

COMMUNICATION PLANNING GUIDE



Topic: _____ Goal: _____

NOTIFICATION SEQUENCE (as appropriate)

Person/Party	Date/Time to Contact	Person Responsible	Messages	Date/Time Completed	Follow Up/Comments
Board of Education					
Cabinet					
Site Leaders					
Union Leadership					
District Office Staff					
Maintenance Department					
IT Department					
PTA/PTO/Booster Group Leaders					
Elected Officials					
City Officials					
Media					
Retirees					
Community Stakeholders					
Business Community					
Faith Community					
School District Stakeholders					
Others (e.g., Law Enforcement, County Health, Department of Education, etc.)					
Website/Social Media					
Press Release Needed (Y/N)					

THIS GUIDE IS A SUMMARY ONLY AND NOT LEGAL ADVICE. WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU CONSULT WITH LEGAL COUNSEL TO DETERMINE HOW THIS MAY APPLY TO YOUR SPECIFIC FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

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TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- Don't Be Shy. Get to know the reporters who cover your district. Don't wait for an emergency to meet the media.
- Be A Leader. Offer to meet regularly with reporters. Become a source of information on federal and state education issues.
- Deadline Difficulties. Explain the need for adequate time to meet deadlines.
- Reciprocal Respect. Call and thank reporters when they do nice pieces on the district, and when they treat a difficult subject with respect and accuracy.
- It's All On The Record. Do not ask to speak off the record. Do not go off the record.
- Great Question, May I Get Back To You? If you do not know the answer, just say so. Offer to get back to the reporter with the answer/information.
- Transparency. If you have nothing to hide, don't hide. Honor Public Records Act requests in a timely fashion.
- No Jargon Allowed. Try to provide information in a manner that all readers or listeners will understand.
- Student Privacy. Be sure and review your board policies on the media's access to campus and students/staff. The media cannot cause a material disruption to campus activity or instruction, and the district and site have an obligation to protect the privacy of minors.
- Make Your Point. Have three key messages.
- Facts Speak Volumes. Have data to support your points.
- Your Own Voice. Make sure you're comfortable presenting messages in your own words.
- "Blank Space." When conversing, reporters might leave "blank space" hoping to draw "unintended" comments. Remember, when you've made your point, stop talking.
- Camera Rules. Today, we are surrounded by cameras. When addressing a crowd/at an event, consider that you are always on camera.
- Sit Still. Do not fidget during the interview.
- Body Language. Make eye contact. Guard against nodding when a reporter asks a question, as this can appear that you agree with the question or issue being raised.
- In Advance? Ask, "What is the story?"
- ATM: Acknowledge, Transition, Message

KEY COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

Tone Matters

- Demonstrate calm confidence.
- Do not take pointed questions personally.
- Show empathy, and action if necessary.
- Speak to concerned employees and parents; the reporter is not your audience.

Tips for Managing a Crisis

- Tell the truth.
- Show empathy for those impacted by the situation and commit to work with lead agencies, or take care of "it" if action is required of the district.
- Allow lead agencies to speak on crises that fall under their purview, e.g. law enforcement to speak on campus violence, fire department on a fire, health department on a health outbreak, etc.
- Make sure you have a district leader at the emergency site and a point person back at the district office who can take all calls and prepare next-steps communication.
- Using concentric circles approach (at right), be sure to disseminate information to all the key audiences in the organization. Provide statements for their use.

