

Developing a District Communication Plan



Sage advice from the old supe:

A curriculum mix-up -- **forgivable**

An error in the budget – **survival is probable**

A little botulism in the cafeteria – **not pretty,
but life goes on**

Inability to effectively communicate – **get your
résumé ready**

Introductions & Expectations for today

Overview of today's session

- ❑ Models for planning: RPIE
- ❑ MSIP 6: Communication (Preview)
- ❑ Audiences
- ❑ Research
- ❑ The right communication tool
- ❑ Social media
- ❑ Internal communications
- ❑ Messaging (and the mesdsenger)
- ❑ Emergency communications (limited discussion)
- ❑ Project-based communication plans
- ❑ MSIP 6: Communication Plans
- ❑ Comprehensive communication plans

MSIP 6 & Communications

Communication (L8) - The school system provides for two-way, reliable, and representative communication with all stakeholders.

- The school system implements and annually reviews a communications plan that outlines multiple methods for two-way, reliable communication with all stakeholders.
- The school system regularly communicates to all stakeholders the progress in attainment of the systems mission, vision, and goals.

Ethics (L3a): The CSIP, developed in meaningful collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, is the product of and based upon a data-based needs assessment.

School Board Policy (L5d): The school system's policies and handbooks are posted on the system's website or are otherwise available to the community

Today's work is only part of the process

- Today we are intentional in our communications discussion
- Today we begin to frame the plan
- Take it home
- Get a date on your calendar and start
- Get others in on the plan
- Do your research
- Develop and execute your comprehensive and project-based communication plans.

Be Strategic in Your Communication Planning

RPIE (think PDSA, RACE, etc.)

- Research
- Planning
- Implementation
- Evaluation

Be Strategic in Your Communication Planning

Research

- Who are your audiences?
- What information does your audience want/need?
- How do they want to receive information

Research

Quantitative

- Social Media Metrics/Insights
- Surveys
 - DIY via online
 - Phone

Qualitative

- Community Engagement
(ongoing, not just before a referendum)
- Focus/Discussion Groups

Audiences

Staff (Certified/Classified)

Students

Parents

Board of Education

Grandparents

Community Members

Booster Groups/PTA

Retired Staff

Alumni

Senior Citizens

Business

Faith Based

Non-Parents (including
future parents)

Civic Organizations

Government Officials

Communication Tools & Methods

One-Way or Two-Way Communications?

Website

Email

Social Media

Apps

Letters home

Publications

Mass Media

Large groups

Small Groups

Video

Auto-calls

Personal calls

Direct Mail

Local media

Text Messages

Staff

Backpack Flyers

Marquees

Presentations

Implementation & Evaluation

- Once the research, planning and key messages are in place, it's time to launch.
- Determine timeline
- Evaluate on the fly and make adjustments (formative)
- Conclusion of plan (summative)
- *Truthfully, there is no "conclusion." Apply what you've learned to future endeavors.*

Let's Do RPIE

- Changing pick-up /drop off at elementary school
- Initiating a parent/staff advisory group for communciations
- Homecoming Parade
- Student Data System implementation

Internal Communications

When the house is on fire, tell those inside first!

- Builds trust
- “When the eagles are silent the parrots will jabber.” (Knocks down rumors)
- Your best PR team is your staff
- *Special superintendent survival note: you really want to tell your board first.*

Internal Communications

What are your internal communications strategies and protocols.

- Flow of information (Central office – Building Principals – Staff and other employees)
- Tools for mass communications?
- Opportunity for two-way communications?

Social Media - Why should you use it?

- Students, parents & patrons are already there
- Connects school & home
- Real-time two-way communication
- Engage parents, students, & patrons
- Model appropriate social media behavior
- User-friendly
- Humanize your district
- You are the media outlet – *“Puking Positivity”*

Social Media: Overview

Why do people use social media?

Social Interaction

Know about others

How can you take advantage of this?

- Behind-the-scenes
- Go “live”
- Explain hows/whys
- Ask questions - encourage comments & sharing
- Shine light on your staff

Social Media

- Follow /Retweet, Like /Share other dist. accounts – helps build followers for all
- Post regularly – Daily, if possible (add reminder to calendar)
- Use photos/images/video
- Tell audience more than once about your social media presence
 - Add social media to signature line in email
 - Post signs in schools
 - Include social media on business cards

Social Media: Tips & Tricks

Everyone is a storyteller.

- Use a district FB page, newsletter, email for news collection and distribution
- Follow/retweet/like/share other district accounts
- Train your staff & remind them to follow social platforms
- Shine the light on your staff
- Showcase your social platforms everywhere
- Use tools to support social: Canva, Key Communicators

Messaging

As a school district, all of your messages must keep in mind the benefits to students.

Messaging

Whether it is the primary mission of the district or an important issue facing the schools, it's important that the message meets these standards:

- Clear, concise and consistent
- Strategic / Supports district mission/plans
- Relevant and Accurate: Is supported by data
- Compelling – Simple – Memorable
- Be consistent, but messages can be tailored to the audience

Message Mapping

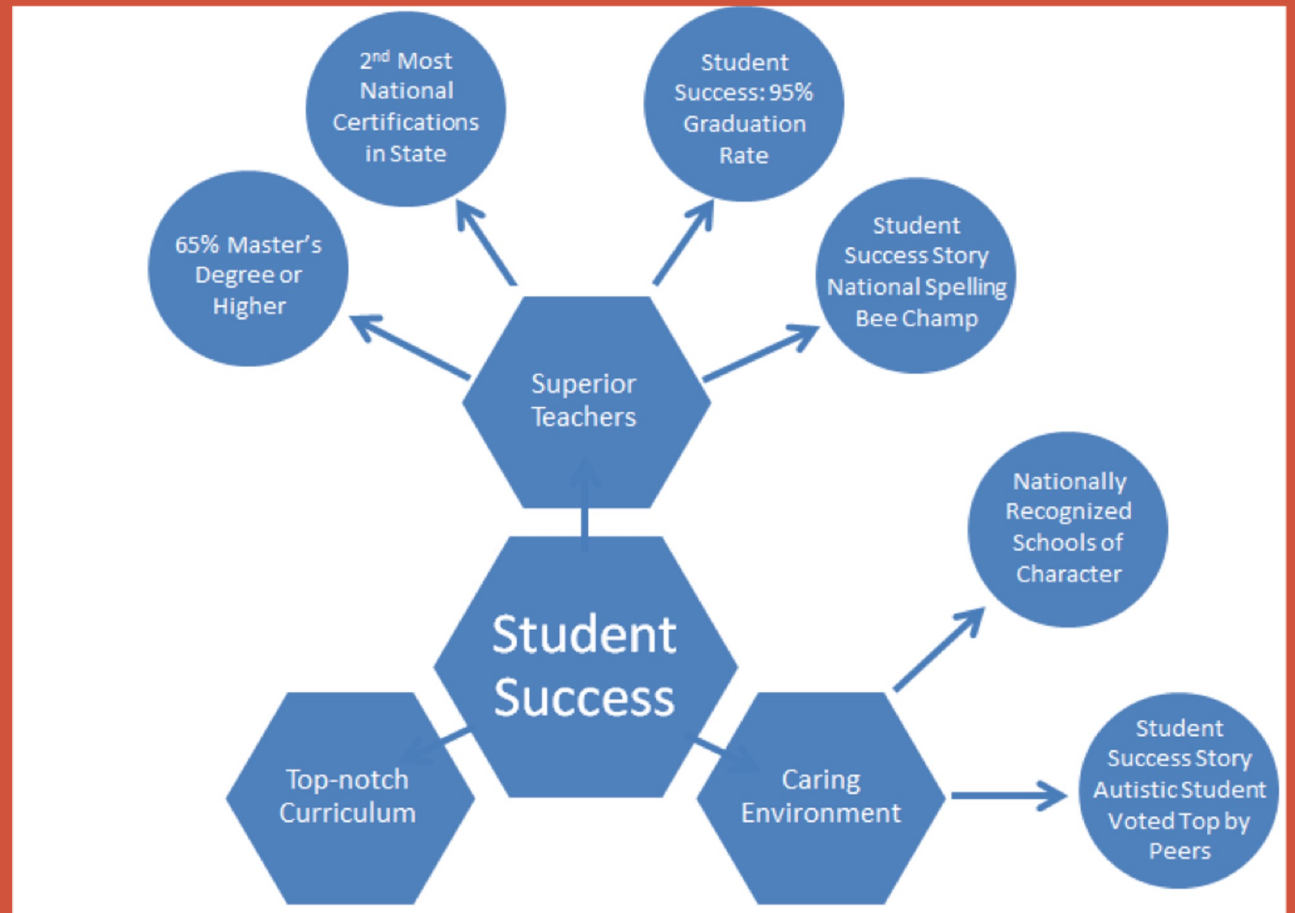
Parkway Schools help all students succeed by providing a great education with superior teachers, an outstanding curriculum and meaningful experiences in a safe and caring environment.

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Emergency Communications

Crisis

Emergency

Policy or Criminal Situations

Employee

Student

Emergency Communications

Even the best communicators struggle when it comes to crisis, emergency, or student or personnel misbehavior. Districts who communicate well during difficult times are often seen as capable, prepared, honest and proactive. A difficult situation handled well ADDS to your credibility. Districts who fail to communicate well often make a bad situation worse.

The keys to crisis communications include timing, tools and tone, but nothing is more important than **being prepared**.

Emergency Communications

Prepare in advance: What is the message, who is the messenger, how will the message be delivered.

Scenario 1: An active shooter situation at a nearby warehouse.

Scenario 2: Rumor of impending violence at school. (After investigating, threat discredited)

Scenario 3: Bus accident with injuries (no fatalities)

Scenario 4: Faculty member arrested for child pornography

Emergency Communications

- Most common situations?
- Having sample letters, scripts, and protocol responses for each situation is vital.
- What communication tools are best for different types of crisis?
- Who is the point person?
- What is the tone of the communication? Empathetic, sympathetic, firm, forthright?
- Post-emergency follow-up?

Individual/Project-Based Plans

- Use for single event, issue, change
- If annual event, can be reused each year
- Same structure
 - Audiences
 - Tools
 - Messages

(Use the grid provided to create your plan.)

Additional Tips/Advice

- Ensure all plans have opportunity for listening/two-way communication
- Communicate multiple times in varied formats
- Be consistent
- Find your #schoolpr rockstars & use them
- Provide training - communications is not everyone's strength
 - Customer Service
 - Parent Communication

Comprehensive Communication Plans

- Use a team approach
- Do your research and let it drive your plan
- Build the plan:
 - Goals -- Describe a future state
 - Objectives: Are SMART and provide focus and direction: Specific (audience), Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound
 - Strategies: Describe an overall plan or approach; the “how” of what will occur
 - Tactics: Describe “what” you will do
- Evaluate (during and after) – if it’s not measureable, how do you determine it success? Its value?

Review: MSIP 6 & Communications

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MOSPRA

MISSOURI SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

WWW.MOSPRA.ORG

MASA
LEAD - DEVELOP - SUPPORT

Samples and Next Steps

We will email you a list of websites with good comprehensive communication plans.

We'll also email you additional documents and links that will help you in the process.

Don't wait on this! Start the process and begin implementing both comprehensive and project-based plans in the very near future.

What did we leave out?

What burning issues or challenges does your district have?

Do you need crisis communication help?

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A little feedback, please

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N5HXMNT>



We'll email this to you. Please take a few minutes – your opinions help us improve.

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