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# Strategic Communications Plan



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# Strategic Communications Plan – Oxnard School District

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## Overview

This overall Plan focuses on communication – within the school, District, with parents and the community, and with the local and possibly national media.

## School Communications

The purpose of the Oxnard School District Communications Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our school community. The plan primarily addresses two types of school district audiences: internal (students, teachers, staff, administration and Governing Board) and external (parents, businesses, civic groups, religious groups, and other members of the OSD community). Staff support for and involvement in this plan is vital – particularly, teachers and office staff who are highly influential sources of information for the public. OSD staff carries the message of the school district to their families and friends who in turn form opinions about the schools. We must have as a top priority the goal of clearly communicating our unified message at all times. The Public Information Officer and the Superintendent’s Office will implement and manage community relations, publications, marketing, and offer leadership on all comprehensive communication services and strategies for the district under the direct supervision 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?



## Objectives

OSD’s objective is to improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open, two-way communication between the Governing Board, administration, staff, students, parents and the OSD communities.

1. **Clarify district flow of information**
  - a. Distribute organizational charts to all staff showing decision-making process, reporting, and accountability structure.
  - b. Charts should include individual areas of staff responsibility for communication.
2. **Provide ongoing training and support for administrators in effective communication with staff and the public**
  - a. Provide continuing training sessions as part of principal's meetings on how to train teachers and staff to communicate their school's message.
  - b. Subscribe to school communication publications (National School Public Relations Association and California School Public Relations Association) and relay pertinent ideas and information to administrators.
  - c. Supply administrators with public relations fact sheets and other easy-to-use communications tools as needed when issues arise.
  - d. Provide communications training sessions to site-level staff as needed.
3. **Provide regular information on district-wide issues**
  - a. Distribute information from meetings on need-to-know basis.
  - b. Distribute all *external* publications (i.e. newsletters) and news releases to staff via the website, social media, and email.
  - c. Issue short, bulleted FYI sheets to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern.
  - d. Formalize a policy for district communication with teachers and site staff.
  - e. Establish a "State of the Schools" report delivered by the Superintendent.
4. **Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents/community to the district**
  - a. Encourage parents and community members to provide current email address to receive digital flyers from their child's school and the district office.
  - b. Conduct electronic surveys via email at district and school site levels to provide feedback on flow of information.
  - c. Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.
  - d. Establish informational email account to receive feedback from community ([news@oxnardsd.org](mailto:news@oxnardsd.org))
  - e. Establish the OSD mobile app
  - f. Expand use of the Parent Portal to facilitate communication between parents and schools.
5. **Publish and distribute informational pieces**
  - a. Develop Collateral Pieces.
    - i. District/School Informational Brochures.
    - ii. Newsletters
    - iii. Press releases as needed.
  - b. Provide each site with a copy of OSD videos when made available
  - c. Post information on District website
6. **Communicate with civic, community and religious groups**
  - a. Include groups in mailings and provide opportunities for them to sign up for our community listserv.
  - b. Attend community meetings as needed to provide information.
  - c. Provide district communications materials to key leaders.
  - d. Develop partnerships with groups.

- e. Develop program for touring District that includes bus tours of schools and facilities. Participants could include senior citizen groups, community members, civic leaders, etc. Tours will be narrated by appropriate staff members, and will vary depending on needs.
- 7. Be visible in the community and attend community organization meetings**
- a. Encourage participation in local service clubs. Host OSD “town hall” meetings or forums when necessary and appropriate. Encourage school staff to talk positively about OSD schools to friends, neighbors and community acquaintances. Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups.
- 8. Promote the successes of OSD staff**
- a. Produce a monthly video series focusing on a student, staff member, program, school, department, etc. Video to be shown on YouTube channel, cable channel, and/or at board meetings.
  - b. Highlight staff with articles in district communications pieces, outside media, and through recognition at events.



## List of Target Audiences

### Internal

- 1. Students
- 2. Staff
  - a. District Level
    - i. Certificated
    - ii. Classified
    - iii. Administrative/Management/Leadership
  - b. School Site Level
    - i. Certificated
    - ii. Classified
    - iii. Administrative/Management/Leadership
- 3. Governing Board

## External

1. Parents/Guardians
2. Parent Organizations
3. Key Communicators
4. Business Community
5. Elected City Officials
6. Elected State and Federal Legislators
7. Civic Groups
8. Community Groups
9. Education – Other school districts and local colleges & universities
10. Private Schools
11. Electronic Media (i.e. website, social media sites, email, newsletters, etc.)
12. Print Media (i.e. newspapers, flyers, posters, banners, etc.)

## **Strategies**

1. **Keep Communications Simple**
  - Use clear, concise and non-educational style for all general publications.
  - Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences.
  - Translate communication pieces for various language groups.
2. **Create Information Sheets**
  - a. Create information sheets on four or five topics such as district and state budgets, school safety, accountability, etc.; update them bi-annually or as needed.
  - b. Have sheets available on-line for quick reference.
  - c. Use template for uniformity so that new topics can be addressed rapidly.
3. **Communicate Early and Often**
  - a. Prepare information sheets when appropriate to send out to principals, office managers, and other staff as needed.
  - b. Follow-up with memos or communications to all staff if necessary.
  - c. Make telephone calls if in doubt.
4. **Communicate Face-to-Face**
  - a. The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face.
  - b. Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate.
5. **Keep Communications Brief and to the Point**
  - a. In order to keep a person's attention, be brief and to the point.
  - b. Use bullet points when appropriate.
  - c. Highlight message in the title.
  - d. Proofread all documents for errors.
6. **Emphasize Customer Service**
  - a. Customer must leave with an answer to their concern or question.
  - b. Never be dismissive.
  - c. Actively listen to understand the message beyond the words.
7. **Train Staff**
  - a. Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors, and people in the community has an impact on how OSD schools are perceived.

- b. Engage frontline staff in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately. They are the best link to the parents and community.
- 8. Develop Relationships with our Community**
- a. Develop relationships with merchants by keeping them informed of minimum days, late starts, etc.
  - b. Ask for input on areas of concern.
  - c. Develop key communicators groups and deliver message to them as needed. They will take the message to the community more effectively than district personnel.
  - d. Maintain a high level of visibility for the District through participation of key staff in various professional and community activities.
- 9. Study the Media**
- a. Pay attention to the type of stories aired or published.
  - b. Note who is generally used as a source of information.
  - c. Develop relationships with editors and education reporters.
- 10. Prepare our Messages**
- a. Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with information sheets.
  - b. Develop responses that represent our school or district message.
  - c. Avoid technical jargon by keeping it simple and using quotable “sound bites,” when appropriate.
  - d. Prepare stories in formats that match those used by the local media.
  - e. Don’t use education lingo when preparing messages



## Methods

The PIO will identify the communication tools that are most widely accepted and preferred by the community through quarterly assessment and adjust accordingly. Our current communications methods are:

### 1. Printed Materials

- Community, district, and school flyers featuring events and activities
- Internal OSD e-newsletter disseminated to all staff
- External OSD e-newsletter disseminated to all parents and key-communicators
- Brochures to highlight district programs or provide general district information.
- Communications from the Superintendent—as needed.

2. **E-mail Communication:** OSD has a community communications tool called “Ed Connect” that provides the district with the ability to send periodic notices including links to OSD’s latest information.

- Publications
- Board minutes, agendas and notes
- Press releases
- Talking points memos

\* All schools should send out a monthly email communication and encourage parents to sign up for Peachjar (digital flyer platform). Paper communication could be greatly reduced over time.

**3. Publications Posted Online:** We can save money and time by continuing to provide the majority of our printed materials on our district’s web site and begin to move away from paper communications.

Our on-line archives include:

- Social Media Plan
- Digital Media Team (DMT) Program
- OSD Communications Plan
- Board agenda/notes/minutes
- News Releases
- E-newsletters

## **Accessibility and Accountability**

Because different measurements work best in different situations, a tracking system will be developed to measure communication effectiveness.

- ✓ Benchmarking: To ascertain what communication strategies are being implemented in other school districts.
- ✓ Focus groups: To be conducted in groups of six to ten people to collect qualitative information as needed.
- ✓ Electronic surveys: To be used to ascertain people’s opinion and to collect quantitative information.
- ✓ Matrix: To be used to measure the number of hits/visits on the district’s website
- ✓ Interpersonal Contact - Informal word-of-mouth surveys will be conducted to gauge the level of effectiveness of Communications Plan.

The Communications Plan will be reviewed and updated 1-2 times a year, or as deemed necessary by the Superintendent, Governing Board, and/or the Public Information Officer.