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SUNNYVALE SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNICATION PLAN 2022-2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SSD Communications Plan aligns with and supports the District’s mission, vision, goals, and operations, presenting a clear road map for engaging with our school community for the benefit of the students we serve. Specifically, we are working toward two primary objectives:

- Engaging stakeholders to instill a sense of ownership and pride in our schools to draw a community of supporters around the children we serve.
- Empowering families to support student success at home.

To that end, we have established the following goals for 2023-2026:

- Increase family connection and engagement through communication practices that are consistent District-wide.
- Improve impact and efficiency of communication efforts.
- Increase community engagement, understanding and support with messages that convey core values, goals, and areas of emphasis.
- Improve coverage by local media. Change to: Regularly provide concrete examples of the District’s values in action and educational impact by sharing our stories one classroom, student, and employee at a time.
- Increase the percentage of families who report that administrators and teachers engage in regular and meaningful communication about their students’ progress District-wide.

To achieve our goals, we have enlisted the support of all District personnel, asking them to act as carriers of District values and messages through their actions and communications with parents and the public. The District’s Communications Coordinator shepherds these efforts for a unified brand and consistent practices throughout the District, gathering data, setting goals, measuring success, and providing needed training, tools, and support at the school level, while setting strategy and implementing communication tasks at the District level as well.

Progress will be monitored with quantitative data and anecdotes collected throughout each year via surveys and verbal/written feedback. The District continues intentional outreach efforts to break down barriers to engagement to make sure all families in the district are heard and supported. Annual findings will inform our communication efforts each year.

To provide input, please contact Alia Wilson, Communications Coordinator, at alia.wilson@sesd.org.

INTRODUCTION

The Sunnyvale School District (SSD) consistently provides clear, accurate, relevant, and timely information to its stakeholders. By regularly communicating about its values, goals, and instructional approaches, reporting on District progress, and regularly seeking input from District families and community members, the District aims to strengthen opportunities for student learning success.

The purpose of the Sunnyvale School District (SSD) Communications Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our school community. The plan addresses both internal audiences (students, teachers, staff, administration, and Board of Education) and external audiences (parents, businesses, civic groups, and other members of the SSD community).

SSD's communication plan was developed with input from staff and stakeholders to ensure appropriate strategic direction over the next three years. It is aligned with and supports the District's overarching mission, vision, and goals. The plan will be reviewed annually for continued relevance and maximum effectiveness.

The Communications Coordinator, Alia Wilson, will lead and manage the District's comprehensive communication services and strategies under the direction of the superintendent.

Two driving questions for every program or activity will be:

1. How does this benefit our students?
2. How do we communicate it to our stakeholders?

DATA-DRIVEN COMMUNICATION PLANNING

Audits

The District began its communication planning process by conducting a communications audit of all 10 schools in the 2021-2022 school year. This audit examined 15 different areas of the District's existing communication and community relations practices including customer service, e-mails, e-newsletters, events, formatting, outreach, parent support in learning at home, partnerships, PTA, recognitions, social media, student work, staff communication, unique to your school and website. The key findings of the audits included:

- A need for annual trainings of communication tools and best practices
- Clear District-level communication expectations of what is to be communicated when and by whom
- Annual monitoring of successes

Surveys

In May 2022, SSD conducted a staff and family survey, through which administrators, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians shared their thoughts and feedback on the District's current communication efforts.

Survey data collected from 1,063 staff and family members showed several important trends that would inform the District's communication practices, such as:

- Communicating more about plans for the future, day-to-day operations, challenges facing the District, events, and opportunities to be involved.
- Communicating more about student learning goals and how families can support learning at home.
- Success with email communication, mobile app communication and a preference for Facebook.

Best practices

The Communication Coordinator regularly researches best practices in school communications, gathering data from trusted, nationally recognized sources and local peer Districts and leveraging the findings for Sunnyvale School District's benefit.

Open-door policy

Finally, the Communications Coordinator fosters an open-door policy, inviting families and community members to reach out and connect with questions, comments, or suggestions at any time.

The plan that follows exists as a living document in that it will be improved in time and revised according to best practices and the District's evolving needs.

SSD MISSION, VISION, GOALS



Mission

Sunnyvale School District provides every student with a strong foundation of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional skills to prepare them for success in a diverse, challenging, and changing world.

Vision

Each school in the Sunnyvale School District will be known for developing global-minded learners by providing an exemplary education for every student, building on individual strengths, embracing diversity, and fostering community responsibility.

Goals

GOAL 1: Ensure all students have access to equitable conditions of learning by providing and investing in highly qualified staff, well-maintained facilities, and equipment, as well as robust standards-aligned instructional materials and resources.

GOAL 2: Provide high-quality, equitable, and responsive instruction for ALL students, to prepare them for college and/or career readiness.

GOAL 3: Ensure school and classroom environments provide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) for the Whole Child so that students can reach their full academic potential.

GOAL 4: Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for all parents, families, and community stakeholders as partners in the education and support of all students' success in school.

GOAL 5: Accelerate learning outcomes for English Language Learners, as measured by local benchmark and state assessments, as well as an increase in the District reclassification rate.

SSD COMMUNICATIONS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

District Communications

Exemplary school communications at all levels — District office, school sites, and classrooms — helps to draw support and resources that benefit our students and staff. All District personnel therefore act as carriers of District values and messages through their actions and communications with parents and the public.

Communications Coordinator Role

The District employs a professional Communications Coordinator to lead, shepherd, and support communication efforts. This work strengthens the District's service to students and families by increasing visibility and understanding of District goals, values, practices, and accomplishments.

Building on District goals, the Communications Coordinator sets strategic communication direction, researches, and applies best practices to outreach efforts, and assesses progress against communication goals. They work toward continuous improvement and consistency in communication throughout the District, providing support, guidelines, and tools for all individuals and teams communicating on the District's behalf.

The Communications Coordinator also manages vendors and staff and/or directly conducts tactical work, including managing and maintaining the District website and social media, photographing school events, producing news articles, press releases, and videos, supporting board meetings, and writing and producing a variety of District publications throughout the year.

SSD COMMUNICATIONS

VISION, MISSION, AND OBJECTIVES

Communication Vision

Sunnyvale School District is well-known for providing strong and equitable learning opportunities for all students. Staff employs District guidelines in communications and regularly demonstrates excellent customer service. This results in a welcoming environment for all families, regular public recognition, and strong community support.

Communications Mission

Sunnyvale School District's Communication Department provides clear, accurate, relevant, and timely information to stakeholders, conveying District goals, reporting on District progress, and encouraging stakeholder participation in a two-way communication process.

Communication Objectives

The District's communication efforts are designed to meet two primary objectives:

- Engage stakeholders to instill a sense of ownership and pride in our schools and draw a community of supporters around the children we serve.
- Help families to understand learning goals (District, class, and student) and how to support student progress in the home.

SSD COMMUNICATIONS

GOALS AND ACTIONS

Communication Goals, 2022-23 academic year

- **GOAL 1: Increase family connection and engagement through communication practices that are consistent in frequency, branding, and messaging throughout the District.**
 - Meet with each principal annually to collaborate on school-specific data-driven goals and recommendations.
 - Share data-driven priority goals with every school, including one universal goal:
 - Regular classroom-level communication with families about learning objectives and tips for help from home.
 - Provide tools, training, and reminders for staff annually
 - Conduct training quarterly for webmasters/staff
 - Provide communications guides with step-by-step instructions
 - Create and share high-level, public-facing communications calendar
 - Share reminders of how Communications Coordinator can provide support
- **GOAL 2: Improve impact and efficiency of communication efforts.**
 - Conduct an annual communication survey to track progress. Share results with school administrators; shape communication efforts based on stakeholder feedback.
 - Build on and improve established District-level communication activities familiar to stakeholders for increased impact and accessibility.
 - When possible, add note about translatability, such as:
 - Quarterly e-newsletter
 - Biannual mailer, “The District Bridge”
 - Create and distribute a new, third mailer, reporting on District goal progress and investments
 - Regularly report on LCAP progress through a variety of channels.
 - Write and distribute a news release whenever there is a positive event or news
- **GOAL 3: Increase community engagement, understanding, and support with messages that are updated to convey core values, goals, and areas of emphasis.**

- Develop high-level messaging template segmented by audience group to guide outreach content
 - Incorporate topics requested by families: LCAP, finances, parent opportunities, partnership opportunities, and District emphases — equity, SEC, academic growth.
- Obtain timely and topical information to share through a Communication Coordinator’s “walk-through” of each school.
- Focus on building a culture of “Sharing our stories, one classroom/student/employee at a time.”
- Provide updates on evolving situations (COVID, emergencies, air quality index) on an as needed basis.
- Reflect ***Values in Action*** through dedicated video series and partner collateral piece
- **GOAL 4: Improve visibility by building relationships with select local media.**
 - Update downloadable press kit for the website
 - Identify five media contacts, including two-to-three foreign language publication/broadcast contacts
 - Send introductory notes and invite to subscribe to District Digest
 - Follow them all on social media
 - Send periodic releases/notes of interest to them
 - Invite to key events
- **GOAL 5: Increase the amount of families who report that administrators and teachers engage in regular and meaningful communication about their student’s learning and success Districtwide.**
 - Work with principals to work with teachers to share learning goals weekly/monthly
 - Measure results as a part of communication survey

COMMUNICATION METHODS

We will identify the communication tools that are most widely accepted and preferred by the community through annual assessment and adjust accordingly. Current methods are:

1. **Printed Materials**

- a. Brochures—as needed to highlight District programs or provide general District information.
- b. Mailer—sent out twice a year to voters within our District, our families, local preschools, partners, and local businesses with the goal of informing the community about District achievement, construction, professional growth, innovation, school programs, partnerships, and how to get involved.

2. **Phone/Email/Text Communication**—SSD has a schoolwide listserv (SchoolMessenger) that individuals can sign up for when they register their child. This gives us the ability to send periodic notices including links to SSD's latest:

- a. Publications
- b. Board minutes, agendas and notes
- c. Press Releases
- d. Talking points, memos

3. **Newsletters**—All schools have a weekly or monthly email communication and encourage parents to sign up for the listserv. The District has a quarterly newsletter, the District Digest.

4. **Website**— All schools and departments have websites/webpages that are maintained on a regular basis. Our online archives include:

- a. Board agenda/board packet/minutes
- b. "About SSD Page"
- c. Press releases
- d. District Digest
- e. Master events calendars

5. **Social Media** —Posting 2-3 times a week a variety of information and resources.

AUDIENCES

Internal

1. Board of Education
2. District and School Site Leadership
3. Certificated Staff
4. Classified Staff

External

1. Enrolled Families
2. Prospective Families
3. Parent organizations and school site councils
4. Registered Voters/Taxpayers/Community Residents
5. Public Entities and Government Officials (Local, State, Federal)
6. Existing Community Partners (SEF, SCS, Rotary, Chamber, Playworks, Starting Arts, CHAC, El Camino Hospital/PAMF, CNC)
7. Potential Community Partners/Businesses
8. Other Key Communicators:
 - Business Community/Realtors
 - Civic Groups/Law Enforcement
 - Senior Citizen Groups
 - Religious Groups
 - Community Groups/Neighborhood Associations
 - Education—neighboring school Districts and local colleges and universities, Private Schools, Charters, early education centers and daycares
 - News Media—news organizations, newsletters, newspapers, flyers, etc.

MONITORING SUCCESS

An important aspect of any communication strategy is establishing a process and metrics to evaluate its success on an ongoing basis. To that end, the District will implement several measures to evaluate its communication efforts by the end of this 12-month plan.

The goals established within this communication plan reflect District values and objectives as well as data collected from a variety of sources, the most important being our own families.

We will measure our success with evidence and anecdotes collected through the year, as well as with data collected through our Panorama survey and a May, 2023 communication survey. Data will help us to determine where we are seeing improvements and in what areas we should alter our actions.

The May communication survey results will be compared year over year and will cover the following:

- How people understand District priorities and values
- Where they get their news
- The challenges they experience in accessing news and information about the District and its schools
- What they'd like to know more about
- If families report that administrators and teachers engage in regular and meaningful communication about their student's learning and success
- Language accessibility

We are also asking teachers, principals, and administrative staff to be as receptive as possible to family concerns and to share ideas with the Communication Coordinator that will boost inclusiveness and connections with families.

The District Communications Coordinator will reinforce an open-door policy wherever possible and use input gathered through conversations with families to further inform goals and actions for subsequent years.

TIMELINE

August

- Welcome message to families/staff (SchoolMessenger, Gmail)
- Premiere new District video
- Call for September Digest articles, write
- Photograph first day of school
- Reshare Communication Guides, remind how to use in day-to-day
- Monthly website audit, share audit report with appropriate webmaster
- Post to social media weekly
- Press release
- Big school meal application push
- Share mailroom/printshop protocols with principals/admins
- School communication walk through
- Share This Month in Photos

September

- Publish September Digest (English/Spanish)
- Quarterly webmaster meeting to review/update websites
- Press release
- Post to social media weekly
- Start working on Fall District Bridge mailer
- Premiere updated Juntos/Bishop Leader in Me videos
- Film updated Lakewood video
- Coordinate photo shoots for all 10 schools
- Promote participation in Sunnyvale State of the City
- Share communication best practice tip with principals
- School communication walk through
- Share This Month in Photos

October

- Publish District Bridge mailer
- Market Programs of Choice/Open Enrollment
- Magna, Asset Champion, Schools to Watch Awards deadlines
- Weekly social posts
- Premiere updated Lakewood video
- Promote Teacher of the Year ceremony

- Monthly website audit
- Share communication best practice tip with principals
- Press release
- Realtor and Potential Community Partner outreach
- School Communication walk through
- Share This Month in Photos
- Schedule Interviews/Film for LCAP video to launch in January

November

- Market Programs of Choice/Open Enrollment
- Quarterly Webmaster Meeting to review/update website
- Call for December Digest stories, write
- Press Release
- ACSA ESSA award deadline
- Weekly Social Posts
- Monthly Website Audit
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- Distribute enrollment banners
- School communication walk through
- Share This Month in Photos

December

- Publish December Digest
- Press Release
- Hoffmann award deadline
- Weekly Social Posts
- Market Programs of Choice/Open Enrollment
- Monthly website audit
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- School communication walk through
- Share This Month in Photos

January

- Market Programs of Choice/Open Enrollment
- Parcel Tax Exemption advertisement
- Create and distribute State of the District mailer (LCAP, finances reports)
- Weekly Social Posts
- Monthly website audit
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- Press release

- School Communication Walk Through
- Share This Month in Photos
- Premier LCAP video!

February

- Final Programs of Choice/Open Enrollment marketing push
- Press release
- Call for March Digest stories, write
- Weekly Social Posts
- Monthly website audit
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- School Communication Walk Through
- Share This Month in Photos

March

- Publish March Digest
- Work on District Bridge mailer
- Quarterly webmaster meeting to review/update websites
- Weekly social posts
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- Press release
- School Communication walk through
- Share This Month in Photos

April

- Publish District Bridge mailer
- Press release
- Weekly social posts
- Monthly website audit
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- School Communication Walk Through
- Share This Month in Photos

May

- Collect enrollment banners
- Submit City of Sunnyvale Community Awards
- Start Golden Bell award application
- Employee Appreciation Month banner/recognitions
- Communication Survey
- Call for June Digest articles, write

- Press release
- Weekly social post
- Quarterly webmaster meeting to review/update websites
- Share communication best practice tips with principals
- Premiere middle school summer school video
- School Communication Walk Through
- Share This Month in Photos

June

- Publish June Digest
- End of year family/staff message
- Press release
- Submit Golden Bell award
- End of Year Communications Report to Superintendent
- Weekly Social Post
- Monthly website audit
- Photograph Promotions and share!

July

- Communication needs assessment with all departments and schools
- Communication plan update
- Monthly website audit
- Summer school video/photos/promotion
- Press release
- Update communication tools (SchoolMessenger active user list, Blackboard staff directory, Peachjar)
- Review/update crisis communication plan
- Update parent/student handbook
- Weekly social post

APPENDIX: COMMUNICATION GUIDES

Communication Guides including Communication Best Practices, Social Media, Website and Branding can be found in a dedicated Google Folder for Sunnyvale School District Leaders:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1q9JNLnEkr4Qcl0FsZhqsH9sQUURpwLSw?usp=sharing>