Prioritize needs and plan follow-up actions
- Provide mutual support
- Be aware of staff needs, i.e. telephoning family members, baby sitting arrangements, counseling needs, etc.

14. In the event of a student's death:

- Do not immediately delete the student's name from any computer records
- Be sure that no one calls home reporting the student absence
- Wait before emptying the student's desk or locker

15. Maintain communication with local law and governmental authorities / agencies.

## Stakeholder Checklist

**Please note:** Our employees **must** be informed first. They may receive inquiries and providing them with a script/guidance will help in ensuring consistent information is shared and to dispel rumors.

**Additionally:** Leverage all appropriate communication channels. The more ways we convey and repeat our message, the more opportunities we have to share accurate information.

- Cabinet
  - Face-to-face
  - Phone call
  - Email (Groups on Google: Cabinet Meeting)
  - Text message
- Admin Council
  - Phone call
  - Email (Groups on Google: Administrators)
  - Text message
- Frontline Employees (School / District)
  - Face-to-face
  - Phone call
  - Email (Groups on Google: Office)
- Employees (School / District)
  - Face-to-Face (employee meeting)
  - Phone call
  - Email (District News / School News / Non-School News)
- Families
  - Apptegy/Thrillshare
    - Phone
    - Email
    - SMS/Text
  - Social media (Facebook / X / Instagram)
- Community
  - Mobile app push notification
  - Website (on-screen alert)
  - Social media (Facebook / X / Instagram)
- Media
  - News release (sent via email from Director of Communications)
  - Interviews
- The Superintendent will contact members of the School Board;

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Communicating with the Media

As per guidance posted on our [website](#) and shared with local news media, “During an emergency, the media will not be allowed inside affected school building(s). You are asked to refer any questions/requests to the Communications Office. We will work to obtain information from our response team and local authorities on site and respond to you as quickly as possible. Please do not try to circumvent this process by contacting the school directly. School phones are needed to manage the situation and they must remain open.”

The Crisis Managers (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Communications, and/or designee) will:

- Serve as the official spokespersons;
- Coordinate with responding agencies (ex: St. Louis County Police Department, Affton Fire Protection District) to determine appropriate release of information;
- Provide updates to the media;
  - Typically, this information is a copy of the script/information provided to families.
  - Establish a single area or on-site “camp” for media and regulate access to district property.
- Complete requests for interviews;
- Attend any news conferences.

General Communications (Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, and the Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent) will field phone calls from members of the media and provide basic information (provided by the Crisis Managers) to callers.

Inform the media:

- You will be provided a copy of communication sent to families.
- We are here to protect students, employees, and the educational process from unnecessary turmoil. We will make an administrator available for you to interview. As such we would appreciate if you would not go to our schools and stop students, families, and employees during dismissal procedures, etc. This is a very difficult and sensitive time and we want to be able for them to have as “normal” of a dismissal procedure as possible.
- Additionally, employees have been reminded, “If you have any requests for information from outside the school system, including the media, please direct those individuals to the Director of Communications at 314-633-5908.”

If this is a high-profile event, challenge the media not to use the perpetrators name, but instead focus on the victims. This is a suggestion of the [ALERTT \(Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training\)](#), and according to their website, “By encouraging the media to focus less on the suspects and more on the victims, it is hoped that future events can be prevented.”

### Script for setting up interviews

- Thank you for your patience, understanding, and sensitivity.
- You will be speaking with (NAME) today, who is a (TITLE). They are a valued member of our District Crisis Team and have helped to lead our efforts.
- You will be interviewing them at the (LOCATION, ADDRESS).
- Please use (DOOR #, MAIN ENTRANCE) and check in at the front desk.
- You will then be escorted to where you will do the interview.
- You will have (# of) minutes for your interview.
- The subject they will speak with you about is our district/school response, and assisting students, employees, and families.
- Please do not go off subject above. If you have further questions, please contact the Director of Communications.
- As we have an administrator available for you to interview, we would appreciate if you would not go to our schools and stop students, families, and employees during dismissal procedures.

- This is a very difficult and sensitive time, and we want to be able for them to have as “normal” of a dismissal procedure as possible.
- We want to protect them from any unanticipated and unwanted media attention.
- We also want to facilitate providing accurate and appropriate information regarding the incident.
- Here is your interview time (please respond to this email to confirm).
  - (TIME) - (REPORTER NAME)

### **Possible Responses for Further Information**

- As per family request, no other information will be released.
- We have a process in place to handle violations of district policies and we will respond accordingly.
- The death did not take place at school. The death was a result of (ACCIDENT/SUICIDE/OTHER REASON). To respect the privacy of the family, that is all the information I have to share.
- We are moving forward from this incident, as it is not representative of (SCHOOL) or its student body.
- It is too early to say what additional steps may be taken to address this incident on a higher level.
- We are taking care of classmates and all students at the schools. We are also caring for grieving teachers, coaches, and employees. Additionally, we are supporting their family members, (especially those still in school).
- Response if asked for additional information about conducting drills: Due to the confidential nature of emergency plans, no other information will be provided regarding the drill.

### **Responses Related to FERPA**

- We have addressed the incident extensively over the past (NUMBER) of days and appropriate action has been taken. While we understand the desire to know what that action is, it is not directory information and cannot be disclosed in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools are not allowed to share the specifics of an incident if it includes any personally identifiable information about a student or information that a reasonable person in the community can use to identify a specific student.
- Disclosing details of a behavior incident and related disciplinary consequences, without the written permission of the respective parent/guardian, is a violation of the student's rights to data privacy under FERPA. Schools are not allowed to share the specifics of an incident if it includes any personally identifiable information about a student or information that a reasonable person in the community can use to identify a specific student.

### **When asked to provide lockdown information, provide:**

- Date,
- School,
- Approximate time,
- Lockdown or Modified Lockdown,
- General description (ex: medical issue, St. Louis County Police Department request, student/family issue, etc.).

### **Spokesperson**

- This individual needs to have the ability to:
  - Acknowledge the event,
  - Remain composed,
  - Respond with empathy,
  - Publicly show support for the prevention and intervention efforts,
  - Offer condolences to those affected,
  - Focus on victim's needs,
  - Thank everyone who rallied together to provide the supports necessary,
  - Reiterate who our stakeholders should be listening to.
- Share key messages as provided by Communications Office:

- This will help establish credibility.
- Distribute a copy of the communication to families/news release with information that has been/can be shared.
- Answer questions the general public would want answers to:
  - Who was involved?
  - Who was affected?
  - Who is overseeing the response?
  - Are there any risks for students/families at this time?
  - When did this occur?
  - Where did this occur?
  - Was there forewarning?
  - Why wasn't this prevented from happening?
  - Can anything else "go wrong?"
  - When will normal operations resume?
  - What (if any) resources are available?
  - Additional resource: [Questions Commonly Asked By a Reporter During a Crisis](#).
- Be prepared to accept criticism and blame.
- Commit to providing additional updates, if needed.
  - Be specific about when.

**Resource:** [Patterns of Media Response to a Crisis: The First 72 Hours](#)

## Affton School District Brand

Affton School District is identified by its logo, colors, school names, and mascot:

- Affton School District
- Colors
  - Purple—PMS 526C (PMS 269C for printing)
    - #682b8e
    - R 104 / G 43 / B 142
    - C 73 / M 100 / Y 0 / K 1
  - Gold—PMS 7752C (PMS 117C for printing)
    - #ddb307
    - R 221 / G 179 / B 7
    - C 0 / M 18 / Y 100 / K 15
- Mascot—Cougar

Use of the Affton logo is limited to the district, its schools and affiliated organizations, in order to protect the strength, consistency and integrity of the Affton School District brand.

The logo and Cougars identity may not be used by any organization that is not affiliated with Affton School District.

Below are the district and school logos:





**HIGH SCHOOL** 1



2



3



**AFFTON HIGH SCHOOL** 4

## Approved Logos

- 1 Primary Mark
- 2 Mascot
- 3 State Mark
- 4 Secondary Mark

Gawdzilla\_Tall

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



**HIGH SCHOOL**



Gawdzilla\_Tall

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

## Typography

The approved font is Gawdzilla\_Tall. Gawdzilla\_Tall should always be used for your school name and used when identifying a sport, department, club or other secondary priority associated with the school.

The primary text has been customized specifically for the Affton School District brand.

### FONT FILES

\*VIP Branding does not provide fonts to clients for use. Fonts are a licensed product from the manufacturer and need to be purchased from said manufacturer for clients personal and commercial use.