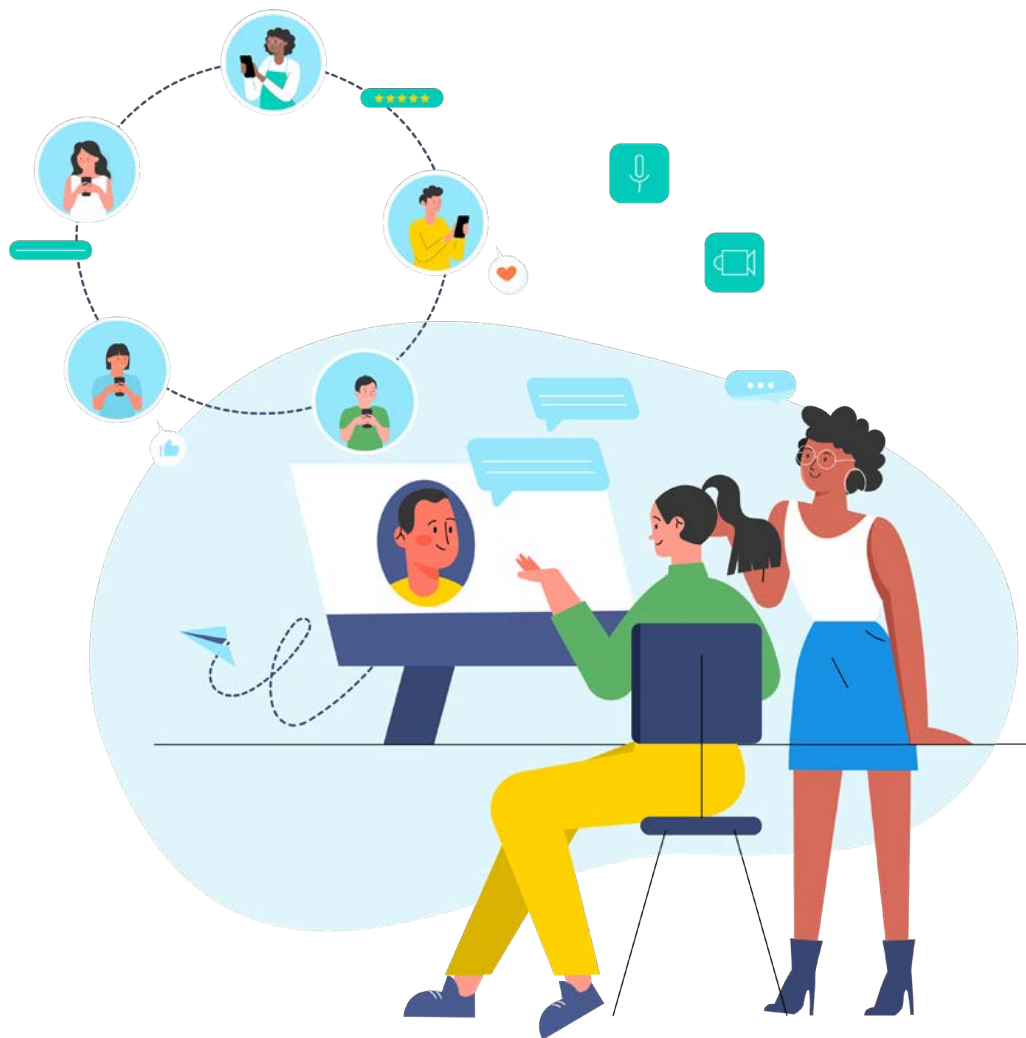


SchoolNow

School Communications Planning Guide



Complete step-by-step guide

A background photograph of a school hallway. In the foreground, a large white semi-circle overlaps the image. To the right, students are walking down a set of stairs. One student in the upper part of the stairs has a blue backpack. Another student further down the stairs has a green backpack. The hallway has large windows and modern interior design.

Introduction

Great school communication starts with a great plan, but getting there is not automatic. Simply polishing off last year's plan won't cut it. Considering budget, technology, staffing, vendor relations, privacy and accessibility issues, it's challenging to construct a relevant, effective plan.

The School Communications Planning Guide is a resource for engaging your school community. As technology and communications channels evolve, it's important that a school's communications plan keeps up - one that aligns your district with modern communication practices and parent communication preferences. From the crisis to the lunch menu, schools need to be prepared to engage.

Use this guide to create your own plan to enhance your school's image, and engage all the right people with all the right information.

Table of content

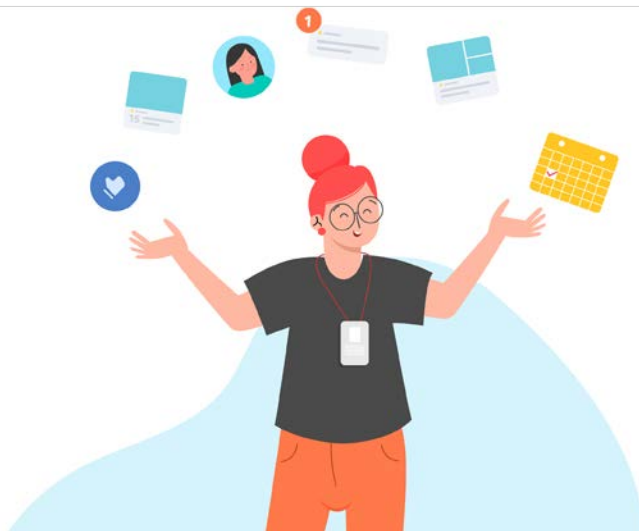
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The best way to
keep everyone close
to your school



All-in-one digital publishing

Say goodbye to scattered school communication.



Mobile app



Messages



Social media



Website



Auto-notices

Intro to strategic school communications



How to ‘live’ your communications mission:

A mission statement should reflect what your school stands for, what it values, and it should serve as a standard for behavior for the staff, students and other stakeholders. Everyone at your school should be prepared and equipped to walk the walk that your mission espouses.

1. Involve school leaders.

Don't develop your mission statement in isolation from other key stakeholders. Your communications lead (or committee if you have one) should own this assignment. In addition to district leaders, involve instructors, other school staff, parents and even students in this fundamental step. Mission statements built as a team have a head start for ready assimilation into the school environment.

2. Keep it academic.

When crafting your mission statement, keep in mind the task at hand. Don't get too far afield from the realistic impact your school can have on its students. It's okay to think big, be altruistic and global and all, but academic achievement, after all, should be driving the bus here.

3. Make it accessible.

Avoid jargon and eduspeak. You're creating this not for academicians with advanced degrees in learning methods, but for students, parents, staff and others who want to get a feel for the goals and culture of your school and rally around it. TIP: If there are too many syllables, reconsider word choice.

4. Spread the word.

Don't create a mission statement then bury it on an obscure web page. It should be communicated in classrooms, school lobbies, student handbooks, websites, online profiles, gymnasiums, auditoriums, emails, videos and other school touch points.

The keystone of the foundation of your communications is a well-conceived, well-articulated mission statement. Be sure that mission is shared – verbatim and in practice – with all the key audiences you're trying to reach. Every communication tactic and message you develop should serve to connect with staff, students, parents or the community at large.

Engaging your entire community

While parent engagement is key to school success, there are other key groups that are essential to communications success. Beyond parents, school communicators must consider how to reach their entire group of stakeholders by seg-



menting and tailoring communications tactics and messages accordingly.

Internal audience

Your internal audience – school board members, instructors and non-teaching staff – are perhaps your most important group. Within this broad group there will be times when you need to address subgroups, but, as a whole, these should be the first to receive that initial volley of communications on most school matters. They're the 'foot soldiers' after all, who can carry or drop the mes-



sages going to your other audience groups.

Especially in terms of policy and procedural changes, an informed staff is a prerequisite to supporting communications with your other audiences, helping to execute your message delivery. Conversely, an uninformed staff can obfuscate and blur an intended message – or even resent the message if not made aware of communications to other school stakeholders.

Parents

Parents are not only a major audience group, but also are allies in helping spread your messaging.

Getting the word out to parents is actually easier than ever today, given the multitude of digital communication channels available. Given the heightened role of social media, for example, 'organic' parent leadership can surface at just about

any time. No longer just the domain of PTOs and booster groups, parent voices and leadership can emerge around the myriad issues school districts face.

Engaging your district parents has become an around-the-clock challenge that requires increased diligence and vigilance. Keeping parents informed on their terms through personalized parent communication methods can serve to build support of key district-level and school-level messaging.



Community

The media and the community at large are the extended audiences that factor into your communications. Nearby businesses, elected officials, civic organizations, senior centers, church-

es, community groups and citizens at large are often overlooked.

School districts are a community asset. They are the heart and soul that helps define neighborhoods, towns and counties. Local governments,



businesses and other community groups are key stakeholders that need to be on your radar.

Students

Many school communications plans ironically neglect – if not totally overlook – the role students can play in delivering messaging. Be sure to factor students into your internal communications mix. They can haul the load when it comes to personifying and sharing your messaging.

Don't overlook students in your internal commu-

Did you know?

A blog can be one of your school's best opportunities to engage parents and the community. Many schools prefer to position it as a superintendent's blog, which gives you a forum to reinforce the school brand, strengthen ties with media, and depict your school leadership precisely the way you want.

Blogs give you total control of the messaging, and can be used to articulate, support and clarify policy, and spark dialogue. Note too that not all posts have to be serious. Some posts can be lighter than others. Simply sharing thoughts, photos, anecdotes, and other's content can all help personalize your school.

nications mix. They can have a major impact on reaching all your other audiences. Students, after all, are the manifestation of your school mission.

Don't leave out anyone

When sharing content, don't forget anybody. Keep all your audiences in mind, and develop strategies, goals and tactics targeting each. parent engagement is key to school success, there are other key groups that are essential to success.

Your internal audience – students, instructors and non-teaching staff – are perhaps your most important group. Within this broad group there will be times when you need to address subgroups, but, as a whole, these should be the first to receive that initial volley of communications on most school matters.

The kids are alright.

Many school communications plans ironically neglect – if not totally overlook – the role students can play in delivering messaging. They are all about sharing. Be sure to factor them into your internal communications mix. Find some student ambassadors who can haul the load when it comes to shar-





Setting communication goals

The communications goals you establish for your district or school will vary on strategic initiatives. Give your goals a lot of thought before setting them, make sure they align closely with overall objectives, and give them a chance to be met.

Know your school's strengths and weaknesses. Confirm them through stakeholder surveys. Consider your current communications with staff, parents, and students.

Questions to ask when goal setting:

- What are the barriers to improving dialogue with your parents?
- Have there been misunderstandings because event information isn't transmitted as smoothly as it could be between staff and parents?
- Is time-critical information being conveyed quickly enough?
- How can you better engage staff, parents, and students at your school?
- What makes parents decide to enroll their children in your school?
- Are there any disconnects you need to eliminate?

Perhaps your communication with staff is excellent, but there have been issues with enrollment. Maybe you're finding it challenging to connect with parents regularly. Identify the main target groups that you need to communicate with more effectively and set your goals accordingly.

Strategic goals to consider:

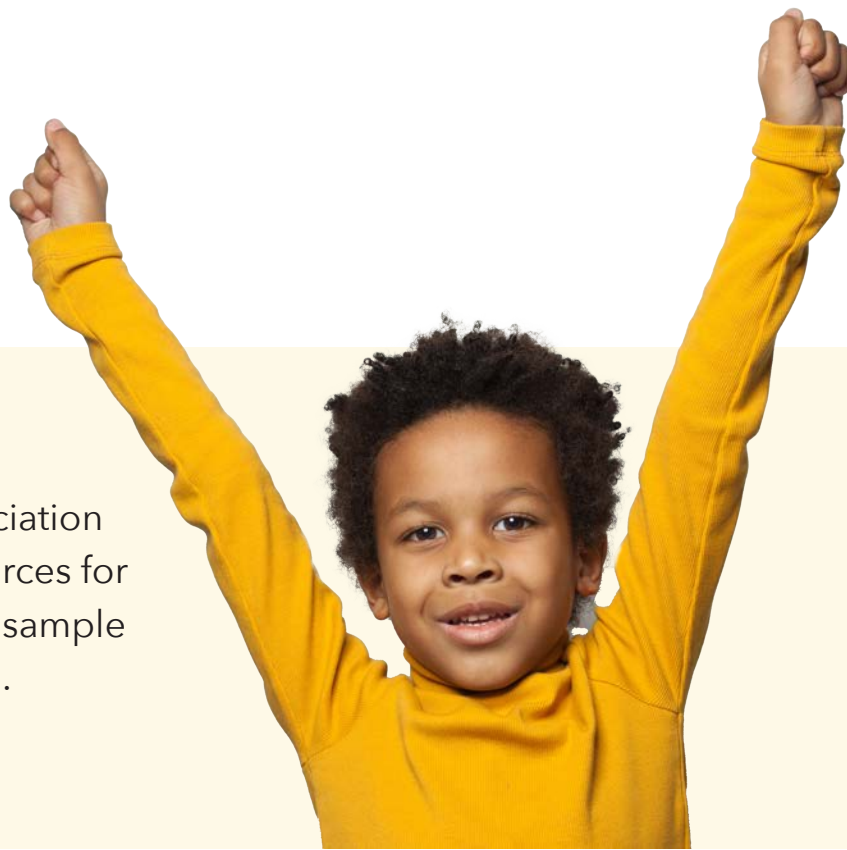
- Increase opportunities to share good news about staff, students and school issues with the entire school community; or,
- Increase amount of content being pushed to parents with regular information on important district-level, school-level, and classroom-level information; or,
- Better gauge and be more responsive to the communications needs of school community stakeholders.
- Measure parent engagement with metrics made available using digital channels.

Examples of specific goals:

- ✓ Redesign school website
- ✓ Establish/enhance communications advisory committee
- ✓ Increase social media following
- ✓ Adding or enhancing communications channels
- ✓ Create a superintendent's blog
- ✓ Create school Youtube channel
- ✓ Expand social media
- ✓ Establish a social media internship
- ✓ Recount popular retired teachers and staff
- ✓ Develop school mobile app
- ✓ Enhance uniformity of classroom (teacher) websites
- ✓ Increase social media content (more postings)
- ✓ Better integrate social media onto website
- ✓ Survey stakeholder groups
- ✓ Increase messaging around key programs
- ✓ Show fun side of your school
- ✓ Spotlight teachers and non-teaching staff
- ✓ Better utilize intranet for in-service and professional development
- ✓ Develop social media ambassadors
- ✓ Create a school style guide for staff emails
- ✓ Launch a school Instagram account
- ✓ Form a communications advisory committee
- ✓ Highlight successful alumni

Quick tip!

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) website has some excellent resources for this stage of your planning. There's even a sample outline of a strategic communications plan.



Using today's digital channels

One of the overarching goals of school communications planning is staying current on all the modern channels available. Independently, each is quite effective, but when used together, all these digital channels can significantly boost your engagement levels.

A responsive school communications plan integrates these essential channels with non-digital tactics for a modern comprehensive approach to the ever-changing challenges of engaging your school community. Understanding and using these channels will make the job of connecting with all your audiences more effective than ever.

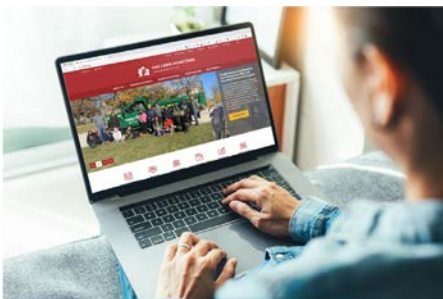
Balancing the communications mix

Pursuing digital channels cannot come at the expense of proven non-digital tools schools have long employed. Personal small- and large-group meetings, phone calls, school signage, take-home packets and the sundry tools otherwise used to connect are still in play. But an integrated approach merging progressive technologies with 'old-school' tactics is your best formula for success.

Digital channels

1. District and school websites
2. Notifications and alerts
3. Mobile app
4. Social media
5. Email
6. Video
7. Blogs
8. Podcasts

1 Website



A website serves an important purpose for school districts and its schools. Think of it as a self-service portal for a great deal of information for your school community.

Because schools have distinct requirements in terms of what their websites need to provide, good website design must take into account precisely why and how visitors access your site. Foremost, frequently accessed information must be easy to find, and your website needs to reflect a professional image that helps depict your school brand.

Website accessibility is critical from both an ADA-compliance standpoint, and the larger population that's accessing your web content. Web content needs to be free of barriers for people with disabilities. Likewise, your web content is usually shared across multiple channels on multiple mobile devices, so everyone needs to access your content anytime from anywhere.

In addition, a district site is the hub for alerts, calendars and news, submission forms, social media feeds, school board activity, e-commerce and more.

2 Notifications

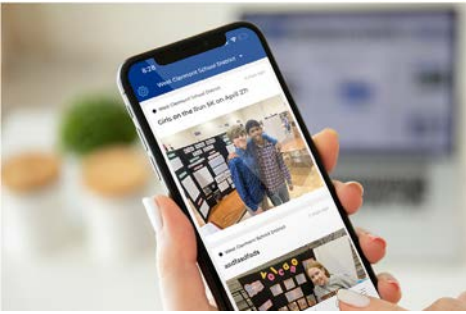


Critical updates, emergency information and important reminders delivered through SMS (text) and voice messages are increasingly important for thorough communications. These types of systems may or may not integrate with other channels such as mobile apps, so careful consideration needs to be given to capabilities and limitations of notification solutions serving K12.

As we all grow more dependent on receiving alerts and notifications to help us prioritize the news and information we want to receive, parent preferences and the ability to personalize their school communications are driving successful parent engagement. Parents and others should have the ability to customize their preferences and receive the preferred method(s) of communication.

Schools need to be sensitive to parents' preferences for these messages or else a breakdown in communication will occur. You do not want to overuse notifications. It is an extremely effective means of communication but can become annoying – and possibly illegal (see Legal Considerations section) – if you are getting notifications about not-so-important information.

3 Mobile app



With 90 percent of internet users accessing it via mobile devices, it's no surprise that mobile apps are becoming a very popular method for schools to communicate. A mobile app can make it efficient for those parents and others in your school community who prefer to use apps.

A dedicated, branded school mobile app can serve as a handy conduit to your school website, where users can access common information like alerts, calendars, directories, news and lunch menus. While the mobile app is not ready to replace the website, the website content needs to be accessible through the app. Another key benefit of the mobile app is the ability to deliver push notifications.

There are other key features a school mobile app should have, but one of the most important is the ability to segment your notifications to the specific users respectively. For example, if the middle school football game is canceled, you should not be notifying the elementary and high school parents. One drawback of mobile apps is the need to have users update their apps, which creates a potential barrier to full utilization of this channel.

4 Social media



Popular social media channels are driving how many businesses and organizations are engaging their audiences, and they're how many in your school community get their news, entertainment and other information. Social media needs to be a big part of your communications mix as well.

Understanding which social media to use and when to use them requires understanding the limits and life cycle of the content to each of these channels. Facebook, Youtube, X, Instagram and are the key channels we're talking about here. There are others - like the relative upstart Tik-Tok - but these are what your school should be using to reach the increasingly digital and mobile stakeholders your school serves.

The beauty of social media is how easily the content can be linked to other social media channels, and how easily it can be shared with many people. Regardless of which media you're utilizing, building a following and, in turn, encouraging sharing (see viral) is what it's all about.

5 Email



The email channel remains a key channel for schools because it is a great way to communicate one-to-one. Nearly everyone has an email account these days, so this channel is almost universally used for regular correspondence. Email allows schools to provide information of all kinds – in detail if needed. Email is can be personal and, if done right, features a high open rate, because most parents open email from their child’s school.

The use of email can range from reminders, policies, registration, newsletters and a variety of announcements. Email also can be the messenger for your website content – still the hub of your school information. Most third-party email blasting systems (e.g., MailChimp, Constant Contact, etc.), which provide a higher degree of email security than one which a school handles itself, enable important metrics that can help you improve your communication.

Email, however, can often be less effective if not written and managed properly. Most, for example are way too long, reducing the chances the reader will read the whole thing, much less act upon it if a call-to-action is included.

6 Video



Videos can greatly amplify your communications. They help personify your school district by bringing messages to life. They’re really quite easy to produce and post. Even live-streaming video for schools is easier than you might think.

Videos and the favored channels to share them – Youtube, Facebook, Vimeo – are the most popular of the media channels because they’re so easy to just sit back and watch. With the abundance of content shoved into our faces each day, short-form video is a natural way to elevate above the clutter and engage your school community.

Video is a crowd-pleasing way for schools to capture, chronicle and archive great school content. When it comes to communicating highlights from just about any kind of event, graduation, a board meeting, ball game, something humorous, touching or otherwise entertaining, video rules.

7 Podcast



Tech-savvy teachers have been turning to podcasts as an aid in instruction, but school leaders too are increasingly utilizing this popular digital channel. By giving your audience the flexibility to listen to your messages whenever and wherever they like, you are accommodating their busy schedules while providing yet another option and opportunity for your messages to be delivered and shared.

Podcast material can range from messages from superintendents, principals and teachers, to important event or calendar information, to more human interest glimpses into your school. Pretty much any longer-form, non-time-critical info you might have on or linked to your website can be podcast fodder. Solo podcasts (i.e., one person speaking) are a good option for things like superintendent's and principal's messages, but interview formats with a conversational tone tend to be more dynamic.

Like videos, producing podcasts don't require extensive equipment or editing software. USB microphones are inexpensive and are versatile enough to plug into just about any computer.

7 Blog



A blog can be one of your school's best opportunities to engage parents and the community. It can be a 'district' or 'school' blog, but many schools prefer to position it as a superintendent's blog, which gives you a forum to reinforce the school brand, strengthen ties with media, and depict your school leadership precisely the way you want.

Blogs give you total control of the messaging, and can be used to articulate, support and clarify policy, and spark dialogue. Note too that not all posts have to be serious. Some posts can be lighter than others. Simply sharing thoughts, photos, anecdotes, and other's content can all help personalize your school.

If properly promoted, a blog can deliver the messaging priorities that can boost public confidence in your entire district. Promote it on your website homepage, share it on your school's Facebook page and other social media, and be sure to promote it through your non-digital school communications as well.

How to plan, create and deliver messages



Every school abounds with communications content possibilities. Schools are a veritable treasure trove of stories and events that deserve and need to be shared. The real challenge is finding the time and other resources to create and deliver all the messages and stories, then choosing the right channels where and when to share it all.

Organizing your content

The size of your district, communications staffing levels, school leadership, culture, vendors and technology levels are variables that you may have limited control over, but how you organize and assemble your content is up to you. Cover the following bases to assure you are covering all your bases when managing your content.

The content hubs

At the highest level, there are four major content hubs - the big chunks - that you should include in your communications plan, each one requiring its own set of objectives and specific goals:

1. Parent/family engagement

Job number one for schools: a steady stream of targeted school information and news to better connect with parents and family members. Messages can range from time-critical alerts and updates to warm-and-fuzzy social media posts. Engagement needs to be at the district level, school level, classroom level.

2. Crisis communications

Fail-safe preparedness and response for emergencies, lockdowns, staff scandals. Maybe there are major 'issues' current or on the horizon that require strategic communications or outside counsel. Ask yourself if you are prepared. Do you have contingency planning in place?

3. Internal communications

Your students, instructors and non-teaching staff are perhaps your most important audience for they can influence everyone else you're trying to reach. They help you live up to the school mission.

Are you engaging these groups with the same urgency you apply to parents and the external school community?

4. Community relations

Being accessible to the communities in which your district operates is another big obligation and should be a priority. Local media, businesses, and social groups can and should be big advocates of your students, staff and mission. It's up to you how you connect the dots between your district and the community.

School-home messaging essentials

What we know about messages:

- Many messages are recurring from school year to school year, or month to month
- Some messages (e.g., school newsletter) use templates, many others start from scratch.
- Messages need to be easily created and sent across multiple channels to select lists.

Message types:

The urgency of each school message varies but can be classified most generally in three (3) categories:

URGENT – Alerts (lockdowns, school closings, crisis/emergencies)

IMPORTANT – Schedule updates, important deadlines, superintendent's/principal's messages

INFORMATIVE – Stories and happenings, events, featured extracurriculars and people news (staff and students)

Building a message content team

One of the most common mistakes made by school communicators is trying to do it all alone. While it is certainly important to maintain control of messaging – especially at the district level – it's not necessary nor advisable to take on responsibility for every web page, notification and social media post.

Certainly, because so much of district messaging that's routinely published, posted and sent is repeated, periodic content that supports the school calendar, you don't need a team to create and manage this aspect of district communications. It's when school-level or classroom-level content is required, that the team approach will benefit.

District communications directors should surround themselves with designated communications "field reporters" as such. They can be responsible for gathering content at each school and serve as the eyes and ears of the vast 'field' of building-level communications opportunities. These team members can be principals, admins, teachers or any staff who is a champion for school communications. Some schools even create communications 'ambassador programs' which can even include students and parents.

The necessary permissions can be granted to communication team members to publish to each of essential communication channels, empowering each to manage content for which they're responsible respectively. These contributors will be granted publishing privileges that you can monitor and preview, if you wish, before messages are published/sent live.

Have a plan in place to handle negative social media comments. They will arise, and there are definite dos and don'ts when it comes to dealing with negative comments from the public.

The power of school storytelling

Nothing better defines your school, its culture, and its image across your entire school community than the positive stories that abound about staff and students. Share those stories of achievement, milestones, behind-the-curtain glimpses into the ordinary and extraordinary that happens every day at every school.

Warm and fuzzy moments can be captured with a cool photo and caption, or a short video that's easily posted to social media or internal school feeds. These vignettes show an authentic side of your school that's every bit as important as the routine general messages and updates you create.

Great stories, after all, are what shape perceptions about your school, so be sure to keep your storytelling funnels full.

Tips for gathering stories

- Make it easy on yourself and your contributors by using technology to solicit ideas
- Create a dedicated email address for such requests. (goodnews@oakschool.edu)
- Create a submission form on your website for soliciting content
- Routinely ask for news and story ideas through your school's social media channels







Pro tip: Share your school stories with video



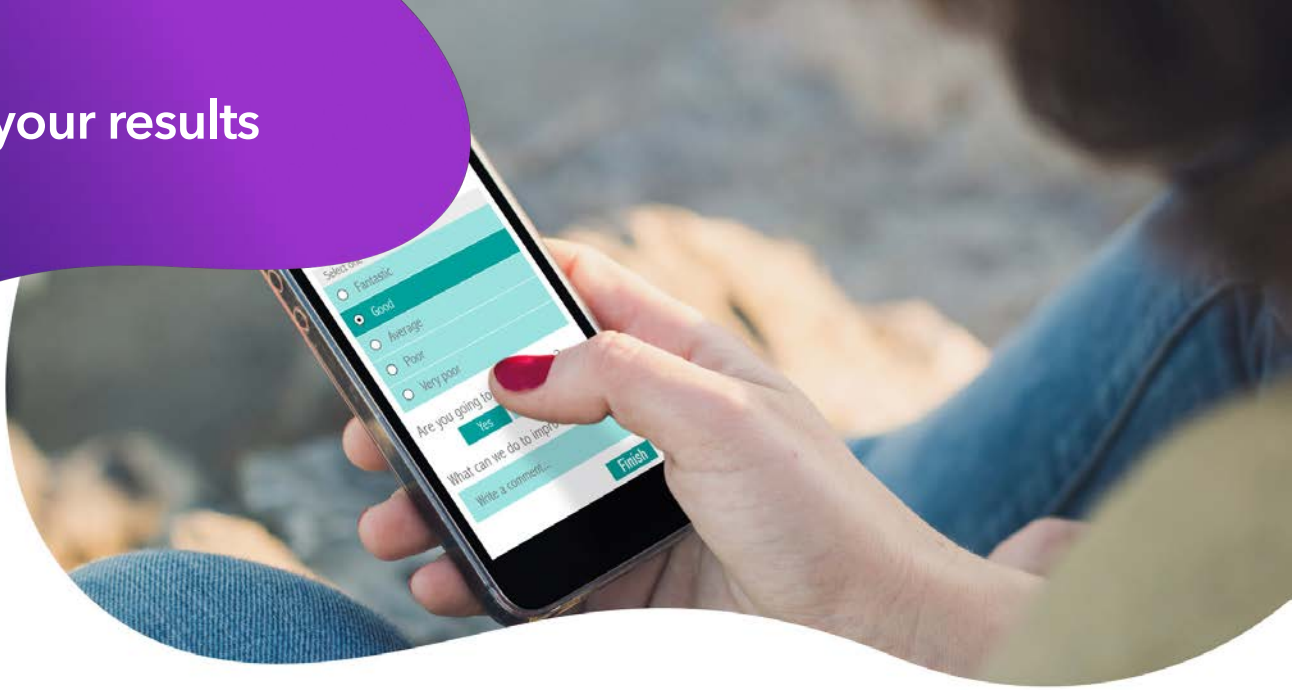
School video storyteller Jake Sturgis, a champion video storyteller and APR professional has compiled some handy tips to tell your school stories via video. Jake founded Captivate Media after working in-house with school districts to help them make the most out of using video. Showcase your videos on social media too. Some schools show live streaming events using Facebook Live or their own Youtube channels, posting everything from football highlights, to school productions, to superintendent's messages. Even if you don't have a Youtube channel, you can create video galleries and archives of your school events. Like all the channels, the time and place for video is here and now.

Right channel, right content.

Not all content should be shared across every channel.
Select the right channels when sharing school information.

	 Email	 Text/voice	 Social media	 Video	 Website	 Mobile app
Emergency alert	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Public relations	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Event promotion	✓		✓		✓	✓
Special announcement	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Important reminders	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Forms/documents	✓				✓	✓
Campaigns	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Levy	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
PTO information	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Fundraising	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Measuring your results



Evaluation is the ongoing part of your communications planning that enables you to keep your planning and execution responsive and agile. Fortunately, many of today's modern channels allow you to learn in pretty short order what's working, and what's not.

In this chapter, you'll learn about some of the popular measurement tools you can use to gauge just how effective your communications are.

1. Surveys

Just like the truck signs that ask, "How Am I Driving?" surveys are a wealth of performance data you can use to measure your communications. Parent and staff surveys especially are great ways to start and maintain dialogue on any number of communications issues. Your website and social media channels provide built-in opportunities to survey any and all of your audiences. Many CMS providers make it easy to create a form or survey that can help spark or confirm communications initiatives.

2. Google Analytics

Because your district and school websites are the hub of information for your school community, knowing how people use them helps you plan, design and build successful websites. One of the best ways to get good data on how people are accessing your website is to use Google Analytics. It's free to schools and is relatively easy to set up on your website. If you're not already using it, put it in gear and start collecting valuable data, like:

- What are your popular pages?
- What are visitors searching for when they come to your site?
- How users really interact with your pages.

To make analysis easier, Google Analytics includes a variety of charts to display information just as you want to see it. Google analytics is the best way to assess your website.

Legal aspects in school communications



Time was when a handwritten note or a permission slip would get the job done, but those days left with the polished apple for teacher. Protecting your school and school information has taken on larger dimensions, as schools scramble to keep pace with the increasing regulations required to communicate securely and legally.

There are several laws that every school should be mindful of when it comes to planning their school communications. This chapter provides a rundown of the most important ones.

FERPA - Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

Under FERPA, families have the right to request and receive their child's education records, and they have the right to submit those requests via email or an online submission form. Your school should have the systems in place so that parents can easily make those requests, and you can respond to them in a timely manner. Consider creating a dedicated email address for such requests or, better yet, creating a specific submission form on your website.

School officials can start here for information and resources on making and keeping your district FERPA compliant. You can also check the government's FERPA FAQ page that answers questions you or parents might have.

ADA - The Americans with Disabilities Act

Besides ramps, handrails, parking spaces, etc., the Americans with Disabilities Act extends to your website.

Because your website is the online proxy for your school, disabled students and parents need to have access to it just as all other members of your community do. This applies to screen readers, which are often used by individuals with poor vision. Your website should be designed in such a way that it's easy for a screen reader to scan. That means the reader should have the option to skip over unnecessary text, like navigation. It also means your site should have clear headings and text structure so the reader can announce any breaks in the text.

Yes, protecting students with disabilities includes your website, so be certain your website is ADA and 508 compliant.

TCPA - Telephone Consumer Protection Act

This one is fresh off the wire. Designed originally, in part, to protect us all from those pesky telemarketers and such, the TCPA was expanded by the Federal Communications Commission to regulate automated voice and text messages many schools are using.

Pay special attention if you have, or are considering implementing a notification system at your school. The key here is consent. If your school uses a notification system, you should require all recipients who subscribe to the notification service to provide consent. Otherwise, your school is legally exposed to potential fines for contacting subscribers without their consent. Especially since more and more schools are using notification systems for much than emergencies (when health or safety issues are not in play), be safe, and be certain to gain permission from all your users.

COPPA - Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

This federal regulation is another safeguard for children and their families. It prohibits any kind of unfair or deceptive methods when it comes to collecting, using or disclosing any personal information about children on the internet. COPPA addresses primarily websites, apps, games and

other online services that children may interact with. Any and all sites must obtain verifiable consent from a parent or guardian before they collect personal information from a child.

PPRA - Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment

This regulation protects minor students from disclosing personal information if their parents don't wish to disclose the information in question. This extends to electronic surveys, polls or other questionnaires.

Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment regulation, schools must get consent from parents before asking children about specific personal information. One way to do this is to have an email system that can quickly send consent forms to parents. Once the parents consent, the email software can record the answer and you can then move forward with any survey or questionnaire.

Leave it to the lawyers

Who knew when you signed up to be a school communicator that you'd have to wade through the legal alphabet soup? While compliance with these laws is best left to your district's legal counsel, it's imperative that any school communicator- and most administrators- should be well aware of these laws.

School districts must be ever vigilant to keep a keen focus on the legal landscape upon which any successful, and lawful, school communications program is built.

3. Email tracking

Still among the most popular and effective ways schools reach parents and other key stakeholders, email is a flexible channel where one-to-one personalization and details can be readily exchanged. While you have a built-in, captive audience with your school community (unlike some email 'marketers'), measuring your email activity can improve your effectiveness:

- Track how many people open your emails.
- Monitor bounce trends.
- See what they clicked, and help you increase engagement.

Metrics included with many third-party email services like Google Workspace for Education and ConstantContact make it easy to manage any email campaign your school conducts.

4. Text/voice metrics

Notifications are necessarily time-sensitive and often critical, so when you have huge volumes of messages through voice and text channels, you need assurances that they're getting through. Most school notification systems provide real-time reporting from a dashboard that enables you to set up reports by broadcast types.

Pro tip: Measure. Adjust. Measure...

Measuring how effective your school communications are is not a one-time proposition. It's a process—lather, rinse, repeat thing. Remember, parent engagement is the end game, but it can also be fleeting, so monitoring your digital communications efforts should be ongoing. If you're just beginning this journey, start with some benchmarking so you know where you stand and where you're heading. With minimal time and resources invested, you'll find that consistent measurement and evaluation allow for flexibility in everything from methods to messaging. and other social media, and be sure to promote it through your non-digital school communications as well.

Planning Checklist

Use this checklist to keep your school communication plan fresh and thorough.



1. Confirm mission and goals.

Start with assessing your own communications mission – is it tightly aligned with the district or school?



2. Reach all your audiences.

Target more than just parents – staff, students, alumni, media, business and even the faith community.



3. See what others are doing.

Look around at neighboring schools. See who's doing it right and not so right.



4. Master all the channels.

Don't be one dimensional, learn about all these key channels driving best practices.



5. Balance your content.

Capture the culture of your school with all the achievements and human interest circulating around your school.



6. Embrace social media.

It's how people are getting their news, information, entertainment. Make sure you're part of that mix.



7. Ensure compliance.

There are legal and ethical reasons to have your ducks in a row.



8. Promote the plan.

Let school leadership, staff, teachers and parents in on what your goals and methods are.



9. Measure. Adjust. Measure.

Communications planning and execution need to be ongoing, a part of your management fabric.