# COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION WINTER 2023

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# TIMELINE AND PROCESS

## INTRODUCTION

In February of 2023, members of the Parkway Board of Education held a preliminary work session for the Communications Department Program Evaluation. In addition, the department sought feedback from the Parkway Communications Advisory Committee - a volunteer group of Parkway parents and residents who work in public relations, communications, marketing and related fields and meet with district leaders multiple times a year to advise on district communications.

The program evaluation process is designed to determine the effectiveness of current programs and seek continuous improvement. A list of guiding questions was presented to the Board at its meeting on March 15, 2023, for discussion and consideration. The following guiding questions were approved and used to drive the evaluation process and research to be gathered.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How does the Communications Program align with best practices for school communications, public relations, marketing and engagement?
2. What is the current satisfaction level among key stakeholders with district communications?
3. What are the communications preferences of key stakeholders? (ex. channels, frequency, content)
4. How do program goals and measurable objectives best support and align with district goals, mission and vision?
5. Does staffing and budget match program and district goals?

# TIMELINE AND PROCESS

## TIMELINE

Communications Community Advisory Feedback: February 24 and April 28, 2023
Board of Education Subcommittee: February 2023
Board of Education Meeting Report: March 15, 2023
Research and Evaluation: April - October 2023
Report to Superintendent's Advisory Team (SAT): December 2023
Present Final Report to Board of Education: January 2024

Program areas of study:
- Comprehensive Communications Plan (Goals, Objectives and Strategies)
- Internal communications
- External communications
- (Parent/family communications, community and media relations)
- Marketing/branding communications
- Community engagement
- Crisis communications

## EVALUATION

The evaluation process began by identifying the target audiences to be included and determining the type of research tools to be used. It was decided that a mix of primary and secondary research would be used along with surveys and focus groups as indicated below for each target audience.

### Research Methods

| Surveys | Primary Informal |
|---|---|
| Focus Groups | Primary Informal |
| NSPRA Audit | Primary Informal |
| Communications Peer Plan Review | Secondary Informal |
| National PDK Poll | Secondary Formal |
| Parkway Public Opinion Surveys | Primary Formal |
| NSPRA Staffing Study | Secondary Informal |

# PARKWAY
## SCHOOLS

# COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

## 23-24 Parkway Communications Plan

## INTRODUCTION

The Parkway Communications Department supports the Parkway mission to ensure "all students are capable, curious, caring and confident learners who understand and respond to the challenges of an ever-changing world."

The Communications Department provides transparent, timely, relevant and consistent communication with stakeholders. We value two-way conversations with our community and strong relationships as the foundation of a strong public school system.

This comprehensive communications plan is designed to establish a strategic process for effective communications, planning and evaluation aligned with Parkway's strategic goals and Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). The plan is reviewed on an annual basis to align with district objectives.

## MISSION AND VISION

The mission of the Parkway Communications Department is to serve the Parkway community by providing strategic communication and community engagement to collectively support positive outcomes for each student.

Our vision for effective communication in support of our students:
- Fosters strong relationships with all stakeholders
- Provides focus and direction for mutual understanding
- Is necessary to accomplish our strategic goals
- Is a two-way process involving internal and external audiences
- Is a function of leadership and the responsibility of every employee in the organization
- Supports teaching, learning and increased student achievement

# OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

## COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

- Communications planning and counseling
- Communications training and support
- Internal and external communications
- Crisis communications
- Issues management and environmental scanning
- Research and community surveys
- Technical support for communications platforms and channels
- Alumni engagement
- Marketing and branding
- New! Staff Recruitment Marketing
- Media relations
- Community relations and district advisories
- Community engagement
- Digital communications and social media
- Publications design and production
- Staff recognition programs and events
- Video production and photography
- Graphic design
- Sports marketing program and partnerships
- Parkway Print Shop

## KEY MESSAGES

District communications will tell stories and use proof points to demonstrate the following key messages.

- How Parkway is meeting its mission to "ensure all students are capable, curious, caring, and confident learners who understand and respond to an ever-changing world."

- How is Parkway achieving its strategic plan to:
  - Ensure students are learners who positively engage in an ever-changing world.
  - Attract, employ, develop and retain an exceptional staff dedicated to and representative of Parkway's diverse community.
  - Responsibility and efficiently allocate resources including finances, facilities, personnel and time.

# OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

## 23-24 Parkway Communications Plan

## KEY AUDIENCES

The following key stakeholders are identified as critical to our communications goals.

- Certified staff
- Support and operations staff
- Special School District staff
- Contracted staff
- Administrators
- School board members
- Key Communicators
- Parkway-Rockwood Community Ed

- Families and Students
- Parent organizations/PTOs/Boosters
- Taxpayers
- Support organizations
- Volunteers
- Community and marketing partners
- Senior citizens
- Business partners and leaders
- Alumni

- Religious leaders
- Real estate agents
- Legislators
- Municipal leaders
- First responders
- News media
- Chambers and civic groups
- Private and parochial school parents
- Prospective parents

# OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

## COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

### DIGITAL + PRINT

- Parkwayschools.net
- Inside Parkway employee website
- School/department websites (support)
- Parkway Today newsletter
- Inside Parkway staff newsletter
- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter X, YouTube
- Payday Notes/Leaders Memo (support)
- Parent and staff mass communications (email, texting, phone)
- Digital flyers
- Parkway mobile app
- Parkway Today printed community newsletter
- News media (TV, radio, newspaper)

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Project Parkway
- Thoughtexchange
- PTO Leadership meetings
- Religious Leaders meetings
- Key Communicators meetings
- Chambers of Commerce
- Mayors and City Administrators meetings
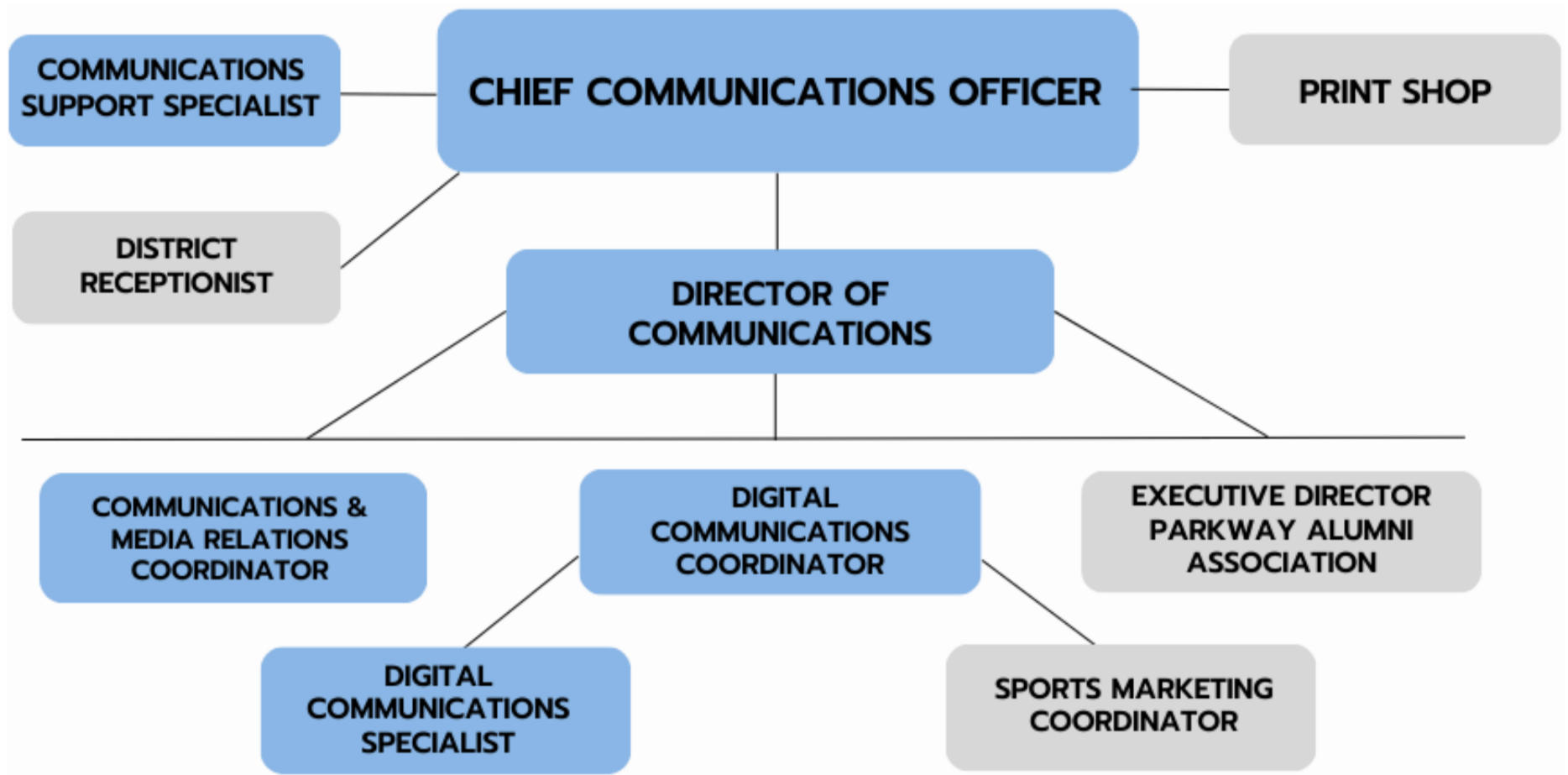- Government Relations meetings

### RECOGNITION

- Board meeting student/staff recognitions
- Appreciation Evening staff recognition event
- Teacher Appreciation
- Light of Parkway, Albert Award, Pillar of Parkway, Teacher of the Year
- Ongoing staff recognition days and events

# OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

## COMMUNICATIONS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

# OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

## 23-24 Parkway Communications Plan

The 23-24 Communications Department team and key roles/responsibilities include:

- Chief Communications Officer, Elisa Tomich (emergency management, custodian of records, strategy and planning, and supervisor of communications and safety/security departments)
- Director of Communications and Community Relations, Annie Dickerson (communications planning and monitoring, writing, editing, community relations, engagement and supervisor of communications department)
- Communications Coordinator, Cathy Kelly (media relations, staff appreciation event)
- Digital Communications Coordinator, James Skorburg (internal and external newsletters, publications, social media, mass communications system support, video, photography and graphic design)
- Digital Communications Specialist, Jada Scales-Cole (social media, graphic design, video and photography support)
- Communications Support Specialist, Kathy Dodge (event planning, staff appreciation and administrative support to communications and safety/security departments)

In addition to the Communications Program, complementary programs and staffing resources exist in the department to ensure community support and revenue for district programs. Most notably. the Parkway Alumni Association and Sports Marketing Program. While these support programs were not targeted as part of this comprehensive communications review, the goals and objectives are included in Appendix D. In addition, the Print Shop and District Front Desk Receptionist are included in the communications department.

# Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the district's high level of community support.

Parkway stakeholders will indicate high levels of satisfaction and trust compared to previous benchmark data on surveys.

## OBJECTIVES

**1**

At least 80% of Parkway residents will grade Parkway Schools an A, B or higher on periodic public opinion surveys.

**2**

At least 85% of parents and staff would "recommend Parkway" to others.

**3**

At least 75% of Parkway parents and staff will indicate Parkway does a good job involving community members in important decisions.

## STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Varied opportunities and channels exist for two-way communication with all stakeholders.

Community engagement plans ensure all voices are included and are representative of our community.

Stakeholder opinion is encouraged, monitored and valued.

# Goal 2: Produce effective communication to and from internal and external audiences.

Parkway stakeholders will indicate they are informed and satisfied with district communications.

## OBJECTIVES

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| At least 80% of parents and staff indicate they are satisfied with communications on annual surveys. | At least 90% of parents and staff indicate they feel informed and communications meet their needs, preferences and expectations on annual surveys. | At least 65% of all content tells the story of capable, curious, caring and confident students and how Parkway staff and programs contribute to student success. | Social media metrics indicate expansion in audience reach and engagement. | Communications results meet established benchmarks. |

# Goal 2: Produce effective communication to and from internal and external audiences.

Parkway stakeholders will indicate they are informed and satisfied with district communications.

## STRATEGIES & TACTICS

**1**

Achievements of students, staff, and the district are routinely recognized through internal and external communications channels.

**2**

Communications routinely include key messages and how Parkway staff and programs contribute to student success.

**3**

Communications content is monitored, evaluated and adjusted to ensure high parent and staff reach, engagement and alignment with mission.

**4**

Communications are timely, relevant, informative, accurate and transparent.

# RESEARCH AND RESULTS

# How does the Communications Program align with best practices?

## AUDIT OF PEER DISTRICTS

To answer this question, the department conducted an:
- Audit of peer district communications plans and an;
- Audit of the National School Public Relations (NSPRA) Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures.

In the summer of 2023, the Communications Department team reviewed over a dozen Comprehensive Communications Plans from districts across the country. Plans were chosen based on their previous awards from the National School Public Relations Association as best practices for comprehensive and strategic communications and public relations programs. In addition, the team reviewed local peer district communication plans including Rockwood, Affton, Lindbergh, Pattonville and Park Hill.

**REVIEWED 13 PLANS**

## KEY FINDINGS

**1** Parkway's Comprehensive Communications Plan and program are aligned with many best practices, specifically goals and objectives.

**2** Some districts have a comprehensive long-term plan and some have an annual plan that is more tactical with short-term goals.

**3** Compared to other exemplary districts, an opportunity exists for Parkway to measure the effectiveness of communications and public opinion more routinely with stakeholders.

# How does the Communications Program align with best practices?

## NATIONAL AUDIT (NSPRA)

In the Spring of 2023, the Communications Department team completed a self-assessment of the Parkway Communications Program using the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures.

Communications team members individually completed the self-assessment and then the team met to discuss findings and determine an overall score.

NSPRA outlines six critical function areas that mark a comprehensive school communications program. The rubric evaluates the status of each function area based on specific components and examples used to determine if the program is emerging, established, or exemplary.

**AUDIT OF SIX KEY AREAS**

## KEY FINDINGS

| CRITICAL FUNCTION | ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT STATUS |
|---|---|
| Comprehensive planned communications using the four-step PR process (RPIE) | Established |
| Internal communications | Established |
| Parent/family communications | Established |
| Marketing/Branding | Established |
| Crisis communications | Exemplary |
| Bond/finance election campaigns | Exemplary |

# How does the Communications Program align with best practices?

## NATIONAL AUDIT (NSPRA)

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Understand Communication Needs and Requirements Through Research**   My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Research into student and stakeholder perceptions and attitudes largely non-existent or limited to hearsay/informal inputs | ☐ Series of approaches in place to understand communication needs and requirements, e.g.: | ☐ Research systematically conducted to ascertain constituent needs and expectations regarding communications as well as opinions and attitudes about district and programs; includes balance of formal and informal, primary and secondary, and qualitative and quantitative research |
| ☐ Limited understanding of student and stakeholder expectations and requirements regarding communications; not necessarily valid and/or reliable | ◆ Surveys of students, parents/families, faculty and staff and community members measuring perception and attitude, communication expectations, and communication effectiveness | ☐ Research adequately supported through budget/district resources |
| ☐ Reliability on narrow channels of information for insight into communication needs and requirements | ◆ Platforms to gather public opinion such as social media outlets or custom email address for complaints | ☐ Communications staff trained in communications research; professional development keeps pace with new trends in research |
| | ◆ Third-party research such as census bureau information, Gallup poll, etc. | ☐ Research results regularly shared with senior leaders to inform decision making |
| | ◆ Focus groups to cull qualitative feedback | ☐ Continuously benchmarks with local and national best-in-class in communication effectiveness |
| | ◆ Formal structure for public input during school board and other meetings | ☐ Research approaches continuously evaluated for effectiveness; new trends routinely considered |
| | ◆ System of informal channels to gather input and feedback such as participation in committees and task forces, attendance to PTA/PTA meetings, etc. | |
| | ☐ Local and national trends in education and communication tracked to inform potential swings in perception and attitude | |

# How does the Communications Program align with best practices?

## NATIONAL AUDIT (NSPRA)

Emerging: The program is in the early stages of development, largely responsive to immediate needs or problems with minimal proactive planning. Program goals, if articulated, are loosely defined with minimal alignment with district goals and objectives.

Established: The program includes a series of defined approaches based on some research. Strategies, tactics and goals are defined. Program goals align with district goals and objectives. Some evaluation may occur.

Exemplary: The program is conducted according to an articulated plan following the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications often known by the acronyms RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) or RACE (Research, Analyze/Action Plan, Communicate, Evaluate). The program is aligned with and integrated into district strategic plans. It is supported through policy, training and resources. Ongoing evaluation to improve progress is embedded into operations.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Parkway historically completes community-wide public opinion surveys every 4-5 years. Exemplary programs complete more routine (annual) research to understand stakeholder needs, public opinions, attitudes and satisfaction.

2. Parkway historically has not included a satisfaction measurement on annual parent/staff climate surveys. Exemplary programs complete more routine (annual) evaluations of parent and staff satisfaction with the district (including communications).

3. Exemplary programs routinely research to understand market demographics, competition and enrollment trends for their community.

# Engaged Participants Representative of our Community

Intentional tactics were used to ensure survey and focus group participants were representative of our community.
- Survey communications were translated into parent native languages
- Parent survey participation matched the racial diversity of our community (60% of respondents White/40% non-White)
- Focus groups were a mix of randomly selected and targeted participants
- Survey response rates were similar to other district surveys.

**3,484**

Parents Surveyed

**125+**

Parents and Staff Participated in
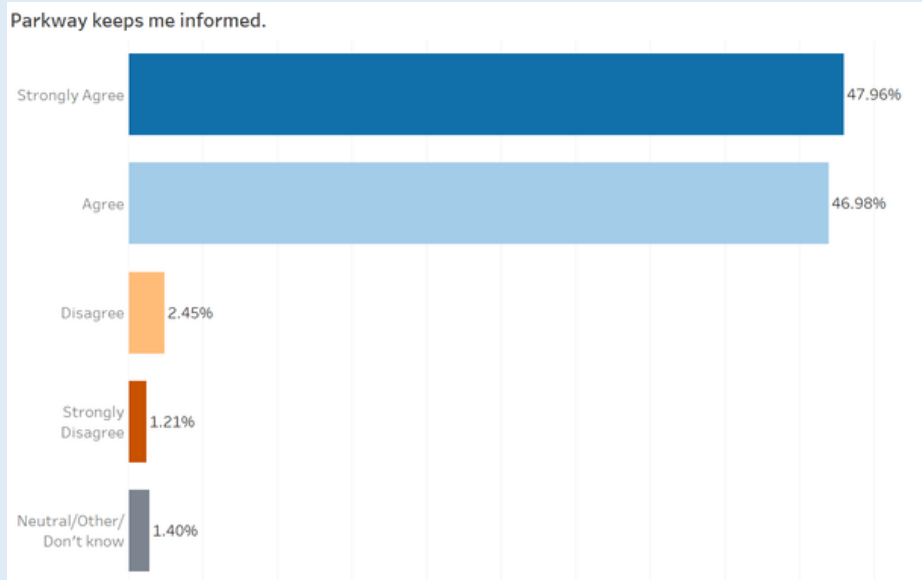
**9**

Random and Targeted Focus Groups

**994**

Staff Surveyed

# Satisfaction and communications preferences

## SURVEYS

In the Spring of 2023, online surveys were administered to all parents and staff. In addition to the survey responses below, data is compared to previous Parkway benchmark data in Appendix A

**Parkway keeps me informed.**

| Response | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 47.96% |
| Agree | 46.98% |
| Disagree | 2.45% |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.21% |
| Neutral/Other/Don't know | 1.40% |

## KEY FINDINGS (PARENTS)

**1** Parent satisfaction with the district is high compared to national data.
- 89% of parents rated Parkway and A or B which is up 8% from the year prior.

**2** Overall, parents are satisfied with district, school and teacher communications.
- 95% of parents said Parkway keeps me informed. 93% said district publications provide useful information.
- Overall, satisfaction with communications 4.13/5 point scale

**3** About two-thirds of parents agree the district does a good job of listening and responding to parents (67%) and involving them in important decisions (69%).
- Our objective is 75% based on historical benchmarks. Results are up from 2022 but slightly down from 2018.
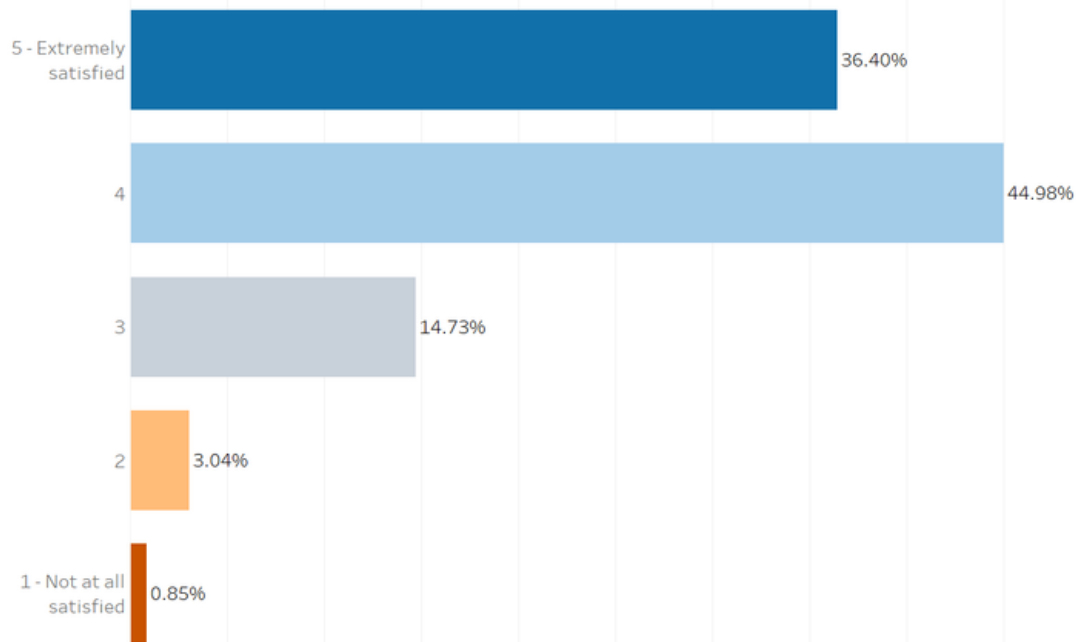
# Satisfaction and communication preferences

## SURVEYS

How satisfied are you with communications from the district?

| | |
|---|---|
| 5 - Extremely satisfied | 36.40% |
| 4 | 44.98% |
| 3 | 14.73% |
| 2 | 3.04% |
| 1 - Not at all satisfied | 0.85% |

## KEY FINDINGS (PARENTS)

**1** Comments from parents on the survey demonstrate communication tactics that could be improved:
- Parents reported a high frequency of emails

**2** When asked about preferred communications channels, parents prefer active/push channels (email and text messages) over passive channels (websites, social media and news media).

**3** Parents are more responsive to school and teacher communications compared to district communications.

**4** Parents want to know more about issues and challenges facing the district and how we are responding.
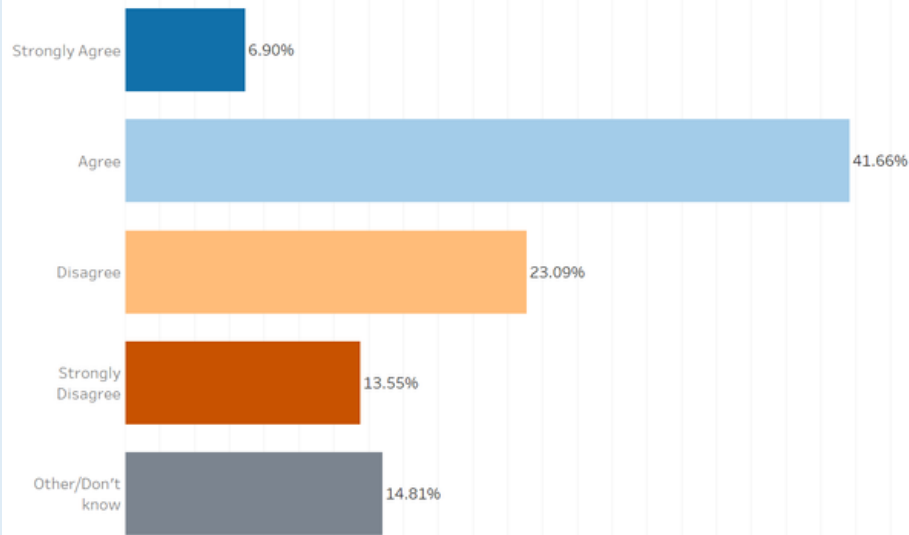
# Satisfaction and communications preferences

## SURVEYS

The district does a good job listening and responding to staff opinion.

| | |
|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 6.90% |
| Agree | 41.66% |
| Disagree | 23.09% |
| Strongly Disagree | 13.55% |
| Other/Don't know | 14.81% |

## KEY FINDINGS (STAFF)

**1** Staff are satisfied with district communications but less satisfied than parents.
- 83% of staff agree Parkway keeps me informed and 78% agree that district communications provide useful information.

**2** Only half of staff (49%) say the district does a good job of listening and responding to staff which is down 25% from a survey last year.

**3** Comments from staff on the survey indicate some frustration with how the district has communicated major decisions.

**4** Staff want to know more about issues and challenges facing the district and how we are responding.

# FOCUS GROUPS

In the Fall of 2023, focus groups were administered with stakeholder groups including staff, parents and community members.

- Targeted parent focus groups: PTO Leadership, PACCD and PAMEE
- Randomly selected parent focus groups
- Targeted teacher/staff focus groups: Key Communicators
- Randomly selected operations staff focus groups
- Targeted community focus group: Communications Advisory Committee

Focus groups were moderated, transcribed and summarized by an independent team led by Dr. Nathan Tyson, Director of Data Management.

Complete summaries for each focus group are included in Appendix B.

# FOCUS GROUP KEY FINDINGS (STAFF)

**1** Staff expressed overall that district communication is sufficient, informative and helpful.

**2** Staff value transparent, clear, concise, and timely communication.

**3** Staff suggest a "centralized, consolidated, comprehensive" communications platform for parents and staff.

**4** Staff rely heavily on their principal and/or supervisor for district updates.

**5** Staff prefer email as a primary communication tool while also acknowledging the heavy volume of emails.

**6** Staff want to be informed of a survey's objective, its results, and how results were used in the decision.

**7** Staff are critical of survey length and the number given, and question if results are anonymous.

**8** Staff commend district communications and Thoughtexchanges used to seek and listen to feedback from staff during the pandemic.

**9** Staff suggest a system for submitting positive news and classroom activities.

# Satisfaction and communications preferences

## FOCUS GROUP KEY FINDINGS (PARENTS)

**1** Parents rely on school newsletters for school and district information, and text messages for time-sensitive information and reminders.

**2** Parents want clear, concise, and immediate communications during an emergency and expect specific details.

**3** Parents consistently said communication should be timely, targeted, concise, clear and transparent.

**4** Nearly all parent groups mentioned needing a single "platform, hub, place" to access school and district communications and information.

**5** Parents named consistency in teacher/classroom communication as a top priority.

**6** Parents mentioned varying communication practices among teachers and principals and difficulty with the use of multiple technology applications.

**7** Parents prioritize school news but feel overwhelmed by excessive emails, particularly from Peachjar flyers.

**8** Parents prefer using the Parkway app as a comprehensive communication tool and value the convenience of having most information in one place.

**9** Parents generally find value in participating in surveys and ThoughtExchanges, acknowledging the importance of sharing their opinions to contribute to the district's improvement. Parents expressed a preference for being informed about the purpose of the surveys and emphasized the importance of focusing on critical issues in surveys to avoid survey fatigue.

# Program alignment with district mission and CSIP

## REVIEW DISTRICT GOALS

The Communications Department compared its current Comprehensive Communications Plan goals and objectives to the district mission, vision, strategic plan and the 23-24 CSIP.

This review resulted in the following key findings:

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Program goals are aligned with the district's current strategic plan and mission. For example, Goal 1 aligns with the department goal that "at least 65% of all content tells the story of capable, curious, caring and confident students." Goal 2 aligns with the department goal that "communications routinely include key messages and how Parkway staff and programs contribute to student success."

2. Opportunities exist for the annual communications plan to align with the annual CSIP to highlight specific strategies Parkway is focused on in the short term to improve student outcomes. (i.e. for example, messaging and storytelling around belonging, achievement and relevance)

# Does staffing and budget match program and district goals?

## COMPARISON WITH NATIONAL STANDARDS

We compared our budget and staffing to national standards (using the 2022 NSPRA Member Survey).

## KEY FINDINGS

**1** Nationally, 82% of school districts with operating budgets of more than $150 million have Communications Departments of 8-15 employees (2022 NSPRA Member Profile Report).

**2** Sixty-four percent of districts with enrollment between 10,000 and 24,999 report communications department budgets of $500,000-$1 million.

**3** Sixty-nine percent of districts with communications budgets between $150,000 to $249,000 enroll fewer than 9,999 students.

# Does staffing and budget match program and district goals?

## COMPARISON WITH PEERS

We compared our budget and staffing directly to peer districts across the state. Peer districts were identified as comparable in enrollment and community demographics.

Staffing and budget comparisons requests to other districts were to include core communications staffing and budget only and did not include special programs - print shop, sports marketing, alumni associations/foundations to ensure adequate comparison.

In addition, we reviewed the top responsibilities/services of Communications Departments across the country (using the 2022 NSPRA Member Survey).

| District | Operating Budget | Enrollment | Comms Department Size | Department Budget |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rockwood | $252 million | 20,311 | 7 | $243,000 |
| Hazelwood | $262 million | 16,713 | 6 | $790,000 |
| Springfield | $363 million | 23,500 | 6 | $100,000 |
| SSD | $496 million | Serves 22,818 | 6 | $193,900 |
| Parkway | $272 million | 16,620 | 5 | $158,835 |
| Park Hill | $280 million | 11,698 | 5 | $550,000 |
| Columbia | $267 million | 18,527 | 5 | $170,172 |
| Lee's Summit | $248 million | 17,810 | 4 | $185,000 |

# Does staffing and budget match program and district goals?

## COMPARISON WITH PEERS

In addition, we reviewed the top responsibilities/services of Communications Departments across the country (using the 2022 NSPRA Member Survey).

NSPRA asked respondents what the top responsibilities were in their current positions to better understand how a member spends his or her time. The top responsibilities in 2022 were:
- crisis communications (58%)
- external communications (52%)
- social media (48%)
- community relations/public engagement (44%)
- media relations (43%)
- website management (39%)
- internal communications (36%)
- strategic communications planning (31%)
- writing/editing (24%)
- marketing (23%)

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Our department's staff size is at or below peer districts in Missouri, and less than than peer districts nationwide.

2. Key responsibilities of other departments across the country are consistent with our department's priorities. Also consistent with national districts, in recent years increased time is being spent on crisis communications, social media and external communications/community engagement. Decreasing responsibilities from previous years noted in the survey were media relations and writing/editing.

3. Parkway's communications budget and staff size has met program goals in the past, but are inadequate to meet emergent needs such as internal communications, employee engagement and recruitment marketing.

# OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

- The Parkway Communications Program is highly established in comparison to national standards and peer districts.
- Parkway's Comprehensive Communications Plan and program are aligned with many best practices, specifically its goals and objectives.
- Program goals are aligned with the district's strategic plan and mission.
- Opportunities exist for the annual communications plan to align with the annual CSIP.
- The Communications Program is routinely meeting its goals and objectives. Opportunities exist to more routinely measure the effectiveness of communications and public opinion.
- Public opinion of Parkway Schools remains strong among stakeholders.
- Parents are generally satisfied and feel informed by district communications.
- Parents want more streamlined communication to reduce the volume of information.
- Parents and staff both value timely, targeted, transparent, clear and concise communication.
- Parents and staff expect timely and transparent communication about safety, security, crises and emergencies.
- Parents and staff want to know more about the district's key decisions, challenges and new student opportunities.
- Parents and staff want to see survey results and the action taken in response.
- Staff generally feel informed but are less satisfied with district communication than parents.
- Staff expresses declining satisfaction with how well the district listens and responds to their feedback.
- Opportunities exist to devote staff and resources to internal communications and employee engagement.
- Principals are key communicators for both parents and staff. Teachers are key communicators for parents.
- The top three content interests for parents and staff are calendar and event information, safety and security, and issues and challenges facing the district. Staff also want information from human resources (benefits, payroll) and information about staff recognition.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**1** Update the Comprehensive Communications Plan based on key findings. Implement an annual communications plan aligned with the annual CSIP for 2024-25.

**2** Measure parent and staff satisfaction with communications annually and measure stakeholder public opinion every two to three years.

**3** Develop a survey and community engagement protocol that includes closing the loop with participants so they're aware of how their feedback will be used by spring 2024.

**4** Identify more streamlined parent communication strategies and tactics and a comprehensive communication platform to meet parent needs by August 2024.

**5** Evaluate and align department services, staffing, budget and resources to address emergent needs by spring 2024.

APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A
Survey results compared to historical Parkway stakeholder data are included below.

**Grading Parkway**

| Grade | Parent Comms Survey 2023 | Parent Bond Survey 2022 | Community 2022* | Community 2018* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 57% | 37% | 34% | 48% |
| B | 32% | 44% | 40% | 37% |
| AB Combined | 89% | 81% | 74% | 85% |

*Community surveys are statistically valid phone surveys of Parkway residents with a confidence margin of error of ±5% or better.

**Parents vs. Staff Satisfaction and Communications (2023 Survey)**

| | I would recommend Parkway to others (weighted avg out of 10) | Satisfaction with district communication (weighted avg out of 5) | Good job of listening and responding (% agree) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Parents | 8.7 | 4.1 | 67% |
| Staff | 7.9 | 3.9 | 49% |

**Staff Communications and Engagement**

| Staff | 2023 Comms Survey | Top Workplaces 2023 | Top Workplaces 2022 | Top Workplaces 2021 | Top Workplaces 2019 | Top Workplaces 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parkway keeps me informed. | 83% (Agree/ Strongly Agree) | N/A | 3.8 | N/A | 3.54 | 3.79 |
| I would recommend Parkway Schools to others as a place to work | 7.9 (weighted avg. scale of 10) | N/A | 4.26 | N/A | 4.44 | 4.61 |

## Parkway Communications & Community Engagement Survey May 2023

|  | Parents<br>2023 Comms Survey | Staff<br>2023 Comms Survey |
|---|---|---|
| What grade would you assign Parkway Schools?<br><br>(A or B) | 89% | N/A |
| Listening and responding<br><br>(Strongly agree/Agree) | 67% | 49% |
| I would recommend Parkway Schools to others.<br><br>(weighted avg. scale of 10) | 8.74 | 7.9 |
| Parkway keeps me informed.<br><br>(Strongly agree/Agree) | 95% | 83% |
| District publications provide useful information.<br><br>(Strongly agree/Agree) | 93% | 78% |
| Satisfaction with district communication<br><br>(weighted avg. scale of 5) | 4.13 | 3.9 |
| Involving community members in important decisions<br><br>(Excellent/Good) | 69% | 62% |

**Comparison to Previous Community Data**

|  | Parents 2023 Comms Survey | Parents 2022 online bond survey | Staff 2023 Comms Survey | Staff 2022 online bond survey | Community 2022 bond survey | Community 2018 bond survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What grade would you assign Parkway Schools? (A or B) | 89% ↑ | 81% | N/A | 96% | 74% | 86% |
| Listening and responding (Strongly agree/Agree) | 67% ↑ | 63% | 49% ↓ | 76% | 44% | 70% |

**FORMAL RESEARCH**

What grade would you give your public schools?
Nationally, 54% of residents grade their community schools an A or B. (PDK Poll 2022)
Locally, 74% of Parkway residents grade our schools an A or B. (2022). This is an increase of 20% compared to the national average.

## A/B ratings for community public schools
*Among all adults*



PDK poll, 2022

---

Public School Perceptions
What grade would you give schools?

### Percent of respondents giving assigning an "A" or "B" Grade



79%   83%   86%   74%   Parkway

32%   30%   44%   26%   Missouri Public Schools

2008 Survey   2014 Survey   2018 Survey   2022 Survey
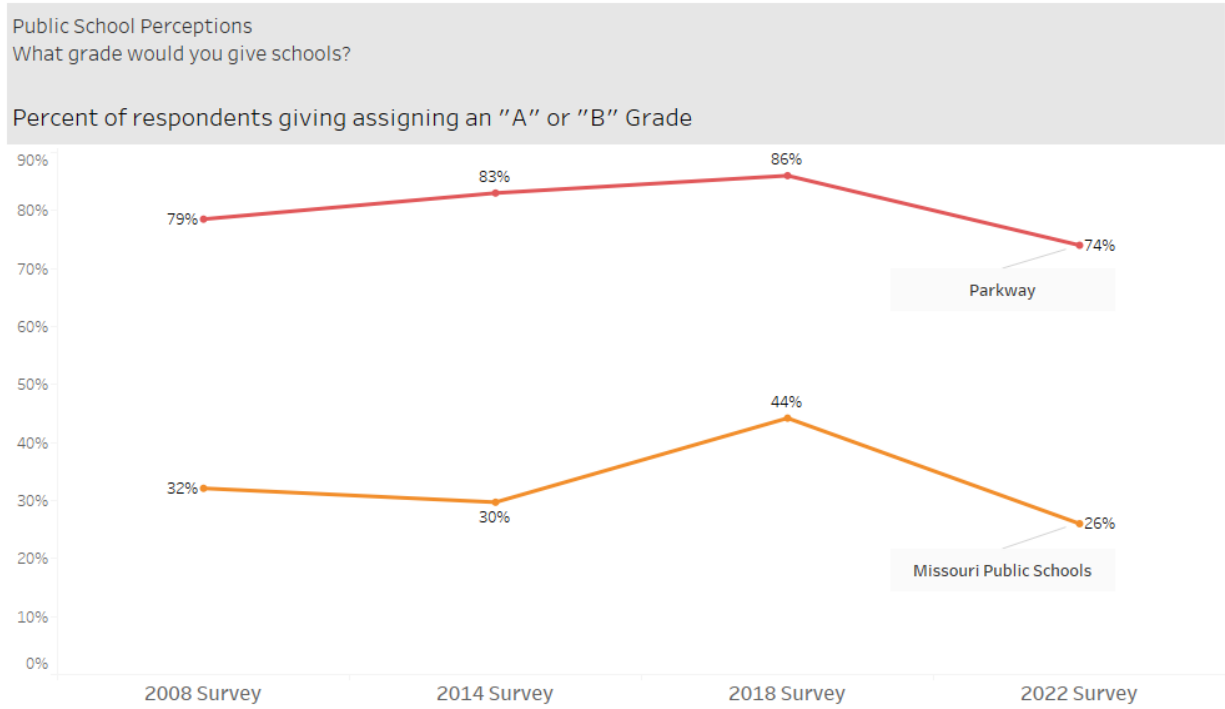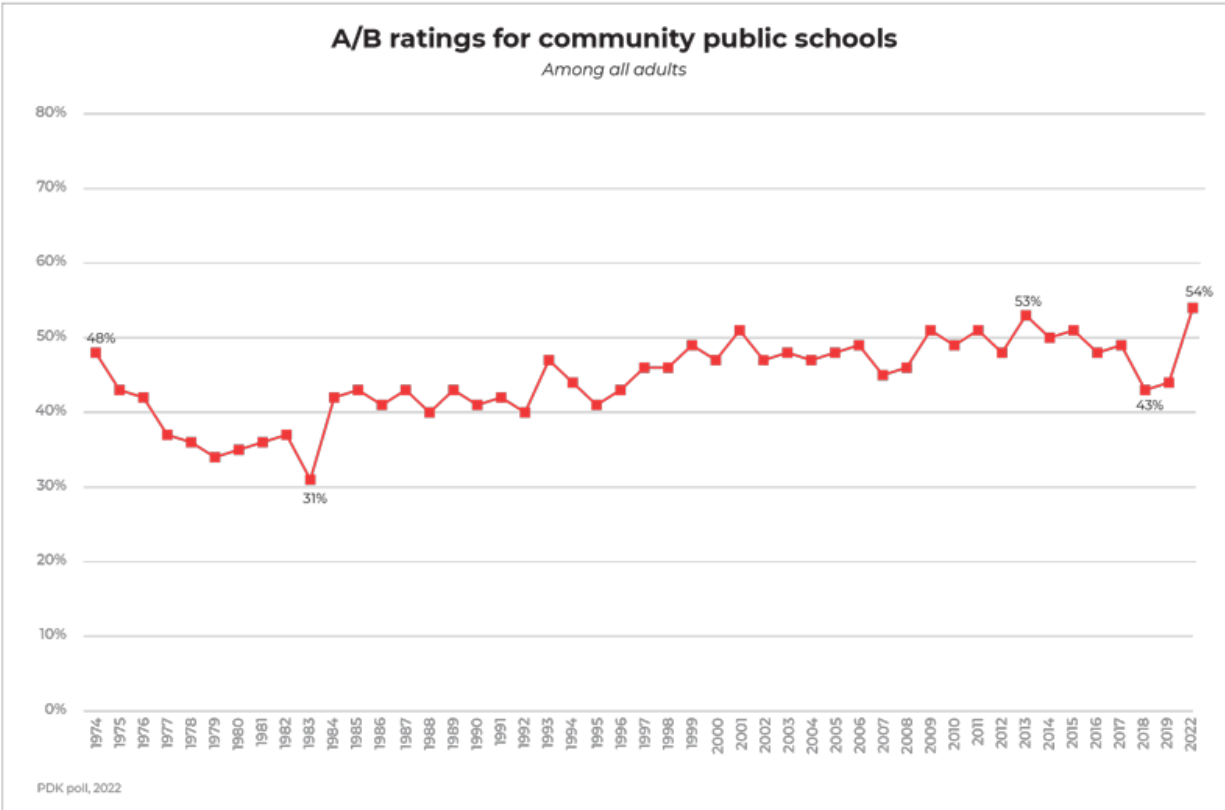
# Q1 Overall, what grade would you assign to the Parkway School District?

Answered: 3,484    Skipped: 11
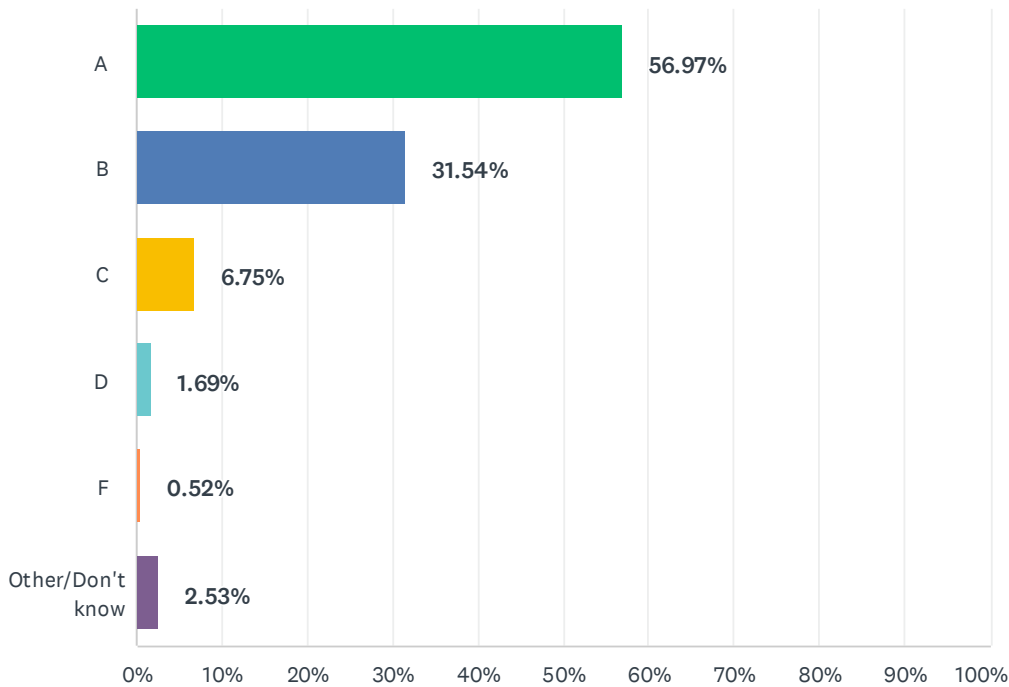


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| A | 56.97% | 1,985 |
| B | 31.54% | 1,099 |
| C | 6.75% | 235 |
| D | 1.69% | 59 |
| F | 0.52% | 18 |
| Other/Don't know | 2.53% | 88 |
| TOTAL | | 3,484 |

# Q2 How likely are you to recommend Parkway to others?

Answered: 3,470    Skipped: 25
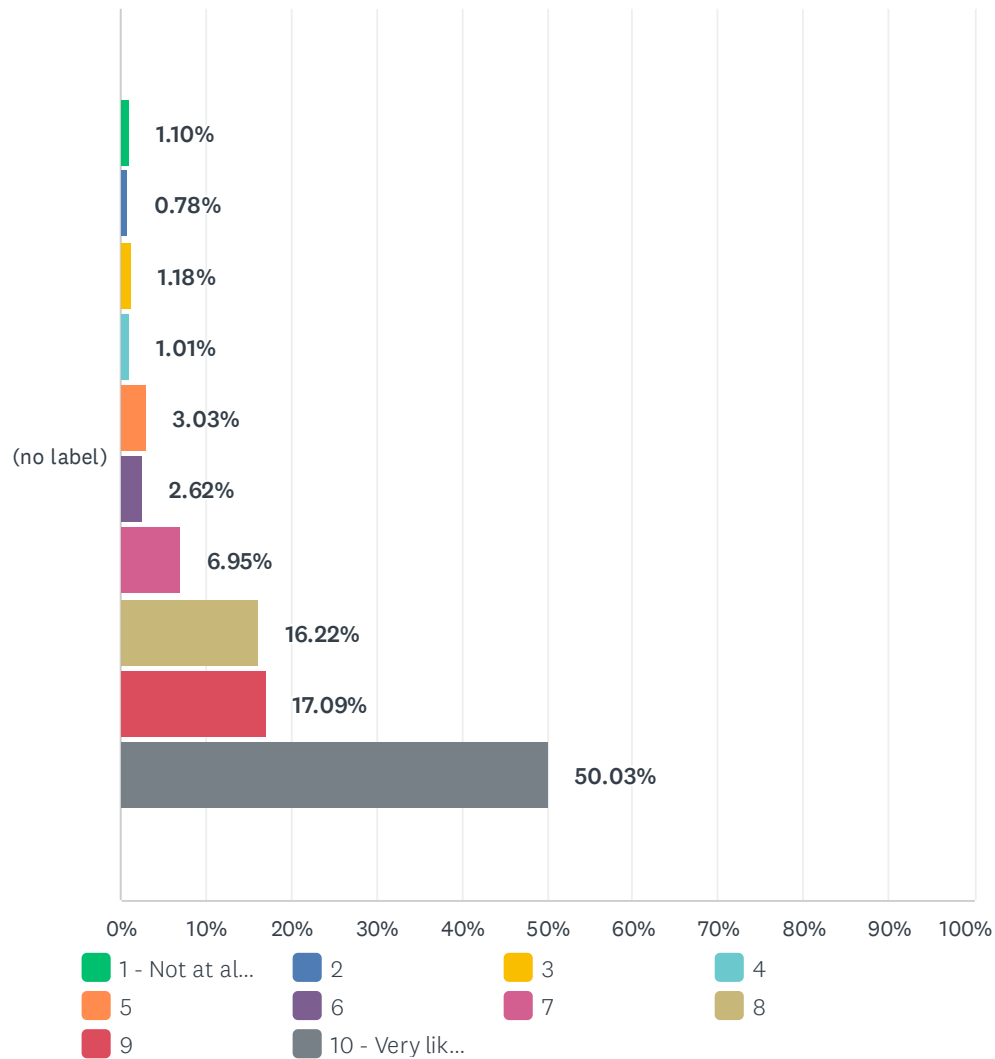


| | 1 - NOT AT ALL LIKELY | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 - VERY LIKELY | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 1.10% 38 | 0.78% 27 | 1.18% 41 | 1.01% 35 | 3.03% 105 | 2.62% 91 | 6.95% 241 | 16.22% 563 | 17.09% 593 | 50.03% 1,736 | 3,470 | 8.74 |

# Q3 Parkway keeps me informed.

Answered: 3,067     Skipped: 428
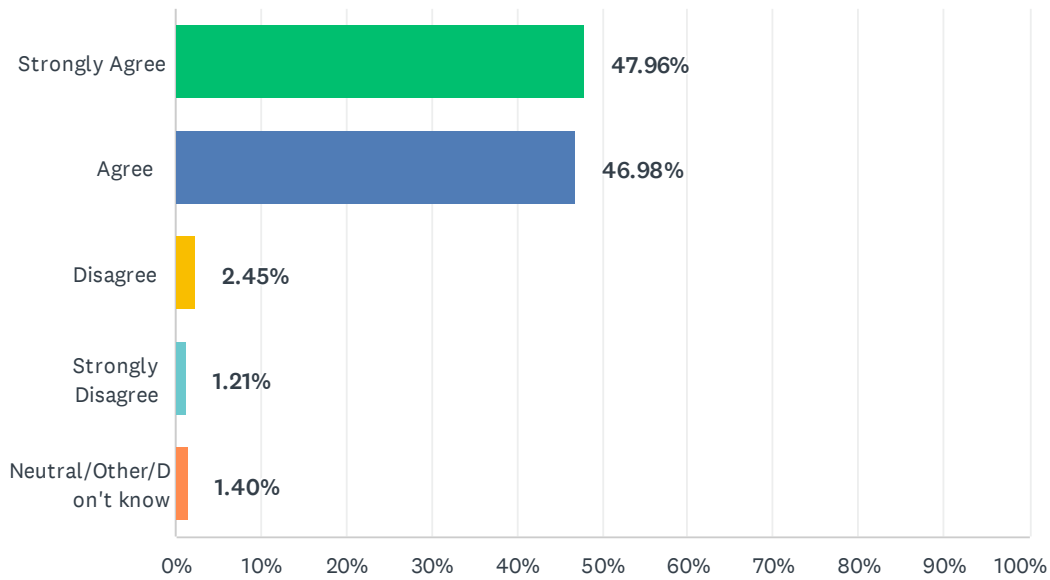


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 47.96% | 1,471 |
| Agree | 46.98% | 1,441 |
| Disagree | 2.45% | 75 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.21% | 37 |
| Neutral/Other/Don't know | 1.40% | 43 |
| TOTAL | | 3,067 |

# Q4 District publications and communications provide useful information to parents.

Answered: 3,062    Skipped: 433
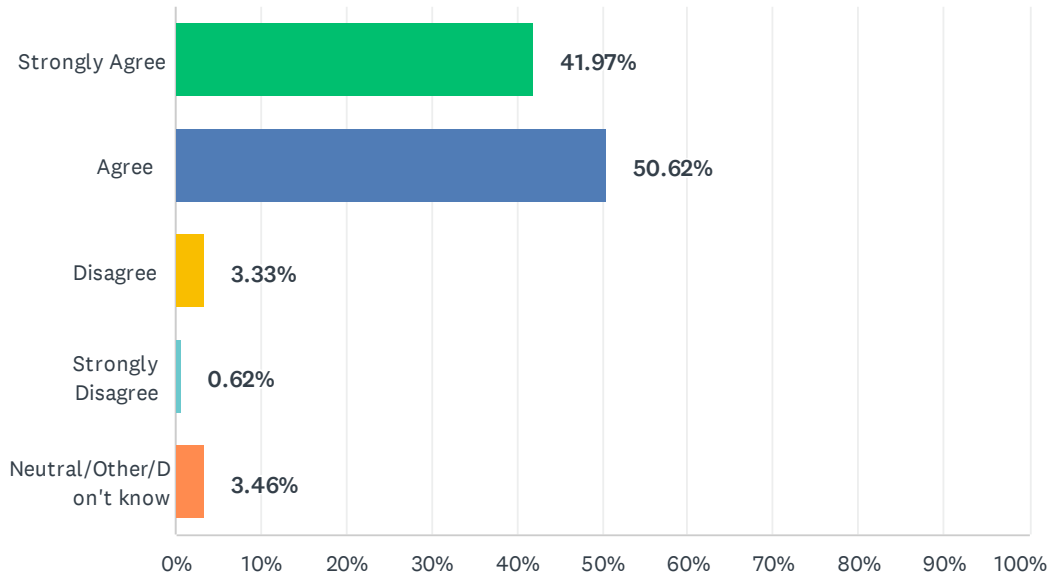


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 41.97% | 1,285 |
| Agree | 50.62% | 1,550 |
| Disagree | 3.33% | 102 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.62% | 19 |
| Neutral/Other/Don't know | 3.46% | 106 |
| TOTAL | | 3,062 |

## Q5 How do you receive information about what is happening in Parkway? (choose as many as you'd like)

Answered: 3,056    Skipped: 439

# Parent Communications Survey 2023

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Emails from the district | 90.87% |
| Emails from the... | 85.14% |
| My student(s) | 52.13% |
| School or Parkway... | 41.39% |
| Parkway mobile app | 35.27% |
| Parkway Facebook | 33.84% |
| Talk among my friends and... | 29.55% |
| My school PTO | 26.18% |
| Employees of the district... | 22.91% |
| Attending school meeti... | 18.32% |
| District newsletter i... | 15.12% |
| Parkway Instagram | 10.60% |
| Other/comments (Please... | 5.56% |
| Board of Education... | 4.88% |
| Community meetings and... | 4.48% |
| Local television news | 4.32% |
| Parkway Twitter | 4.25% |
| Local newspapers a... | 2.16% |

# Parent Communications Survey 2023

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Emails from the district | 90.87% | 2,777 |
| Emails from the school/principal newsletter | 85.14% | 2,602 |
| My student(s) | 52.13% | 1,593 |
| School or Parkway websites | 41.39% | 1,265 |
| Parkway mobile app | 35.27% | 1,078 |
| Parkway Facebook | 33.84% | 1,034 |
| Talk among my friends and neighbors - word of mouth | 29.55% | 903 |
| My school PTO | 26.18% | 800 |
| Employees of the district - teachers | 22.91% | 700 |
| Attending school meetings or events | 18.32% | 560 |
| District newsletter in the mail - Parkway Today | 15.12% | 462 |
| Parkway Instagram | 10.60% | 324 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 5.56% | 170 |
| Board of Education meetings | 4.88% | 149 |
| Community meetings and/or Project Parkway | 4.48% | 137 |
| Local television news | 4.32% | 132 |
| Parkway Twitter | 4.25% | 130 |
| Local newspapers and radio | 2.16% | 66 |
| Total Respondents: 3,056 | | |

# Q6 What kind of information would you like to receive? (choose as many as you'd like)

Answered: 2,973    Skipped: 522
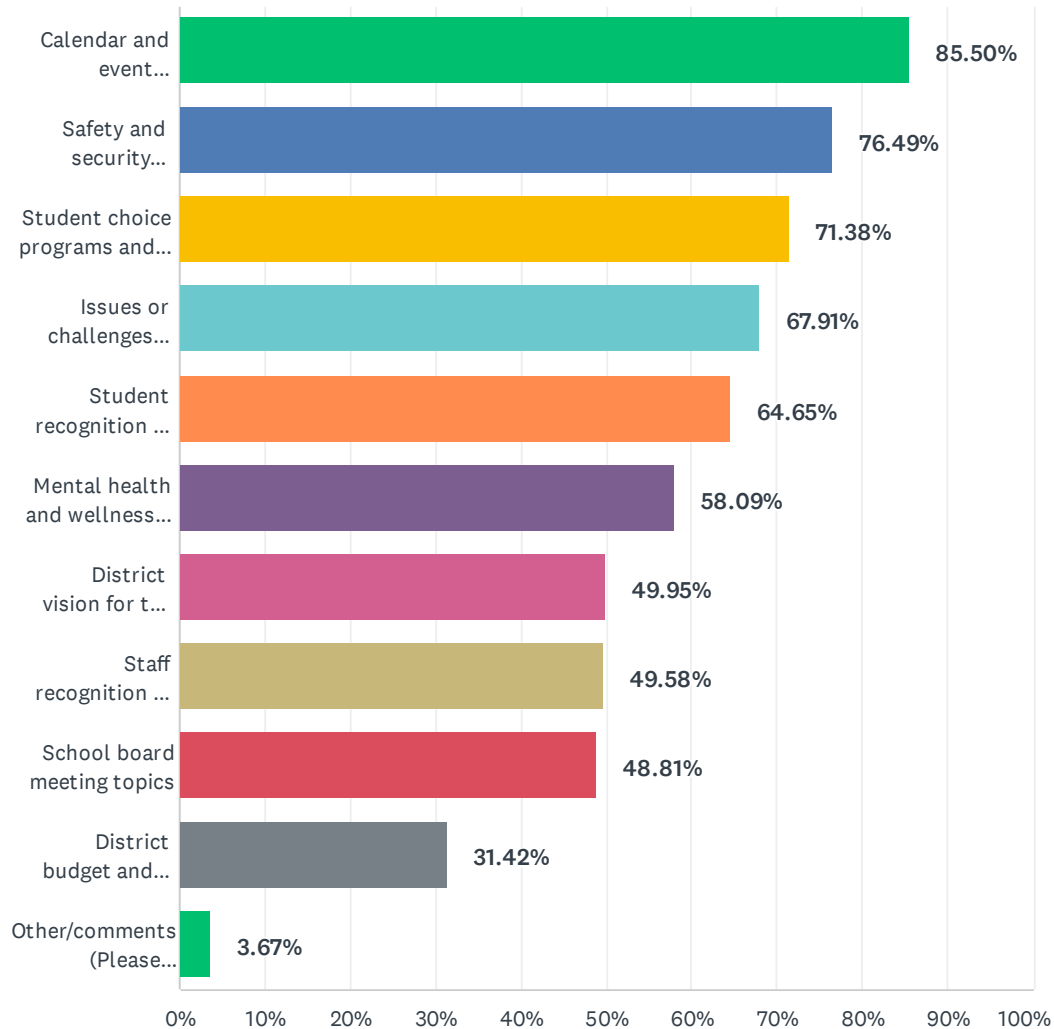
| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Calendar and event... | 85.50% |
| Safety and security... | 76.49% |
| Student choice programs and... | 71.38% |
| Issues or challenges... | 67.91% |
| Student recognition ... | 64.65% |
| Mental health and wellness... | 58.09% |
| District vision for t... | 49.95% |
| Staff recognition ... | 49.58% |
| School board meeting topics | 48.81% |
| District budget and... | 31.42% |
| Other/comments (Please... | 3.67% |

# Parent Communications Survey 2023

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Calendar and event information | 85.50% | 2,542 |
| Safety and security information | 76.49% | 2,274 |
| Student choice programs and extracurricular opportunities beyond the classroom | 71.38% | 2,122 |
| Issues or challenges facing the district | 67.91% | 2,019 |
| Student recognition and accomplishments | 64.65% | 1,922 |
| Mental health and wellness resources for students and families | 58.09% | 1,727 |
| District vision for the future | 49.95% | 1,485 |
| Staff recognition and accomplishments | 49.58% | 1,474 |
| School board meeting topics | 48.81% | 1,451 |
| District budget and finance | 31.42% | 934 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 3.67% | 109 |
| Total Respondents: 2,973 | | |

# Q7 How would you prefer to receive emergency-related information and/or school closures? (choose as many as you'd like)

Answered: 3,055    Skipped: 440
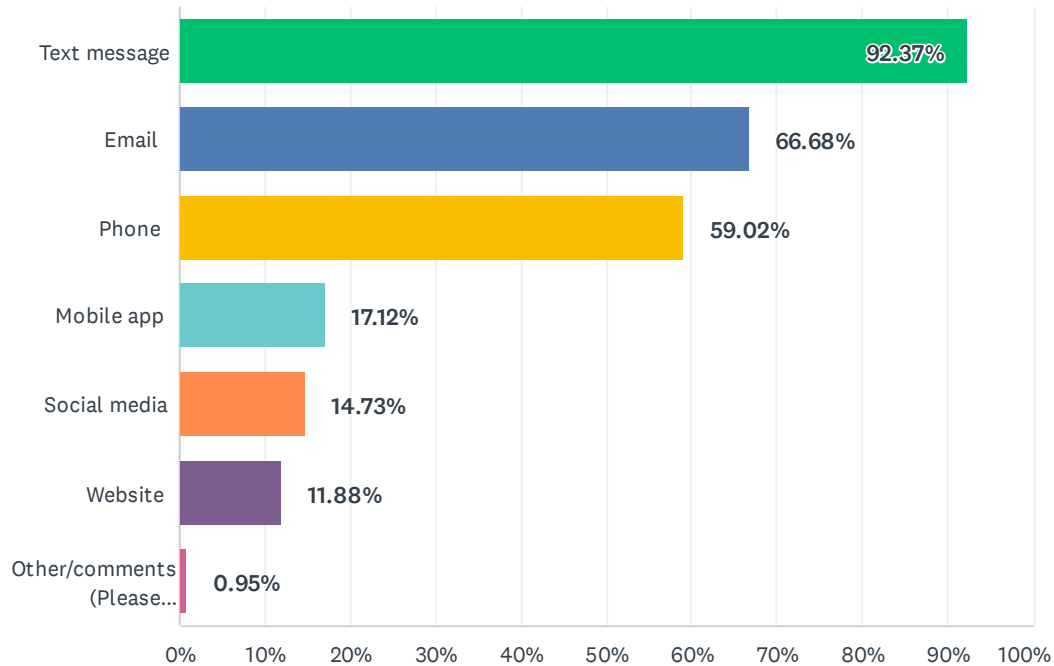


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Text message | 92.37% | 2,822 |
| Email | 66.68% | 2,037 |
| Phone | 59.02% | 1,803 |
| Mobile app | 17.12% | 523 |
| Social media | 14.73% | 450 |
| Website | 11.88% | 363 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 0.95% | 29 |
| Total Respondents: 3,055 | | |

# Q8 How would you prefer to receive day-to-day information from your school and the district? (choose as many as you'd like)
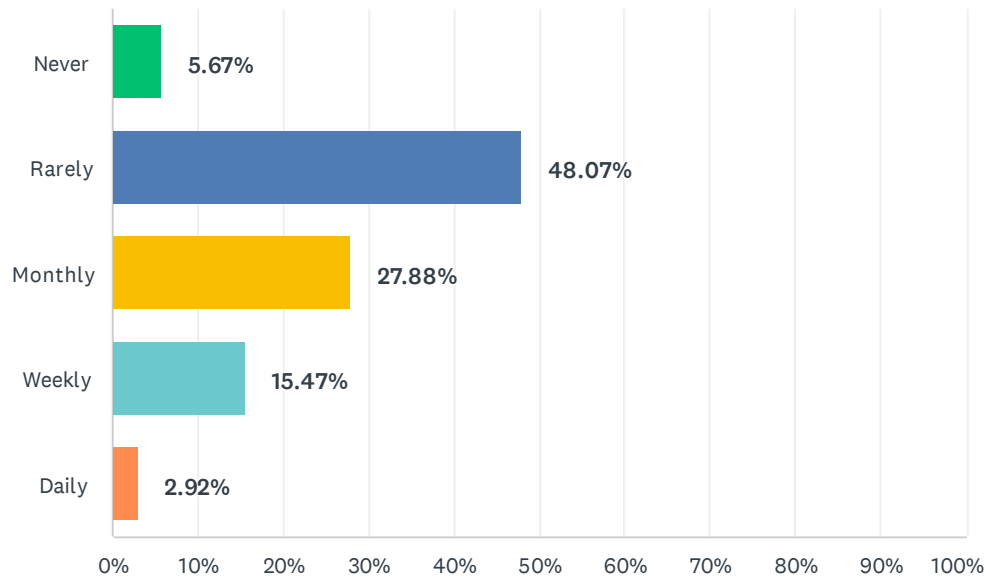
Answered: 3,055    Skipped: 440
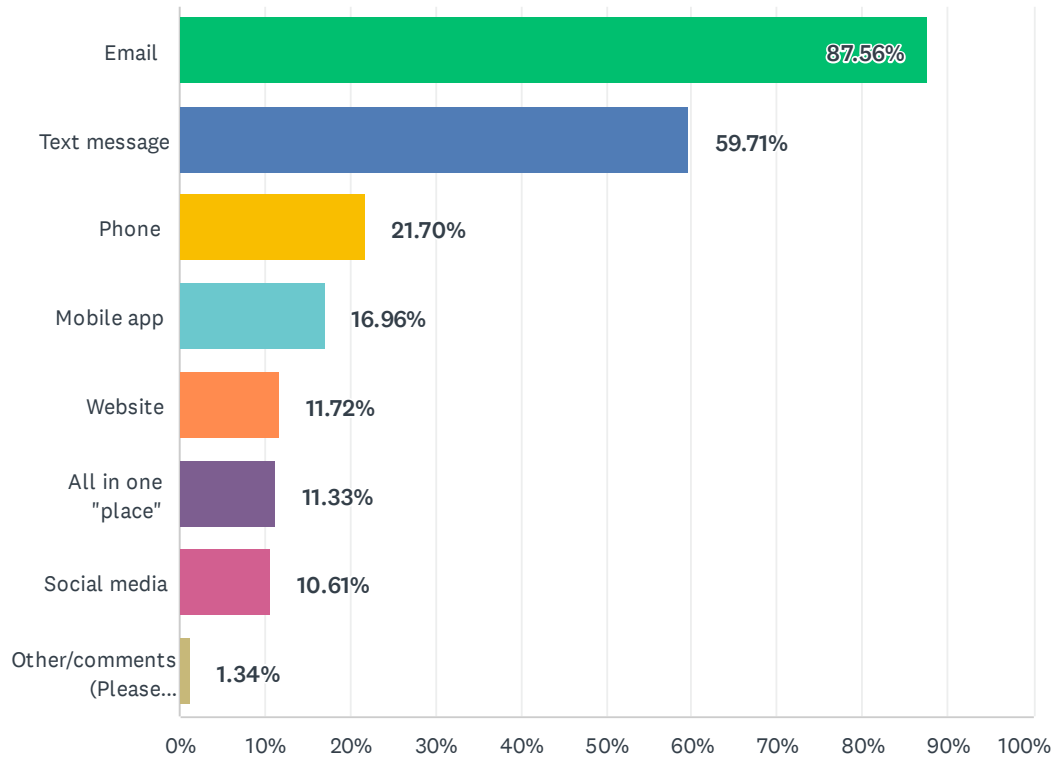


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Email | 87.56% | 2,675 |
| Text message | 59.71% | 1,824 |
| Phone | 21.70% | 663 |
| Mobile app | 16.96% | 518 |
| Website | 11.72% | 358 |
| All in one "place" | 11.33% | 346 |
| Social media | 10.61% | 324 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 1.34% | 41 |
| Total Respondents: 3,055 | | |

# Q9 I use the school-district websites ...

Answered: 3,052    Skipped: 443



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Never | 5.67% | 173 |
| Rarely | 48.07% | 1,467 |
| Monthly | 27.88% | 851 |
| Weekly | 15.47% | 472 |
| Daily | 2.92% | 89 |
| TOTAL | | 3,052 |

# Q10 How satisfied are you with communications from the district?

Answered: 3,055    Skipped: 440
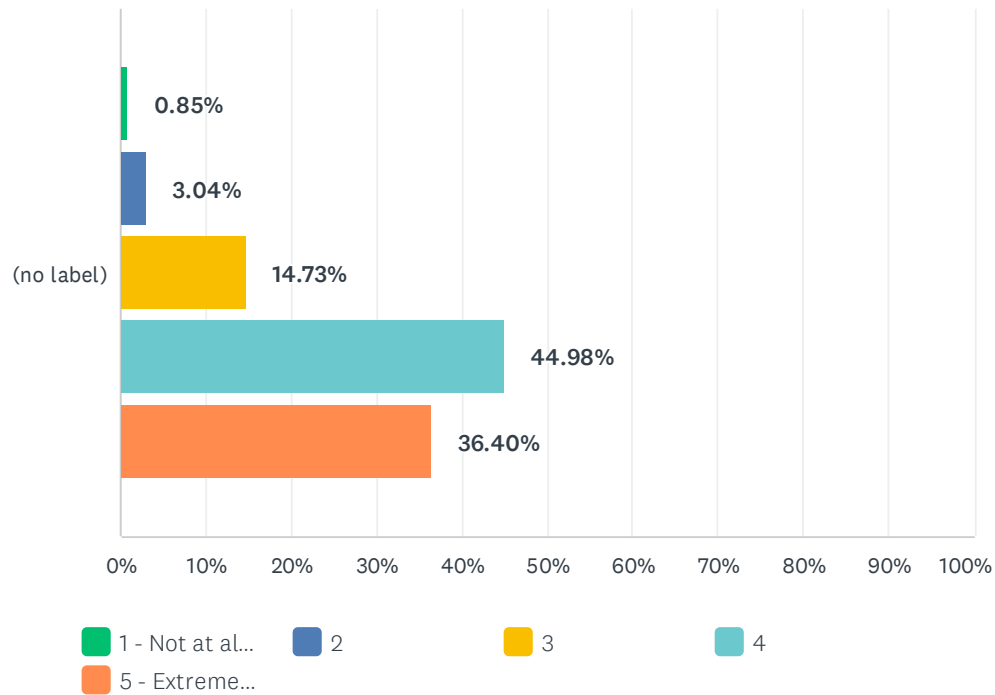


| | 1 - NOT AT ALL SATISFIED | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 0.85% 26 | 3.04% 93 | 14.73% 450 | 44.98% 1,374 | 36.40% 1,112 | 3,055 | 4.13 |

# Q11 How satisfied are you with communications from your school?

Answered: 3,010    Skipped: 485
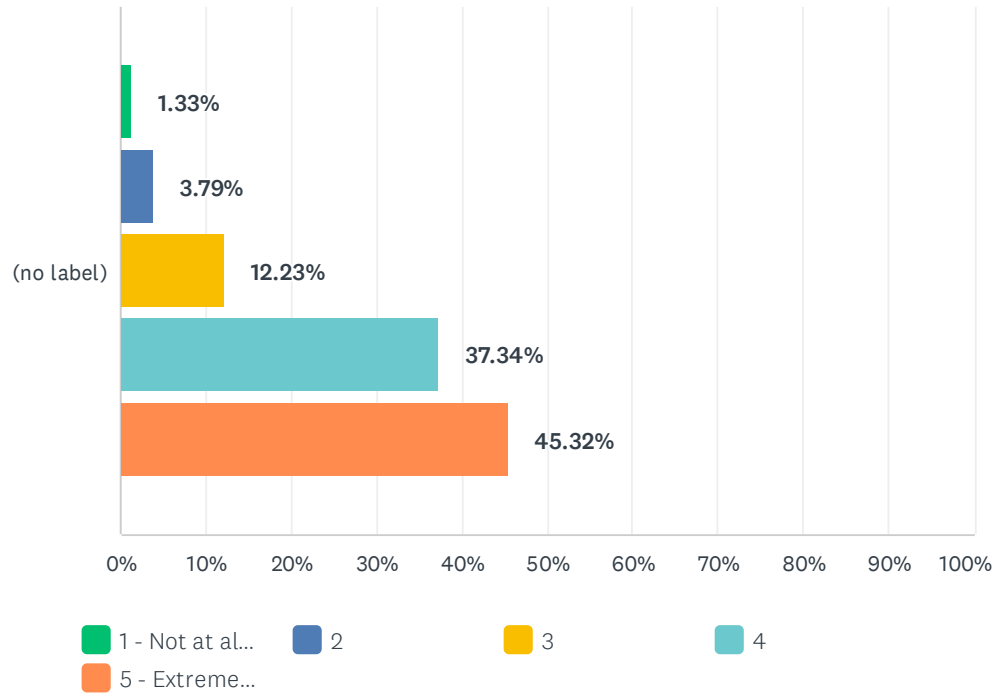


| | 1 - NOT AT ALL SATISFIED | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 1.33% 40 | 3.79% 114 | 12.23% 368 | 37.34% 1,124 | 45.32% 1,364 | 3,010 | 4.22 |

# Q12 How satisfied are you with communications from your teacher(s)?

Answered: 2,999    Skipped: 496
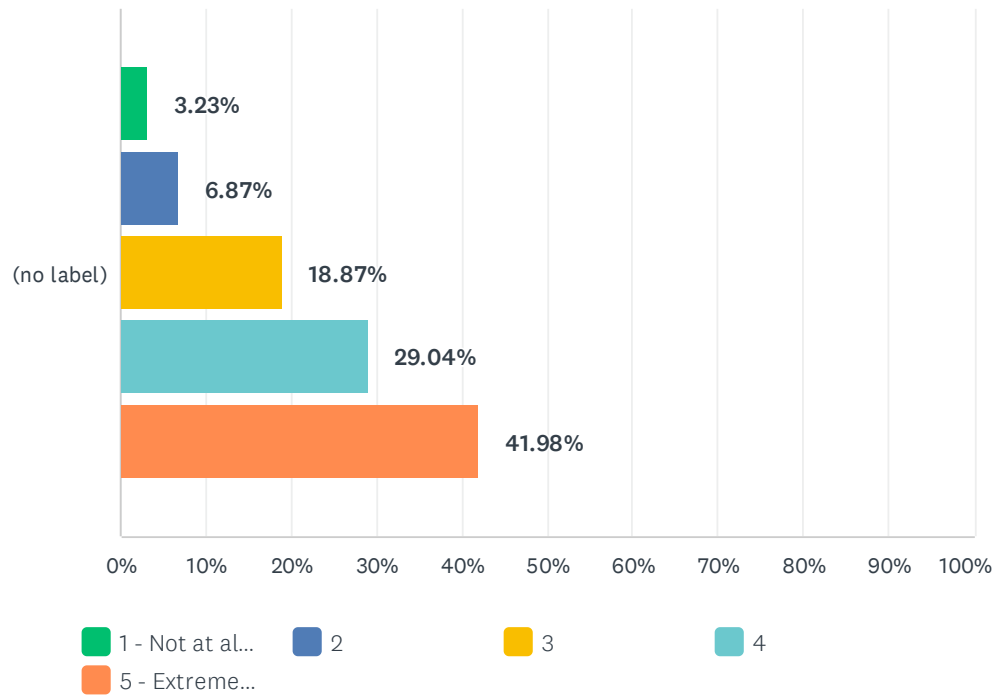


| | 1 - NOT AT ALL SATISFIED | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 3.23%<br>97 | 6.87%<br>206 | 18.87%<br>566 | 29.04%<br>871 | 41.98%<br>1,259 | 2,999 | 4.00 |

# Q13 How involved have you been in the districts community engagement and strategic planning opportunities (Project Parkway, State of the District meetings, online Thoughtexchanges)?

Answered: 2,926    Skipped: 569
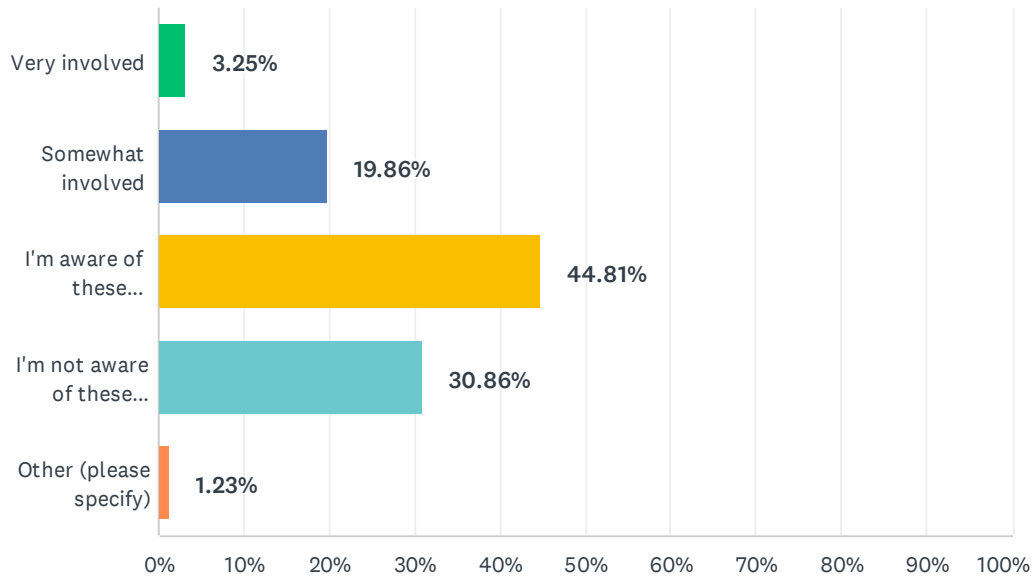


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Very involved | 3.25% | 95 |
| Somewhat involved | 19.86% | 581 |
| I'm aware of these opportunities but have not been involved | 44.81% | 1,311 |
| I'm not aware of these opportunities | 30.86% | 903 |
| Other (please specify) | 1.23% | 36 |
| TOTAL | | 2,926 |

# Q14 How would you rate the district's efforts to involve parents in important decisions?

Answered: 2,938    Skipped: 557
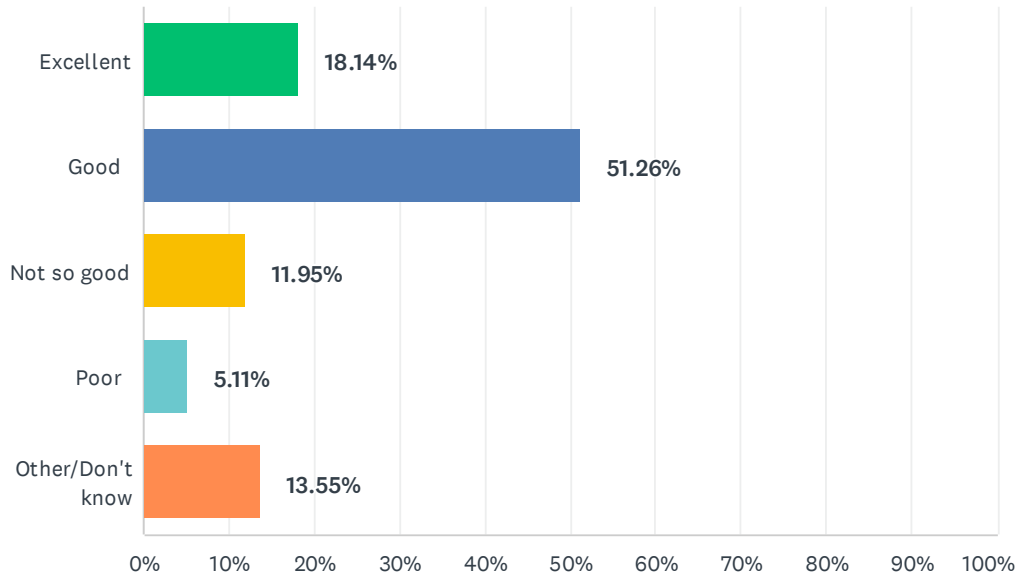


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Excellent | 18.14% | 533 |
| Good | 51.26% | 1,506 |
| Not so good | 11.95% | 351 |
| Poor | 5.11% | 150 |
| Other/Don't know | 13.55% | 398 |
| TOTAL | | 2,938 |

# Q15 The district does a good job of listening and responding to parents.

Answered: 2,933    Skipped: 562
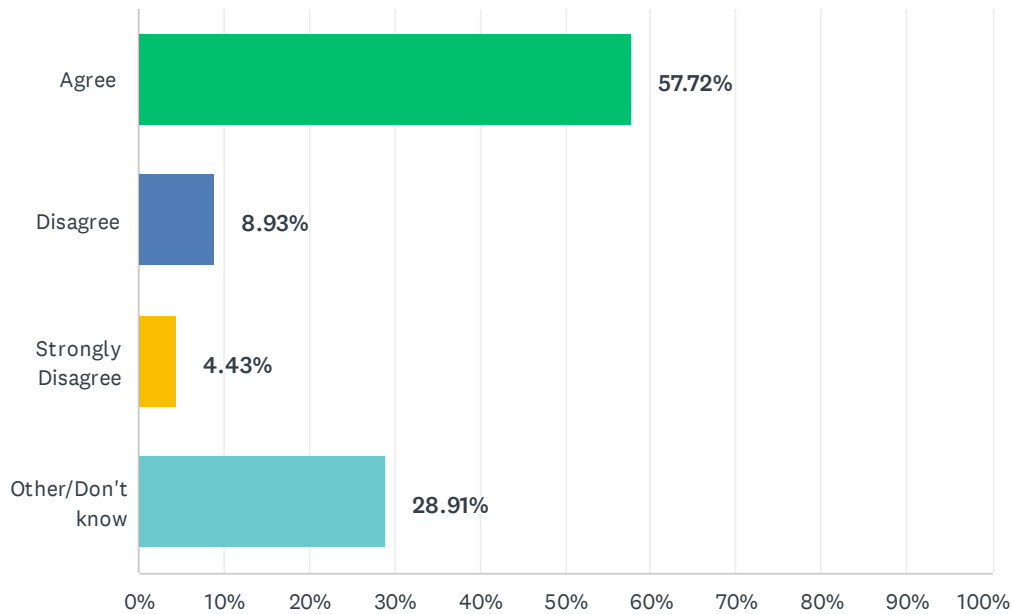


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Agree | 57.72% | 1,693 |
| Disagree | 8.93% | 262 |
| Strongly Disagree | 4.43% | 130 |
| Other/Don't know | 28.91% | 848 |
| TOTAL | | 2,933 |

## Q16 Where does your child attend school? (If you have more than one child, choose the school where the oldest child attends).

Answered: 2,698    Skipped: 797

| School | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Barretts | 2.30% |
| Bellerive | 2.34% |
| Carman Trails | 2.48% |
| Central High | 6.60% |
| Central Middle | 5.19% |
| Claymont | 3.00% |
| Craig | 2.22% |
| Early Childhood... | 2.93% |
| Fern Ridge | 0.15% |
| Green Trails | 1.85% |
| Hanna Woods | 1.93% |
| Henry | 2.82% |
| Highcroft Ridge | 2.11% |
| Mason Ridge | 1.30% |
| McKelvey Primary | 2.34% |
| McKelvey Intermediate | 2.30% |
| North High | 6.56% |
| Northeast Middle | 3.37% |

# Parent Communications Survey 2023

| School | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Oak Brook | 2.41% |
| Pierremont | 2.48% |
| River Bend | 2.19% |
| Ross | 1.63% |
| Shenandoah Valley | 3.26% |
| Sorrento Springs | 1.67% |
| South High | 9.60% |
| South Middle | 3.56% |
| Southwest Middle | 3.82% |
| West High | 9.12% |
| West Middle | 5.63% |
| Wren Hollow | 2.41% |
| ADC - MO Options | 0.04% |
| Virtual Campus | 0.41% |

# Parent Communications Survey 2023

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Barretts | 2.30% | 62 |
| Bellerive | 2.34% | 63 |
| Carman Trails | 2.48% | 67 |
| Central High | 6.60% | 178 |
| Central Middle | 5.19% | 140 |
| Claymont | 3.00% | 81 |
| Craig | 2.22% | 60 |
| Early Childhood Center/Programs | 2.93% | 79 |
| Fern Ridge | 0.15% | 4 |
| Green Trails | 1.85% | 50 |
| Hanna Woods | 1.93% | 52 |
| Henry | 2.82% | 76 |
| Highcroft Ridge | 2.11% | 57 |
| Mason Ridge | 1.30% | 35 |
| McKelvey Primary | 2.34% | 63 |
| McKelvey Intermediate | 2.30% | 62 |
| North High | 6.56% | 177 |
| Northeast Middle | 3.37% | 91 |
| Oak Brook | 2.41% | 65 |
| Pierremont | 2.48% | 67 |
| River Bend | 2.19% | 59 |
| Ross | 1.63% | 44 |
| Shenandoah Valley | 3.26% | 88 |
| Sorrento Springs | 1.67% | 45 |
| South High | 9.60% | 259 |
| South Middle | 3.56% | 96 |
| Southwest Middle | 3.82% | 103 |
| West High | 9.12% | 246 |
| West Middle | 5.63% | 152 |
| Wren Hollow | 2.41% | 65 |
| ADC - MO Options | 0.04% | 1 |
| Virtual Campus | 0.41% | 11 |

| TOTAL | 2,698 |
|---|---|

# Q17 Please consider sharing your race/ethnicity.

Answered: 2,841   Skipped: 654
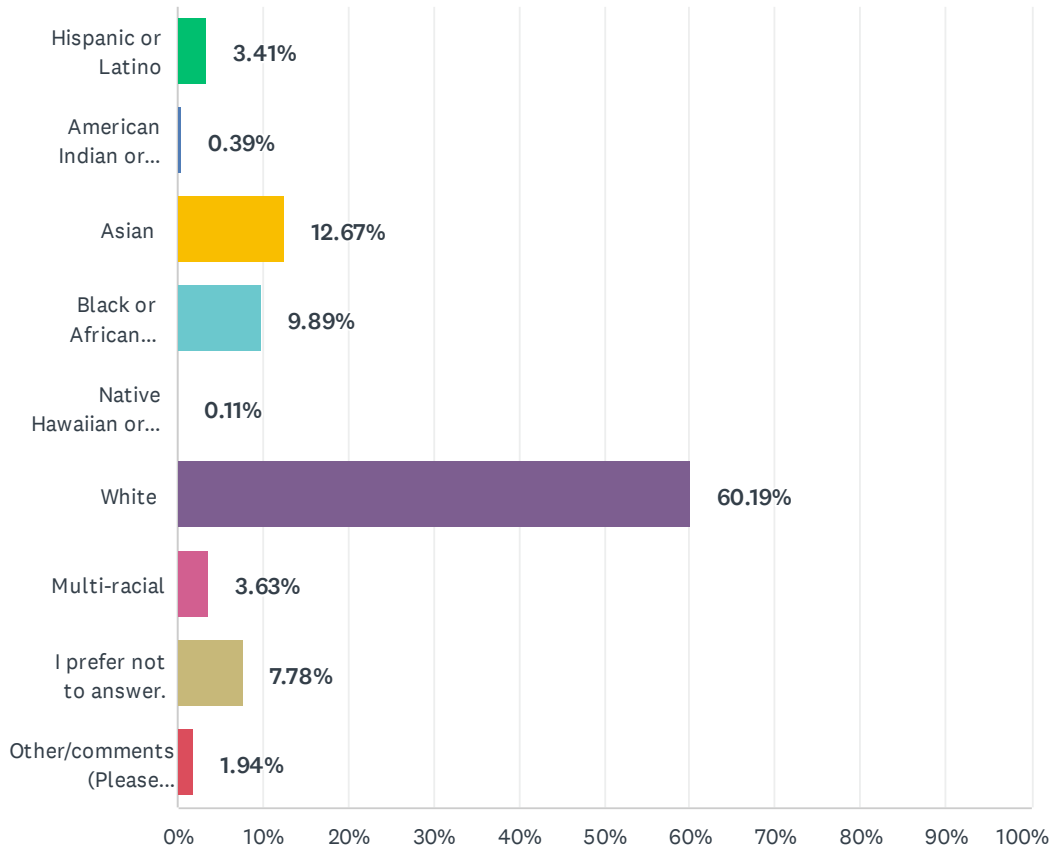


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hispanic or Latino | 3.41% | 97 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0.39% | 11 |
| Asian | 12.67% | 360 |
| Black or African American | 9.89% | 281 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0.11% | 3 |
| White | 60.19% | 1,710 |
| Multi-racial | 3.63% | 103 |
| I prefer not to answer. | 7.78% | 221 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 1.94% | 55 |
| TOTAL | | 2,841 |

# Q18 Regarding communication, is there anything this survey did not cover that you would like to tell us about?

Answered: 593    Skipped: 2,902

# Q1 How likely are you to recommend Parkway to others as a place to work?

Answered: 994    Skipped: 3



1.91%

1.01%

2.82%

2.31%

6.14%

6.84%

13.78%

18.91%

14.29%

31.99%

(no label)

0%    10%    20%    30%    40%    50%    60%    70%    80%    90%    100%

■ 1 - Not at al...    ■ 2    ■ 3    ■ 4
■ 5    ■ 6    ■ 7    ■ 8
■ 9    ■ 10 - Very lik...
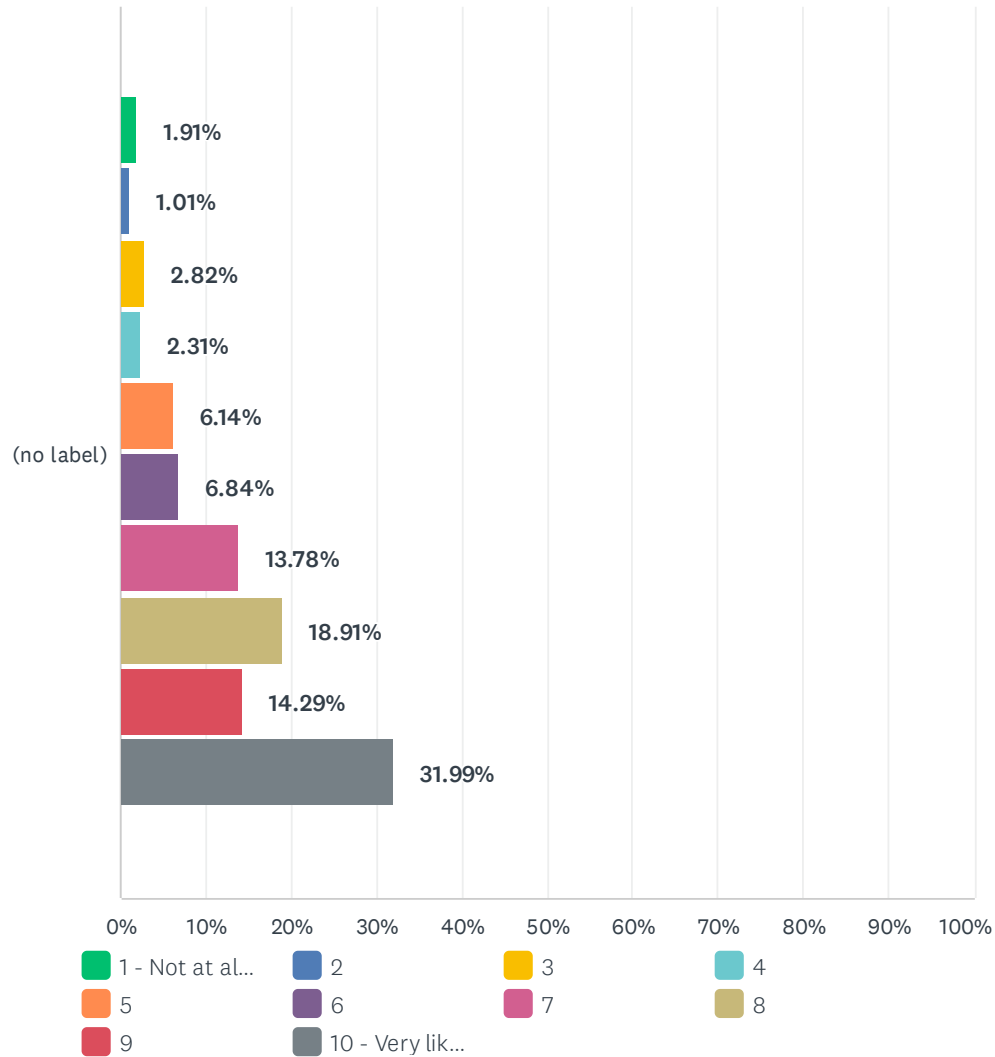
| | 1 - NOT AT ALL LIKELY | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 - VERY LIKELY | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 1.91% 19 | 1.01% 10 | 2.82% 28 | 2.31% 23 | 6.14% 61 | 6.84% 68 | 13.78% 137 | 18.91% 188 | 14.29% 142 | 31.99% 318 | 994 | 7.90 |

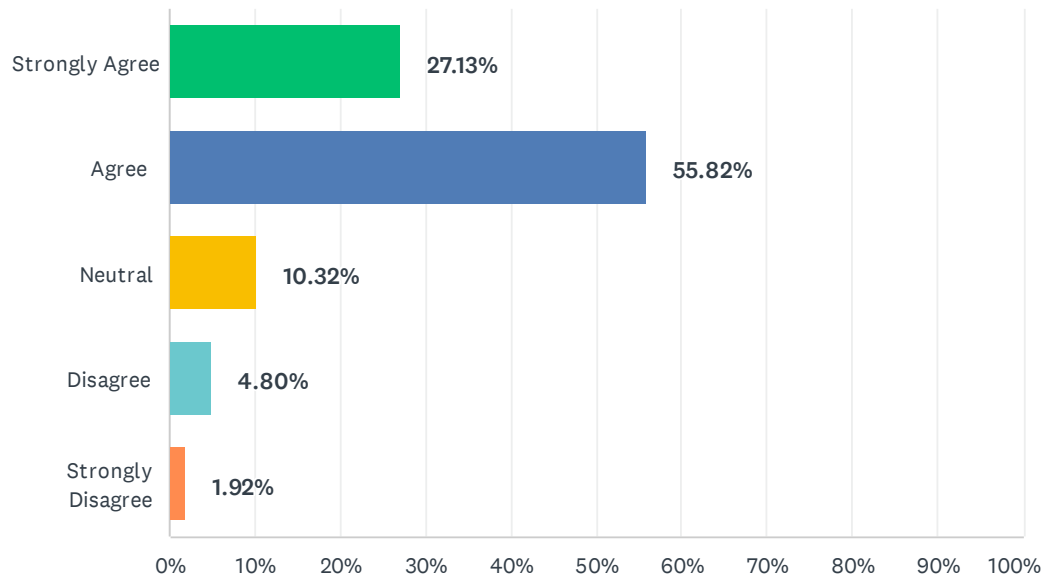# Q2 How satisfied are you with communications from the district?

Answered: 993    Skipped: 4
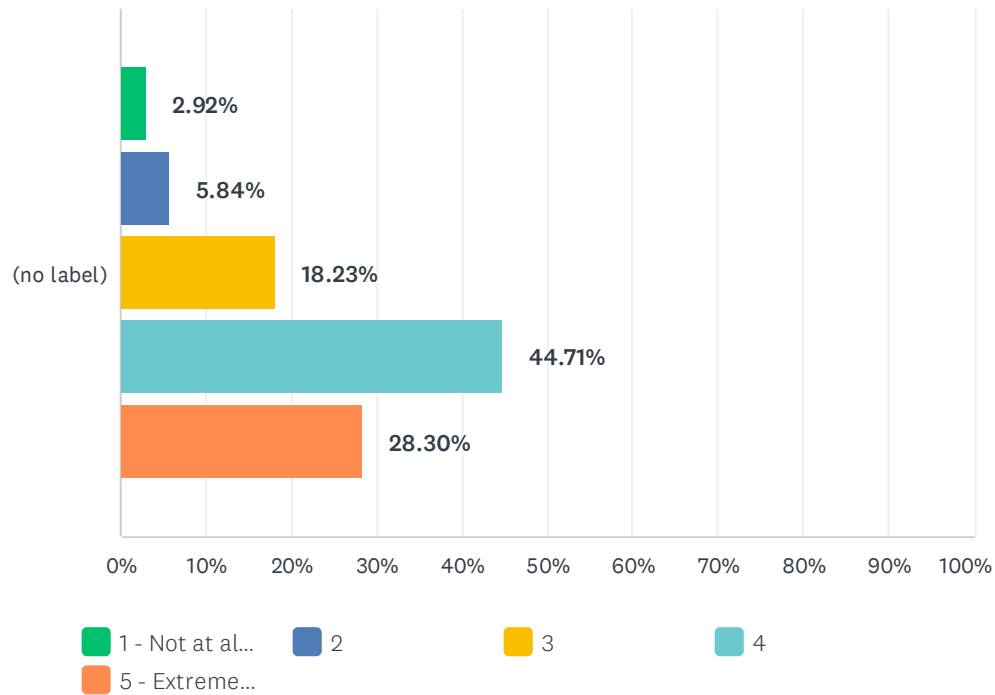


| | 1 - NOT AT ALL SATISFIED | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 2.92% 29 | 5.84% 58 | 18.23% 181 | 44.71% 444 | 28.30% 281 | 993 | 3.90 |

# Q3 Parkway keeps me informed of important district news.

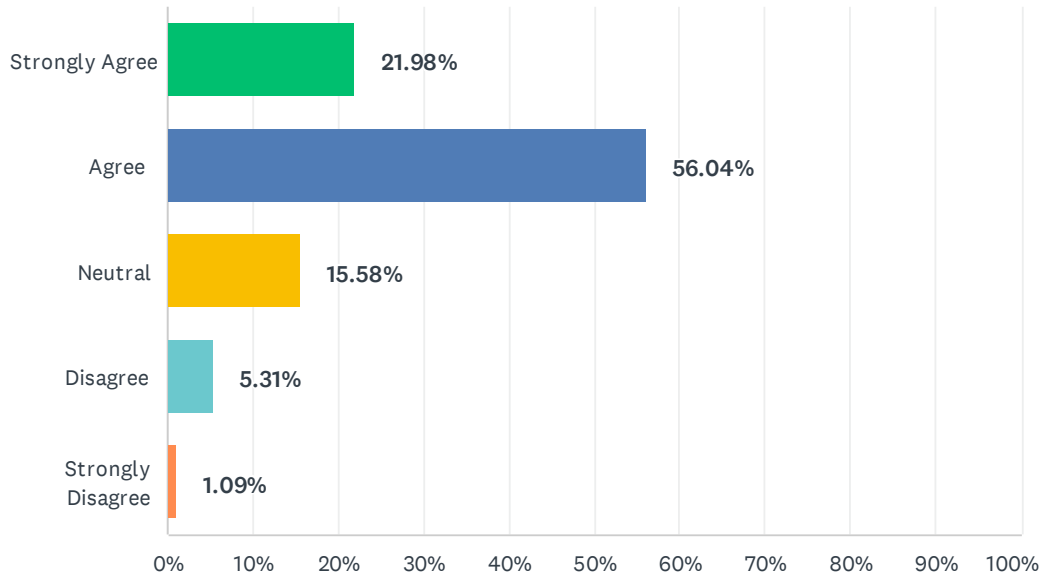Answered: 833    Skipped: 164



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly Agree | 27.13% | 226 |
| Agree | 55.82% | 465 |
| Neutral | 10.32% | 86 |
| Disagree | 4.80% | 40 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.92% | 16 |
| TOTAL | | 833 |

# Q4 Parkway's district publications and other communications provide useful information to staff.
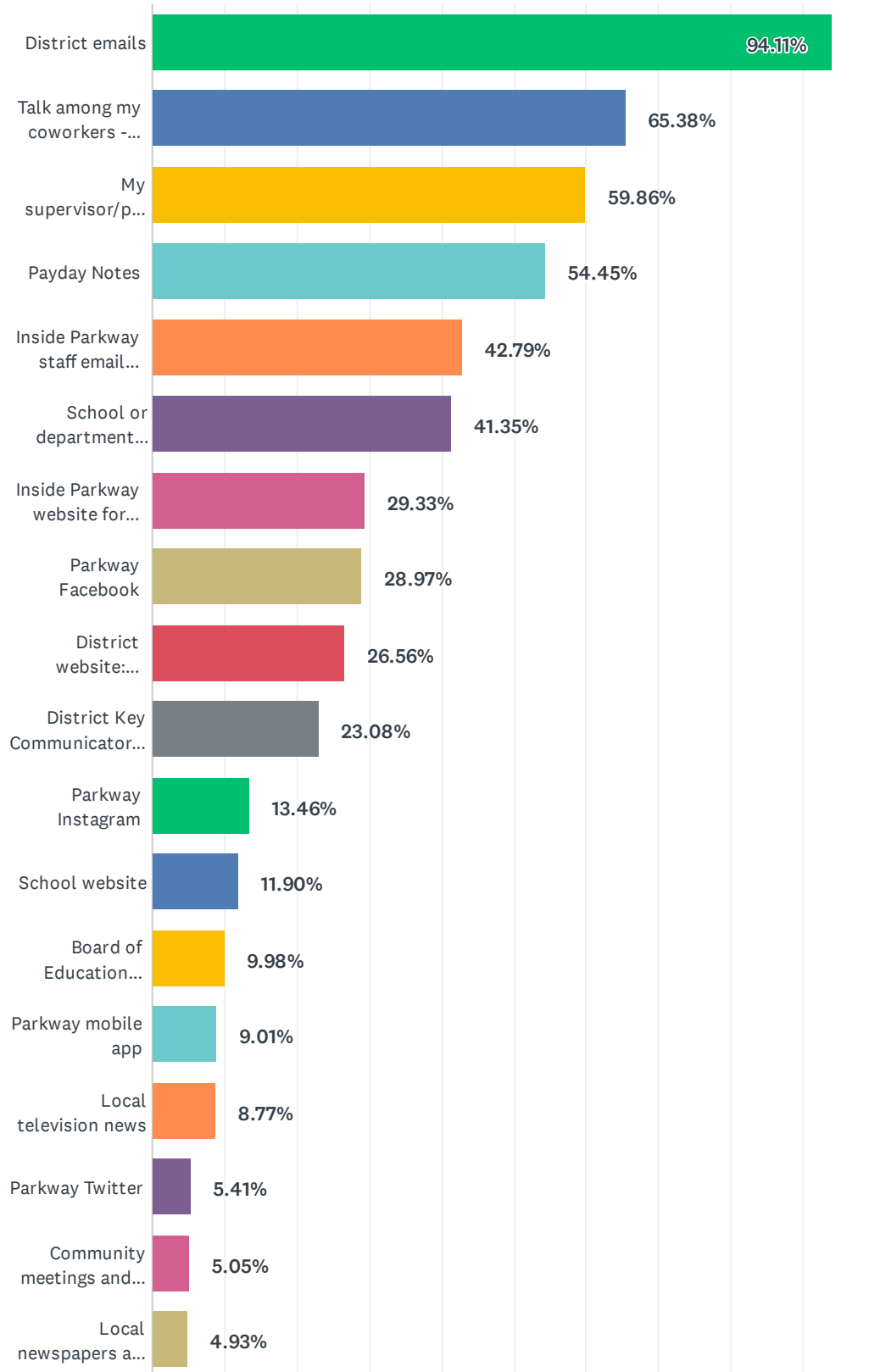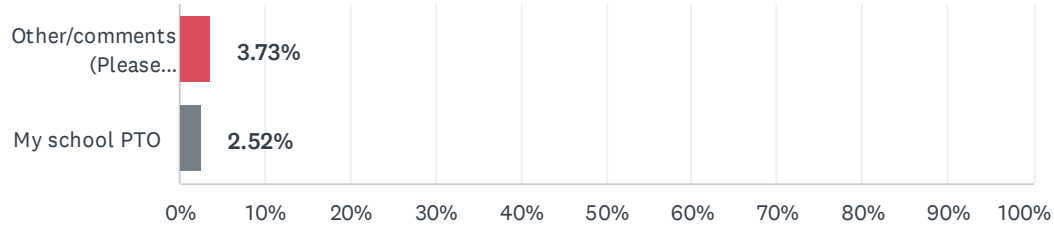
Answered: 828    Skipped: 169



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 21.98% | 182 |
| Agree | 56.04% | 464 |
| Neutral | 15.58% | 129 |
| Disagree | 5.31% | 44 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1.09% | 9 |
| TOTAL | | 828 |

# Q5 How do you receive information about what is happening in Parkway? (choose as many as you'd like)
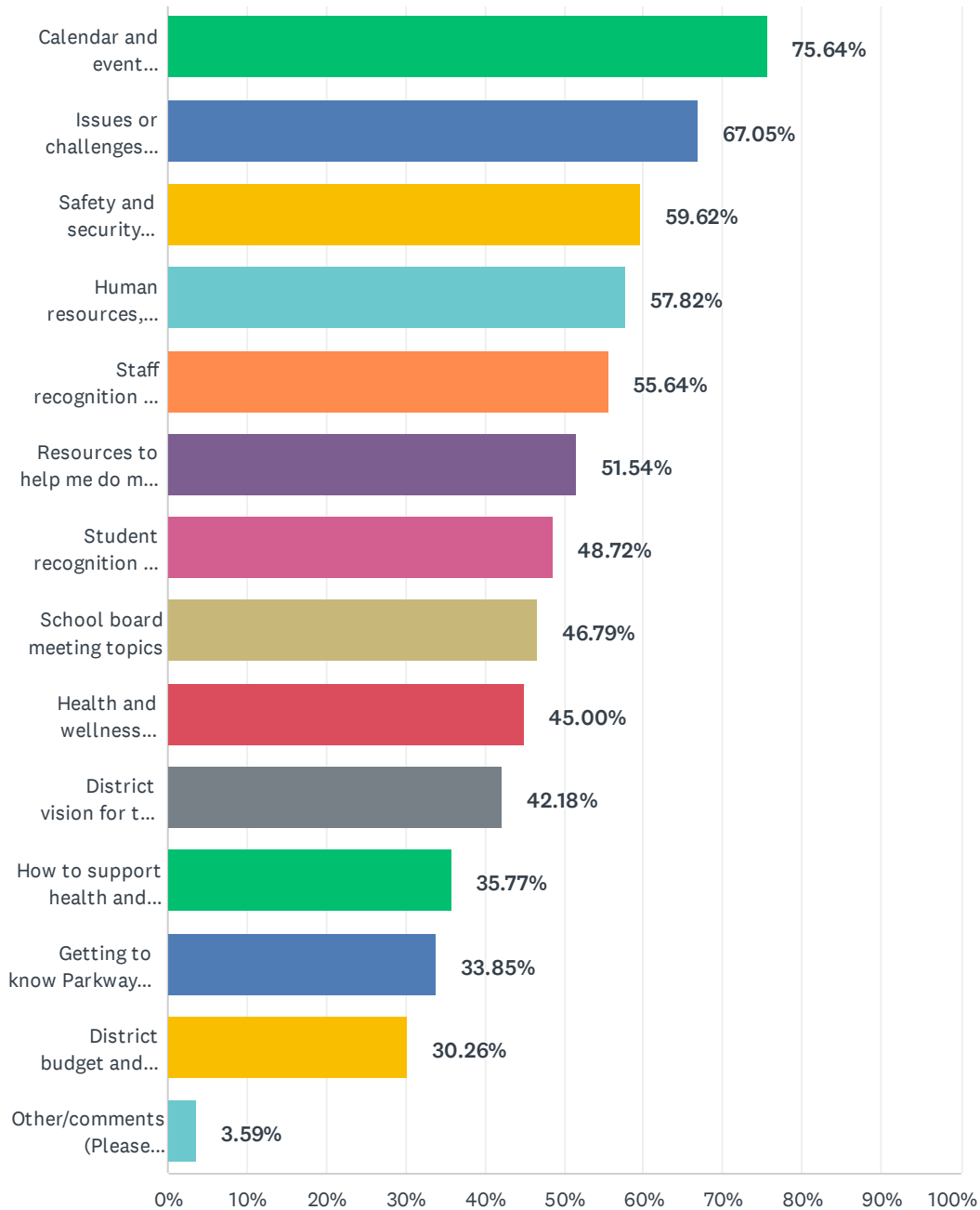
Answered: 832    Skipped: 165

| Category | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|
| District emails | 94.11% |
| Talk among my coworkers -... | 65.38% |
| My supervisor/p... | 59.86% |
| Payday Notes | 54.45% |
| Inside Parkway staff email... | 42.79% |
| School or department... | 41.35% |
| Inside Parkway website for... | 29.33% |
| Parkway Facebook | 28.97% |
| District website:... | 26.56% |
| District Key Communicator... | 23.08% |
| Parkway Instagram | 13.46% |
| School website | 11.90% |
| Board of Education... | 9.98% |
| Parkway mobile app | 9.01% |
| Local television news | 8.77% |
| Parkway Twitter | 5.41% |
| Community meetings and... | 5.05% |
| Local newspapers a... | 4.93% |

# Employee Communications Survey 2023



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| District emails | 94.11% | 783 |
| Talk among my coworkers - word of mouth | 65.38% | 544 |
| My supervisor/principal | 59.86% | 498 |
| Payday Notes | 54.45% | 453 |
| Inside Parkway staff email newsletter | 42.79% | 356 |
| School or department meetings | 41.35% | 344 |
| Inside Parkway website for staff | 29.33% | 244 |
| Parkway Facebook | 28.97% | 241 |
| District website: parkwayschools.net | 26.56% | 221 |
| District Key Communicator meetings - summaries from my building rep | 23.08% | 192 |
| Parkway Instagram | 13.46% | 112 |
| School website | 11.90% | 99 |
| Board of Education meetings | 9.98% | 83 |
| Parkway mobile app | 9.01% | 75 |
| Local television news | 8.77% | 73 |
| Parkway Twitter | 5.41% | 45 |
| Community meetings and/or Project Parkway | 5.05% | 42 |
| Local newspapers and radio | 4.93% | 41 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 3.73% | 31 |
| My school PTO | 2.52% | 21 |
| Total Respondents: 832 | | |

# Q6 What kind of information would you like to receive? (choose as many as you'd like)
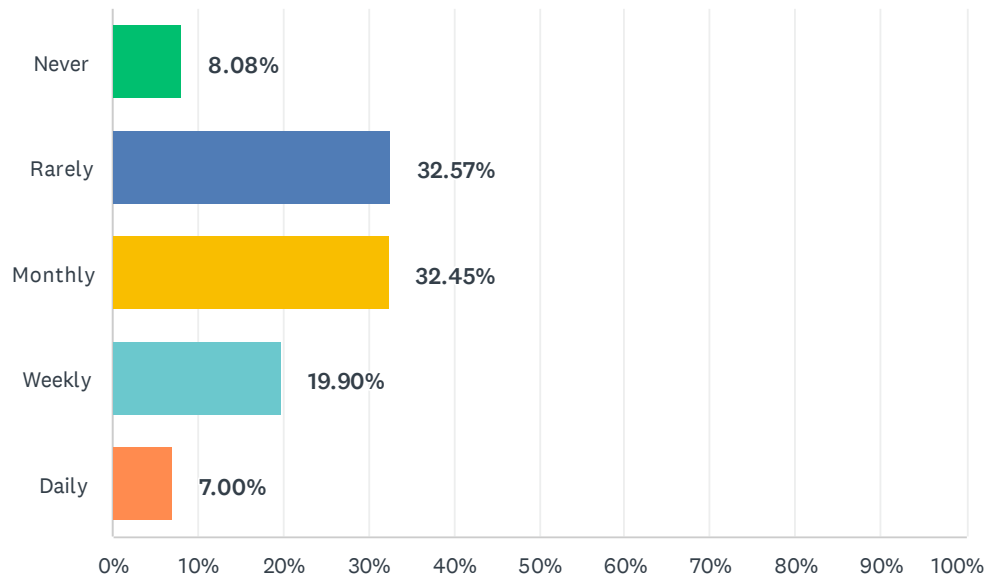
Answered: 780    Skipped: 217

| Category | Percent |
|---|---|
| Calendar and event… | 75.64% |
| Issues or challenges… | 67.05% |
| Safety and security… | 59.62% |
| Human resources,… | 57.82% |
| Staff recognition … | 55.64% |
| Resources to help me do m… | 51.54% |
| Student recognition … | 48.72% |
| School board meeting topics | 46.79% |
| Health and wellness… | 45.00% |
| District vision for t… | 42.18% |
| How to support health and… | 35.77% |
| Getting to know Parkway… | 33.85% |
| District budget and… | 30.26% |
| Other/comments (Please… | 3.59% |

# Employee Communications Survey 2023

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Calendar and event information | 75.64% | 590 |
| Issues or challenges facing the district | 67.05% | 523 |
| Safety and security information | 59.62% | 465 |
| Human resources, payroll and and/or benefits information | 57.82% | 451 |
| Staff recognition and accomplishments | 55.64% | 434 |
| Resources to help me do my job | 51.54% | 402 |
| Student recognition and accomplishments | 48.72% | 380 |
| School board meeting topics | 46.79% | 365 |
| Health and wellness information for staff | 45.00% | 351 |
| District vision for the future | 42.18% | 329 |
| How to support health and wellness for students | 35.77% | 279 |
| Getting to know Parkway staff members | 33.85% | 264 |
| District budget and finance | 30.26% | 236 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 3.59% | 28 |
| Total Respondents: 780 | | |

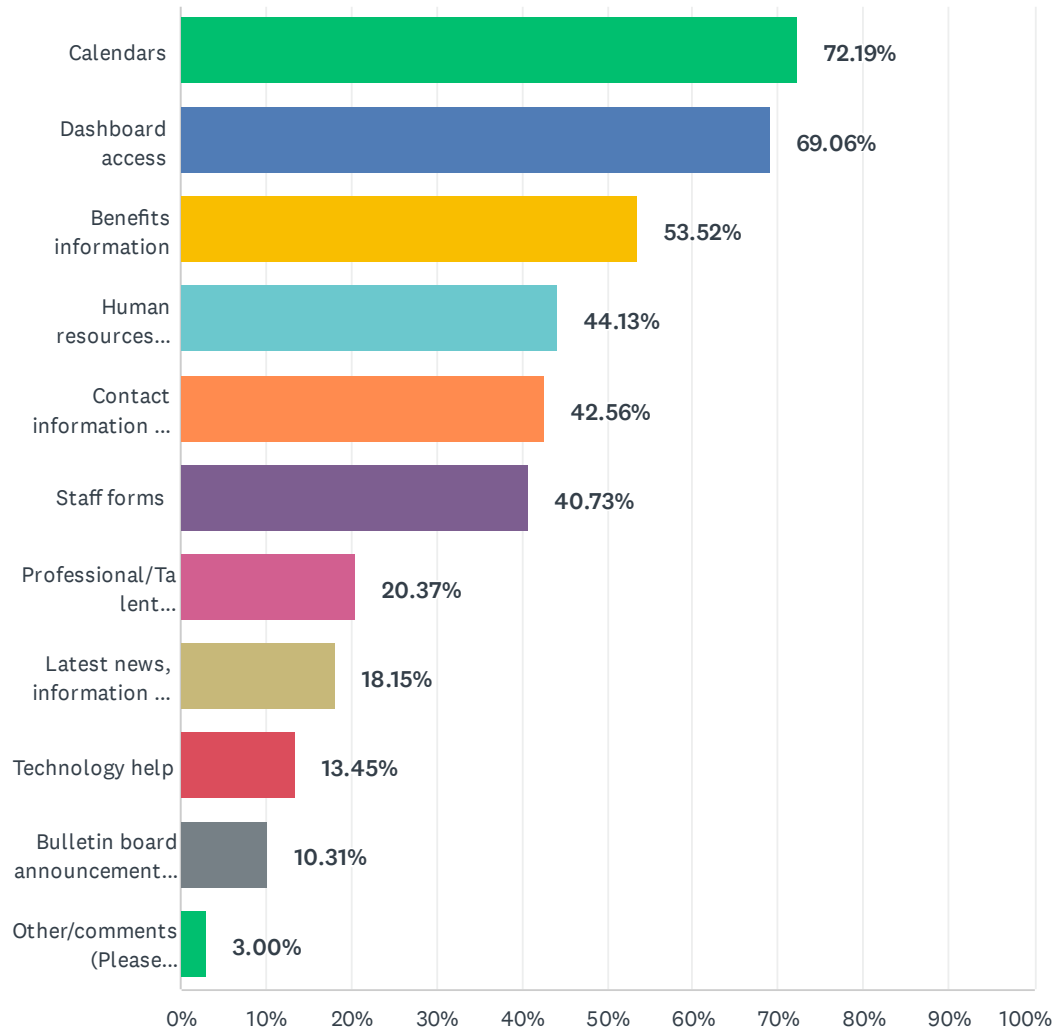# Q7 I use the district staff website "Inside Parkway" ...

Answered: 829    Skipped: 168



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Never | 8.08% | 67 |
| Rarely | 32.57% | 270 |
| Monthly | 32.45% | 269 |
| Weekly | 19.90% | 165 |
| Daily | 7.00% | 58 |
| TOTAL | | 829 |

## Q8 What information or links do you look for on the district website "Inside Parkway?" (choose all that apply)

Answered: 766    Skipped: 231

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Calendars | 72.19% |
| Dashboard access | 69.06% |
| Benefits information | 53.52% |
| Human resources... | 44.13% |
| Contact information ... | 42.56% |
| Staff forms | 40.73% |
| Professional/Talent... | 20.37% |
| Latest news, information ... | 18.15% |
| Technology help | 13.45% |
| Bulletin board announcement... | 10.31% |
| Other/comments (Please... | 3.00% |

# Employee Communications Survey 2023

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Calendars | 72.19% | 553 |
| Dashboard access | 69.06% | 529 |
| Benefits information | 53.52% | 410 |
| Human resources information | 44.13% | 338 |
| Contact information - staff/department directories | 42.56% | 326 |
| Staff forms | 40.73% | 312 |
| Professional/Talent development | 20.37% | 156 |
| Latest news, information and stories for staff | 18.15% | 139 |
| Technology help | 13.45% | 103 |
| Bulletin board announcements - buy and sell/births and condolences | 10.31% | 79 |
| Other/comments   (Please specify.) | 3.00% | 23 |
| Total Respondents: 766 | | |

# Q9 How satisfied are you with communications from your supervisor?

Answered: 816    Skipped: 181
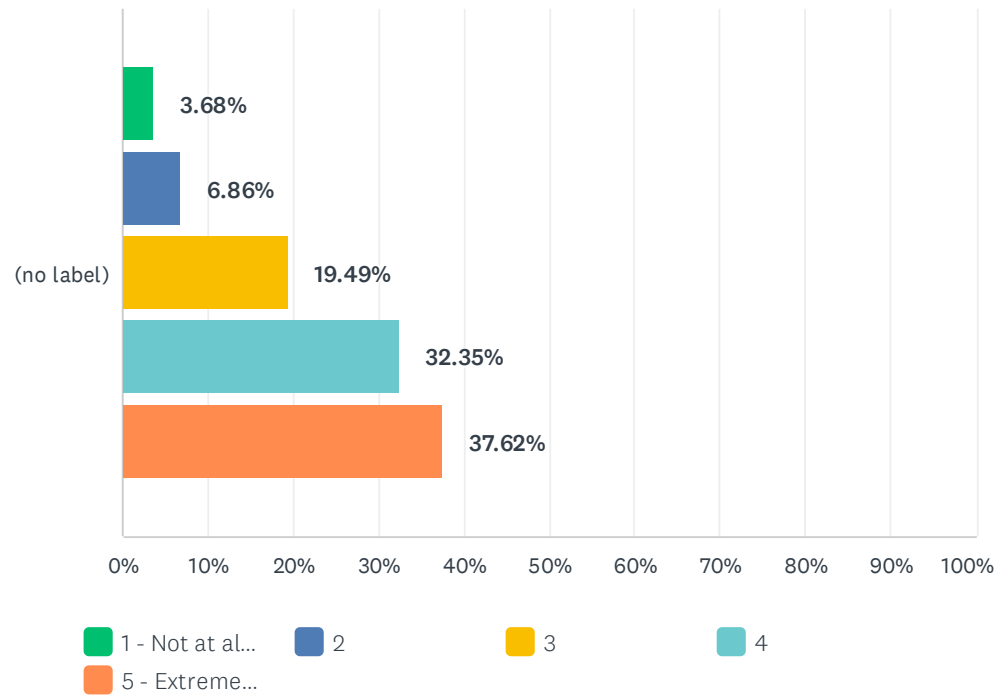


| | 1 - NOT AT ALL SATISFIED | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (no label) | 3.68% 30 | 6.86% 56 | 19.49% 159 | 32.35% 264 | 37.62% 307 | 816 | 3.93 |

# Q10 How involved have you been in the district's community engagement and strategic planning (Project Parkway, State of the District meetings, online Thoughtexchanges)?
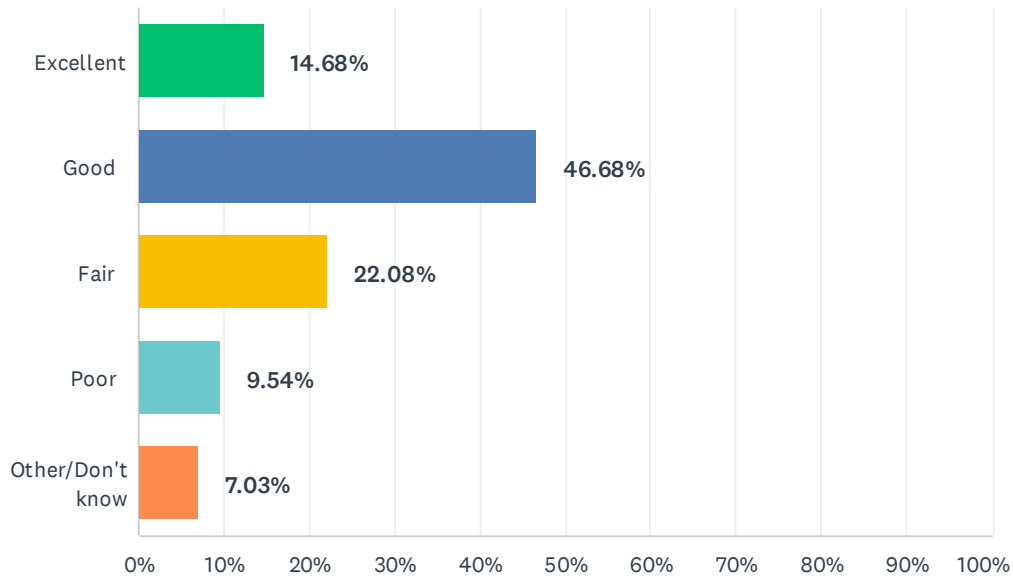
Answered: 793     Skipped: 204
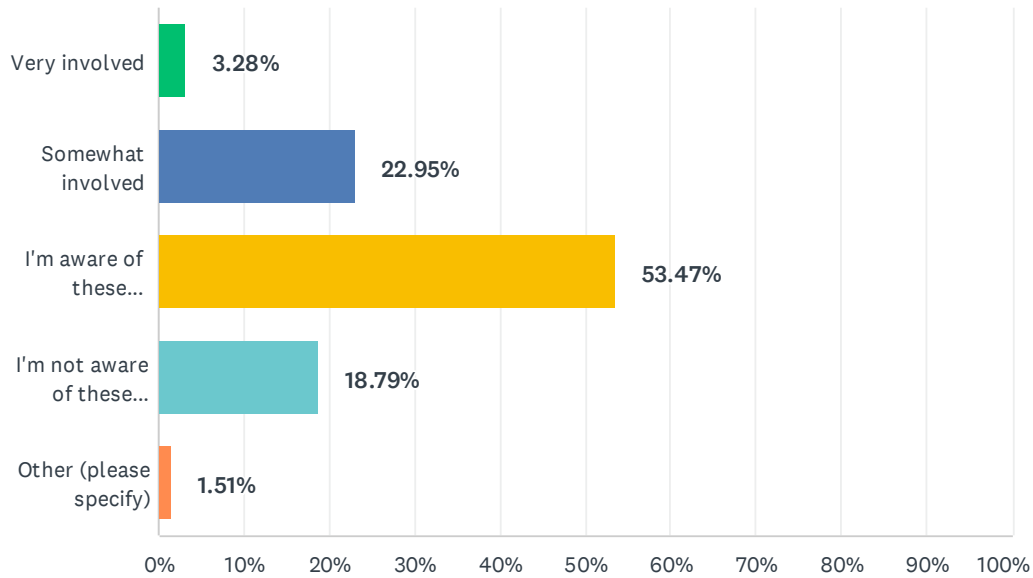


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Very involved | 3.28% | 26 |
| Somewhat involved | 22.95% | 182 |
| I'm aware of these opportunities but have not been involved | 53.47% | 424 |
| I'm not aware of these opportunities | 18.79% | 149 |
| Other (please specify) | 1.51% | 12 |
| TOTAL | | 793 |

# Q11 How would you rate the job performance of the district in involving all community members (parents, residents and staff) in important decisions that affect the district?
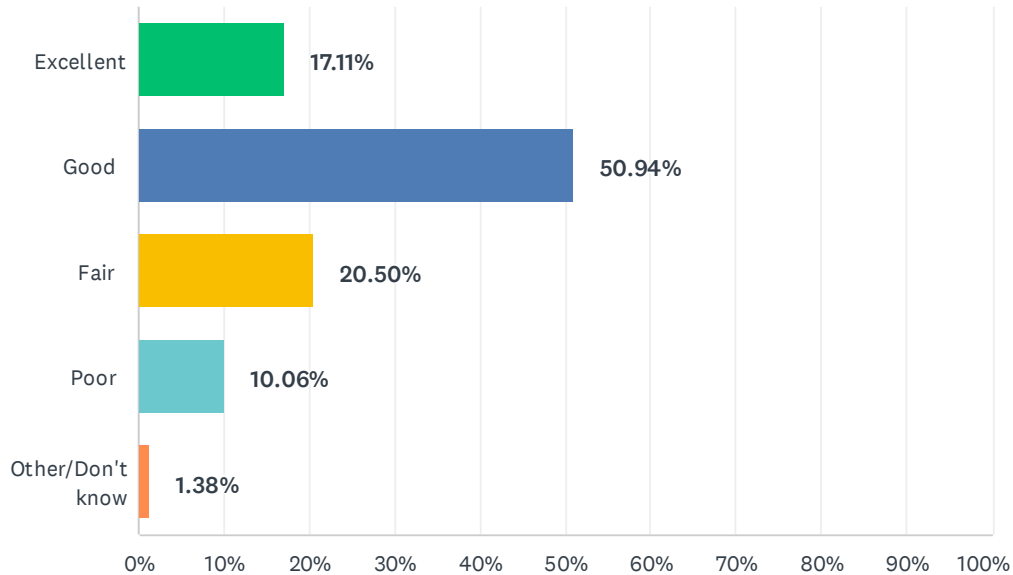
Answered: 797    Skipped: 200



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Excellent | 14.68% | 117 |
| Good | 46.68% | 372 |
| Fair | 22.08% | 176 |
| Poor | 9.54% | 76 |
| Other/Don't know | 7.03% | 56 |
| TOTAL | | 797 |

## Q12 How would you rate the job performance of the district in communicating with all staff?
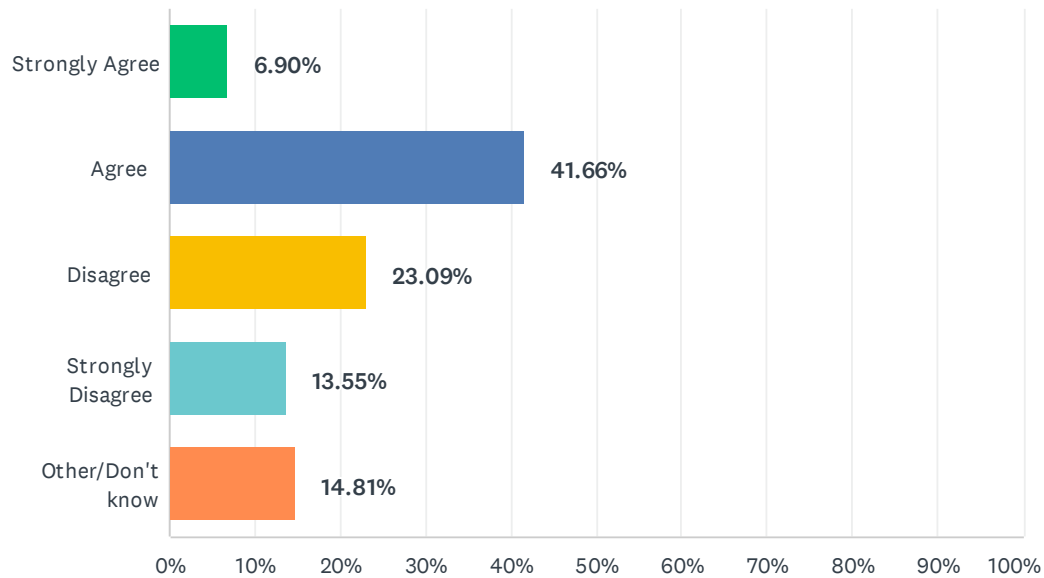
Answered: 795    Skipped: 202



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Excellent | 17.11% | 136 |
| Good | 50.94% | 405 |
| Fair | 20.50% | 163 |
| Poor | 10.06% | 80 |
| Other/Don't know | 1.38% | 11 |
| TOTAL | | 795 |

# Q13 The district does a good job listening and responding to staff opinion.

Answered: 797    Skipped: 200

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 6.90% | 55 |
| Agree | 41.66% | 332 |
| Disagree | 23.09% | 184 |
| Strongly Disagree | 13.55% | 108 |
| Other/Don't know | 14.81% | 118 |
| TOTAL | | 797 |

# Q14 What role best describes the work you do?

Answered: 771    Skipped: 226
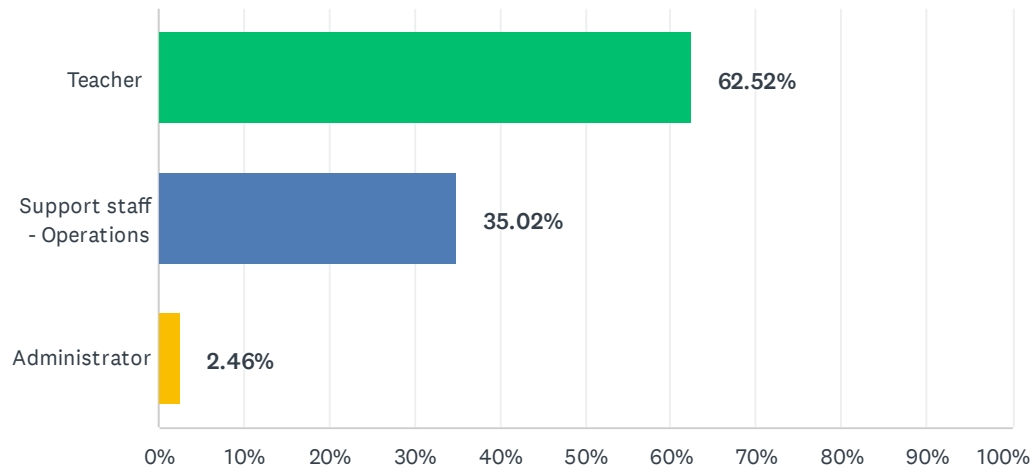


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher | 62.52% | 482 |
| Support staff - Operations | 35.02% | 270 |
| Administrator | 2.46% | 19 |
| TOTAL | | 771 |

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# Q15 Please share your work location. (If you work at multiple locations, select one where you spend the most time).

Answered: 677    Skipped: 320

| Location | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Barretts | 1.48% |
| Bellerive | 2.66% |
| Carman Trails | 2.22% |
| Central High | 5.17% |
| Central Middle | 4.87% |
| Claymont | 1.77% |
| Craig | 1.18% |
| Early Childhood... | 5.47% |
| Fern Ridge | 2.22% |
| Green Trails | 1.48% |
| Hanna Woods | 1.92% |
| Henry | 2.22% |
| Highcroft Ridge | 1.77% |
| Mason Ridge | 1.33% |
| McKelvey Primary | 1.62% |
| McKelvey Intermediate | 2.36% |
| North High | 6.65% |
| Northeast Middle | 4.14% |

# Employee Communications Survey 2023

| Location | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Oak Brook | 1.77% |
| Pierremont | 0.44% |
| River Bend | 2.07% |
| Ross | 2.51% |
| Shenandoah Valley | 2.36% |
| Sorrento Springs | 1.48% |
| South High | 7.68% |
| South Middle | 3.10% |
| Southwest Middle | 2.66% |
| West High | 6.20% |
| West Middle | 6.79% |
| Wren Hollow | 1.62% |
| ADC - MO Options | 0.15% |
| Virtual Campus | 0.15% |
| Administration Building | 2.36% |
| The Nines | 0.89% |
| Facilities | 2.07% |
| Food Service | |
| Welcome Center | 0.74% |
| AEL | 1.03% |
| Transportation | 3.40% |

0%    10%    20%    30%    40%    50%    60%    70%    80%    90%    100%

# Employee Communications Survey 2023

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Barretts | 1.48% | 10 |
| Bellerive | 2.66% | 18 |
| Carman Trails | 2.22% | 15 |
| Central High | 5.17% | 35 |
| Central Middle | 4.87% | 33 |
| Claymont | 1.77% | 12 |
| Craig | 1.18% | 8 |
| Early Childhood Center/Programs | 5.47% | 37 |
| Fern Ridge | 2.22% | 15 |
| Green Trails | 1.48% | 10 |
| Hanna Woods | 1.92% | 13 |
| Henry | 2.22% | 15 |
| Highcroft Ridge | 1.77% | 12 |
| Mason Ridge | 1.33% | 9 |
| McKelvey Primary | 1.62% | 11 |
| McKelvey Intermediate | 2.36% | 16 |
| North High | 6.65% | 45 |
| Northeast Middle | 4.14% | 28 |
| Oak Brook | 1.77% | 12 |
| Pierremont | 0.44% | 3 |
| River Bend | 2.07% | 14 |
| Ross | 2.51% | 17 |
| Shenandoah Valley | 2.36% | 16 |
| Sorrento Springs | 1.48% | 10 |
| South High | 7.68% | 52 |
| South Middle | 3.10% | 21 |
| Southwest Middle | 2.66% | 18 |
| West High | 6.20% | 42 |
| West Middle | 6.79% | 46 |
| Wren Hollow | 1.62% | 11 |
| ADC - MO Options | 0.15% | 1 |
| Virtual Campus | 0.15% | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Administration Building | 2.36% | 16 |
| The Nines | 0.89% | 6 |
| Facilities | 2.07% | 14 |
| Food Service | 0.00% | 0 |
| Welcome Center | 0.74% | 5 |
| AEL | 1.03% | 7 |
| Transportation | 3.40% | 23 |
| TOTAL | | 677 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Administration Building | 2.36% | 16 |
| The Nines | 0.89% | 6 |

# Q16 Please consider sharing your race/ethnicity.

Answered: 741    Skipped: 256
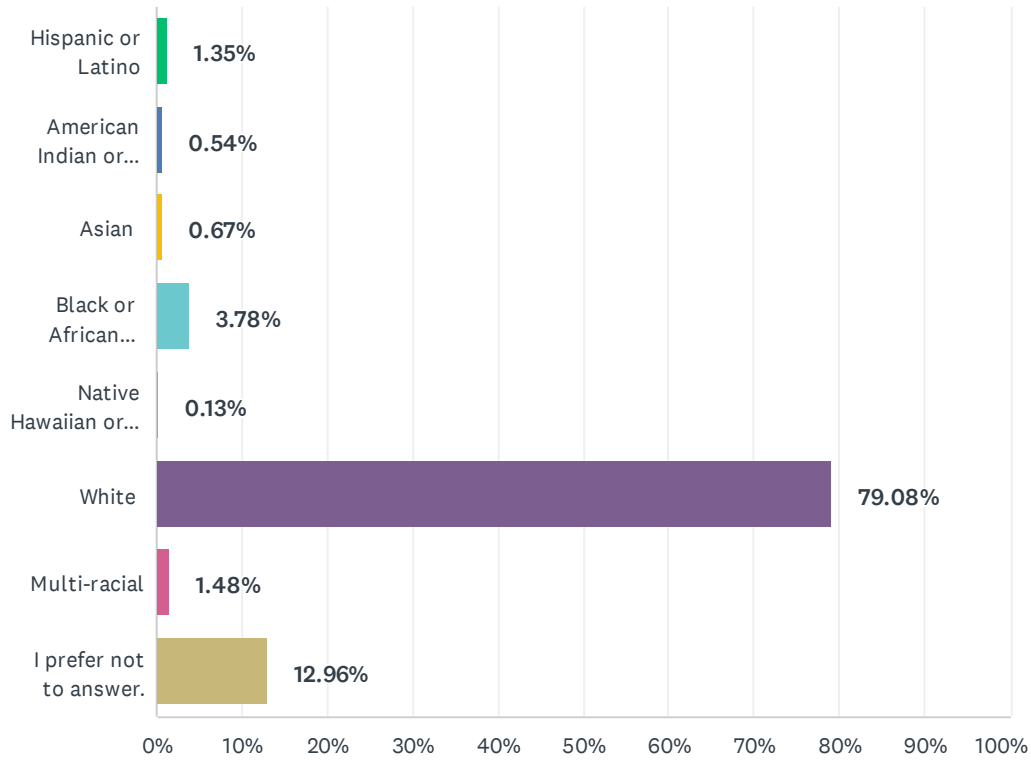


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Hispanic or Latino | 1.35% | 10 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0.54% | 4 |
| Asian | 0.67% | 5 |
| Black or African American | 3.78% | 28 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 0.13% | 1 |
| White | 79.08% | 586 |
| Multi-racial | 1.48% | 11 |
| I prefer not to answer. | 12.96% | 96 |
| TOTAL | | 741 |

## Q17 Regarding employee communication, is there anything this survey did not cover that you would like to tell us about?

Answered: 125     Skipped: 872

# Parent Survey Results: Race

## Overall, what grade would you assign to the Parkway School District?

| Race | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 18.18% | 18.18% | 63.64% |
| Asian | 3.90% 3.90% | 21.45% | 69.08% |
| Black or African American | 6.05% | 35.23% | 54.45% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 5.21% | 28.13% | 65.63% |
| I prefer not to answer. | 6.33% 16.29% | 38.01% | 34.39% |
| Multi-racial | 3.88% | 28.16% | 64.08% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | | | 100.00% |
| Other/comments (Please specify.) | 5.45% 10.91% | 36.36% | 45.45% |
| White | 5.61% | 32.87% | 59.42% |
| Null | 7.29% 8.53% | 30.85% | 50.85% |

**Response**
- A
- B
- C
- D
- F
- Other/Don't know

## How satisfied are you with communications from the district?

| Race | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 9.09% | 18.18% | 72.73% |
| Asian | 13.61% | 44.44% | 39.44% |
| Black or African American | 12.10% | 36.30% | 47.33% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 10.42% | 40.63% | 47.92% |
| I prefer not to answer. | 8.60% | 23.98% | 42.53% | 21.72% |
| Multi-racial | 18.45% | 34.95% | 43.69% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 33.33% | 66.67% |
| Other/comments (Please specify.) | 3.64% 16.36% | 40.00% | 40.00% |
| White | 13.49% | 48.56% | 35.07% |
| Null | 5.91% 20.45% | 40.91% | 30.91% |

**Response**
- 5 - Extremely satisfied
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 - Not at all satisfied

## Staff Survey Results: By Role

"Likely to recommend Parkway as a place to work" (Employee Net Promoter Score)

| Teachers | 29 |
| --- | --- |
| Support Staff | 29 |
| Administrators | 69 |

## Teachers

How likely are you to recommend Parkway to others as a place to work?

| Score | Percent |
| --- | --- |
| 1 - Not at all likely | 1.45% |
| 2 | 0.83% |
| 3 | 2.90% |
| 4 | 2.28% |
| 5 | 5.39% |
| 6 | 6.64% |
| 7 | 15.35% |
| 8 | 20.12% |
| 9 | 15.56% |
| 10 - Very likely | 29.46% |

## Support Staff

How likely are you to recommend Parkway to others as a place to work?

| Score | Percent |
| --- | --- |
| 1 - Not at all likely | 1.45% |
| 2 | 0.83% |
| 3 | 2.90% |
| 4 | 2.28% |
| 5 | 5.39% |
| 6 | 6.64% |
| 7 | 15.35% |
| 8 | 20.12% |
| 9 | 15.56% |
| 10 - Very likely | 29.46% |

## Administrators

How likely are you to recommend Parkway to others as a place to work?

| Score | Percent |
| --- | --- |
| 7 | 10.53% |
| 8 | 21.05% |
| 9 | 15.79% |
| 10 - Very likely | 52.63% |

# APPENDIX B

**Focus Group Questions:**

How do you get important news and information about Parkway?
   a. Is the content shared helpful or informative?
   b. Is it frequent enough and/or too much?
   c. What is working well? And/or what can be improved?

Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?
   d. What is the best way for us to communicate with you?

We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.
   e. Are these opportunities valuable to you?
   f. Do you participate?
   g. When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?

If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

# Comm Focus Groups
# Key Communicators Notes Summary 9.13.23
# (Summary)

## South Area Notes

Staff receives a variety of information from multiple sources, including the principal's newsletter to staff, district emails, and staff-directed emails. Some rely on district emails rather than building administration emails, as the latter are not sent every week. Staff find the "Payday Notes" effective, with good information and a manageable length. They receive the Principal's weekly bulletin and parent newsletters but tend to ignore the redundant emails from Parkway. They note a significant presence on district social media, primarily focusing on celebrations rather than providing information. The staff appreciates receiving text messages for quick updates, particularly for weather information and emergencies and does not use social media as a primary source of news.

The new CCO should focus on promoting positive activities and gathering community feedback. The new Chief Communications Officer should immerse themselves in the district by attending significant events in each area. Staff notes it's important to have equally representative content for all schools and grade levels. To improve communication with parents, the suggestion is to explore the use of apps like Remind and SeeSaw, possibly integrating them for district information. The district has a diverse population, including ESL families, and there is a need for improved access to information beyond just English. To address this, a teacher is using the Blackboard translation service. A participant suggests developing a comprehensive app to consolidate all information for parents.

The preference for communication lies in emails and text messages. It's important to indicate the target audience for each communication, distinguishing whether the content is intended for parents or staff members. Encouraging parents to check their emails via a text message is proposed. Targeted communications are considered more effective at the school level rather than at the district level for both parent and staff newsletters.

The utilization of surveys is regarded as valuable, with a focus on understanding who will see it, why it's needed, and how it will be used. Concerns about the sharing of data and its intended purpose are raised. The "open comment" box can be intimidating, prompting the suggestion to include a more convenient and accessible option for providing feedback. Reminders for survey completion are deemed necessary, as people tend to forget. Providing dedicated time to complete surveys is recommended. Confidentiality concerns are noted, particularly when a survey requires you to provide an email address, which compromises anonymity. The issue of excessive survey requests is acknowledged, and there's a desire for more transparency regarding the use of submitted feedback. Moreover, there is a recommendation to develop a comprehensive 360-degree feedback tool to effectively distribute and summarize survey results.

Additionally, the need to be able to email the entire team, including all families and students, is highlighted, along with the inability to communicate with large groups effectively. Principals play a pivotal role as communicators for staff, teachers, and parents. Enhancing school-to-home

communication is emphasized, with proposed measures including providing training and best practices for principals and schools. The suggestion is to share relevant content through school newsletters.

## Central Area Notes

The communication methods for staff primarily revolve around email and text blasts for critical school information. Text messaging is used effectively for emphasizing important matters, often prompting recipients to check their emails. Email is considered the quickest mode of communication. While staff meetings are occasionally held, they are not frequent enough to cover all necessary information, but they are seen as informative and helpful when they do occur.

The focus is on ensuring equal access to information for all educators. Providing the option for individuals to choose their preferred communication channels, such as email, text, etc., is favored. The idea of allowing teachers to submit stories about school activities is suggested. Some high schools use Twitter for parental communication. Collaboration with other districts to learn about best practices is recommended. There is a proposal for the development of a Parkway app for both parents and staff, which would consolidate district information in one accessible location. The mention of Parentsquare in Rockwood is made, highlighting the need for a centralized platform for managing multiple sources of information. However, there is a lack of awareness about the existence of a Parkway app for both parents and staff.

The feedback on surveys is generally positive, with a desire for timely feedback and follow-up, including the sharing of survey results and subsequent actions taken. Some expressed skepticism about whether their input is truly considered. Suggestions include shortening survey lengths and ensuring clarity about anonymity. There's a need for consistent communication plans to share and follow up on survey results.

During the COVID period, there was appreciation for Parkway's communication efforts. The importance of sharing positive news is emphasized to boost morale among students, teachers, and parents.

Educating teachers on how to share positive news with the district is suggested, including providing clear instructions and contact information for communication submissions.

## North Area Notes

Information from the principal to staff primarily focuses on updates related to the school, with some district-level information included. The weekly emails from the principal are relied upon to reinforce district-level information. The current level of shared information is considered sufficient. Social media and district emails are also regularly reviewed for updates. Despite receiving a substantial amount of emails as both a teacher and a parent, an individual feels well informed, appreciating the valuable emails received from the principal.

A priority for communications is sharing positive events and achievements to foster a sense of positivity within the community. Mention is made of the effectiveness of the district's video initiatives, such as the Hope video and Kindergarten videos, in creating a welcoming environment for students. Transparency

and openness are encouraged, especially when addressing sensitive issues. Ensuring equitable access to information is highlighted, particularly for families without access to devices. Principals sending both text messages and emails to parents is seen as helpful. There's a call for providing information in multiple languages, as some families struggle to understand communication in English. Streamlining the communication process for enrollment and providing visual instructions for non-English speaking families on tasks like field trip payments are suggested to improve accessibility and understanding.

The significance of surveys is acknowledged, but there is a strong desire for more comprehensive feedback and follow-up actions. Participants express the need for result summaries and the incorporation of a rating scale in surveys to save time, with an option for additional feedback. There's a suggestion for Key Communicators to share survey results with their buildings to enhance transparency. The practice of notifying survey duration upfront is appreciated for time management. Additionally, there is a request for periodic check-ins and support from leadership, as well as sharing the results of calendar surveys. The proactive approach during the COVID period is commended, particularly the continuous efforts to assess teacher comfort and well-being.

**PAMEE Meeting 11.10.2023**
**Facilitator: Kristen Harms**

**Question 1**

  **How do you get important news and information about Parkway?  (e.g., district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, your child, social media, website)**

    ●  **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
    ●  **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
    ●  **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The speaker relies on email communication and occasional text messages to receive important news and information about Parkway. They express satisfaction with the current level of communication but emphasize the importance of not reducing it. Another participant, suggests that she would prefer more text messages as she doesn't frequently check her email. Another participant added that the text messages she receives are usually from the school, prompting parents to check their emails. Additionally, the participant suggests improving communication with older students, especially those involved in groups like the Black Student Union, as they might not bring home information and may be interested in getting their parents involved.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?  What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

Participants discussed the communication tools and channels they find effective and expressed satisfaction with the current methods, including automated calls for inclement weather. They emphasized the importance of receiving information through multiple channels, such as email, phone calls, and text messages, to ensure that parents are reached in various ways. The consensus is that the current communication methods are sufficient and helpful, covering a range of preferences among parents.

**Question 3**
**We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

    ●  **Are these opportunities valuable to you?**
    ●  **Do you participate?**
    ●  **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

Both participants have actively participated in surveys regarding district issues, but they express uncertainty about the impact of their feedback. They suggest that providing information on how the survey results influence decisions or sharing summaries of the outcomes would enhance transparency and help them understand the significance of their input. The participants emphasize the importance of seeing tangible results or understanding how the feedback contributes to positive changes within the district.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**

The participant expressed concerns about a specific communication issue related to the residency verification process for her child in the VIC program. She highlights the challenges her elderly grandmother faces in providing physical documentation and the unexpected nature of the communication request. The participant feels that the process is repetitive and inconsiderate, especially since the information has not changed since the initial registration in third grade. The participant also touches on the potential impact on her son's education and mentions considering writing to the superintendent. Another participant, shared concerns about what she perceives as continued segregation in communications, expressing a desire for more inclusive messaging that allows all families to participate, regardless of their location or demographics. Both participants suggest a need for improved communication processes and a better understanding of individual family circumstances.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

A participant raises a concern about the lack of information and support regarding Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) at West High. They shared their experience with their older child and expressed the desire for better communication and emphasis on opportunities for children of color, specifically regarding HBCUs. The participant highlights the importance of presenting various options, including trade schools, and suggests that the Parkway schools should do more to address the diverse interests of the students. The participant also mentions their involvement with the Black Student Union and the need for the school to provide more comprehensive information and support for students with different aspirations.

**PAMEE Meeting 11.09.2023**
**Summary**
**Facilitator: Nathan Tyson**

**Question 1**

> **How do you get important news and information about Parkway? (e.g., district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, your child, social media, website)**
>
> - **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
> - **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
> - **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

Participants shared their preferred channels for receiving important news and information about Parkway. A participant mentioned relying on emails, especially for updates about meetings. She expressed the need for reminders, both a week and a day before events, to enhance her participation. Someone else shared that he receives weekly updates from the principal and class teachers, finding them frequent and informative. He emphasized the importance of reminders for month-based activities. A first-year Parkway parent with a child in elementary school, appreciated communication directly from the teacher through email and felt the overall communication was acceptable. She highlighted the convenience of Zoom options for meetings.

Concerns about the amount of information were raised, suggesting a possible focus on key details. A participant also echoed a sentiment of occasional overload but recognized the importance of detailed information for others. Overall, participants acknowledged the effectiveness of communication, comparing it favorably to their experiences in previous school districts. They indicated gaps in information about sports sign-ups and expressed uncertainty about age-appropriate sports sign-ups for her child.

The key feedback includes the need for timely reminders, a consideration of the volume of information shared, and addressing gaps in sports sign-up information, particularly for specific age groups.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see? What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

Participants discussed their preferred communication tools for receiving information from Parkway. The consensus is that email works well, but social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, can be effective for reaching a broader audience. The idea of consolidating information into a single Parkway app was suggested to streamline communication and reduce the chances of missing important updates. Another participant agreed with the notion of a central location but appreciates having different outlets for information. Overall, the participants highlight the importance of convenience and accessibility in communication tools.

**Question 3**
**We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

> - **Are these opportunities valuable to you?**
> - **Do you participate?**
> - **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

One participant expressed uncertainty about the value of surveys as they haven't participated in any yet, citing a specific instance related to the counseling department survey. The participant suggests that surveys may be more effective if conducted later in the school year when parents have had more interactions with the relevant

departments. Another participant mentioned not having specific suggestions for improvement but expressed openness to participating in surveys. Despite limited experience with Parkway surveys, participants generally acknowledge the value of gathering feedback through surveys, emphasizing that follow-ups on survey responses would be appreciated. Overall, the participants expressed a willingness to participate in surveys to provide valuable feedback.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**
One participant emphasized the importance of ensuring the right information reaches the right people and avoiding sending irrelevant information to specific groups. Another participant agreed, highlighting the significance of accurate targeting in communication. The issue of emergency communication is raised, with one participant expressing appreciation for the introduction of color-coded systems but suggesting the need for timely updates during such situations. The participant shared an incident where they felt the communication came a bit late after a safety concern near the school. This feedback underscores the importance of timely communication during emergencies to address parents' concerns about their child's safety.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

Participants shared feedback about the need for improved communication regarding school activities and athletics. The participant highlighted the challenge of receiving information that is relevant to her high schooler and suggested a more targeted approach. The participant expressed a desire for better communication about sign-ups and opportunities for her child. Participants suggested a non-identifiable, aggregated approach to sharing medical information, such as common illnesses or symptoms among students, to reduce unnecessary panic. Overall, participants emphasized the importance of receiving timely and relevant information about school events, activities, and health-related updates.

**PAMEE Meeting 11.09.2023**
**Facilitator: Cartilia Lucas**

**Question 1**
      **How do you get important news and information about Parkway? (e.g., district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, your child, social media, website)**

- **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
- **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
- **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The speaker receives important news and information about Parkway through various channels. They appreciate regular emails, texts, and a monthly publication called the "Hoot Owl" that covers school events and PTO information. The frequency of updates through texts and emails is considered good, providing reminders for events like book fairs and PTO meetings. The speaker does not find it overwhelming and values being informed about school and community happenings.

Another participant expressed some difficulty in managing the information flow. They receive emails from different sources, including district emails and teacher emails, and wish for more concise communication. The participant also highlights a specific concern about the lack of communication on school-specific information, leading to surprises when their child mentions events they were not aware of. They express a desire for more targeted and transparent communication from the school.

The discussion touched on the use of social media and the school website for information. One participant mentioned discovering a Facebook group related to their child's class, finding it helpful but not widely known. Overall, there is a mix of positive feedback on the current communication methods and suggestions for improvement, particularly in terms of clarity and school-specific information dissemination.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see? What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

The discussion explored preferred communication tools and channels for receiving information. One participant expressed a liking for Facebook due to its convenience and easy accessibility for finding information without the need to search through emails or websites. Another participant brought up the Parkway app, highlighting its efficiency as a one-stop shop for receiving text messages, emails, and other communications from the school. The app is described as feeding into various communication methods.

There is a mention of the Parkway app being separate but integrated, allowing users to select specific schools to follow and receive notifications.

The participants considered other communication tools or initiatives that could better serve them, with a focus on ease of access and consolidation of information. The discussion sheds light on the preferences of the participants and their experiences with different communication platforms.

**Question 3**
**We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

- **Are these opportunities valuable to you?**
- **Do you participate?**
- **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

The discussion addressed the value of opportunities for parents and staff to provide feedback or participate in surveys regarding important issues or challenges facing the district. One participant acknowledged the value of these opportunities but admitted to not participating frequently, explaining that they are still in the process of becoming more involved in the district during their second year. They expressed a desire to better understand the workings of the organization before offering personalized feedback.

When asked about the frequency of surveys and whether it affects their response, the participant, unable to recall the exact number of surveys, stated that they do not perceive it as too much and find the surveys valuable. There is an overall positive sentiment toward the feedback and survey processes, with the participant emphasizing the importance of having such opportunities for input.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**

One participant emphasized the need for improved communication at the individual school level, citing a frustrating experience where the lack of communication about a heat advisory and broken air conditioning in a specific school building caused discomfort for students. They advocate for a focus on informing parents about school-specific matters.

Another participant highlighted the importance of clear communication regarding testing, expressing a desire for more detailed information about test results and their implications for students. They emphasize the need for a comprehensive understanding of the test data and suggest better explanations for parents.

The facilitator inquires about the participants' experiences with the district website. One participant mentioned using it when needed for specific research but doesn't frequent it regularly. They note that navigating the website can be challenging, especially when looking for specific information about the curriculum. Another participant echoed the sentiment, expressing that some information shared by individuals may not be available on the website.

There was a consensus among participants that individual school communication needs improvement, particularly in conveying important details about changes, such as new programs or curricula. The emphasis is on ensuring parents are well-informed at the school level.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

One participant emphasized the importance of diversity on panels and boards, expressing a desire for more representation. They highlighted the significance of diverse voices, especially in a community with a diverse population.

Another participant, in their first meeting, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share concerns and suggested making such meetings a regular part of their schedule. They emphasized the need for professional communication from administrators, principals, and teachers. The participant has experienced instances of what

they perceive as unprofessional communication and urges for a more understanding and courteous approach, particularly when responding to concerned parents' questions. They shared an example of a situation where they felt their query was not adequately addressed.

In summary, the participants brought attention to the importance of diversity in leadership and requested professionalism in communication, emphasizing the need for respectful and comprehensive responses to parent inquiries.

**Focus Group - Community Leaders**
**Communications Advisory 09/29/23**
(Summary)

**Think about the last 12-18 months, how did you get important news about Parkway?**
The individual finds the "Today in Parkway" newsletter to be lengthy and lacking a clear order of importance. They prioritize school news but feel overwhelmed by excessive information, particularly from Peachjar flyers and Community Ed flyers. They prefer using the Parkway app as a comprehensive communication tool and value the convenience of having all the information in one place. They appreciate the district's effort to provide positive local news, building trust even during challenging times. However, there are concerns about inconsistent communication between schools in different areas, with a perceived lack of leadership and communication in certain schools. They trust communications from the district's team, especially those from Keith Marty, and find the content valuable, although they desire more personalized information in school communications.

**What is important content?**
The individual values safety-related news and desires proactive and reactive updates from the school district. They appreciate back-to-school guides, calendar information, and anything that aids in planning. They find Peachjar flyers and Community Ed solicitation emails bothersome, suggesting a higher fee for ads at the football stadium to minimize their frequency. They are interested in updates on how district funds are utilized, particularly in terms of recognition, facility improvements, and student achievements, as it could potentially impact property values. They enjoy uplifting stories but have limited attention to spare. While they are not particularly active on social media, they follow Parkway on Instagram and notice that the district highlights information differently across various platforms. They prefer a consolidated email for all school-related communications and are generally content with the current level of communication. They have heard positive feedback about the district's Payday Notes from a neighbor who is a teacher, emphasizing the good communication cadence. Overall, they express satisfaction with the school's communications program and team.

**Top priority for communications?**
The individual prioritizes crisis communication and urgent information, emphasizing the need for clear and concise subject lines in emails to help manage the overwhelming volume of communication. They value hearing directly from Superintendent Dr. Marty and suggest increased visibility for him through video communication to foster a sense of trust and connection with the audience. They propose the inclusion of diverse voices and spokespersons to effectively address various topics, advocating for a team of communicators for the district. They acknowledge that while they find Dr. Marty relatable and trustworthy, they recognize that their perception may not represent that of everyone in the community.

**Surveys**
The individual appreciates the thought exchange process, enjoying the transparency and opportunity to see and contribute to collective thoughts. They feel a sense of obligation to participate in surveys as part of the advisory group, especially if it directly affects them. They find the current surveys acceptable but note that some can be lengthy.
**Anything else to share?**

The individual praises Parkway for its excellent communication efforts and emphasizes the importance of providing the communications department with adequate resources to adapt to evolving needs. They expressed astonishment at the efficiency of the communication team despite having a small staff. They feel valued as a member of the committee and appreciate Parkway's open-mindedness and willingness to listen and make adjustments. They express concerns about the use of AI in Parkway's communication, emphasizing the necessity of maintaining personal and human interaction within the school district's communication approach.

1. How do you get important news and information about Parkway? (Prompt if needed: district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, their child, social media, website, etc.)
   a. Is the content shared helpful or informative?
   b. Is it frequent enough and/or too much?

c. What is working well? And/or what can be improved?

2. Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?
    a. What is the best way for us to communicate with you?

3. We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.
    a. Are these opportunities valuable to you?
    b. Do you participate?
    c. When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?

4. If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?

5. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

# Communications Focus Group
## PACCD  10/17/23
**(Summary)**

## Question 1

**How do you get important news and information about Parkway?  (e.g., district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, your child, social media, website)**

- **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
- **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
- **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The conversation revolved around the challenges faced by parents in receiving and managing information from the Parkway school district, particularly regarding various communication channels and their effectiveness. Participants highlighted their experiences with newsletters, emails, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of communication. They discussed the difficulties of managing multiple sources of information and the potential of missing out on crucial updates. In emergencies, there was a consensus among the participants that the district's communication lacked specific and timely information, particularly concerning code colors and protocols during lockdowns or severe weather events. Additionally, the discussion touched on the recent changes in the school administration and the impact on parents' perceptions and expectations. The participants shared their desire for more streamlined communication methods, especially in situations involving multiple departments, events, and activities within the district. They emphasized the need for improved coordination and consolidation of information across different platforms and expressed a desire for a more comprehensive and accessible communication strategy.

## Question 2
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?  What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

The discussion revolves around the need for effective communication tools and channels for parents. The group discusses the concept of a family hub or a centralized online platform that provides all necessary information for parents. They highlight the challenges they have faced with accessing information from the school website and the specific steps required for tasks like paying for school lunches or buying tickets for events. The conversation also touches on the varying communication practices among teachers and principals, with some sending regular emails or newsletters while others rely on platforms like ClassDojo.

The participants expressed their desire for more streamlined communication and better coordination between different entities, such as the school district and the Special School District (SSD). They emphasize the importance of a cohesive relationship between these entities to ensure that parents have access to all the necessary resources and information, particularly for students with special needs who require accommodations.

The discussion points to the need for clear communication guidelines and practices that can help standardize the flow of information from schools to parents. The participants stress the importance of avoiding confusion and ensuring that relevant information reaches parents in a timely and accessible manner.

**Question 3**
**We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

- **Are these opportunities valuable to you?**
- **Do you participate?**
- **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

Participants discuss the importance of knowing the time commitment required for surveys and the need for clear communication about the duration beforehand. They express the desire for better feedback mechanisms, highlighting the importance of understanding how the information provided by participants is being utilized and addressing the concerns raised.

The participants emphasize the value of engagement opportunities like Project Parkway and the SSD Leadership Institute, acknowledging the positive aspects of these initiatives. However, they also raise concerns about the inclusivity of surveys, particularly about addressing the needs of neurodiverse children. They express the sentiment that while they feel their voices are heard in certain instances, there is room for improvement in terms of considering a more diverse range of perspectives and experiences.

The discussion also touches on the challenges of balancing participation in these activities, especially for parents of children with special needs. They highlight the additional workload involved in engaging with SSD initiatives and emphasize the importance of ensuring that such programs are accessible and accommodating for all participants.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**

The participants discuss the paramount importance of student safety as the top priority in Parkway's communication strategy. They underscore the critical need for effective communication in ensuring that parents feel confident and informed about the safety measures in place for their children. The conversation delves into specific incidents that have caused concerns among the parents, such as delayed buses, inappropriate bus stop locations, and challenges in tracking the school bus's whereabouts. They highlight the need for better communication and transparency in the transportation department, emphasizing the significance of promptly addressing parental concerns and implementing appropriate safety protocols. The participants share personal experiences and express the necessity for proactive measures, such as real-time bus tracking and efficient communication channels, to alleviate parental anxieties and ensure the safety of students.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

The participants expressed their concerns regarding the challenges associated with different platforms used by teachers for assignments, making it difficult for students and parents to keep track of school-related information. They highlight the complexities arising from the use of multiple applications such as Schoology and Google Classroom and the need for streamlined communication and standardized platforms. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of improved coordination and collaboration between districts, particularly in terms of special education services (SSD) and general education (Parkway), advocating for a more integrated approach to ensure a cohesive educational experience for all students.

**Communications Focus Group**
**Operations Staff 10/10/23**
**(Summary)**

**Question 1**
**How do you get important district-level news and information?  (e.g., my principal/supervisor, district staff newsletter (Inside)/district emails, co-workers/other staff, social media, website, etc.)**

- **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
- **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
- **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The discussion primarily revolves around the challenges and preferences for receiving district-level news and information. The group finds the district staff newsletter and updates from their supervisors useful but highlights issues with the reliance on emails, particularly for staff members who may not frequently check their emails. They emphasize the importance of timely and clear communication, especially during critical incidents. There's a consensus that different staff members have varying access to and preferences for receiving information, suggesting a need for diverse communication strategies that consider the varying needs of the staff, including in-person meetings for certain groups. The group also discusses the importance of concise and relevant communication tailored to specific roles within the school community, underscoring the necessity for efficient dissemination of critical information to ensure everyone remains informed. The conversation touches on the significance of effective communication for staff members who may face language barriers or other constraints in accessing information. Overall, the group agrees on the importance of comprehensive and inclusive communication strategies to ensure that vital information reaches all staff members promptly and effectively.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?  What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

The group discusses preferred communication tools and the challenges associated with the reliance on emails for important updates. They highlight the usefulness of text messages for immediate and crucial information, such as snow days. However, they acknowledge the potential issue of crossing boundaries between work and personal time when using personal phones for work-related texts. They appreciate direct and concise text messages that get straight to the point. They also discuss the effectiveness of sending personal emails for specific types of information, such as reminders to check mailboxes. The group raises the need for timely communication, especially for significant events like weather-related issues that may affect long commutes. Despite the challenges, they recognize the importance of finding the right balance in communication strategies to ensure staff members remain informed without feeling overwhelmed or intruded upon.

**Question 3**
**We often ask staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

- **Are these opportunities important/valuable to you?**
- **Do you participate?**
- **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

The group expressed their concerns about participating in surveys and not seeing tangible results or feedback from the district. They emphasize the importance of receiving acknowledgment and understanding, even when the district may not be able to implement requested changes. They discuss the need for anonymity in surveys to ensure genuine responses without fear of repercussions. Additionally, they highlight the significance of honest and transparent communication, citing instances where clear

explanations have been lacking. They bring attention to the apparent contrast in responsiveness to concerns between staff and parents, noting potential discrepancies in the treatment of feedback from these two groups. Despite the frustration, they express a desire for a more streamlined and efficient communication process that acknowledges and addresses the concerns of all stakeholders.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**

If in charge of communications for Parkway, the group identified various priorities that need attention. These include ensuring that school websites are consistent, providing comprehensive information including calendars, and simplifying the process of updating contact information for parents and guardians. They emphasized the importance of effective communication from the HR department to job applicants and improving communication strategies for non-English speaking families during the student registration process. Additionally, they highlighted the necessity of fostering a two-way communication process to ensure that the concerns and feedback from both staff and parents are adequately addressed.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

The group shared a series of concerns, focusing primarily on the need for bus drivers for more support from schools in managing student behavior and enforcing rules. They discussed the importance of consistency and consequences, particularly related to behavior and dress code. They also emphasized the need for fair compensation for summer school TAs and expressed a desire for more transparent communication on social media, including both positive and challenging aspects of the district.

**Communications Focus Group**
**Operations Staff 10/4/23**
**(Summary)**

**Question 1**
**How do you get important district-level news and information?  (e.g., my principal/supervisor, district staff newsletter (Inside)/district emails, co-workers/other staff, social media, website, etc.)**

- **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
- **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
- **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The individuals in the conversation discussed the challenges they face in obtaining and managing district-level information in their workplace. They rely primarily on district staff newsletters and conversations with colleagues to stay informed. With one person's transition to a district building, they express a sense of reduced access to information compared to when they were at the school building.

They discuss the overwhelming volume of emails and struggle to find time to read all of them, especially those not directly related to their roles. Many express the need for important information to be prioritized at the top of emails and communication channels. They suggest the implementation of a centralized resource hub or a frequently asked questions document to streamline access to crucial information. Additionally, they highlight the challenges in navigating the district's website and locating specific information and contacts.

The group emphasizes the importance of improved communication from the district's communication team, including accessible information about various positions and contact details within the district. They recognize the discrepancies in job titles across different locations and the need for a clear understanding of whom to approach for specific inquiries or concerns.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?  What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

- Participants discuss the need for improved communication tools and initiatives within the district.
- They highlight the importance of regular updates or newsletters to provide information about various departmental activities.
- The conversation emphasizes the significance of clear communication for individuals with limited online access.
- Participants suggest the implementation of a bulletin board to facilitate the dissemination of job-related information and are considered effective for sharing concise and easily accessible materials.
- The need for public computer access for job applications within the district is addressed.

**Question 3**
**We often ask staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

- **Are these opportunities important/valuable to you?**
- **Do you participate?**
- **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**


- Concerns are raised regarding the perceived lack of genuine interest in participants' opinions and the absence of follow-up actions.
- Participants recall specific topics from past surveys, including safety, work hours, and strategic planning.
- Issues related to the specificity of questions and their relevance to different departments or roles are highlighted.
- Anonymity concerns are discussed, particularly for employees in smaller departments or specific roles.


**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**

- The primary focus of communication would be to ensure the representation of all groups within the district, especially those that are typically overlooked, such as custodial, facilities, and technology staff.
- There is a desire to capture and showcase the everyday work of various departments through photographs and other media to highlight their contributions to the school community.
- Additionally, there is a suggestion to implement a read-receipt system for emails to assess the reach and effectiveness of communication efforts.
- Ensuring that information is disseminated to all staff members and that they are kept informed about important updates and events is highlighted as another critical priority.


**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

- One of the key concerns is the occurrence of misspellings, typos, and inaccuracies in the communication, especially when it involves students' names or important details, which is deemed inexcusable.
- An instance of a new employee's name being misspelled, along with errors in student records, was highlighted, emphasizing the need for better proofreading and fact-checking.
- A promise made in the past about recurring guidance on effective communication with parents was mentioned, indicating the importance of following through on commitments and providing updates if plans change.
- The suggestion to create a simplified one-page summary after board meetings that translates the discussed information into more accessible language for the general public was put forward as a potential strategy for improving communication.

**Communications Focus Group**
**Parents 10/09/23**
**( Summary)**

**Question 1**

      **How do you get important news and information about Parkway? (e.g., district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, your child, social media, website)**

- **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
- **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
- **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The participants in the discussion primarily rely on the Parkway app and weekly newsletters sent through email for important updates about the Parkway district and their children's schools. The newsletters are found to be informative, especially for keeping track of school-related events and schedules. However, the participants expressed the need for more clarity on certain issues, such as understanding the meaning of different codes sent through the Parkway app. They suggest providing direct links or explanations within the notifications to avoid confusion among parents.

Moreover, the discussion highlights the challenges of managing multiple platforms such as Infinite Campus, Schoology, and Google Classroom, where teachers have varying practices for posting assignments and important updates. This lack of consistency poses difficulties for parents trying to keep track of their children's schoolwork and schedules. The participants express the need for a single unified system to access all relevant school-related information.

Regarding district-wide communications, the participants mention receiving occasional updates through the Parkway app and Twitter. They express a desire for more active use of social media by the schools to share information about sports events and other student activities. The use of Peachjar flyers is seen as excessive, with most of the content being ignored by the participants, except for occasional information on specific services or resources.

Overall, the participants emphasize the importance of clear and consistent communication, especially in times of potential emergencies, such as the occurrence of code yellow or code red alerts. They stress the need for better communication practices, including the provision of comprehensive information within notifications and the use of a unified platform for school-related updates and assignments.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?  What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

The participants appreciate the communication channels currently utilized, including the Parkway app, email notifications, text messages, and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. While they find the text messages useful for time-sensitive information such as bus delays, they note that there should be a clear indication of which school the message is referring to, especially in cases where they have children attending multiple schools within the district. They suggest that providing school-specific details in the text messages would be more effective and reduce confusion among parents.

The participants emphasize the importance of timely and relevant communication, particularly for time-sensitive issues like bus delays. They appreciate being informed of important events or reminders, such as picture day or upcoming deadlines. However, they stress the need for a balance in the frequency and content of the messages, avoiding excessive or irrelevant notifications that may lead to communication overload.

Additionally, the participants value communication methods that allow them to easily revisit past information, highlighting the convenience of using the Parkway app and email for this purpose. They find it essential to have access to a reliable platform for checking back on previous updates and announcements.

**Question 3**
**We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

- **Are these opportunities valuable to you?**
- **Do you participate?**
- **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

The participants generally find value in participating in surveys and thought exchanges, acknowledging the importance of sharing their opinions to contribute to the improvement of the district. They appreciate surveys focused on various aspects such as school climate, the performance of principals, and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they express a desire for more surveys, including year-end satisfaction surveys to gather comprehensive feedback on the overall educational experience.

While they trust the process and understand that implementing changes may take time, the participants suggest providing context or explanations for the surveys, particularly when the surveys are part of a larger evaluation or program assessment. They highlight the importance of transparent communication to foster a better understanding of the district's initiatives and decisions.

Furthermore, the participants indicate that they do not necessarily expect direct feedback from the district after completing surveys. However, they express a preference for being informed about the purpose of the surveys to understand the district's motivations and intentions behind gathering specific feedback. They believe that transparent communication about the survey objectives would enhance their participation and overall engagement with the survey process.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**

If in charge of communications at Parkway, the top priority for the participants would be to establish consistency in classroom communication and ensure that parents have easy access to information on a unified platform. They emphasize the importance of streamlining communication methods to provide a convenient and accessible experience for parents across all schools within the district.

Additionally, the participants discuss the need for improved communication between parents, teachers, and students, particularly parent-teacher conferences. They express the desire for a more effective and efficient format for these meetings, citing examples from other districts as potential models for improvement. Furthermore, they underscore the significance of balancing in-person and virtual communication options to accommodate different preferences and schedules among parents and educators.

The participants demonstrate a thoughtful approach to addressing communication challenges within the district, showcasing a keen awareness of the various factors that influence effective parent-school interactions.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

In the participants' final comments, they expressed their overall satisfaction with the Parkway school district, emphasizing their appreciation for the hard work of the teachers and staff. They acknowledge the challenges faced by the district and applaud the efforts made to ensure the success of both the school and the students.

Additionally, one participant highlights the significance of the care counseling program at Parkway and its impact on students' mental health. They share personal experiences of how the program has provided essential support to their children during difficult times, praising the accessibility and cost-effective nature of the service. The participant advocates for the expansion of the care counseling program, recognizing its value in addressing the growing mental health challenges faced by students.

Overall, the participants convey their support for the district's initiatives and express their willingness to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement, underscoring their commitment to fostering a positive and effective educational environment for their children.

**Communications Focus Group**
**Parents 10/03/23**
**(Summary)**

**Question 1**

> **How do you get important news and information about Parkway? (e.g., district or school newsletters/email, friends and neighbors, your child, social media, website)**
>
> - **Is the content shared helpful or informative?**
> - **Is it frequent enough and/or too much?**
> - **What is working well? And/or what can be improved?**

The discussion revolved around the challenges of receiving and managing communication from Parkway, particularly via email and various apps. The participants expressed a need for streamlined and centralized communication, suggesting the implementation of a communication center on the website. They also emphasized the importance of more personalized and timely communication from teachers, along with the challenges of managing different communication platforms used by different teachers. Furthermore, they highlighted the need for teachers to balance communication with their teaching responsibilities and the importance of thoughtful responses over immediate responses. They also discussed the significance of spotlight stories celebrating personal achievements and events within the district.

**Question 2**
**Are there other communication tools, channels or initiatives you would like to see?  What is the best way for us to communicate with you?**

The participants expressed a need for improvements in communication tools and channels, especially during school transitions, such as from elementary to middle school. They suggested the implementation of a frequently asked questions document or a how-to survival guide for middle school. Additionally, they recommended a centralized hub on the website where parents can find essential information. They emphasized the significance of positive communication and suggested that teachers should maintain a tracker for positive communication with families. The participants also highlighted the benefits of early proactive communication from teachers and the positive impact it has on building rapport and addressing potential issues more effectively.

**Question 3**
**We often ask parents and staff to share feedback or complete surveys about important issues or challenges facing the district.**

> - **Are these opportunities valuable to you?**
> - **Do you participate?**
> - **When you participate, what would make you feel like your voice was heard?**

The discussion revolved around the effectiveness of surveys and feedback mechanisms employed by the Parkway district. The participants expressed varying levels of engagement with the surveys, citing time constraints and preference for concise formats. They highlighted the value of surveys during the pandemic, particularly in helping them navigate uncertainties related to their children's education. They emphasized the importance of focusing on critical issues in surveys to avoid survey fatigue. Additionally, they indicated that they might feel more heard and valued if the surveys were more school-specific rather than district-wide, as the responses could have a more direct impact.

**Question 4**
**If you were in charge of communications for Parkway, what would be your top priority?**
The participants discussed several priorities for improving communication within the Parkway school district. They emphasized the need to streamline communication channels, clearly distinguish between necessary and optional information, and centralize all communications in a single hub or website. They highlighted the importance of creating a positive rapport between teachers and students, particularly for elementary school children, by implementing simple, yet impactful gestures such as personalized notes. The participants also underscored the significance of transparent communication from counselors and other staff members, expressing a desire for more regular outreach and updates from these individuals. Additionally, they acknowledged the challenges faced by working parents in keeping up with school-related communications and emphasized the need for more proactive and comprehensive communication strategies to ease the burden on families.

**Exit Question**
**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

The participants discussed the potential benefits of implementing short breaks during the school day, particularly for subjects that require intense focus such as writing and math. They emphasized the importance of allowing students to have brief periods to decompress and refocus, citing personal experiences and observations of their own children. The participants highlighted the positive impact of such breaks on students' ability to concentrate and engage effectively in their studies. Additionally, they expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the focus groups, emphasizing the value of having a platform to share their insights and concerns to help improve the educational experience for all students.

**Focus Group - Community Leaders**
**Communications Advisory** 09/29/23
(Summary)

**Think about the last 12-18 months, how did you get important news about Parkway?/What is important content?**

Channels for Receiving News:

- Parkway Today emails were a primary source of information, occasionally criticized for their organization.
- Participants distinguished between district-wide news and specific updates from individual schools, highlighting the significance of both.
- Some received updates through mailers and the district app, praising the app's accessibility.
- A participant emphasized the role of local television news in delivering important district updates, emphasizing the importance of diverse communication channels.
- Inconsistencies in communication quality across different schools within the district were noted, with dissatisfaction expressed for certain schools' strategies.
- Electronic communication such as emails and texts was highly valued, emphasizing the importance of well-organized and pertinent information. Trustworthy sources like Dr. Marty were also highlighted.

Key Points of Desired Communication:

- Safety news was considered critical, with a preference for school-specific information.
- Back-to-school updates, including the calendar and planned initiatives, were highly valued.
- Emphasis was placed on impactful stories, achievements, and financial transparency within the district.
- Participants expressed frustration with irrelevant or solicitation-based emails and sought more personalized and relevant content.
- Social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram were used to access positive district updates.
- The district's "payday notes" email communication received a positive response, seen as engaging and effective for delivering personal stories and relevant updates to employees.
- Overall, effective communication was acknowledged, with a preference for concise information that highlighted district achievements and the responsible use of taxpayer funds.

**Top priority for communications?**
The discussion focused on the significance of effective communication during crises and the importance of Dr. Marty's voice in conveying messages to the community. Participants highlighted the need for clear communication that prioritizes the most critical information and delivers it from trusted sources within the district. They emphasized Dr. Marty's credibility and likability as an essential asset for effective communication.

The participants also suggested the utilization of various communicators, including the superintendent, teachers, and other district representatives, to ensure diverse perspectives and a broader understanding of the district's communication. They proposed a strategy to create a group of communicators or a "cadre" that could effectively represent the district's messages to the community through various channels, including social media and employee videos.

**Surveys**

The group reflected on their experiences with surveys conducted within the past 12 to 18 months. They discussed the use of various platforms, including ThoughtExchange, for sharing opinions and engaging in transparent discussions. While acknowledging their participation in surveys due to their involvement in the group, they also noted that survey completion might not be a prevalent topic of discussion among the broader community. Some expressed their willingness to participate in surveys, particularly those that directly impact them, such as those related to the bond issue. Additionally, the group recognized the importance of providing feedback on critical issues despite some surveys being lengthy.

**Anything else to share?**

The group expressed their appreciation for the effective communication strategies employed by Parkway School District and commended the district for its commitment to engaging with the community through various channels. They acknowledged the challenges associated with catering to diverse communication preferences and emphasized the value of maintaining a personal touch in the communication process. Additionally, they expressed reservations about the use of AI technology for generating content, citing concerns about its reliability and the importance of retaining a human element in the communication process, particularly in a large school district like Parkway.

**Comm Focus Groups**
**Key Communicators Notes Summary 9.13.23**
**(Summary)**

**South Area Notes**

Staff receives a variety of information from multiple sources, including the principal's newsletter to staff, district emails, and staff-directed emails. Some rely on district emails rather than building administration emails, as the latter are not sent every week. Staff find the "Payday Notes" effective, with good information and a manageable length. They receive the Principal's weekly bulletin and parent newsletters but tend to ignore the redundant emails from Parkway. They note a significant presence on district social media, primarily focusing on celebrations rather than providing information. The staff appreciates receiving text messages for quick updates, particularly for weather information and emergencies and does not use social media as a primary source of news.

The new CCO should focus on promoting positive activities and gathering community feedback. The new Chief Communications Officer should immerse themselves in the district by attending significant events in each area. Staff notes it's important to have equally representative content for all schools and grade levels. To improve communication with parents, the suggestion is to explore the use of apps like Remind and SeeSaw, possibly integrating them for district information. The district has a diverse population, including ESL families, and there is a need for improved access to information beyond just English. To address this, a teacher is using the Blackboard translation service. A participant suggests developing a comprehensive app to consolidate all information for parents.

The preference for communication lies in emails and text messages. It's important to indicate the target audience for each communication, distinguishing whether the content is intended for parents or staff members. Encouraging parents to check their emails via a text message is proposed. Targeted communications are considered more effective at the school level rather than at the district level for both parent and staff newsletters.

The utilization of surveys is regarded as valuable, with a focus on understanding who will see it, why it's needed, and how it will be used. Concerns about the sharing of data and its intended purpose are raised. The "open comment" box can be intimidating, prompting the suggestion to include a more convenient and accessible option for providing feedback. Reminders for survey completion are deemed necessary, as people tend to forget. Providing dedicated time to complete surveys is recommended. Confidentiality concerns are noted, particularly when a survey requires you to provide an email address, which compromises anonymity. The issue of excessive survey requests is acknowledged, and there's a desire for more transparency regarding the use of submitted feedback. Moreover, there is a recommendation to develop a comprehensive 360-degree feedback tool to effectively distribute and summarize survey results.

Additionally, the need to be able to email the entire team, including all families and students, is highlighted, along with the inability to communicate with large groups effectively. Principals play a pivotal role as communicators for staff, teachers, and parents. Enhancing school-to-home

communication is emphasized, with proposed measures including providing training and best practices for principals and schools. The suggestion is to share relevant content through school newsletters.

## Central Area Notes

The communication methods for staff primarily revolve around email and text blasts for critical school information. Text messaging is used effectively for emphasizing important matters, often prompting recipients to check their emails. Email is considered the quickest mode of communication. While staff meetings are occasionally held, they are not frequent enough to cover all necessary information, but they are seen as informative and helpful when they do occur.

The focus is on ensuring equal access to information for all educators. Providing the option for individuals to choose their preferred communication channels, such as email, text, etc., is favored. The idea of allowing teachers to submit stories about school activities is suggested. Some high schools use Twitter for parental communication. Collaboration with other districts to learn about best practices is recommended. There is a proposal for the development of a Parkway app for both parents and staff, which would consolidate district information in one accessible location. The mention of Parentsquare in Rockwood is made, highlighting the need for a centralized platform for managing multiple sources of information. However, there is a lack of awareness about the existence of a Parkway app for both parents and staff.

The feedback on surveys is generally positive, with a desire for timely feedback and follow-up, including the sharing of survey results and subsequent actions taken. Some expressed skepticism about whether their input is truly considered. Suggestions include shortening survey lengths and ensuring clarity about anonymity. There's a need for consistent communication plans to share and follow up on survey results.

During the COVID period, there was appreciation for Parkway's communication efforts. The importance of sharing positive news is emphasized to boost morale among students, teachers, and parents.

Educating teachers on how to share positive news with the district is suggested, including providing clear instructions and contact information for communication submissions.

## North Area Notes

Information from the principal to staff primarily focuses on updates related to the school, with some district-level information included. The weekly emails from the principal are relied upon to reinforce district-level information. The current level of shared information is considered sufficient. Social media and district emails are also regularly reviewed for updates. Despite receiving a substantial amount of emails as both a teacher and a parent, an individual feels well informed, appreciating the valuable emails received from the principal.

A priority for communications is sharing positive events and achievements to foster a sense of positivity within the community. Mention is made of the effectiveness of the district's video initiatives, such as the Hope video and Kindergarten videos, in creating a welcoming environment for students. Transparency

and openness are encouraged, especially when addressing sensitive issues. Ensuring equitable access to information is highlighted, particularly for families without access to devices. Principals sending both text messages and emails to parents is seen as helpful. There's a call for providing information in multiple languages, as some families struggle to understand communication in English. Streamlining the communication process for enrollment and providing visual instructions for non-English speaking families on tasks like field trip payments are suggested to improve accessibility and understanding.

The significance of surveys is acknowledged, but there is a strong desire for more comprehensive feedback and follow-up actions. Participants express the need for result summaries and the incorporation of a rating scale in surveys to save time, with an option for additional feedback. There's a suggestion for Key Communicators to share survey results with their buildings to enhance transparency. The practice of notifying survey duration upfront is appreciated for time management. Additionally, there is a request for periodic check-ins and support from leadership, as well as sharing the results of calendar surveys. The proactive approach during the COVID period is commended, particularly the continuous efforts to assess teacher comfort and well-being.

# APPENDIX C

# Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures

**Improving the practice of school public relations in:**

- Comprehensive planned communications
- Internal communications
- Parent/family communications
- Marketing/branding communications
- Crisis communications
- Bond/finance election plans and campaigns

**School Communication Benchmarking Project**

**NSPRA**

**School Communication Benchmarking Project**

# Foreword

**Fourth Edition – June 2020**

In response to changes in the workforce climate, where all organizations and professions are now pressed to show evidence of quantifiable value, the National School Public Relations Association established the School Communication Benchmarking Project.

Standardizing the quantifiable value of public relations has traditionally eluded the profession. In a 2009 survey by the American Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication and the Institute for Public Relations, 88% of global practitioners believed measurement was an integral part of the public relations process. More recently, a 2017 survey by the USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations found that 77% of PR executives believe the field can increase its value in an organization by demonstrating how PR achieves business objectives. This is good news. The bad news: There is no universal agreement on the best methods for measuring the value of PR.

## Critical Function Areas in a Communication Program

Acknowledging this challenge, NSPRA began its benchmarking approach by organizing the work into "critical function areas" — the primary areas of focus in a school communications program. Working with association members, NSPRA gathered research on studied, proven best practices and details on evaluative measures used in the **critical function areas** of:

- **Comprehensive professional communication program**,
- **Internal communications**,
- **Parent/family communications**,
- **Marketing/branding communications**,

> **"Benchmarking is the practice of being humble enough to admit that someone else is better at something, and being wise enough to learn how to match them and even surpass them at it."**
>
> Jack Grayson, founder
> American Productivity & Quality Center

- **Crisis communication** and
- **Bond/finance election plans and campaigns**.

In the spirit of traditional benchmarking practice, our goal was to identify top performers in each of these critical function areas based on results. The top performers' best practices within the essential **program components** for each area provide a benchmarking framework for school communicators to assess whether a program is **emerging**, **established** or **exemplary**.

NSPRA first shared this approach and the results for three of the critical function areas with association members during the 2012 National Seminar. Since that time, NSPRA has continued to expand its benchmarking efforts. This resource now presents rubrics and suggested measures for six critical function areas. It also now includes tools for calculating the status of your communication program in each critical function area.

At the end of this publication, you will find a benchmarking tip sheet and a glossary of terms to inform and help guide your measurement efforts.

# School Communication Benchmarking Project

## How to Use the *Rubrics of Practice*

1. As you read through each critical function area, check the boxes next to the program component examples that match current practice in your communication program.

2. Determine under which column—emerging, established or exemplary—the majority of your checked boxes fall. Based on where they fall, award yourself either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) for each individual program component.

3. On the "Rate Your..." page for each critical function area, total your points for all program components within that area to assess the status of your communication program.

## How to Use Your Results

Make the most of this benchmarking resource by using it to:

- Assess the current status of your program.
- Assign quantifiable measures to your work.
- Compare your results with high-performing programs, and identify ways to evolve your program to the next level.
- Correlate your results with other key performance indicators in your school district to demonstrate value and to support requests for additional resources for your program.

> **"If you can't measure something, you can't understand it. If you can't understand it, you can't control it. If you can't control it, you can't improve it."**
>
> H. James Harrington, CEO
> Harrington Institute, Inc.

# Contents

**Fourth Edition – June 2020**

**Benchmarking Project Objective**

   To identify best-in-class practices and performance measures for the areas of critical functions within the school public relations practice that will guide the PR practitioner, the superintendent and board members in the components of a successful communications program that ultimately contributes to student achievement. This can be used as a tool for developing and launching a school communications program, enhancing an existing one or evaluating the program and practitioner.

**Critical Function Area Status Types**

**Emerging**
Program is in the early stages of development, largely responsive to immediate needs or problems with minimal proactive planning. Program goals, if articulated, are loosely defined with minimal alignment with district goals and objectives.

**Established**
Program includes series of defined approaches based on some research. Strategies, tactics and goals are defined. Program goals align with district goals and objectives. Some evaluation may occur.

**Exemplary**
Program is conducted according to an articulated plan following the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications often known by the acronyms RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) or RACE (Research, Analyze/Action Plan, Communicate, Evaluate). Program is aligned with and integrated into district strategic plans. It is supported through policy, training and resources. Ongoing evaluation to improve progress is embedded into operations.

# Rubrics of Practice for Critical Function Area:

## Comprehensive Professional Communication Program

### Critical Function Area

The first critical function area, **Comprehensive Professional Communication Program**, is the basis for all communications deployed from a school district or component organization. It is rooted in the communications function residing at the executive management level of the district. Communications are systematic, transparent, two-way and comprehensive. They align with and support the district's goals and objectives. Ultimately, they foster dialogue, collaboration, understanding, engagement and trust with the primary focus to support student achievement.

A comprehensive professional communications program is supported by district policy and with the resources required to effectively operate the function. The program is based on the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications often known by the acronyms RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) or RACE (Research, Analyze/Action Plan, Communicate, Evaluate). It is embedded into the leadership of the organization with the PR professional serving as strategic advisor to senior leaders. Communication and relationship-building are integral to the overall planning process.

The communications program seeks to engage students, staff and other stakeholders in support of student achievement. Two-way communications foster stakeholder commitment, involvement, engagement and support for student learning. The program fosters partnerships and shared responsibility for educating students among these key constituents.

A comprehensive communications program is led by a trained communications professional. This leader possesses the qualifications of a public relations professional, including education, training and experience. It is preferred that he or she holds [Accreditation in Public Relations (APR)](). In the absence of a designated public relations professional on staff, the administrator charged with communications is trained in effective public relations practice.

The program is guided by the [NSPRA Code of Ethics]() and the [North American Public Relations Council Uniform Code of Ethics]().

The following program components have been identified through research and anecdotal evidence to be best practices in a comprehensive professional school communications program. Evidence of emerging, established and exemplary programs are outlined in the table that follows.

### Program Components

**Establishing Communication as Priority Through District Policy:** Written board-approved policies outlining the school communications program, along with roles and responsibilities, ensure and protect the school communications function.

**Maximizing Communication with Trained Leadership at the Executive Level:** Similar to other vital school leadership areas, communications are maximized when directed by a trained public relations professional. Placing the communications leader at the senior level in the organization, with direct access to the superintendent and other senior leaders, also maximizes the capacity of the function by providing clear channels for the flow of information and by allowing for strategic advisement.

**Supporting Communication with Sufficient Resources and Ongoing Training:** For communications programs to be continuously effective, adequate resources in

technology, equipment and supplies are essential along with ongoing training to stay current with innovations and new developments in PR research, implementation and evaluation.

**Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through Adherence to Code of Ethics:** The practice of public relations can present unique and challenging ethical issues. At the same time, protecting integrity and public trust are fundamental to the profession's role and reputation. Successful PR hinges on the ethics of its practitioners.

**Managing Communication Through RPIE/RACE:** Effective school communications programs are rooted in research and developed to achieve specific goals and measurable objectives. Strategies and tactics are implemented for specific audiences to achieve specific outcomes.

**Understanding Communication Needs and Requirements Through Research:** Ongoing analysis on where the district stands in regard to all stakeholders it wishes to reach helps to inform relevant communications goals and objectives.

**Communication Effectiveness Embedded Across District and Building Operations:** The responsibility for effective communication in a school district does not lie with the public relations office alone. Ensuring all district and building-level leaders, faculty and staff are effective communicators maximizes service to its students and stakeholders.

**Deploying Multiple and Varied Communication Strategies, Including Accommodations for Diversity:** With advances in technology and growth in the diversity of school communities, communications leaders are challenged to deliver messages via their audiences' preferred media while respecting specific needs and priorities related to race, culture, religion, disability, orientation, identity and income.

**Effectively Managing Communications Through the News Media:** Ensuring news media have access to accurate, timely information while protecting the privacy rights of students and staff is essential to a school communications program.

**Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Social Media:** Successful school communications engage internal and external audiences with strategic, two-way social media channels. Information shared through social media channels is relevant, interesting, timely, conversational, channel-specific, and when appropriate, entertaining.

**Effective Crisis Communication Plans and Procedures:** Ensuring a safe environment for students and staff is a school district's first priority. Effectively communicating with all stakeholders during a school crisis helps ensure safety and builds trust.

**Effective Finance Communications:** Often, the school district is a community's largest asset. Building trust through transparency in finance communications is essential for schools to thrive, especially when dependent on public votes for finance referendum.

**Supporting Constituent Involvement/Engagement Through Communication:** Effective programs to engage stakeholders embrace a philosophy of partnership. The responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff, community members and business leaders.

**Advancing Identity/Brand of Your School District:** The school district's brand is based on an understanding of what stakeholders' value about and expect of the district. The brand identity is communicated consistently, clearly and regularly following established brand identity/style guidelines.

**Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy:** Systematic evaluation to inform communication effectiveness is essential to the ongoing success of any communications program and supports the practice of deploying communications using the four-step strategic PR planning process (i.e., RPIE or RACE).

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

## COMPONENT: Establish Communication as a Priority Through District Policy
My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING | ESTABLISHED | EXEMPLARY |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Communications policy loosely articulated and resides within communications department; minimal awareness of policy among senior leaders | ☐ Articulated communications policy shared with senior leaders; referred to regularly to guide communications actions | ☐ Seeks input from senior leaders and other stakeholders on communications programming needs and expectations to guide policy development; researches communications policies in other districts for ideas and insight |
| ☐ Communications protocols and regulations developed largely in response to issues or challenges | ☐ Series of communications protocols and regulations developed with input and review by necessary parties | ☐ Robust communication policy adopted by the School Board with widespread buy-in from the district |
|  |  | ☐ Communication policy consistently updated in response to latest research and aligned with goals and objectives of the district |
|  |  | ☐ Policies address exceptions for potential communication (stemming largely from Human Resources, FOIA and FERPA) |

## COMPONENT: Maximize Communication with Trained Leadership at the Executive Level
My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING | ESTABLISHED | EXEMPLARY |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Limited input from the communications department/professional into executive-level decision making; largely in response to isolated requests | ☐ Ready access to some key management personnel on the part of the communications professional/department chair | ☐ Communications professional/department chair is a member of executive level team |
| ☐ Staff member(s) responsible for communications have little or no professional training or experience in public relations and communications | ☐ Representation of communications department/professional on some committees | ☐ Superintendent and other senior leaders easily accessible by communications professional/department chair |
| ☐ Activities conducted by communications department limited to results/outcomes of leadership decisions | ☐ Communications staff sought for advice and insight on major issues | ☐ Communications staff input included regularly in executive-level decision making; serves in advisory role to senior leaders |
| ☐ Little or no communications training for senior leaders; limited largely in response to crisis or issues with no follow-up | ☐ Series of strategies to maximize communication effectiveness among senior leaders, e.g.: | ☐ School Board accesses resources in the communications department when needed |
|  | ◆ Gathers input from social media and public forums to use for executive-level decision-making | ☐ Communications department/professional represented on all relevant committees |
|  | ◆ Drafts informational memos and talking points for various departments | ☐ Ongoing comprehensive communications training for all senior leaders |
|  | ◆ Some communications training for senior leaders such as media interviews, public speaking, etc. | ☐ Role of communications office evaluated regularly to determine effectiveness of organizational relationship |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Support Communication with Sufficient Resources and Ongoing Training**

My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal communications budget; resources to support communications projects elicited on an as-needed basis | ☐ Established communications budget developed with input from the communications department/professional; covers all planned communications programs | ☐ Established communications budget developed with input from the communications department/professional; process to acquire additional funds for projects/issues that arise unexpectedly |
| ☐ Technology to support communications not current, sometimes compromising capacity of the communications function | ☐ Technology current and sufficient to support communications function | ☐ State-of-the-art technology with built-in capacity for program expansion |
| ☐ Training for communications staff largely a function of their own initiative with constrained budget support | ☐ Series of professional development activities, e.g.: | ☐ Planned professional development schedule in response to identified needs on the part of the communications staff and environmental scanning on new trends in school communications research, implementation and evaluation; support for communications professionals to attain Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) |
| ☐ Support for membership to professional associations limited | ◆ Webinars, other online training programs | |
| | ◆ Acquisition of publications and toolkits to inform communications function | ☐ Regular evaluation of effectiveness of communications budget, technology, training |
| | ◆ Opportunities to meet with other school communications professionals to exchange ideas and share expertise | ☐ Resources for communications function benchmarked with other high-performing school communications programs |
| | ◆ Formal professional development seminars and workshops offered by NSPRA, PRSA or like organization | |

**COMPONENT: Ensure Communication Effectiveness Through Adherence to Code of Ethics**

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Integrity of activities of communications staff limited largely to their own personal ethics rather than an articulated Code of Ethic | ☐ Public relations staff aware of the NSPRA Code of Ethics/North American Public Relations Council Uniform Code of Ethics/PRSA and operates within its/their framework | ☐ Public relations practice regularly guided by the NSPRA Code of Ethics/North American Public Relations Council Uniform Code of Ethics/PRSA; regularly relies on code to guide responses to questionable situations |
| | | ☐ Communications staff evaluations aligned with Code of Ethics |
| | | ☐ Code of Ethics included in school board policy; senior leadership knowledgeable of code as an operating framework for decisions regarding public relations challenges |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Manage Communication Through 4-Step Strategic Planning Process (RPIE/RACE)**    My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Communications initiated largely on a reactive basis in response to questions or complaints | ☐ Some research conducted to identify and clarify constituent needs and expectations regarding communication as well as opinions and attitudes regarding district and programs | ☐ Research systematically conducted to ascertain constituent needs and expectations regarding communications as well as opinions and attitudes about district and programs; includes balance of formal and informal, primary and secondary, and qualitative and quantitative research |
| ☐ Communications inconsistent across events/situations and from building to building, department to department, classroom to classroom, etc. | ☐ Some communications department programs articulated through written plans containing some or most of the essential plan elements (overall goals, target audiences, objectives for each audience, strategies, tactics, messages, evaluation, materials, budget, timetable) | ☐ Comprehensive analysis of research to identify and understand needs, expectations, opinions and attitudes, and to inform communications planning |
| ☐ Little or no formal communications planning. Communications minimally aligned with district/building goals if at all | ☐ Some evaluation of communication effectiveness through surveys, opinion polls, participation rates or other metrics | ☐ Comprehensive, written communication plan contains all essential plan elements (overall goals, target audiences, measurable objectives for each audience, strategies, tactics, messages, evaluation, materials, budget, timetable), guides communications department programs and is incorporated into district strategic/master plan |
| | | ☐ Communication plan supported with adequate resources and budget for effective implementation |
| | | ☐ Systematic evaluation of communications relative to goals and objectives. Evaluations inform program by standardized or adjusting approaches based on evaluation results |

    

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Understand Communication Needs and Requirements Through Research**

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Research into student and stakeholder perceptions and attitudes largely non-existent or limited to hearsay/informal inputs | ☐ Series of approaches in place to understand communication needs and requirements, e.g.: | ☐ Research systematically conducted to ascertain constituent needs and expectations regarding communications as well as opinions and attitudes about district and programs; includes balance of formal and informal, primary and secondary, and qualitative and quantitative research |
| ☐ Limited understanding of student and stakeholder expectations and requirements regarding communications; not necessarily valid and/or reliable | ◆ Surveys of students, parents/families, faculty and staff and community members measuring perception and attitude, communication expectations, and communication effectiveness | ☐ Research adequately supported through budget/district resources |
| ☐ Reliability on narrow channels of information for insight into communication needs and requirements | ◆ Platforms to gather public opinion such as social media outlets or custom email address for complaints | ☐ Communications staff trained in communications research; professional development keeps pace with new trends in research |
|  | ◆ Third-party research such as census bureau information, Gallup poll, etc. | ☐ Research results regularly shared with senior leaders to inform decision making |
|  | ◆ Focus groups to cull qualitative feedback | ☐ Continuously benchmarks with local and national best-in-class in communication effectiveness |
|  | ◆ Formal structure for public input during school board and other meetings | ☐ Research approaches continuously evaluated for effectiveness; new trends routinely considered |
|  | ◆ System of informal channels to gather input and feedback such as participation in committees and task forces, attendance to PTA/PTA meetings, etc. |  |
|  | ☐ Local and national trends in education and communication tracked to inform potential swings in perception and attitude |  |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

## COMPONENT: Embed Communication Effectiveness Across District and Building Operations

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Communications to stakeholders comes largely from the communications staff<br><br>☐ Responsibility for community outreach limited largely to the communications staff<br><br>☐ Communications staff as spokespeople for any/all district/school issues<br><br>☐ Communications staff input sought only after individual schools' or departments' promotional efforts fail<br><br>☐ Minimal input from district and school leaders into communications planning | ☐ Series of approaches to embed communications across district and building operations, e.g.:<br>  ♦ Prepared templates, memos, letters and other resources for principals and department chairs to use in their communications<br>  ♦ Talking points developed and distributed on key issues as they arise to assist district personnel in responding/communicating about them<br>  ♦ District and school webpage content managed for consistency<br>  ♦ Organized structure in place for principals and department chairs to communicate, including emergency outreach tools such as rapid alert systems<br>  ♦ Communication planning integrated into project/program/event planning<br>  ♦ Individual relationships between schools/departments and community organizations<br><br>☐ District and school leaders designated as spokespeople on specific issues are relevant; training on media relations and interview skills to support them in this role<br><br>☐ District and school leaders provide input into communications planning | ☐ District policy on communications includes expectation for all leaders and middle managers to actively support communications; communication effectiveness included in district and school leader performance evaluations<br><br>☐ Communication planning integrated into projects and strategic planning on all levels<br><br>☐ District communication plan incorporates robust and ongoing strategies and tactics to deploy building and department communications; district and school leaders consistently provide input into development of communication plan<br><br>☐ Organized plan for community outreach that encompasses all key community groups, aligning them with best-fit schools/departments<br><br>☐ District and school leaders trained and empowered as spokespeople in their areas of content expertise with coordination through communications department<br><br>☐ Building and department-level communications consistently evaluated for effectiveness; strategies and tactics added and/or revised accordingly |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Deploy Multiple, Varied Communication Strategies and Accommodations for Diversity**   My Points = ___2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Basic understanding of diversity of district<br><br>☐ Some differentiation on some levels for different audiences | ☐ Solid understanding of the diverse makeup of the district; awareness of some cultural preferences for communications among different groups<br><br>☐ Varied series of approaches to reach different audience segments (multilingual when needed), e.g.:<br>  ◆ Press releases<br>  ◆ Website updates<br>  ◆ Parent newsletters<br>  ◆ Social media<br>  ◆ Rapid alert systems<br>  ◆ Online grade books/parent portals<br>  ◆ Letters home<br>  ◆ Events (public hearings, parent gatherings, public forums, recognitions/celebrations, etc.)<br>  ◆ Student communications<br>  ◆ Community leader meetings<br>  ◆ Text messaging<br><br>☐ Differentiation on essential communications for most or all audience segments | ☐ Thorough understanding of the diverse makeup of the district; ongoing mechanism to track changes; comprehensive awareness of cultural preferences for communications among all audience segments<br><br>☐ Consistently adjust all communications to meet the needs/preferences of all audience segments<br><br>☐ Ongoing support for district and school leaders to deploy multiple and varied communications to audience segments<br><br>☐ Accommodations for diversity in communications consistently evaluated for effectiveness and adjusted accordingly |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Effectively Managing Communications Through the News Media**

My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Interactions with news media largely limited to responding to inquiries with little proactive outreach on the part of the district | ☐ Building and maintaining relationships with local media a priority | ☐ Media relations supported through district policy and written protocols |
| ☐ Responses to media inquiries contain basic information only; little or no consideration of opportunity to fold in key district messages | ☐ Media relations across district and all schools flow through communications office; district and school leaders work in conjunction with communications staff to maximize media coverage | ☐ Media coverage incorporated within overall communication plan complete with goals, strategies and tactics for maximum coverage |
| ☐ Inconsistent management of media relations; little or no centralized coordination of messaging and pitch opportunity | ☐ Responds to media requests with requested information in a timely manner; aware of the restrictions and allowances of FERPA and FOIA | ☐ Ongoing professional development for communications staff, district and school leaders in media interviews |
| ☐ Availability to media limited to during work hours; generally honors deadlines | ☐ Availability to media extended beyond school day to evenings/weekends/holidays | ☐ Availability of leadership/content experts for media interviews fostered |
| ☐ Culture may be adversarial with media depending on media's needs and staff's ability to produce | ☐ Lawful consent process in place to protect staff and students in media interviews, photos, videos, etc. | ☐ Full compliance with restrictions and allowances of FERPA and FOIA; waiver policy to allow sharing of crucial information that otherwise would be contained |
| | ☐ Local and national trends tracked for story opportunities; relevant pitches prepared with essential background information | ☐ Media coverage monitored; inaccuracies followed up to prevent repeats; appreciation extended for well-handled coverage |
| | ☐ Media coverage monitored | ☐ Reciprocal relationships with neighboring districts includes ongoing sharing of resources and information as well as for supplemental communications staffing support in times of crisis/large stories |
| | ☐ Overall culture of transparency; can vary among schools and departments | ☐ Media relations regularly evaluated to identify opportunities to improve coverage |
| | ☐ Reciprocal relationships with neighboring districts for supplemental communications staffing support in times of crisis/large stories | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Social Media**    My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ One or two social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube/SchoolTube) used with little monitoring | ☐ Multiple social media channels used strategically for different audiences; monitored regularly | ☐ Usage, monitoring and strategies for social media channels incorporated within overall communication plan; coordinated by the school communications department |
| ☐ Social media use limited primarily for announcements such as weather-related events and school/district events | ☐ Social media use includes broader scope of content beyond announcements such as student/staff recognition, professional development, student enrichment activities and promotion of programs | ☐ Selection and usage of social media based on researched audience preferences and profiles, in accordance with RACE |
| ☐ Multiple people in district have posting rights on different social media channels but little coordination is evident; Posting guidelines non-existent or unclear | ☐ Strategies in place to drive traffic to district website or other web-based information source | ☐ Social media use spans full range of district communications; audiences encouraged to interact with the district via social media |
| ☐ Two-way conversations limited; negative conversations not addressed in a timely manner | ☐ Some coordination exists among people in district with posting rights; Posting guidelines easily accessible | ☐ Clear, ongoing proactive coordination exists among people in district with posting rights; team meets regularly |
| ☐ Lack of board policies regarding social media usage | ☐ Growth in two-way conversation on social media channels evident; negative conversations addressed promptly | ☐ Board policies regarding social media shared with students, parents, staff and public via multiple mechanisms (website, social media channel, students handbooks, employee manuals) |
| ☐ No tracking of analytics of postings by channel | ☐ Board policies in place regarding social media usage for staff and students | ☐ Regular updates for students, staff and parents on best practices and staying safe while using social media channels |
| | ☐ Analytics by platform tracked and shared regularly with leadership team | ☐ Goals established for attaining views or interaction aligned with district communication plan; Leadership team tracks results and adjusts strategies accordingly |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Effective Crisis Communication Plans and Procedures**

My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Written crisis communication plan non-existent or in early stages of development | ☐ Written crisis communication plan developed and includes varied series of approaches to reach target audiences, e.g., official spokesperson designation and schedule of public notifications and updates; telephone and electronic messaging; website updates; news media coordination, etc. | ☐ Comprehensive written crisis communication plan aligns with emergency response plan; revisited and tested regularly, especially in the wake of school tragedies |
| ☐ Little or no alignment of crisis communications with emergency response procedures | ☐ Plan aligns with emergency response procedures | ☐ Regularly seeks police and city input for joint review and development of crisis communication plan |
| ☐ Communications during crisis implemented on a case-by-case basis; inconsistencies and gaps exist from event to event and across buildings/departments | ☐ Periodic training in crisis communications for school leaders and communications staff | ☐ Systematically benchmarks against other school/agency crisis communications efforts to identify best practices and incorporates into written plan |
| ☐ Communications during a crisis largely in response to requests or complaints with little or no proactive approaches | ☐ Plan periodically reviewed for improvement typically in response to mandated updates | ☐ Maintains an up-to-date emergency contact sheet and strong relationships with emergency departments' point of contacts |
| ☐ Little or no training in crisis communications for school leaders and communications staff | ☐ Some support tools (e.g. up-to-date contact sheet) are in place and updated/checked periodically | ☐ All necessary support tools in place (cell phones for staff, rapid alert systems, access to other staff to augment crisis communications team, if necessary, etc.) and reviewed/updated regularly |
| | | ☐ Systematic training in crisis communications for all school leaders, communications staff and crisis response team members |
| | | ☐ Crisis communications evaluated after each event and written plan and procedures updated based on evaluation results |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Effective Finance Communications**

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Finance communications limited largely to minimum content and distribution mandated by law<br><br>☐ Responses to financial inquiries include only the information requested with little else to possibly increase understanding, expand awareness and build trust<br><br>☐ Little or no coordination of finance communications among key staff, resulting in possible duplication or gaps<br><br>☐ Communications contain finance office language with little or no translation into layperson's terms, marginalizing message effectiveness | ☐ Series of approaches to build trust through effective finance communications, e.g.:<br><br>◆ Budget information complies with all legal and other regulatory bodies governing finance communications<br><br>◆ Development of key messages regarding district finances and finance issues; written in layperson's terms to foster understanding<br><br>◆ Proactive outreach to faculty and staff with finance communications, preferably before external audiences<br><br>◆ Timely and complete distribution of key finance information to key stakeholder groups<br><br>◆ Effective use of graphs, tables, comparisons and other resources to increase understanding of financial information<br><br>◆ Finance communications delivered via multiple platforms and media to ensure outreach, e.g., public presentations, print and electronic messaging, website resources, blogs, etc.<br><br>☐ Significant input from finance staff into communication plan and deployment<br><br>☐ Ongoing coordination of finance communications among key staff; finance staff available for interviews and comment | ☐ Research into key stakeholder perceptions and attitudes regarding district finances used to inform finance communications<br><br>☐ Written formal finance communication plan or finance communications incorporated within overall communication plan complete with goals, strategies and tactics for maximum coverage; finance communications embedded into full-year calendar and not limited only to budget or referenda votes<br><br>☐ Ongoing professional development for communications staff and key district leaders in school finance regulations and communications requirements<br><br>☐ Ongoing opportunities for two-way communication between district and both internal and external audiences on finance information and questions; timely and thorough responses to inquiries; input used to monitor and correct rumor<br><br>☐ Support of community advocates harnessed, especially for high-profile reductions/cuts to education or large expenditures for facilities/programs<br><br>☐ Ongoing evaluation of finance communication effectiveness to foster transparency and build trust; results systematically used to inform improvement |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Supporting Constituent Involvement/Engagement Through Communication**    My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Opportunities for constituent involvement/ engagement minimally posted, relying mostly on traditional media with little or no follow-up or reinforcement | ☐ Opportunities for constituent involvement/ engagement consistently communicated across a wide variety of media including print, electronic, news media, social media and others | ☐ Research into constituent personal priorities for engagement informs engagement opportunities, thereby fostering alignment with personal missions and those of the district and schools |
| ☐ Communications efforts are largely one-way (from district to constituent), compromising receptivity for authentic involvement/ engagement | ☐ Organized formal structures in place for constituent involvement to support student learning such as volunteer programs, task forces, advisory councils, booster clubs, community partnerships, advocates, etc. | ☐ Community involvement strategically managed by communications department; feedback from relationships shared internally through an organized system |
| ☐ Responses to offers of involvement handled inconsistently; few structures in place for constituents to participate in educational process | ☐ Successful involvement/engagement programs promoted throughout district and in local media | ☐ Involvement/engagement opportunities align with district and school missions to foster authenticity and maximize involvement |
| ☐ Communications staff involvement in constituent engagement limited to high-stakes issues | ☐ Communications staff involved in many key community organizations; gleans some feedback through involvement | ☐ Engagement messages/outreaches are frequent and timely; focus on how opportunities align with constituent needs and priorities |
| | | ☐ Comprehensive, ongoing, authentic two-way communications to foster involvement and engagement; includes blogs, social media outlets and designated email accounts to solicit feedback from constituents on programs, new initiatives, budget matters and topics of high interest |
| | | ☐ Professional development to maximize constituent involvement and engagement; includes training for faculty and staff on how to effectively involve and engage stakeholders as well as training for constituents on district and school policies, procedures, etc. to support involvement |
| | | ☐ Constituents recognized regularly for involvement and engagement |
| | | ☐ Ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of constituent involvement/engagement in supporting student learning; results systematically used to inform improvement |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Advancing Identity/Brand of Your School District**  My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Brand/identity may not be reflective of school system's current reality among key stakeholders | ☐ Brand/identity generally accepted and considered reflective of school system's current reality among key stakeholders | ☐ Research into stakeholder perceptions and expectations about their district and schools supports brand/identity development; development further supported through competitive analysis and alignment with recent or evolving trends in education |
| ☐ Inconsistent use of district logo/slogan across district media (website, stationary, print materials, electronic messaging, etc.) | ☐ District logo/slogan consistently deployed across district media | ☐ Communication plan incorporates use of brand/identity across all relevant strategies and tactics |
| ☐ Individual school logos/slogans with little or no coordination to a central theme; inconsistent use of logos/slogans across school media; inconsistent inclusion of district logo/slogan across school/media | ☐ District logo/slogan consistently deployed across individual school media; integration with individual school logos/slogans may or may not be consistent | ☐ Individual school logos/slogans coordinate with and support one another as well as district logo/slogan |
| ☐ Brand management decentralized with little or no coordination by the communications department | ☐ Brand management centrally coordinated by communications department | ☐ Policy and guidelines outline use of district and school logos/slogans; generally supported by district and school staff |
| | ☐ Messaging consistently supports the school system's brand/identity in most operational areas | ☐ Messaging consistently supports the school system's brand/identity in all operational areas |
| | | ☐ Brand/identity regularly evaluated for relevance and currency |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy**

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Evaluation is primarily anecdotal based on observation and "word of mouth" feedback from stakeholders<br><br>☐ Sporadic formal assessments occur, largely in response to widespread problems with communications | ☐ Series of approaches to evaluate communication effectiveness, e.g.:<br><br>♦ Surveys and other polls to determine satisfaction and effectiveness of district communications<br><br>♦ Attendance and participation rates at programs/events<br><br>♦ Evaluations of large-scale campaigns to ascertain if objectives, deadlines and budget goals were met<br><br>♦ Open rates on electronic messaging<br><br>♦ Website analytic metrics<br><br>♦ Social media metrics<br><br>♦ Response rates of direct email and marketing tracked<br><br>♦ Focus groups representing key audience segments<br><br>♦ Informal feedback gleaned through participation in committees, task forces, attendance at meetings, etc.<br><br>♦ Media coverage monitored for frequency and tone | ☐ Systematic schedule to comprehensively evaluate district and communication effectiveness across all key stakeholder groups and segments; supported by budget and other required resources<br><br>☐ All communication plans reviewed upon completion to ascertain if objectives, deadlines and budget goals were met<br><br>☐ Systematic approach for using evaluation results to revise/improve communications<br><br>☐ Systematic feedback loop to inform district and school leaders of communication effectiveness; includes recommendations for strategy revisions<br><br>☐ Comprehensive Communications Audit conducted by NSPRA or other reputable professional organization<br><br>☐ Results are used to modify communication outreaches, as necessary |

## RATE YOUR...
## COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

1. **Enter your "my points" score for each program component** in the chart at right. As a reminder, each individual component should get either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) based on where the majority of your checked boxes fell in the previous charts.
2. **Total your points** for all program components.
3. **Compare your total points to the "overall rating" score range** below to assess the current status of your school district's communication program in this critical function area.

## Overall Rating in Critical Function Area

**Emerging** = 0 - 22 total points

**Established** = 23 - 37 total points

**Exemplary** = 38 - 45 total points

| Program Component | My Points (1, 2 or 3) |
|---|:---:|
| Establishing Communication as Priority Through District Policy | 3 |
| Maximizing Communication with Trained Leadership at the Executive Level | 3 |
| Supporting Communication with Sufficient Resources and Ongoing Training | 3 |
| Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through Adherence to Code of Ethics | 2 |
| Managing Communication Through RPIE/RACE | 2 |
| Understanding Communication Needs and Requirements Through Research | 2 |
| Communication Effectiveness Embedded Across District and Building Operations | 2 |
| Deploying Multiple and Varied Communication Strategies, Including Accommodations for Diversity | 2 |
| Effectively Managing Communications Through the News Media | 3 |
| Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Social Media | 2 |
| Effective Crisis Communication Plans and Procedures | 3 |
| Effective Finance Communications | 2 |
| Supporting Constituent Involvement/Engagement through Communication | 2 |
| Advancing Identity/Brand of Your School District | 2 |
| Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy | 2 |
| **TOTAL =** | **35** (45 max) |

## SAMPLE MEASURES

From NSPRA membership outreach and Baldrige Award recipients (collected 2011-12):

- Top sources of information for learning about district/school issues (rank from a list)
- How well district keeps stakeholders informed
- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing that they receive the information they want/need from the district
- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing they are informed in a timely manner of major decisions
- How responsive district is to requests
- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing that Board of Education makes good decisions that improve student achievement
- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing that district is trustworthy/does a good job of building trust between district and stakeholders
- Whether district is doing a good job/headed in the right direction
- Whether district has safe schools
- Whether district spends taxpayer dollars wisely
- Overall grade (A, B, C, etc.) stakeholders would give teachers in the district
- Overall grade (A, B, C, etc.) stakeholders would give the district as a whole
- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing that district is important to them/household
- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing that the district positively impacts property values and economic development
- Student enrollment rates/private vs. public enrollment
- Finance referenda passage rates

- Percentage of stakeholders agreeing that they were well informed about the school district's budget
- Stakeholder ranking on communications regarding
  - ◊ Student performance
  - ◊ School finances
  - ◊ Accessibility to school leaders
- Number/increase in school-business partnerships
- Number/increase in number of volunteers/volunteer hours
- Number/increase in donations to the district/educational foundation

## SOURCES

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*How Strong Communication Contributes to Student and School Success*. (2006). New York: Public Relations Society of America.

*Supporting Students, Supporting Communication: Helping Others See the Communication-Achievement Links*. (2006). New York: Public Relations Society of America.

Stern, Gary J. (1977). *Mobilize People for Marketing Success*. Minnesota: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

# Rubrics of Practice for Critical Function Area:

## Internal Communications

### Critical Function Area

In the second critical function area, **Internal Communications**, the school communications program recognizes the invaluable role of all district personnel as representatives of the district/component organization. It includes a proactive program for providing them with the skills, information and resources they need to effectively serve as ambassadors.

The employee communications program is based on the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications often known by the acronyms RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) or RACE (Research, Analyze/Action Plan, Communicate, Evaluate). Employee needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels are systematically researched and analyzed. Communications are designed and delivered accordingly with desired outcomes aligned and evaluated.

Employee communications are systematically embedded into the district's comprehensive communication plan, maximizing on the opportunity for them to exponentially support external communications. Accordingly, employees are systematically informed early in the communication cycle. Ongoing two-way communications with employees help inform external communications.

Employee communications support employee engagement. Employees are kept informed about the goals, objectives, plans, programs, finances, issues, events and incidents of the district and their school.

The program is further supported through systematic dialogue and listening mechanisms for ongoing assessment of employee needs and expectations to inform senior leadership decision making and to foster collaboration, transparency and trust.

Employee communications focus on keeping faculty and staff informed and engaged to ultimately support student achievement. Communications foster a collaborative partnership and shared responsibility for student success between faculty and staff and the district leadership.

Dr. Bruce K. Berger, organizational public relations leader, professor and author, notes that "employee communication is the formal communication in our organizations. Even more, it is communications that cross and connect work teams and groups. And most of all, it is the words, the listening skills and the behaviors of leaders and front-line managers." In fact, research indicates effective internal communication helps increase job satisfaction, morale, productivity, commitment, trust and learning, and improves climate and the relationship with the organization's publics.

Research shows that employees who have positive relationships with their organizations help develop positive relationships with their organization's publics. Further, publics assess organizations based on the quality of employee relationships with their organization. What does that mean for schools? Simply, happy employees translate into happy parents and students.

The following program components have been identified through research and anecdotal evidence to be best practices in internal communications. Evidence of emerging, established and exemplary programs are outlined in the table that follows.

## Program Components

**Researching and Understanding Employee Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels:** Without research, school systems are left to guess what their employees are thinking and feeling. The better school leaders understand their employees, the more able they are to provide better work environments, improved communications and effective ways to engage employees in the important work of a school district, namely student achievement.

**Employee Engagement:** Engaging employees has been described as unleashing the full energy and talents of people. Organizations with engaged and committed employees show a 44% higher employee retention rate and are 50% more productive than organizations that do not have engaged employees, according to research by Izzo and Withers (2000).

**Employee Alignment with the School District's Vision, Mission and Goals:** The International Association of Business Communicators says, "Alignment is an ongoing process that builds employee commitment to the organization's vision, mission, and goals and ensures employees understand how they can help the organization achieve its vision, mission, and goals." The bottom line is that every school district employee should be able to make the connection between their job and student achievement.

**Leadership and Management Communications:** Research shows that 55% of employees form their perceptions about their organization based on what their leaders say and do; 30% on what employees experience in their organization; 15% on formal communications, such as the Internet, newsletters and emails. (Jim Shaffer, 2004). Thus, educating and engaging leaders and managers in their role in employee communications is critical to the school district's success.

**Managing Information Overload:** Employees receive hundreds of emails a day through many internal sources. The communications professional should strive to be not the gatekeeper of information, but the facilitator of information.

**Customer Service:** The primary customers of a school system are families and students. In fact, your customer service can deeply impact the brand perception of your school system. For example, are your schools known to be friendly or difficult to interact with? Are school system leaders accessible to customers or hard to reach?

**Employee Ambassadors:** Employees are the most credible sources of information about your school district to both fellow employees and the community. It's critical that employees communicate accurately about the vision, mission, goals, new developments, issues and challenges of the school system.

**Communicating with Employees During a Crisis:** Keeping all employees informed during a crisis is critical to ensuring their safety and security. Equipping them with the most current information during the progression, resolution and aftermath of the crisis helps support them in their role as ambassadors and helps manage accuracy and transparency during critical times.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Researching and Understanding Employee Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge** — My Points = 2 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Written crisis communication plan non-existant | ☐ Varied opportunities for employees to provide input, e.g.: | ☐ Integration of faculty and staff listening approaches into communication plan |
| ☐ Limited opportunities for employees to provide input; largely passive leaving onus on employee to initiate, e.g., online comment opportunities or suggestion boxes | ◆ Designated times at school board and faculty/staff meetings | ☐ Multiple and regular face-to-face opportunities to hold conversations among employees and leaders |
| ☐ Periodic staff surveys assessing communication effectiveness, largely reactive when issues surface | ◆ Representation on key district and school committees, task forces, etc. | ☐ Listening mechanisms differentiated for faculty and staff segments as needed, e.g., location, language, access to technology, schedules, etc. |
| ☐ Informal, casual meetings between leadership and employees (breakfasts, lunches, coffee breaks, water cooler conversations) | ◆ Access to communications director, supervisor(s) and senior leaders | ☐ School board members, administrators, principals, department chairs and other managers trained in critical listening |
| | ◆ Written and online avenues | ☐ Systematic approach for responding to and integrating faculty and staff input |
| | ☐ Faculty and staff informed of opportunities to provide input during new employee orientation and/or hiring process | ☐ Systematic review of employee satisfaction with opportunities to provide input, e.g., surveys, focus groups, face-to-face interactions |
| | ☐ Annual faculty and staff survey assessing communication effectiveness | ☐ Comprehensive working conditions survey with results analyzed and action plan implemented at every school (and at the district level) |
| | ☐ Employee advisory committees that meet regularly and advise the superintendent and/or school board on important issue | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Employee Engagement**

My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Emerging awareness of importance of engaging employees<br><br>☐ Employee communications are infrequent and irregular, and often in response to crises or problems<br><br>☐ Little or no two-way dialogue with employees | ☐ Series of communications approaches to foster employee engagement, e.g.:<br>　◆ Employee intranet page established with key employee content including human resources information, employee calendar, ways to contact school system leaders, etc.<br>　◆ Frequent, thorough and accurate employee communications through newsletters and email messages<br>　◆ Employee association or union representatives meet with school district leaders for two-way dialogue<br>　◆ Rationale for decisions made by school district leaders is shared with employees<br><br>☐ New employee orientation that includes an overview of the school district and the role of employees in the overall organization<br><br>☐ Employee recognition program and/or award program supporting employee contributions to the organization's success | ☐ Regular and ongoing input from employees on preferred opportunities to be engaged with the district and school in support of student learning<br><br>☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for engaging all parents/families to support student learning<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources for district/school leaders to use in fostering employee engagement in student learning<br><br>☐ Sharing of best practices in employee engagement internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br><br>☐ Ongoing feedback from employees and regular evaluation of employee engagement to foster student success<br><br>☐ Feedback is incorporated into communications action steps with evaluation component |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Employee Alignment with the School District's Vision, Mission and Goals**      **My Points = _2_ out of 3**

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Unclear or poorly defined vision, mission and goals of the school district<br><br>☐ Sporadic communications about the vision, mission and goals by school district -leaders/ communications office, largely limited to start-of-year or new employee orientation<br><br>☐ Limited alignment of employee goals and actions with district vision, mission and goals | ☐ Series of communications strategies to support alignment of employee goals and actions with district vision, mission and goals, e.g.:<br><br>◆ Vision, mission and goals communicated consistently and regularly through pictures, slogan and collateral communication materials such as letterhead, brochures, website, telephone hold message, etc.<br><br>◆ Core messages to employees making clear the school district's vision, mission and goals; success stories include real examples and highlight employee contributions<br><br>◆ Regular reporting on the progress of district/school/department goals<br><br>☐ New employee orientation that includes focus on mission, vision and goals<br><br>☐ Employee award programs that recognize and reward employee excellence in the areas that align with the district's vision, mission and goals | ☐ Research on employee levels of awareness and understanding of the district vision, mission and goals and their preferred methods to be informed about them<br><br>☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communicating district vision, mission and goals to employees and for fostering alignment of with employee goals and actions<br><br>☐ Ongoing professional development for senior leaders on how to raise employee awareness, understanding and alignment with vision, mission goals<br><br>☐ Employee feedback to continuously assess and monitor the level of awareness, understanding and alignment with the vision, mission and goals, and the areas in which employees need more training and communication<br><br>☐ Sharing of best practices in fostering alignment internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Leadership and Management Communications**

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Emerging awareness of the importance of leadership and management communications with employees | ☐ Series of leadership and management communication approaches, e.g.: | ☐ Regular research on leader and manager communication effectiveness; feedback used to update communication action plans and measurement components |
| ☐ Little or no regular communication from leaders and managers; communications largely generated in response to requests for information; communications inconsistent from one manager to another | ◆ Regular opportunities for face-to-face communications with school and district leaders such as faculty meetings, staff meetings, committee meetings, etc. where accurate, timely and thorough information is articulately shared; includes opportunities for two-way communication with leaders and managers | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned expectations for leader and manager communications supported by adequate resources and training |
| ☐ Channeling all communications to employees through one gatekeeper | ◆ Regular email communications to employees from the superintendent, such as columns in an electronic newsletter or targeted messages directly to employees | ☐ Clear articulation of district's communications expectations of schools, e.g., school website guidelines; school media liaison and partnership liaison job descriptions; teacher website guidelines, etc. |
| | ◆ Email addresses of leaders available to all employees for direct contact with timely response | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in effective communications for leaders and managers including workshops, classes and online resources; includes verbal and nonverbal communication |
| | ◆ Opportunities to hear directly from the superintendent, especially during critical times such as school year kickoff, budget proposals and adoptions, and crises | ☐ Communications effectiveness included as a component of leaders' performance evaluation |
| | ◆ Content provided to district/building leaders on important and timely issues, such as FAQs, talking points, white papers, or online chat sessions in support of effective leadership and management communications | ☐ Sharing of best practices in leadership and management communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ☐ Some professional development for leaders and managers on effective communications strategies, e.g., public speaking, electronic messaging, "walking the talk," etc. | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Managing Information Overload**　　　　　My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Emerging realization of information overload with no overall plan to manage | ☐ Series of approaches to manage information overload, e.g.: | ☐ Ongoing research to determine communication preferences of employees and effectiveness of existing communication information-sharing vehicles |
| ☐ Few or no guidelines in place for communicating with employees resulting in disorganized, redundant and competing messaging | ◆ Limited and standardized official vehicles for internal communications at various levels deployed on set schedules | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for information sharing among internal audiences based on research of preferences and vehicle effectiveness |
| ☐ Information sent out as needed without a plan or regular schedule to maximize communication effectiveness | ◆ A common internal calendar that holds important dates for school district deadlines, meetings, testing schedules, events, etc. | ☐ Systematic review of information-sharing effectiveness; results used to inform improvements to plan |
| | ◆ Limit email access to "all employees" to selected senior school district leaders | ☐ Sharing of best practices in managing information overload and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ☐ Employee training on organizing email accounts and inboxes, use of folders, etc. | |
| | ☐ Information and file-sharing software to minimize email and organize access to important information by project or issue | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

## COMPONENT: Customer Service

My Points = __1__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Varying levels of awareness of importance of customer service among school employees; generally dependent on individual employee or manager focus<br><br>☐ Spotty customer service training for school employees, generally in response to complaints<br><br>☐ Commitment to customer service non-existent or minimally reflected in communications goals and/or district goals | ☐ Commitment to customer service and customer service expectations clearly articulated<br><br>☐ Series of approaches to ensure responsive customer service by school employees; e.g.:<br>  ◆ Customer service expectations outlined during new employee orientation<br>  ◆ Training of frontline school and central office staff on excellent customer service<br>  ◆ Printed and online resources on effective customer service delivery available to employees<br>  ◆ Some cultural competency training to serve specific segments of families and stakeholders<br><br>☐ Some auditing of customer service levels, e.g.:<br>  ◆ Unannounced visits where evaluators audit how friendly and welcoming the school environment is to families and stakeholders<br>  ◆ Quick polls on how well customers are served<br>  ◆ Some complaint tracking and resolution | ☐ District policy supports clearly defined customer service commitment, expectations and goals<br><br>☐ Comprehensive annual assessment on the quality of relationships that families and stakeholders have with their school and the district; including but not limited to surveys, spot audits and complaint tracking<br><br>☐ Annual plan to ensure delivery of customer service based on assessment results with input of work team composed of employee, family and stakeholder representatives<br><br>☐ Sufficient resources and budget to support ongoing training and delivery of customer service including comprehensive cultural competency training for all segments within the school community<br><br>☐ Program to recognize and reinforce outstanding customer service throughout the school system; benchmarking and sharing of best practices |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Employee Ambassadors**

My Points = 1 out of 3

**EMERGING (1 point)**

- [ ] Varying levels of employee awareness of school district materials including handbooks, newsletters, brochures, calendars
- [ ] Varying levels of employee understanding of current district and school goals, initiatives and issues
- [ ] Minimal access to resources to seek information

**ESTABLISHED (2 points)**

- [ ] Series of approaches to keep employees informed of key issues in support of their roles as district ambassadors, e.g.:
  - ◆ Access to school facilities, programs, events, meetings, etc. to gain first-hand knowledge and build understanding
  - ◆ Regular, comprehensive and timely summaries of school board actions immediately following meetings
  - ◆ Employee webpage with timely information on current issues including rumor busters and frequently asked questions
  - ◆ Principal and manager-led meetings and conversations among staff members on issues, programs, and district/school progress
  - ◆ Established protocol for sharing bad news with employees first before releasing externally
  - ◆ Inclusion of key staff members in a district Key Communicators program
- [ ] New employee orientation program includes expectation that faculty and staff serve as ambassadors; includes how district provides information to them to serve in that role

**EXEMPLARY (3 points)**

- [ ] Ongoing assessment of employee knowledge and understanding of district goals, initiatives and issues; ongoing assessment of employee preparedness to effectively serve as ambassadors
- [ ] Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for effective employee communications to support them in their roles as ambassadors
- [ ] Sufficient resource and budget to support effective employee communications
- [ ] Communications training for frontline and key employee leaders to maximize their effectiveness as ambassadors; e.g., public speaking, answering questions, minimizing negativity, etc.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

## COMPONENT: Communicating with Employees During a Crisis

My Points = 3 out of 3

**EMERGING (1 point)**

- ☐ Lack of or minimally defined crisis communication plan outlining steps/layers and strategies for communication during crisis and deployment of internal staff to support communications during crisis
- ☐ Minimal proactive outreach to faculty and staff during crisis limited to general information with few details
- ☐ Communications with faculty and staff during crisis delayed or inconsistent with regards to timing and coverage
- ☐ Details regarding crisis largely articulated on reactive basis typically in response to inquiries or complaints
- ☐ Reliance on news media to release information

**ESTABLISHED (2 points)**

- ☐ Series of approaches to communicate with faculty and staff during crisis, e.g.:
  - ◆ Crisis communication plan outlining internal communications as priority and including steps/layers and strategies for communication during crisis and deployment of internal staff to support communications during crisis
  - ◆ Automated messaging capability including email, voice and text messaging to support swift and accurate communications with faculty and staff during all phases of crisis
  - ◆ Online access to information such as dedicated web pages regarding crisis with accurate and timely postings
  - ◆ Series of standardized letters, notices and other communications to readily adapt and facilitate timely notification during crisis
  - ◆ Prepared talking points for administrators, principals and others to use throughout crisis
  - ◆ Articulation of relevant information and details regarding crisis through local news media
- ☐ Regard to protection of staff privacy as per federal and state legal requirements (FERPA, FOIL, etc.)
- ☐ Some tracking of crisis communication effectiveness

**EXEMPLARY (3 points)**

- ☐ Systematic approach to keeping faculty/staff informed during crises based on customized employee preferences
- ☐ District/school policy and clearly articulated crisis communication plan updated regularly with involvement from police and safety officials and supported by adequate technology and resources
- ☐ Plan for provision of emergency back-up and additional support for district communications office in the event of large-scale crisis or catastrophe
- ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in crisis communication plan, procedures and strategies for all district personnel
- ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of crisis communications resources to administrators, principals and faculty/staff
- ☐ Deployment of tabletop crises at the school level and joint crisis drills with public safety agencies at the district level; systematic evaluation of drills to assess employee readiness in crisis response
- ☐ Sharing of best practices in crisis communications internally and benchmarking same externally to drive improvement
- ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications to improve faculty/staff engagement and ensure student and staff safety

## RATE YOUR...
## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Enter your "my points" score for each program component** in the chart at right. As a reminder, each individual component should get either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) based on where the majority of your checked boxes fell in the previous charts.

2. **Total your points** for all program components.

3. **Compare your total points to the "overall rating" score range** below to assess the current status of your school district's communication program in this critical function area.

### Overall Rating in Critical Function Area

**Emerging** = 0 - 11 total points

**Established** = 12 - 19 total points

**Exemplary** = 20-24 total points

| Program Component | My Points (1, 2 or 3) |
|---|---|
| Researching and Understanding Employee Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels | 2 |
| Employee Engagement | 2 |
| Employee Alignment with the School District's Vision, Mission and Goals | 2 |
| Leadership and Management Communications | 2 |
| Managing Information Overload | 2 |
| Customer Service | 1 |
| Employee Ambassadors | 1 |
| Communicating with Employees During a Crisis | 3 |
| TOTAL = | 15 (24 max) |

## SAMPLE MEASURES

From NSPRA membership outreach and Baldrige Award recipients (collected 2011-12)

- Percentage of employees feeling adequately informed about district/breaking news/non-emergency news
- Percentage of employees feeling optimistic about the future of the district
- Percentage of employees aware of/reliance on key sources of information
- Percentage of employees agreeing that school leadership effectively communicates policies
- Percentage of employees feeling comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them
- Percentage of administrators agreeing district has effective process for making group decisions and solving problems
- Percentage of employees agreeing there is atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in their school
- Percentage of employees agreeing that teachers are respected as educational experts
- Employee satisfaction with district's community partnerships
- Percentage of employees agreeing that district/their school keeps them informed
- Percentage of employees agreeing that district communications provide useful information
- Percentage of employees feeling prepared to tell others about positive aspects of their district
- Percentage of staff satisfied with their jobs
- Percentage of staff who would recommend district as a good place to work
- Staff satisfaction with empowerment
- Staff satisfaction with working conditions

- Staff rating on communication from site leaders
- Staff rating on whether their ideas/suggestions are considered by site/district leaders
- Percentage of staff satisfied with their participation in decisions
- Trustworthiness of information in district website
- Trustworthiness of superintendent
- Ranking of specific communications vehicles
- Employee perception of parents expectations for their children
- Some data segmented by instructional/non-certified staff

## SOURCES

Berger, B. (2008). *Employee/Organizational Communications*, University of Alabama.

Gay, C., Mahony, M., & Graves, J. (2012). *Best Practices in Employee Communications: A Study of Global Challenges and Approaches*. California: International Association of Business Communicators.

National School Public Relations Association. Content retrieved from https://www.nspra.org/.

Rhee, Y. (2003). *The employee-public-organization chain in relationship management: A case study of a government organization*. Florida: Institute for Public Relations.

# Rubrics of Practice for Critical Function Area:

## Parent/Family Communications

### Critical Function Area

In the third critical function area, **Parent/Family Communications**, the school communications program recognizes the relationship between parent/family involvement/engagement and student success. It includes a proactive program to keep parents/families informed about and involved in their children's education with the ultimate goal of building collaboration and trust to support student learning.

Parent/family communications are based on the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications often known by the acronyms RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) or RACE (Research, Analyze/Action Plan, Communicate, Evaluate). Parents' and families' needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels are systematically researched and analyzed. Communications are designed and delivered accordingly with desired outcomes aligned and evaluated. To maximize engagement for all families, communications respect and accommodate cultural diversity. Communications are adapted for differences in language and custom.

Parent/family communications directly support student success in school. Communications include information and resources on how parents/families can become and stay involved in children's education and how they can support and reinforce learning.

The district's communications program also supports teacher and building-level communications and interactions with parents/families. Parents/families are regularly informed of academic and co-curricular offerings and requirements as well as expectations regarding student conduct and consequences for discipline violations.

Parent/family communications are two-way and include dialogue and listening opportunities such as face-to-face interactions with school leaders and methods to voice and resolve complaints. The communications program promotes opportunities to volunteer and become involved in school/district programs as well as systematic collection of feedback on communication effectiveness. The program also includes a comprehensive and responsive crisis communication plan with specific strategies and tactics for parents/families.

The ultimate purpose of parent/family communications is engaging parents/families to value their children's education and support student achievement. Parents/families are kept informed about the goals, objectives, plans, programs, finances, issues, events and incidents of the district and their children's schools.

The program is further supported through systematic listening mechanisms for keeping current with parent/family needs and expectations regarding engagement. Ultimately the school communications program fosters a collaborative partnership and shared responsibility for student success between parents/families and the district.

The following program components have been identified through research and anecdotal evidence to be best practices in parent/family communications. Evidence of emerging, established and exemplary programs are outlined in the table that follows.

### Program Components

**Researching and Understanding Parent/Family Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels**: Without research, school systems are left to guess what their parents/families are thinking and feeling. The better

school leaders understand the opinions, attitudes, needs and expectations of parents/families, the better equipped they are to communicate effectively, foster transparency and build trust with this critical stakeholder group.

**Deploying Multiple, Varied and Targeted Communication Strategies, Including Accommodations for Diversity**: With advances in technology and growth in the diversity of our communities, communications leaders are challenged to deliver messages via their audiences' preferred media, while respecting specific cultural requirements and priorities.

**Communicating with Parents/Families on Student Progress/Success**: The family provides the child's primary educational environment. Keeping parents/families informed of their child's progress and success in school is essential for parent/family support and involvement. Knowing when a student requires additional support and resources for success and advocating for and/or providing that support contributes to that student's opportunity to succeed.

**Communicating Academic Programs and Expectations with Parents/Families**: Parents/families are regularly informed of academic and co-curricular offerings and requirements, as well as ways they can support their child's academic progress so their child can reach his or her potential.

**Communicating Student Conduct Expectations and Discipline Policies with Parents/Families**: Strong communications is essential in helping parents/families clearly understand the school's expectations regarding student conduct and consequences for discipline violations so that student learning is maximized in the classroom.

**Communicating Extra- and Co-Curricular Offerings and Requirements with Parents/Families**: Parent/family knowledge and understanding of academic and co-curricular offerings and requirements, disciplinary expectations and policies are essential to their providing adequate support to their children. Parent/family support correlates positively with student success.

**Communicating School and District Goals, Plans, Programs, Finances and Issues with Parents/Families**: Regularly communicating about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and other larger issues helps keep parents/families connected with the larger picture of student success. It is important that this important stakeholder group understands how these areas are directly related to teaching and learning.

**Communicating with Parents/Families During Crisis**: Knowing their children are safe in school is consistently identified as the number one priority for parents/families. Effectively communicating with parents/families during a school crisis helps assure student safety and build trust.

**Supporting Parent-Teacher and Parent-Building Communications**: The role of communicator does not lie with the public relations department alone. Effectively supporting communications between parents/families and their children's school and teacher exponentially increases communication capacity and fosters understanding about academic, classroom and school-related issues.

**Fostering Parent/Family Involvement and Engagement to Support Student Learning**: Studies find that students with involved parents are more likely to pass their classes, earn higher grades and test scores; earn credits and be promoted; attend school regularly; have better social skills, show good behavior and adapt well to school; graduate and go on to higher education. Fostering parent/family engagement that is linked to learning impacts student outcomes.

**Involving Parents/Families in Decision-making to Support Shared Responsibility**: Promoting a process of partnership with shared views and actions toward shared goals enhances understanding and builds trust.

**Supporting PTA/PTO Activity and Success**: Acknowledging the valuable role of the PTA/PTO in encouraging student achievement, an effective school communications program forges cooperative, trusting relationships with parent organizations and their leaders, and supports their activities and success.

**Fostering Parent/Family Involvement in Community Collaboration**: Effective programs to engage families and the community embrace a philosophy of partnership. The responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff and community members.

**Fostering Problem-Solving and Resolving Complaints**: Effectively communicating during problems and managing complaints provides organizations with opportunities to recapture parent/family confidence.

**Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy**: A systematic evaluation of communication effectiveness is essential to the ongoing success of any communications program and supports the practice of deploying communications using the four-step strategic public relations planning process.

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| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Researching and Understanding Parent/Family Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels**

My Points = __2__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Limited opportunities for parents/families to provide input; largely passive, leaving onus on parent to initiate, e.g., online comment opportunities or suggestion boxes; complaint guidelines; calls or emails | ☐ Series of formal and informal assessments to listen and gain insights into parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels, e.g.: | ☐ Integration of research and assessments of parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels into parent/family communication plan; findings systematically analyzed to improve parent/family communications |
| ☐ Understanding and assessing parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels limited to anecdotal input | ◆ Written and electronic surveys<br>◆ Focus groups<br>◆ Representation on key district and school committees, advisory councils, task forces | ☐ Comprehensive system of formal and informal listening posts and assessments for parents/families at all locations throughout district |
| ☐ Sporadic and random parent/family surveys assessing parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels; largely reactive when issues surface | ◆ Forums, town hall meetings, parent conferences, etc.<br>◆ Opportunities for small-group interaction with parents/families such as coffee with the superintendent, grade-level parent meetings with the principal, etc. | ☐ Listening mechanisms and assessments differentiated for parent/family segments as needed, e.g., language, access to technology, schedules, etc. |
| | ◆ Designated times at school board and faculty/staff meetings | ☐ Assessments span life of relationship with parent/families from entry-level of students in preschool/kindergarten through graduation/alumnus status |
| | ◆ Access to communications director, principal, supervisor(s) and senior leaders<br>◆ One-to-one interactions, open door policy | ☐ School board members, administrators, principals, department chairs, managers and teachers trained in critical listening |
| | ◆ Written and online avenues including forums, social media, etc. | ☐ Systematic approach for responding to and integrating parent/family input |
| | ◆ Feedback through PTA/PTO and other organized parent/family groups<br>◆ Exit interviews with parents/families transferring students out of district | ☐ Assessment findings systematically shared and analyzed by district and building-level leaders to inform and improve services to students and families |
| | ◆ Exit polls following bond/finance referenda | ☐ Resources are made available to parents as a result of research and assessments. (For example: parent training, access to computers; web-based resources, etc.) |
| | ☐ Parents/families informed of opportunities to provide input during new family orientation and/or registration process | |
| | ☐ Annual parent/family survey assessing communication effectiveness | |
| | ☐ Some tracking on effectiveness of assessments | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Deploying Multiple, Varied and Targeted Communication Strategies, Including Accommodations for Diversity**

**My Points = 2 out of 3**

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Communication strategies largely one-size-fits-all with little or no differentiation for varied segments of parents/families | ☐ Series of communication strategies to address varied parent/family segments, e.g.: | ☐ Communications tailored for key parent/family segments based on assessments of parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels |
| ☐ Communications limited to more traditional media, e.g., memos, print/electronic newsletters, announcements at meetings, news releases, websites, emails, etc. | ◆ Written correspondence including memos, printed newsletters, letters, fliers, brochures, etc. | ☐ Communications tailored for key parent/family segments based on assessed preferences for media, messaging and scheduling |
| ☐ Communications random and inconsistent across schools and classrooms | ◆ Electronic correspondence including email, e-newsletters, websites, etc. | ☐ Accommodations for language and cultural diversity for all parent/family segments represented in district; e.g., translators |
| | ◆ Automated messaging including voice and text messaging | ☐ Sharing of best practices for diverse parent/family communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ◆ Face-to-face and interpersonal correspondence including meetings, presentations, forums, office hours, etc. | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of effectiveness of communication with diverse audiences |
| | ◆ Social media including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, forums, chats, etc. | |
| | ◆ Articulated policy on minimal reply timelines for electronic and voice messaging | |
| | ☐ Some accommodations for parent/family segments, e.g., school/grade levels, geographic location | |
| | ☐ Some accommodations for language and cultural diversity; Programs to build cultural awareness | |
| | ☐ Some accommodations for varied family structures | |
| | ☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of communications for diverse audiences | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Communicating with Parents/Families on Student Progress/Success**    My Points = _2_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Report cards and progress reports that meet minimum state requirements | ☐ In addition to meeting minimum state requirements for report cards and progress reports, series of approaches to further inform parents/families, e.g.: | ☐ Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of student progress in school based on researched parent/family preferences |
| ☐ Little or no proactive outreach from teachers to parents/families | ◆ Online grade book portal | ☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred teacher communications, e.g., calendar of regular inputs and evaluations of teacher communications |
| ☐ Parental/familial access to teachers limited, e.g., bi-annual or annual parent-teacher conferences; teacher email addresses and voicemail extensions not easily available; delayed teacher response time to parent/family email and voicemail | ◆ Online parent/teacher log<br>◆ Parent/family visitation days to classrooms<br>◆ Ongoing access or regularly scheduled opportunities for parents/families to meet with teachers | ☐ District/school policy re: minimum response time for teacher email and voicemail supported by adequate technology and resources |
| ☐ Little or no involvement from parents/families on preferred teacher communications | ◆ Focused parent/family involvement program for students at risk<br>◆ Homework hotlines available online or by phone | ☐ District/school policy for updating online grade book with assignments and grades across all schools/teachers |
| | ☐ Teacher response time to email and voicemail varies with individual teacher practice | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families on student progress/success |
| | ☐ Expectations of updating online grade book with assignments and grades left to individual teachers and buildings | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for teachers and building-level staff |
| | ☐ Some involvement from parents/families on preferred teacher communications | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources to teachers and building-level staff |
| | ☐ Some professional development in parent/family communications strategies for teachers and building-level staff | ☐ Sharing of best practices of parent/family communications of student progress internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ☐ Some parent/family communications resources provided to teachers and building-level staff | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent/family communications of student progress to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |
| | ☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of communications student progress | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Communicating Academic Programs and Expectations with Parents/Families**   My Points = _2_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive outreach on academic programs and expectations largely limited to annual listings with little or unclear detail | ☐ Series of approaches to outline academic programs and expectations with parents/families, e.g.: | ☐ Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of academic programs and expectations based on researched parent/family preferences |
| ☐ Specifics regarding academic programs and expectations largely articulated on reactive basis only with onus on parents/families for inquiry | ◆ Details by class/teacher outlined at the beginning of each school year during Back-to-School/Meet-the-Teacher events | ☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about academic programs and expectations |
| ☐ Inconsistent and random communications regarding academic programs and expectations with parents/families | ◆ Printed and online access to class requirements (classroom/teacher web pages), grading structures, homework assignments, project schedules, etc., by class/teacher | ☐ District/school policy re: minimum academic program and expectations communications including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources |
| | ◆ Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from teacher via email/voicemail/face-to-face | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families on academic programs and expectations |
| | ◆ Presentations/meetings with principals, teachers and curricular staff to educate and inform parents/families on academic expectations, new curricula, etc. | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for teachers and building-level staff |
| | ◆ Announcements and coverage of new programs or program changes through local news media | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources to teachers and building-level staff |
| | ◆ Reinforcement of academic expectations through coverage of student success in local news media | ☐ Sharing of best practices of communications about academic programs and expectations internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ☐ Communications vary by building based on principal practice | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about academic programs and expectations to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |
| | ☐ Some professional development in parent/family communications strategies for teachers and building level staff | |
| | ☐ Some parent/family communications resources provided to teachers and building-level staff | |
| | ☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on academic programs and expectations | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Communicating Student Conduct Expectations and Discipline Policies with Parents/Families**

My Points = _2_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive outreach on conduct and discipline expectations and policies with parents/families largely limited to annual notices with little or unclear detail | ☐ Series of approaches to outline conduct and discipline expectations and policies with parents/families, e.g.: | ☐ Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of conduct and discipline expectations and policies based on researched parent/family preferences |
| ☐ Specifics regarding conduct and discipline expectations and policies largely articulated on reactive basis, typically in response to incidents or violations | ◆ Handbook outlining expectations, policies and consequences for violations distributed to parents/families annually with parent-signed acknowledgment form returned to school/teacher | ☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about conduct and discipline expectations and policies |
| ☐ Inconsistent and random communication regarding conduct and discipline expectations and policies with parents/families | ◆ Online access to expectations, policies and consequences for parents/families | ☐ District/school policy re: conduct and discipline expectations and policy communications including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources |
| | ◆ Presentations/meetings with principals and administrators to educate and inform parents/families on expectations, policies and consequences | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families about conduct and discipline expectations |
| | ◆ Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from principal/administrators via email, voicemail, face-to-face | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for communicating and enforcing conduct and discipline expectations and policies for principals and administrators |
| | ◆ Periodic reminders to parents/families about expectations and policies, including related incidents or current events | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources on conduct and discipline to principals and administrators |
| | ☐ Communications vary by building based on principal practice | ☐ Sharing of best practices of communications about conduct and discipline expectations and policies internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ☐ Some communications resources provided to principals and administrators regarding conduct and discipline expectations and policies | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about conduct and discipline expectations and policies to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |
| | ☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on conduct and discipline expectations and policies | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Communicating Extra- and Co-Curricular Offerings and Requirements with Parents/Families**

My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive outreach on extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements largely limited to annual listings with little or unclear detail<br><br>☐ Specifics regarding extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements largely articulated on reactive basis only with onus on parents/families for inquiry | ☐ Series of approaches to outline extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements with parents/families, e.g.:<br>◆ Details by program/club/team outlined at the beginning of each school year during Back-to-School/Meet-the-Teacher events<br>◆ Printed and online access to program/club/team offerings, eligibility expectations, schedules, etc.<br>◆ Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from advisors/coaches/program directors via email/voicemail/face-to-face<br>◆ Presentations/meetings with principals, program directors, advisors and coaches to educate and inform parents/families on offerings, requirements, changes in program, etc.<br>◆ Announcements and coverage of new programs or program changes through local news media, district/school website and social media<br>◆ Reinforcement of extra- and co-curricular involvement through coverage of student success in local news media<br>☐ Some professional development in parent/family communications strategies for program directors, advisors and coaches<br>☐ Some parent/family communications resources provided to program directors, advisors and coaches<br>☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements | ☐ Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements based on researched parent/family preferences<br>☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements<br>☐ District/school policy about minimum extra- and co-curricular requirements communications, including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources<br>☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements<br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for program directors, advisors and coaches<br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources to program directors, advisors and coaches<br>☐ Sharing of best practices of communications about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br>☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Communicating School and District Goals, Plans, Programs, Finances and Issues with Parents/Families**

**My Points = _2_ out of 3**

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive outreach on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with parents/families largely limited to annual or one-time notices with little or unclear detail<br><br>☐ Specifics regarding school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues largely articulated on reactive basis typically in response to incidents or complaints<br><br>☐ Inconsistent and random communications regarding school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with parents/families | ☐ Series of approaches to outline school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with parents/families, e.g.:<br><br>◆ School and district goals, plans, programs and finances outlined annually in meetings, printed and online communications<br><br>◆ School and district issues communicated in a timely manner via meetings, printed and online media, and covered through local news media<br><br>◆ Online access to information and details on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues<br><br>◆ Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from school and district administrators via email, voicemail, face-to-face<br><br>◆ Reinforcement of school and district goals, plans, programs and finances through coverage in local news media<br><br>◆ Key Communicator program to extend flow of information about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with trusted, reliable sources<br><br>◆ Town hall meetings offered to provide information on updated goals, plans, programs, finances and other important issues<br><br>◆ PTO/PTAs meetings include a short update from an administrator or staff liaison about any changes or to solicit feedback to district goals, plans, programs, finances and other important issues | ☐ Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues based on researched parent/family preferences<br><br>☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues<br><br>☐ District/school policy about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues communications, including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources<br><br>☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families about district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for communicating and enforcing school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues for all district personnel<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues to administrators, principals and faculty/staff<br><br>☐ Sharing of best practices of communications about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | ☐ Some internal communications on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with district faculty and staff in their roles as ambassadors | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |
| | ☐ Some resources provided to teachers and building-level staff on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues | |
| | ☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues | |

## COMPONENT: Communicating with Parents/Families During a Crisis

My Points = 3 out of 3

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive outreach with parents/families during crisis limited to general information with little detail | ☐ Series of approaches to communicate with parents/families during crisis, e.g.: | ☐ Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed during crises based on researched parent/family preferences |
| ☐ Communications with parents/families during crisis delayed or inconsistent with regards to timing and coverage | ◆ Crisis communication plan to support parent/family communications | ☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications during crises |
| ☐ Details regarding crisis largely articulated on reactive basis typically in response to inquiries or complaints | ◆ Automated messaging capability (email, voice and text messaging) to support swift and accurate communications with parents during all phases of crisis | ☐ District/school policy and clearly articulated crisis communication plan updated regularly with involvement from police and safety officials and supported by adequate technology and resources |
| ☐ Reliance on news media to release information | ◆ Online access to information regarding crisis with accurate and timely postings | ☐ Plan for provision of emergency back-up and additional support for district communications office (personnel, equipment and other resources) in the event of large-scale crisis or catastrophe |
| | ◆ Current and accurate emergency contact listing in the event parents need to be reached personally | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in crisis communication plan, procedures and strategies for all district personnel |
| | ◆ Current and accurate lists of persons authorized to pick up students during early dismissals/emergencies | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family crisis communications resources to administrators, principals and faculty/staff |
| | ◆ Series of standardized letters, notices, talking points and other communications to readily adapt in support of timely notification during crisis | |
| | ◆ Prepared talking points for administrators, principals and others to use throughout crisis | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | ◆ Articulation of relevant information and details regarding crisis through local news media<br><br>◆ Regular meetings between school district and local first responders (fire departments, law enforcement , health dept. and other government agencies) to discuss, plan and update procedures of how information will be coordinated and released to parents/public during a different crises (plans in place and updated for communicating natural disasters, mass shootings, epidemics/pandemics, etc.).<br><br>☐ Some internal communications with district faculty and staff during crisis in their roles as ambassadors<br><br>☐ Regard to protection of student/staff privacy as per federal and state legal requirements (FERPA, FOIL, etc.)<br><br>☐ Some tracking of crisis communication effectiveness | ☐ Sharing of best practices in crisis communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br><br>☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications to improve parent/family engagement and ensure student safety |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Supporting Parent-Teacher and Parent-Building Communications**

My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive support to building-level administrators and teachers on effective communications with parents/families largely limited to responding to requests for assistance and materials<br><br>☐ Inconsistent and random support for parent-teacher and parent-building communications | ☐ Series of approaches to support effective parent/family-teacher and parent/family-building communications, e.g.:<br><br>◆ Prepared memo, letter, newsletter and other printed correspondence templates for principals and teachers to support effective parent communications and facilitate consistency in messaging<br><br>◆ Prepared electronic text and templates for principals and teachers to support effective parent communications and facilitate consistency in messaging<br><br>◆ Prepared talking points and presentations for principals and teachers to use in parent presentations and meetings<br><br>◆ Prepared talking points for principals and teachers to use regarding building/classroom issues and incidents<br><br>☐ Some professional development for principals and teachers on effective parent/family communication strategies<br><br>☐ Some tracking of parent-teacher and parent-building communications effectiveness | ☐ Comprehensive parent/family communication plans for each building based on researched preferences of parents/families<br><br>☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications from the school building and the classroom teacher<br><br>☐ District/school policy about parent-teacher and parent-building communications that is supported by adequate technology and resources<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development for principals and teachers on effective parent/family communication strategies<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support effective parent-teacher and parent-building communications<br><br>☐ Sharing of best practices in parent-teacher and parent-building communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br><br>☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent-teacher and parent-building communications to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Fostering Parent/Family Involvement and Engagement to Support Student Learning**    My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive support for parent/family involvement and engagement to support student's learning with onus left largely to parents/families to initiate and navigate | ☐ Series of approaches to cultivate an inviting environment that fosters parent/family engagement to support student learning, e.g.: | ☐ Regular and ongoing input from parents/families on preferred opportunities to be engaged with the district and school in support of student learning |
| ☐ Limited opportunities for parent/family engagement to support student learning with most at early stages of involvement and less opportunity for engagement | ◆ Printed and online articulation of parent/family and school expectations and how parents/families can become involved and collaborate with district and school personnel to consistently support student learning | ☐ District/school policy and plans about parent/family engagement in student learning that are supported by adequate technology and resources |
| ☐ Random approaches to fostering parent/family involvement and engagement | ◆ Printed and online resources about curriculum, instructional strategies, student expectations, etc. to strengthen parent/family understanding and capacity to support student success | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for engaging all parents/families to support student learning |
| | ◆ Online access to current and future homework and classroom assignments to engage parent/family support in on-time and satisfactory completion by students | ☐ Professional development programs for faculty and staff on effective parent/family engagement strategies in support of student learning |
| | ◆ Communications between school personnel and parents/families on student's progress and how parents/families can advocate for and support learning at home and in the classroom to ensure achievement | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support parent/family engagement in student learning |
| | ◆ Programs to increase parent/family understanding and skills in support of student learning, e.g., family resource center, workshops and seminars on parenting skills, student learning styles, time management, etc. | ☐ Sharing of best practices in parent/family engagement internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement |
| | ◆ Scheduled events and opportunities for parents/families to visit school and classroom and gain insight into teaching and learning processes, e.g., Open Houses, Back-to-School/Meet-the- | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent/family engagement in student learning to foster student success |

Teacher Nights, Visitation Days, Family Reading/Math/Science Nights at school

- Opportunities for parents/families to provide input into and collaborate with teachers and school staff about student's progress

- Opportunities for parents/families to advocate on behalf of district/school to better support delivery of programs and services

- Teacher/home visit program to improve trust and relationships between teachers and parents/families

- Programs for heightened parent/family involvement for at-risk students

- Parent liaison program to facilitate parent/family communication and involvement

☐ Some tracking of parent/family engagement effectiveness

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Involving Parents/Families in Decision-making to Support Shared Responsibility**   **My Points = 2 out of 3**

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive support for parent/family involvement in decision-making with onus left largely to parents/families to seek avenues | ☐ Series of approaches to involve parents/families in decision-making to support shared responsibility, e.g.:<br><br>◆ Representation and participation of parents/families in district and school committees and task forces developing policies and programs<br><br>◆ Representation of parents/families on the board of education and opportunities for parents/families to address the board with input related to board decisions<br><br>◆ Opportunities for parents/families to provide input into district and school policies and programs via printed and online opportunities such as surveys, polls, etc.<br><br>◆ Regular input from parents/families on school and district finance and budget decisions<br><br>◆ Parent/family-led advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements<br><br>☐ Some tracking of parent/family involvement effectiveness | ☐ Ongoing input from parents/families on preferred opportunities to be involved in decision-making<br><br>☐ District/school policy about parent/family involvement in decision-making that is supported by adequate technology and resources<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support parent/family involvement in decision-making<br><br>☐ Sharing of best practices in parent/family involvement internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br><br>☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent/family involvement in decision-making to support shared responsibility |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Supporting PTA/PTO Activity and Success**   My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal district/school support for PTA/PTO activity and success with onus left largely to PTA/PTO to initiate and secure | ☐ Series of approaches to support PTA/PTO activity and success, e.g.:<br>◆ Involvement of PTA/PTO leaders in development of annual school and district calendar to ensure coordination of programs and events and minimize conflicts<br>◆ Communications support of PTA/PTO programs and events through district and school channels such as automated messaging services, backpack fliers, bulletin boards, school websites, social media, etc.<br>◆ Involvement and support of PTA/PTO through faculty and staff attendance to meetings and participation in program development and delivery<br>◆ Where allowable by policy/law, provision of district and school resources such as meeting and event space, copying and mailing services, equipment and supplies to support PTA/PTO programs<br>☐ Some evaluation of PTA support effectiveness | ☐ Regular and ongoing input from PTA/PTO representatives on preferred support mechanisms from district and school<br>☐ District/school policy about provision of support to PTA/PTO, including adequate technology and resources<br>☐ District-wide PTA/PTO Leadership Council; Meets regularly with district leaders<br>☐ Deploy and support PTA/PTO leaders as key communicators to larger parent constituency<br>☐ Sharing of best practices in PTA/PTO support internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br>☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of effectiveness of PTA/PTO support from district and school<br>☐ Collaborative efforts are in effect (Examples: joint volunteer guidelines, co-sponsored events, etc.)<br>☐ Collaborative efforts in setting policies and procedures for volunteers in schools – e.g., sign-in procedures, background checks, guidelines when working directly with students and/or staff, etc.<br>☐ Providing orientation meetings and materials for all parent volunteers and PTA/PTO groups that includes best practices for volunteers |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Fostering Parent/Family Involvement in Community Collaboration**

My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal collaboration between parents/families and community members on district and school- related issues with onus left largely to parents/families to initiate | ☐ Series of approaches to foster parent/family involvement in community collaboration, e.g.:<br><br>◆ Involvement of parent/family representatives alongside district and school representatives and community representatives on school and community committees, task forces and forums<br><br>◆ Educational foundation and/or other fundraising efforts involving parents/families and community members to support district and school programs<br><br>◆ Advocacy programs involving parents/families and community representatives collaborating to support district and school programs, such as lobbying efforts, letter-writing campaigns and legislative forums<br><br>◆ Coordination of events and dissemination of information about community activities that link to and/or support learning<br><br>◆ Community service programs for students/families<br><br>◆ Active alumni association to support school programs<br><br>☐ Some tracking and evaluation of parent/family involvement in community collaboration | ☐ Ongoing input from parents/families on preferred opportunities to be involved in community collaboration<br><br>☐ District/school policy about parent/family involvement in community collaboration that is supported by adequate technology and resources<br><br>☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support parent/family involvement in community collaboration; e.g., parent leadership development programs<br><br>☐ Sharing of best practices in parent/family involvement in community collaboration internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement<br><br>☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent/family involvement in community collaboration |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Fostering Problem Solving and Resolving Complaints**

My Points = _1___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal proactive communication with parents/families regarding how and where to direct complaints with onus left largely to parents/families to navigate | ☐ Series of approaches to foster problem solving and resolve complaints, e.g.:<br>♦ Articulation of where and how parents/families should direct concerns and complaints<br>♦ Articulation of successive channels for problems and complaints not resolved<br>♦ Some involvement of parents/families in development of problem solving and complaint resolution approaches<br>♦ Some tracking of complaints to determine key causes and support corrective actions to improve service<br>♦ Some follow-up with parents/families following complaint resolution to track and ensure satisfaction | ☐ Comprehensive complaint resolution and problem-solving processes standardized across district and each building based on researched preferences of parents/families |
| ☐ Problem-solving and complaint-resolution inconsistent across district and buildings, and varies with individual handling issue | | ☐ Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred problem solving and complaint resolution processes |
| ☐ Little or no support provided to faculty and staff on effective customer service strategies | | ☐ District/school policy about problem solving and complaint resolution supported by adequate technology and resources |
| | | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing professional development for faculty and staff on effective customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution |
| | ☐ Some professional development for faculty and staff on effective customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution | ☐ Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support effective customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution |
| | ☐ Some evaluation of problem solving and complaint resolution effectiveness | ☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy**    My Points = 2 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal approaches for evaluating communication effectiveness largely reactive in response to problems/issues<br><br>☐ Reliance on anecdotal examples or limited sampling, e.g., talking only to friends or those you know, specific constituent group | ☐ Series of approaches to evaluate communication effectiveness to inform strategy, e.g.:<br>♦ Annual or periodic surveys of parents/families on communication effectiveness<br>♦ Focus groups with parents/families on communication effectiveness and opportunities for improvement<br>♦ Online forums and suggestion boxes for parents/families to provide input regarding communication effectiveness<br>♦ Involvement of parents/families on task forces and advisory committees where focus is on communication<br>♦ Monitoring and tracking of parent/family complaints and concerns regarding communication<br>♦ Exit interviews with parents/families departing from district on communication effectiveness<br>♦ Exit polls on finance and bond referenda on communication sources and effectiveness<br>♦ Periodic communications audits performed by external evaluators | ☐ Comprehensive plan for regular and ongoing evaluation of communication effectiveness<br><br>☐ Regular review and analysis of communication evaluation results to inform changes and improvements in communication plan and strategies<br><br>☐ Tracking of communication effectiveness results with improvement targets and timelines<br><br>☐ Regular communication audits performed by external evaluators<br><br>☐ Benchmarking with best-in-class performers on parent/family communication effectiveness to improve results |

## RATE YOUR...
## PARENT/FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Enter your "my points" score for each program component** in the chart at right. As a reminder, each individual component should get either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) based on where the majority of your checked boxes fell in the previous charts.

2. **Total your points** for all program components.

3. **Compare your total points to the "overall rating" score range** below to assess the current status of your school district's communication program in this critical function area.

### Overall Rating in Critical Function Area

**Emerging** = 0 - 22 total points

**Established** = 23 - 37 total points

**Exemplary** = 38 - 45 total points

| Program Component | My Points (1, 2 or 3) |
|---|---|
| Researching and Understanding Parent/Family Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels | 2 |
| Deploying Multiple, Varied and Targeted Communication Strategies, Including Accommodations for Diversity | 2 |
| Communicating with Parents/Families on Student Progress/ Success | 2 |
| Communicating Academic Programs and Expectations with Parents/Families | 2 |
| Communicating Student Conduct Expectations and Discipline Policies with Parents/Families | 2 |
| Communicating Extra- and Co-Curricular Offerings and Requirements with Parents/Families | 2 |
| Communicating School and District Goals, Plans, Programs, Finances and Issues with Parents/Families | 2 |
| Communicating with Parents/Families During Crisis | 3 |
| Supporting Parent-Teacher and Parent-Building Communications | 2 |
| Fostering Parent/Family Involvement and Engagement to Support Student Learning | 2 |
| Involving Parents/Families in Decision-making to Support Shared Responsibility | 2 |
| Supporting PTA/PTO Activity and Success | 3 |
| Fostering Parent/Family Involvement in Community Collaboration | 2 |
| Fostering Problem-Solving and Resolving Complaints | 1 |
| Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy | 2 |
| **TOTAL =** | **31** (45 max) |

## SAMPLE MEASURES

From NSPRA membership outreach and Baldrige Award recipients (collected 2011-12)

- Top sources of information for learning about district/school issues (rank from a list)
- Parent awareness of key information media
- How well district keeps parents informed
- NSPRA CAP Survey; Percentage of parents who feel...
    ◊ Informed about events, activities, issues at school
    ◊ There are adequate opportunities to express concerns and opinions about important school issues
    ◊ Concerns and opinions expressed by parents and the community are seriously considered by the principal and district administration
    ◊ Informed about issues impacting education
    ◊ There are adequate opportunities to express concerns and opinions about important issues impacting schools
- Whether school/district is doing a good job/headed in the right direction
- Percentage of parents aware of district's performance in key areas
- Whether district has safe schools
- How responsive district is to requests
- Percentage of parents agreeing there is good communication from the school to parents
- Percentage of parents agreeing that school staff responds to their needs/concerns in a timely manner
- Whether district spends taxpayer dollars wisely
- Percentage of parents agreeing that they trust the Board of Education to make good decisions that improve student achievement

- Percentage of parents agreeing that they receive the information they want/need from the district
- Percentage of parents agreeing they are informed in a timely manner of major decisions
- Percentage of parents agreeing that district is trustworthy
- Percentage of parents agreeing that their opinions/input is valued/used when making decisions
- Percentage of parents agreeing that they feel comfortable expressing their ideas or concerns
- Percentage of parents agreeing they are treated with dignity and respect
- Percentage of parents satisfied with opportunity to be involved in their child's education
- Percentage of parents agreeing that the overall public image of the school is good
- Parent grading of district (A, B, C, etc.)
- Percentage of parents that would recommend district to a friend
- Student enrollment rates
- Reasons for disenrollment (exit survey); tracked for real vs. perception
- Attendance/participation in parent-teacher conferences
- Percentage of parents feeling valued as partners in their child's education
- Parent e-newsletter open rates and click-through rates
- Parent awareness of district strategic plan and motto
- Percentage of parents aware of different ways they can support their child's education
    ◊ Help with homework
    ◊ Communicate with teachers
    ◊ Be involved with school
    ◊ Encourage child

- ◊ Know what they are studying
- ◊ Make sure they get enough sleep
- ◊ Be there when needed
- ◊ Ask child about day
- ◊ Observe in classroom
- ◊ Listen to them
- Percentage of parents agreeing their school encourages parent involvement
- Parent satisfaction with teachers communicating expectations
- Percentage of parents agreeing that they participate with the school in their child's personal plan of study
- Percentage of parents agreeing National PTA Standards for Family-School Involvement
- Understand the rules and their responsibilities
- School keeps families informed about important issues and events
- School communicates in multiple ways
- School communicates timely alerts on health/safety issues
- School connects them with somebody who can help if school cannot
- School provides information on other learning opportunities outside school
- Teachers communicate with them regularly
- Teachers help parents understand how to best work with their child at home to improve academic progress
- School considers parent input before making important decisions

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# Rubrics of Practice for Critical Function Area:

## Marketing/Branding Communications

### Critical Function Area

The fourth critical function area is **Marketing/Branding Communications**. Increased competition, declining resources, changing demographics, news media scrutiny and the importance of public perceptions are just a few reasons schools and school districts need an effective marketing program. Having a well-defined and authentically experienced brand promise as part of the marketing strategy helps position the school district in the community's mind and supports the district's vision.

Effective marketing programs are based on the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications often known by the acronyms RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) or RACE (Research, Analyze/Action Plan, Communicate, Evaluate). They are designed to achieve specific and measurable goals, include audience-specific strategies and tactics and have feedback loops for continual evaluation and improvement. They are led by a school communications professional or marketing manager who serves as champion and team leader.

Marketing plans are sensitive to and based on both the internal and external environments within which the school district operates. As such, they are responsive, adaptable and outcome oriented. They support relationship building and rely on staff to serve as loyal brand ambassadors.

The best marketing plans use a mix of communication channels, from pot-luck suppers, school newsletters, electronic and social media, one-on-one communication, and community events to full-blown campaigns that combine websites, paid advertisements, and well-placed news and feature stories.

Brand standards and guidelines are integral to upholding and protecting the district's brand, building trust, and ensuring a consistently conveyed image in the marketplace.

Ultimately, effective marketing programs that support a strong brand can improve employee retention and morale, stabilize or increase enrollment, build community support and help the school district accomplish mission-critical and tangible goals. Ideally, marketing programs are deployed as part of a comprehensive, planned communications program.

### Program Components

The following program components have been identified through research and anecdotal evidence to be best practices in a comprehensive professional marketing program. Evidence of emerging, established and exemplary marketing/branding programs is outlined in the table that follows.

**Conducting thorough market research to understand demographics, products and services, competition, market trends and market segments:** Without research, school systems are left to guess what the internal and external environments are that they are operating within and how to effectively and efficiently target their marketing efforts. The better school leaders understand the environment within which they operate, the better equipped they are to market effectively and deliver a brand experience that is both authentic and resonates with target markets.

**Developing your school district's brand position, attributes, points of pride, promise and traditions:** Effective school brands are focused and inclusive. The brand is

built on the internal and external environment within which the district operates.

**Defining brand experience for target audiences:** Effective school branding programs incorporate significant engagement of each target audience to achieve specific and measurable goals with each group.

**Developing a comprehensive and effective marketing plan in support of the brand and district marketing goals:** Effective marketing plans, based on research, are developed to achieve specific and measurable goals that support the district's vision. Strategies and tactics are implemented for specific audiences to achieve specific outcomes. Regular evaluation ensures that effective strategies are continued and others modified as appropriate to maximize district resources and remain responsive to audience needs.

**Providing standards and guidelines for consistent use of adopted brand assets (logo, slogan/tagline, home-base district message/mission) through a brand standards guide:** Establishing and maintaining the consistent use of a school district's logo, slogan and message protect the district's brand. Consistent branding increases public awareness of what the district does and builds support, trust and confidence in the district's mission. Consistent use of brand standards ensures the district's identity is professional and clear for all audiences.

**Fostering brand ownership and loyalty among staff and district leadership in their roles as ambassadors:** Effective school marketing programs are rooted in a strong brand promise that is executed and upheld at the school building and district levels.

**Measuring/evaluating impact of marketing plan/brand:** Effective brands are supported by effective marketing plans that are developed to achieve specific and measurable goals. Measurement methodology and tools are in place to consistently measure and evaluate strategies and tactics.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Conducting Thorough Market Research to Understand Demographics, Products and Services, Competition, Market Trends, Market Segments**

**My Points = 1 out of 3**

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Understanding and assessing district and school markets and target audiences limited to anecdotal input | ☐ Series of formal and informal assessments to understand demographics, products and services, competition, market trends, and market segments: | ☐ Comprehensive research conducted to identify target audiences and ascertain target markets' needs and desires; includes balance of formal and informal, primary and secondary, and qualitative and quantitative research |
| ☐ Sporadic and random surveys assess district issues; rarely include questions targeted to support marketing efforts | ◆ Target audiences identified | ☐ Demographics of district and target markets continuously defined and monitored |
| ☐ Leadership ideas for marketing shared sporadically with communications staff, largely reactive when issues surface | ◆ Annual or bi-annual surveys completed to identify values, perceptions and desires of community relative to schools; some segmentation of survey results by target audience | ☐ Enrollment trends into and away from competitors regularly reviewed and analyzed |
| | ◆ List of neighboring districts and nearby competitive schools such as charter schools and private schools with relevant demographics | ☐ Comprehensive audit of district's brand conducted; all touch points assessed and outlined; analysis of faculty and staff knowledge of and support for brand completed |
| | ◆ Competition defined and compared/contrasted with district | ☐ Comprehensive analysis of all research conducted to identify and understand district's baseline position, markets' desires, district's strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats (SWOT), and internal and external opinions and attitudes |
| | ☐ Situation or other analysis developed by communications office that outlines key points learned from assessments, surveys and relevant data | ☐ Integration of research into marketing plan; findings systematically analyzed to improve market/brand position |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Developing Your School District's Brand Position, Attributes, Points of Pride, Promise and Traditions**

My Points = _3_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Brand position, attributes, points of pride, promise non-existent or not reflective of district's current reality among key stakeholders | ☐ Brand position, attributes, points of pride and promise developed and largely accepted among key stakeholders | ☐ Input from senior leaders and other stakeholders considered in developing measurable vision and mission statement, district's positioning statement, attributes, points of pride and brand promise |
| ☐ Vision and mission statements non-existent or not updated to reflect district's current reality among key stakeholders | ☐ Vision and mission statements updated to reflect the district's current reality among key stakeholders; positioning statement established | ☐ Communications professional/brand manager is member of the executive level team and serves as brand manager for the district; superintendent and other senior leaders are accessible to communications professional/brand manager |
| ☐ Communications professional/brand manager not designated, leading to inconsistencies in use of brand elements | ☐ Communications professional/brand manager designated | ☐ Ongoing training for district staff to effectively develop the district's brand position, attributes, points of pride, promises and traditions |
| | ☐ Deployment of brand position and messaging across the district's internal and external audiences; possible variations and inconsistencies of deployment | ☐ Adequate resources and budget to effectively develop brand position, attributes, points of pride, promise and traditions |
| | ☐ Limited budget to effectively grow brand and district traditions | ☐ Comprehensive analysis of research to define myths and misperceptions associated with the district brand to inform communications planning; ongoing cycles of evaluation to ensure relevance to marketplace |
| | ☐ Elements of storytelling included in communication plan to support the brand's promise, attributes, points of pride and positioning statements | ☐ Organized brand standards and guide that encompasses all defined messages and design elements for use by communications professional/brand manager, senior leaders, staff and other stakeholders (see *Providing Standards and Guidelines for Consistent Use of Adopted Brand Assets* on page 64) |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Defining Brand Experience for Target Audiences**

My Points = 2 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Communication efforts largely one-way (from district to target audience), sometimes compromising authentic involvement/ engagement | ☐ Some research conducted to understand priorities and communication preferences of target audiences | ☐ Research systematically conducted to ascertain each target audiences' customs, subdivisions, expectations, priorities and preferred language, methods and mediums for communication |
| ☐ Little to no tailoring of brand messaging to target audiences | ☐ Series of events, communications and partnering opportunities to create brand involvement and engagement, e.g.: | ☐ Delineation between primary and secondary target audiences based on marketing goals and objectives |
| ☐ Stories mainly about process and procedure rather than impact on audiences | ◆ District bands, choruses and other student groups participate in community events such as parades and tree lightings | ☐ Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for engaging all target audiences by tailoring messages specifically to them |
| ☐ Some district involvement in the community | ◆ Focused events such as senior citizens day to engage target audiences | ☐ Established key communicator network to comprehensively address cultural, socio-economic, geographic or other diversity in different stakeholder groups |
| ☐ Staff trained as brand ambassadors limited to district administrators if any | ◆ Key target audience leaders are members of budget or other key district advisory committees | ☐ Clear, concise and memorable brand promise story to exemplify the desired brand attributes |
| | ◆ District leadership are members of local chamber of commerce or other community organizations | ☐ Communications that emphasize emotional connection, not process |
| | ◆ Social media presence with some level of response to posts | ☐ Effective use of visuals – photography, video and/or illustration – to depict brand attributes |
| | ◆ Ongoing communications to support target audiences' awareness of district projects and priorities | ☐ Involvement/engagement opportunities aligned with and support the district's desired brand attributes; ongoing efforts to give back to the community through recognition, events and use of facilities |
| | ◆ Some storytelling to help target audiences emotionally connect to brand | ☐ Comprehensive, ongoing and authentic two-way communications to foster involvement and engagement through preferred target audience mediums, including blogs, social media outlets, forums and events |
| | ☐ Some training of district staff in effectively representing the brand | |
| | ☐ Evaluation of target audience involvement and engagement with the brand in early stages | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | | ☐ District personnel at all levels trained and empowered to act as brand ambassadors (see *Fostering Brand Ownership and Loyalty among Staff and District Leadership* on page 65) to ensure the brand experience is consistent |
| | | ☐ Ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of target audience involvement and engagement with the brand; results systematically used to inform improvement |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Developing a Comprehensive and Effective Marketing Plan in Support of the Brand and District Marketing Goals**

My Points = 2 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Marketing tactics random and developed by communications office in isolation; efforts not aligned with district vision or strategic plan | ☐ Marketing efforts incorporated into overall communication plan and aligned with goals developed jointly by communications office and leadership; some budget allocated | ☐ Marketing plan follows four-step strategic PR planning model and aligns with district's overall vision and strategic plan; plan has full support of leadership with adequate financial resources as defined by communications professional/brand manager |
| ☐ No additional communications staff or budget allocated for implementation of marketing tactics | ☐ Desired brand experience and overarching key messages included in plan | ☐ Overarching key messages designed to address issues identified through research included in plan |
| ☐ Key messages used sporadically, not strategically | ☐ Objectives included but may be difficult to measure | ☐ Specific and measurable goals and objectives outlined along with clearly identified faculty and staff responsibilities, timelines, budgets and both intermediate and final intended outcomes |
| ☐ District values and vision may help guide faculty and staff behavior | ☐ Range of tactics listed and organized in some way; deadlines included for most tactics; tactics may indicate which audience they are designed to reach | ☐ Plan's strategies and tactics organized by audience, goal and/or objective |
| ☐ Outputs tied to periodic marketing efforts are tracked sporadically | ☐ Brand standards and expected usage distributed to faculty and staff | ☐ Tactics designed to achieve goals and include a blend of responsive, two-way, transparent and accessible marketing strategies by target audience that could include advertising, online marketing, social media marketing, publicity/PR, direct marketing, experiential marketing, community relations and relationship marketing; based on best practices and research |
|  | ☐ Plan outcomes by goals and/or objectives may be reviewed periodically | ☐ Plan includes key messages that support the district brand while appropriate for each target audience |
|  | ☐ Storytelling supports the brand's promise, attributes, points of pride and positioning statements | ☐ All school board members and district faculty and staff aware of and trained in marketing plan goals and expectations as well as in brand standards; informed of updates on marketing plan regularly |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | | ☐ Brand standards aligned with the actual experience that stakeholders have with the district |
| | | ☐ Faculty and staff receive regular support such as training, information and other resources to uphold the brand experience |
| | | ☐ Entire plan evaluated regularly to assess progress toward goals and response to specific tactics; modifications made based on evaluation results (see program component *Measuring/Evaluating Impact of Marketing Plan/Brand* on page 66) |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Providing Standards and Guidelines for Consistent Use of Adopted Brand Assets (Logo, Slogan/Tagline, Home-Base Message/Mission) Through Brand Standards Guide**

**My Points = _3_ out of 3**

| EMERGING | ESTABLISHED | EXEMPLARY |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Emerging awareness of inconsistencies across district and within schools of logo usage, slogan/tagline and mission on various communication pieces | ☐ Published guide addresses brand standards for proper usage of some of the following: <br> ◆ School/district logo (color palette, minimum size, placement on materials), slogan and mission for paper and electronic, publications, social media and other marketing materials <br> ◆ Formatting for letterhead/stationary (digital and paper) <br> ◆ Formatting for letters, memos, forms and presentations (digital and paper) <br> ◆ Interior and exterior signage <br> ◆ Business cards, name plates, name tags <br> ◆ Editorial style and any local/district acceptable style changes <br> ◆ Photos and graphics <br> ◆ Email signatures <br> ◆ Branding on apparel and other marketing items | ☐ Published comprehensive guide that addresses brand standards for proper usage of all items listed under "established" program (see left) |
| ☐ Schools within district rarely/inconsistently identify with district logo, slogan/tagline and/or mission | | ☐ Trained brand coordinators designated at the district level, school cluster level or at each building who ensure quality control of brand on all communication pieces |
| ☐ Usage of brand assets is inconsistent on marketing materials | | ☐ Staff in all buildings follows guidelines consistently in all internal and external communication pieces, social media and marketing materials. |
| ☐ Usage of brand assets is inconsistent on social media platforms | | ☐ Ongoing training on guidelines to key staff members and brand coordinators |
| ☐ Standardization of guidelines addressing consistent usage of adopted brand assets is in infancy stage | | ☐ Brand guide reviewed annually and updated as needed |
| | | ☐ District logo, name and slogan/tagline trademarked |
| | ☐ Key school/district personnel receive training on using published guide | |
| | ☐ School/district personnel largely following guidelines for external marketing materials and communication pieces | |
| | ☐ School/district personnel largely following guidelines with electronic and published communications and social media | |
| | ☐ School/district personnel inconsistently following guidelines with some internal communication pieces | |
| | ☐ Process initiated to trademark district logo, name and slogan/tagline | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Fostering Brand Ownership and Loyalty Among Staff and District Leadership in Their Roles as District Ambassadors**

**My Points = __1__ out of 3**

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Varying levels of awareness of importance of brand promise | ☐ Series of approaches to ensure staff and district leadership own and promote brand: | ☐ District strategic plan supports clearly defined brand promise, expectations and goals |
| ☐ Inconsistent brand training for school employees often in response to brand violations | ◆ Brand promise expectations outlined during new employee orientation | ☐ Sufficient resources and budget support ongoing training, executing and upholding of brand promise at the school/district level |
| ☐ Commitments to brand promise non-existent or minimally reflected in communication goals and/or district goals | ◆ Training of frontline school and central office staff on brand promise | ☐ Brand ownership and loyalty among district leaders and staff permeate the district's culture |
| ☐ No channel audits of brand promise conducted at the school level | ◆ Printed and online brand style guide available to employees (See *Providing Standards and Guidelines for Consistent Use of Adopted Brand Assets* on page 64) | ☐ Fostering and executing brand promise and adhering to brand style guide integrated into key employee evaluations |
| | ◆ Staff communications include examples and reminders of how to promote brand | ☐ Comprehensive annual evaluation on the effectiveness of school board members and faculty/staff in their roles as brand ambassadors; evaluation aligned with *Measuring/Evaluating Impact of Marketing Plan/Brand* on page 66 |
| | ☐ Some audits of brand promise conducted: | |
| | ◆ Unannounced visits where evaluators audit literature, logos and signage | |
| | ◆ Periodic reviews of district and school communications (print, electronic, social media) for brand consistency | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

## COMPONENT: Measuring/Evaluating Impact of Marketing Plan/Brand

My Points = _2_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Evaluation largely anecdotal based on observation and "word of mouth" feedback from stakeholders | ☐ Some evaluation conducted that may include:<br><br>◆ Informal surveys/polls to determine satisfaction and effectiveness of district communications<br><br>◆ Response rates of various online campaigns<br><br>◆ Website analytics and social media metrics<br><br>◆ Informal focus groups representing various key stakeholders<br><br>◆ Media coverage monitored for frequency and tone | ☐ Brand/identity regularly evaluated for relevance and currency through a systematic schedule that measures effectiveness with all key stakeholder groups; evaluation includes assessment of all brand touch points as well as effectiveness of faculty/staff and school board members in their roles as brand ambassadors |
| ☐ Insufficient resources for communications professional/brand manager to evaluate the marketing plan/brand | | ☐ Evaluation results systematically used to revise/improve communications |
| ☐ Goals, objectives, staff responsibilities, timelines and budgets loosely defined with no coordination to final intended outcomes | | ☐ Professional development opportunities identified through marketing/program weaknesses |
| ☐ Brand touch points and messaging loosely utilized and inconsistently integrated into tactics | ☐ Messaging consistently supports the brand/marketing plan in most tactics and operational areas | ☐ Adequate budget and other required resources available to support marketing plan/brand revisions |
| | ☐ Specific and measurable goals and objectives, staff responsibilities, timelines and budgets in place with most tactics tied to final intended outcomes; some methods and tools of measurement and evaluation included in the marketing plan | ☐ Adjustments to marketing plan/brand based on benchmarking program against top performers to inform improvement |
| | ☐ Adjustments to the marketing plan/brand based on available budget | |

## RATE YOUR...
## MARKETING/BRANDING COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Enter your "my points" score for each program component** in the chart at right. As a reminder, each individual component should get either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) based on where the majority of your checked boxes fell in the previous charts.

2. **Total your points** for all program components.

3. **Compare your total points to the "overall rating" score range** below to assess the current status of your school district's communication program in this critical function area.

### Overall Rating in Critical Function Area

**Emerging** = 0 - 10 total points

**Established** = 11 - 17 total points

**Exemplary** = 18 - 21 total points

| Program Component | My Points (1, 2 or 3) |
|---|---|
| Conducting Thorough Market Research to Understand Demographics, Products and Services, Competition, Market Trends and Market Segments | 1 |
| Developing Your School District's Brand Position, Attributes, Points of Pride, Promise and Traditions | 3 |
| Defining Brand Experience for Target Audiences | 2 |
| Developing a Comprehensive and Effective Marketing Plan in Support of the Brand and District Marketing Goals | 2 |
| Providing Standards and Guidelines for Consistent Use of Adopted Brand Assets (Logo, Slogan/Tagline, Home-Base District Message/Mission) Through Brand Standards Guide | 3 |
| Fostering Brand Ownership and Loyalty Among Staff and District Leadership in Their Roles as Ambassadors | 1 |
| Measuring/Evaluating Impact of Marketing Plan/Brand | 2 |
| **TOTAL =** | 14 (21 max) |

## SAMPLE MEASURES

- District/school/program enrollment data from before and after a marketing campaign
- Data on district's share of local student enrollment market compared to nearby competitors
- District/school climate surveys to determine whether stakeholders' perceptions of the district align with the district's perception of its brand
- Staff and parent surveys on the likelihood that they would recommend district/schools to potential new employees and families; determine a net promoter score
- Focus groups with key stakeholders on awareness of and feelings about the district's brand
- Exit interviews with employees leaving the district
- Exit interviews with families disenrolling from the district
- Call-to-action (CTA) click-through rates on digital marketing materials such as buttons on websites or in e-newsletters and ads on social media
- Reviews and ratings on district/school rating websites/apps
- Independent evaluation of marketing/branding plans, campaigns and materials through entrance in state and national awards competitions

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# Rubrics of Practice for Critical Function Area:

## Crisis Communication

### Critical Function Area

The fifth critical function area is **Crisis Communication**. Perhaps no better opportunity exists for school districts to show the effectiveness of their leadership and communication than during a crisis. All eyes and attention will be focused on how the district handles and responds to the crisis at hand.

Effective crisis communication will instill confidence that the school district is doing everything possible to address the situation and prevent reoccurrences. Conversely, leaders can lose the confidence of their communities, not because of the crisis but because of how they responded to it.

Crisis communication is the foundation of any crisis planning, implementation, management, training, and recovery effort. Crisis communication is the process by which school leaders manage the strategy, key messages, timing, and communication channels to communicate effectively with media, employees, students, families, and community stakeholders.

A crisis communication plan should effectively manage communication through formal, clearly defined channels to mitigate the crisis or serious repercussions for the school district as well as to maintain the reputation of leadership and transparency on vital issues and breaking news. The communicator's job is to inform stakeholders about what happened, what is going to happen, and why, as well as to keep leadership aware of what those stakeholders are thinking and saying.

### Program Components

The following program components have been identified through research and anecdotal evidence to be best practices in crisis communications:

**Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through a Crisis Communication Plan:** Without a formal communication plan, communication can be haphazard and random in a crisis. With a well-prepared plan, school leaders have a road map to ensure that all stakeholders will receive critical information in a timely manner that ultimately builds trust and confidence in and positive relationships with the school district.

**Maximizing Communication Effectiveness with Trained Staff and Leadership:** Training of district staff and leaders is essential to understand the implementation of the crisis communication plan components. No plan can cover every crisis scenario, but an understanding of the plan components is foundational to delivering high-quality communications during a crisis.

**Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Electronic Tools in a Crisis:** Communicators have more tools in their toolbox than ever before to use in reaching their stakeholders. In a crisis, it is critical that all of these tools are used effectively to deliver consistent and reliable messages.

**Continuously Improving Through Post-Crisis Communication Processes and Procedures:** No two crises are the same, and each provides unique learning opportunities to improve communication when the next crisis emerges. To maximize learning and ensure continuous improvements, debriefs should be formal, scheduled, and represent all impacted audiences.

**Engaging the Community on Safety and Crisis Communication:** Positive, two-way engagement helps families and communities understand school leaders' efforts to ensure schools are safe learning environments as well as the protocols for communicating during a crisis.

**Incorporating Cultural Competency with Crisis Communication:** Non-English speakers, especially families, understand school safety protocols and receive the same information at the same time as English speakers during a crisis to ensure student safety and build trust.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through a Crisis Communication Plan**   My Points = _3_ out of 3

**EMERGING (1 point)**

- ☐ Written crisis communication plan non-existent or in early stages of development
- ☐ If exists, plan lacks measurable goals and evaluation component
- ☐ If exists, plan occasionally reviewed during crisis by communication staff and generally not involving leadership, administrators, or external stakeholders or agencies
- ☐ Crisis message templates (for example, response statements, message mapping) are scant and available only to communication department
- ☐ Parents and families are unaware of school or district emergency response plans unless a crisis occurs or following its conclusion
- ☐ Minimal or no preparation for an adverse event that wipes out organization's traditional communication systems, including establishing communication systems and networks, and redundancies in the event of a loss of power
- ☐ Crisis communication plan does not contain scalability, and drills focus on a single crisis scale (for example, only large-scale crises involving multiple agencies, or only mid-level crises requiring internal response only)

**ESTABLISHED (2 points)**

- ☐ Written crisis communication plan developed and includes a series of approaches to reach target audiences, for example:
  - ◆ Official spokesperson designation
  - ◆ Schedule of public notifications and updates
  - ◆ Key messaging through multiple channels (telephone, electronic, website, social media, news media, etc.)
- ☐ Plan identifies members of the crisis communication team, their roles and responsibilities
- ☐ Plan annually reviewed as part of the communication office's overall strategic planning process
- ☐ Review occasionally involves cabinet and external stakeholders and agencies, including law enforcement
- ☐ Crisis message templates (for example, response statements, message mapping) are developed for multiple channels (website, electronic, social media, phone, news media)
- ☐ Training on use of crisis message templates occasionally takes place
- ☐ District and building emergency response plans are shared with parents annually through multiple communication channels
- ☐ Crisis communication plan includes back-up systems and network to communicate critical information relevant to district staff, families, and stakeholders

**EXEMPLARY (3 points)**

- ☐ Comprehensive, written crisis communication plan aligns with Emergency Response Information Plan (ERIP)/National Incident Management System (NIMS) and procedures
- ☐ Crisis communication plan consistently updated in response to latest research and aligned with goals and objectives of district
- ☐ District leadership seeks input from law enforcement and municipal officials for joint review and development of plan
- ☐ Plan reviewed both annually and post-crisis with input from first responders and local, state, federal agencies and in conjunction with a districtwide drill annually with communication staff and district leaders
- ☐ Plan incorporates evolving expectations of community, analysis of changing information landscape (for example, social media, where influential conversations are happening)
- ☐ Plan systematically benchmarked against other school or agency crisis communication efforts to identify and incorporate best practices
- ☐ Crisis message templates (for example, response statements, message mapping) for a multitude of incidents have been vetted by school or district leaders and used regularly
- ☐ Training on how messages are shared with different audiences is provided annually to all district and school leaders
- ☐ Templates are available to access by all communication staff and selected district leaders identified as back-ups

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | ☐ Crisis communication plan contains some features that can be scaled to the scope of a crisis, but lacks clear direction as to how this scaling process occurs or the team members responsible for activating components of the response team | ☐ District annually reviews crisis communication plan with a team of stakeholders that may include parents, emergency responders, public information officers and school or district leaders |
| | ☐ Drills typically focus on a single-scale crisis response | ☐ Communication practices are adjusted using the four-step strategic PR planning model for continuous improvement |
| | | ☐ Redundant communication systems established and tested in simulated disaster and in collaboration with responding agencies |
| | | ☐ Crisis communication plan contains processes that allow for scalability based on the complexity of the crisis |
| | | ☐ Team members are clear on the process by which to assess level of deployment needed and execute plan accordingly |
| | | ☐ Training drills include exercises that require an evolving scale of response, and team members are very familiar with the process used to expand and decrease response |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Maximizing Communication Effectiveness with Trained Staff and Leadership**

My Points = _3_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Communication leader not part of the district leadership circle (superintendent's cabinet) or advisor on crisis planning and response | ☐ Communication leader works with district leadership team during times of crisis, but only occasionally advises on preparation or planning outside of an active crisis situation | ☐ Communication leader an integral part of superintendent's cabinet and District Emergency Response Team in all aspects of crisis planning, response and recovery |
| ☐ No plans in place when communication team members are not available to fulfill designated roles during an emergency | ☐ Some communication team roles lack back-up and cross-training happens occasionally | ☐ Cross-training and back-ups identified for each member of the communication team and embedded in training procedures |
| ☐ Communication staff has limited knowledge of applicable laws (FERPA, TCPA, FOIA, ADA), which are only referenced during a crisis or in response to news media or stakeholder queries | ☐ Communication staff has general knowledge and proficiency of applicable laws (FERPA, TCPA, FOIA, ADA) and needs minimal legal consultation | ☐ Communication staff fluent in applicable laws (FERPA, TCPA, FOIA, ADA) and seen as expert; potential application of laws in various scenarios are embedded in crisis communication message drafts |
| ☐ Communication staff and district leaders have limited or no understanding of a crisis communication life cycle | ☐ Communication staff and district leaders have knowledge of a crisis communication life cycle and plan some messages accordingly to meet the district's information goals | ☐ Communication staff and district leaders internalize the crisis communication life cycle and use it regularly to guide district responses |
| ☐ Minimal or no training in crisis communications for key school and district leaders and communication staff | ☐ Communications staff reviews key elements of crisis communications annually with school and district leaders, but no tabletop or scenario training is offered and no cross-training is conducted | ☐ Systematic training in crisis communications for all school leaders, communication staff and crisis response teams |
| ☐ Media training provided to school and district leaders and communication staff during an emergency and rarely outside of a crisis | ☐ Media training occasionally carried out with district-level leaders only (superintendent, cabinet) | ☐ Media training program conducted at least annually and includes multi-level approach to train all district leaders and management team (directors, supervisors, principals) |
| ☐ No joint training activities occur with local agencies; no coordination of training efforts | ☐ Some involvement of local agencies in district-planned training efforts | ☐ Joint training activities conducted by district and other emergency responders, who also collaborate with planning training efforts |
| ☐ Limited knowledge of the Joint Information Center (JIC) protocol for managing information dissemination and relationships | ☐ General knowledge of the Joint Information Center (JIC) protocol and established relationships with potential JIC members | ☐ Fluency in Joint Information Center (JIC) protocol, established relationships with potential JIC members, and, participates with other JIC agencies in joint exercises and drills |
| ☐ Limited knowledge of area emergency management or life safety Public Information Officers (for example, law enforcement, fire, public health) and related agencies, and no established mutual aid relationships | ☐ Developing relationships with area public information officers (PIO) includes informal assistance agreements; PIO group meets occasionally to discuss cross-agency support | ☐ Well-established relationships and reciprocal support or mutual aid agreements with area emergency management or life safety public information officers; regularly participates |
| ☐ Limited knowledge of support available through county, regional or area education agency, state department of education, NSPRA or NSPRA chapter, and no relationships developed | ☐ Developing relationships with county, regional or area education or state agencies and NSPRA or NSPRA chapter; school district | |

## EMERGING (1 point)

- [ ] Loosely defined crisis communication standards and protocols established but only understood by top district leaders
- [ ] Communication strategies and materials largely developed during a crisis
- [ ] Key stakeholders and objectives identified after a crisis emerges and as situation evolves
- [ ] Staging areas for news media, parent-student reunification, etc., identified after crisis incident has occurred
- [ ] No substitutes identified to relieve key communication staff during crisis

## ESTABLISHED (2 points)

communication leader attends occasional trainings and has general knowledge of support available to district in a crisis

- [ ] Crisis communication standards clearly defined and understood by district and site leaders
- [ ] Occasional trainings occur for district and site leaders, but do not include department directors and managers
- [ ] Communication staff activates comprehensive crisis communication plan and deploys all relevant materials during crisis duration
- [ ] Key school system staff play minimal role and have limited knowledge of elements in crisis communication plan
- [ ] Staging areas for news media, parent-student reunification, etc., determined at onset of crisis, and communicated within first or second wave of initial information releases
- [ ] At least one substitute identified to relieve key communication staff during a crisis
- [ ] A district-designated staff member may be assigned task of monitoring key response team staff to ensure self-care and effectiveness of team over time

## EXEMPLARY (3 points)

in collaborative meetings to establish crisis response protocols

- [ ] Well-established relationships with county, regional or area education or state agencies and NSPRA or NSPRA chapter; school district communication leader regularly converses with members of these groups on crisis response, mutual aid and preparation
- [ ] Established process for how and when these support systems are accessed
- [ ] Well-established and district-wide standards and protocols for crisis response understood by district, site and department leaders
- [ ] Regularly scheduled trainings for site and department teams on crisis protocols, including process by which to train new employees hired between regularly scheduled trainings
- [ ] Key school system staff, in addition to communication staff, activate comprehensive crisis communication plan and deploy materials based on knowledge of roles and emergency response/communication training
- [ ] Staging areas established as part of comprehensive crisis communication or emergency operations plans before any incident necessitating their use
- [ ] Multiple substitutes or potential shifts identified in advance of crisis so that key communication staff can be relieved during crisis response activities
- [ ] Predetermined, district-designated staff member is assigned task of monitoring key response team staff to ensure self-care and effectiveness of team over time

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Electronic Tools in a Crisis**

My Points = ___3___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Notification system in place but rarely used to communicate with stakeholders | ☐ Notification system in place and serves as the primary communication tool for both regular and emergency messages | ☐ Notification system in place and used strategically to communicate emergency messages |
| ☐ Phone, text and email database of stakeholders not updated regularly | ☐ Stakeholder database updated annually | ☐ Stakeholder database updated frequently and easily by stakeholders |
| ☐ Limited or no use of social media during a crisis; no change in pre-scheduled or automated social media messages during a crisis; plan does not contain multi-media resources | ☐ Limited knowledge and use of social media during a crisis but not fully integrated as a tool in a crisis communication strategy; haphazard use results in some communication during a crisis, but not viewed by audiences as a reliable source of information | ☐ In-depth knowledge of social media; active and responsive on stakeholder-generated social media during crisis; team members assigned to monitor and respond to social media |
| ☐ Few social media channels (for example, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) used with little monitoring | ☐ Some social media posts linked to resources and updates on district website | ☐ Official district social media platforms broadcast frequent updates |
| ☐ Social media use limited primarily to school, district and weather-related events | ☐ Minimal or no effort in place to develop social media following to expand reach in a crisis | ☐ If available, multimedia resources (video, audio, photo, statements) pushed out through social media to increase engagement and expand audience reach |
| ☐ Two-way conversations limited on social media channels; no protocols exist to address negative conversations | ☐ Multiple social media channels used strategically for different audiences and monitored regularly | ☐ Use of pre-scheduled, automated social media content paused during crisis |
| ☐ No district webpage exists that outlines crisis or emergency protocols, terms and standards | ☐ Social media use includes some communication during a crisis or emergency | ☐ Comprehensive social media plan that includes procedures for use, monitoring and frequency in the event of an incident or emergency is incorporated into the comprehensive communication plan; coordinated by the district communication office |
| ☐ No tracking of analytics of social media posts, homepage or emergency page visits, or notification alerts during a crisis | ☐ Evidence of two-way conversations on social media channels; protocols established to address negative conversations | ☐ Social media is used as a key vehicle for disseminating information about a crisis (during and after); monitoring systems allow schools or district to accurately adapt emergency response strategies and tactics, as well as information shared |
| | ☐ District webpage exists with limited information on crisis or emergency protocols, terms, and standards | ☐ Clear, ongoing proactive coordination exists among district staff with posting rights; social media team meets regularly |
| | ☐ Analytics by each platform tracked during a crisis and analyzed by communication team | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | | ☐ District webpage exists with complete information on crisis or emergency protocols, terms and standards |
| | | ☐ Crisis webpage ready to take over all or part of district home page if needed |
| | | ☐ Analytics are shared with district leaders and school board; provide basis for communication staff to reinforce or revise use of social media, webpage and notification alerts during a crisis |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Continuously Improving Through Post-Crisis Communication Processes, Procedures**     My Points = _2_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ No or minimal debriefing held among district leadership, communication team and responding agencies to analyze and evaluate crisis communication | ☐ Regular review and debrief of crisis response with key school system staff (including cabinet, school administrators, impacted staff) and responding agencies to analyze and evaluate crisis communication | ☐ Comprehensive formal review and debrief of crisis with all impacted stakeholders, including analysis of successes, opportunities to improve, challenges, and necessary revisions to emergency operations and comprehensive crisis communication plans |
| ☐ District-level discussions take place following local or regional incidents or small-scale crises, but all impacted staff members may not be included | ☐ Notes from debrief summarized and communicated to school administrators and district leadership | ☐ Formal report created for leadership in all participating agencies |
| ☐ Debriefs, when they do occur, lack an intentional focus on assessment of the crisis response plan, process and roles | ☐ Findings communicated to collaborating agencies | ☐ Comprehensive crisis communication plan revised based on formal review of incident |
| ☐ No formal communication shared with partnering agencies about debrief findings | ☐ Comprehensive crisis communication plan revised based on review and debrief with key school system staff | ☐ Updated plan communicated to all stakeholders, including district leadership, staff and multiagency collaborators |
| ☐ Minimal or no revisions made to crisis communication plan | ☐ Updated plan communicated to district leadership | ☐ Any applicable board policies and administrative regulations reviewed and revised if necessary |
| ☐ Informal sharing of notes from incident debrief | ☐ Case study professional development session offered to district leadership using findings from formal incident review and crisis communication plan revisions | ☐ Ongoing professional development trainings for leadership and school staff updated to reflect findings from most recent incident and revisions to crisis communication plan |
| ☐ No formal assessment of incidents or events taking place outside of the district | ☐ Discussion of local or national incidents or events occurs irregularly or without an intentional effort to evaluate in the context of the district's own crisis preparedness planning | ☐ Regular discussion of incidents or events that occur outside of district to assess potential impact to district emergency plans and procedures, and adjustments made accordingly |
| ☐ No adjustment of plans takes place after incidents or events outside of the district | ☐ Plans may not be updated in the wake of local or state incidents | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Engaging the Community on Safety and Crisis Communication**     My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal or no awareness by stakeholders of school and district safety and crisis communication procedures and protocols | ☐ Basic understanding by stakeholders of school district safety and crisis communication procedures and protocols | ☐ School site and district safety and crisis communication procedures and protocols with stakeholder groups, especially parents, are regularly shared |
| ☐ Emergency management, crisis response and crisis communication policies adopted by school board | ☐ School board receives briefing after each emergency by superintendent, communication director or designee, and provided talking points if necessary | ☐ Stakeholders' expectations are regularly assessed and incorporated into crisis communication planning |
| ☐ Minimal outreach to and engagement with stakeholders on safety issues | ☐ Town hall, summit or community forum on school safety or specific issue held in response to and following a crisis | ☐ Key communicators informed through media statements, press releases and electronic tools as part of crisis communication response |
| ☐ Minimal or no understanding of student, parent, family and staff perceptions of crisis communication preferences and satisfaction | ☐ Prevention and intervention strategies published in school newsletters and on district and school websites in response to and following a crisis | ☐ School board observes, participates in or receives summaries of tabletop drills and after incident debriefing sessions so they are prepared to respond to stakeholders |
| | ☐ Student, parent, family and staff survey on crisis communication conducted regularly on preferences and satisfaction; results shared widely with stakeholders | ☐ Parent and community forums on prevention and intervention strategies for a variety of possible crises held at least annually |
| | | ☐ Parents and community members serve as expert sources, who can speak to media on school district crisis communication plan and preparation |
| | | ☐ Crisis communication survey results regularly analyzed and integrated into current plan and practices |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Incorporating Cultural Competency with Crisis Communication**

My Points = 2 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Crisis communication plan largely devoid of addressing needs of English language learner (ELL) families | ☐ English language learner (ELL) families, interpreters or translators, and community agencies that serve immigrant families are occasionally or rarely consulted for input on crisis communication plan | ☐ English language learner (ELL) families, interpreters or translators, and community agencies that serve immigrant families review district's crisis communication plan annually to ensure cultural responsiveness |
| ☐ Interpreters or translators for ELL families used as-needed, if available, to translate or interpret communication during emerging crises | ☐ Interpreters or translators are contracted with and available during crises to communicate with families but may not have thorough understanding of families they serve or may not be continuously connected with district | ☐ Crisis communication reflects understanding of cultural rituals and norms of ELL families when responding to a crisis involving ELL students (how to respond to family in mourning, respect for religious rituals, etc.) |
| ☐ Translation of crisis messages for ELL families is inconsistent and dependent on time of crisis and availability of translators | ☐ District communication staff works with schools regularly and knows which families and languages are needed for translation in a crisis | ☐ Interpreters or translators are trained in crisis communication, district and school safety protocols, and emergency procedures |
| ☐ No translations available of parent manuals on student safety, security, emergency procedures and communication | ☐ Messages are translated consistently during crises for ELL families for rapid notification calls, emails and texts regardless of time of crisis | ☐ Interpreters or translators meet with families they serve at least annually to share crisis communication protocols and resources |
| ☐ Some informal opportunities for ELL families to ask questions and learn more about school or district safety protocols and emergency procedures and communications, but no districtwide streamlined process exist | ☐ Parent manuals on student safety, security, emergency procedures and communication are translated only if requested | ☐ Translated crisis messages are provided during all crises in a timely manner, and interpreters or translators are available by phone or in person to respond to questions from non-English speakers |
| ☐ Few crisis messages templates are developed in multiple languages | ☐ Interpreters available at start-of-school open houses or ELL events to help explain school or district safety protocols and emergency procedures and communication | ☐ Translated parent manuals on safety, security, emergency procedures and communication are disseminated at the start of each school year |
| | ☐ Key crisis message templates are developed in multiple languages and available to multiple communicators, staff members and key district leaders | ☐ Onsite interpreters help new parents understand safety, security, emergency procedures and communication material, and are available annually thereafter as needed |
| | ☐ Message templates are translated for parent emails, texts, phone scripts and website | ☐ District or school offers ELL families multiple opportunities throughout the year to learn and understand district and school safety protocols and emergency procedures as well as how the district will communicate with them during a crisis |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | | ☐ Feedback from ELL families used to refine crisis communication practices and plan |
| | | ☐ Templates are reviewed and updated by communication staff with translators at least annually |

## RATE YOUR...
## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Enter your "my points" score for each program component** in the chart at right. As a reminder, each individual component should get either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) based on where the majority of your checked boxes fell in the previous charts.
2. **Total your points** for all program components.
3. **Compare your total points to the "overall rating" score range** below to assess the current status of your school district's communication program in this critical function area.

### Overall Rating in Critical Function Area

**Emerging** = 0 - 8 total points

**Established** = 9 - 14 total points

**Exemplary** = 15 - 18 total points

| Program Component | My Points (1, 2 or 3) |
|---|---|
| Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through a Crisis Communication Plan | 3 |
| Maximizing Communication Effectiveness with Trained Staff and Leadership | 3 |
| Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Electronic Tools in a Crisis | 3 |
| Continuously Improving Through Post-Crisis Communication Processes and Procedures | 2 |
| Engaging the Community on Safety and Crisis Communication | 2 |
| Incorporating Cultural Competency with Crisis Communication | 2 |
| **TOTAL =** | 15 (18 max) |

## SAMPLE MEASURES

- SCoPE (School Communication Performance Evaluation) Survey
    - ◊ Percentage of parents, employees and community members who perceive communication to be open and transparent
    - ◊ Percentage of parents, employees and community members who perceive communication to be timely
    - ◊ Percentage of parents, employees and community members who perceive communication to be accurate
    - ◊ Percentage of parents, employees and community members who perceive communication to be trustworthy
    - ◊ Level of satisfaction with the quality of communication during a crisis
    - ◊ Level of satisfaction with the quality of communication about school safety
    - ◊ Level of agreement on whether parents, employees and community members feel well informed during a school or district emergency
- Preferences on receiving communication during a crisis
- Communication platform analytics during a crisis vs. non-crisis (social media, website, notification alerts) to include visits as well as engagement levels
- Media coverage analysis during crisis and post-crisis
- Results of post-crisis debriefing
- Number of attendees at community forums on school safety
- Number of trainings for school site and department teams on crisis communication plan and protocols
- Evaluation results of staff training on crisis communications
- Number of school district safety publications or information translated into multiple languages

## SOURCES

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*Crisis Communication Guidelines*. California: Los Angeles County Office of Education.

*Crisis Communications Plan*. (2014). California: San Diego County Office of Education.

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*The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools*, 4th edition. Maryland: National School Public Relations Association.

Kaufman, R. (2015). *Crisis Management: Plan, Prepare and Practice for the Unthinkable Emergency*. Missouri School Public Relations Association.

Steele, B. *Law Enforcement Best Practices for Social Media Use and Monitoring During a Crisis.* Oregon: FBI Public Affairs.

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**Rubrics of Practice for Critical Function Area:**

## Bond/Finance Election Plans and Campaigns

### Critical Function Area

The sixth critical function area is **Bond/Finance Election Plans and Campaigns**.

Depending upon the laws and regulations of a particular state or province, the elected members of boards of education (aka, boards of trustees, school boards, school committees, etc.) and the administrators they hire have the authority to make a variety of financial decisions for public school districts that affect daily operations, programs and services. However, there are specific instances in which school districts must receive voter approval through a bond/finance election (commonly called a referendum or public vote) before they can spend any of the district's existing funds, borrow funds and/or levy a tax to raise funds for specific purposes. These circumstances can vary widely by state or locale.

For example, in some instances each school district's annual operating budget is set by the state (or other applicable governing body), with all or the majority of revenues generated through property taxes, income taxes, sales taxes, lottery sales revenue and the like. In those cases, there may be little or no local discretion over how much money can be spent, and on what. Some states may allow a public "override" vote to determine whether residents are willing to permit the district to impose additional taxes to enhance programs or services beyond what the state has agreed to provide. In other states, voters must approve their school district's entire proposed annual operating budget, which will then be paid for in part through state and federal monies, and in part through taxes paid by district residents and businesses.

Likewise, state and/or federal funding may be used in some instances to help districts pay for capital renovation and construction costs without requiring a public vote, while in other

instances, district residents must approve capital renovation and construction projects through a formal vote. These are sometimes called a bond vote, because districts will borrow money through bonds to pay for renovations and construction projects while waiting for revenue or reimbursements to come from the state and/or federal government, or from residents through the taxes they pay.

Keep in mind that each state (and sometimes each local municipality) has its own laws, rules and regulations for districts to follow for financing public education and for renovating, repairing and/or constructing schools and additions. **The following information is intended to be general enough to apply to school districts throughout the United States and Canada, but school leaders should make sure they have a complete understanding of the laws, rules and regulations that are in effect in the communities they serve.**

Perhaps it should go without saying, but all communication materials on any and all topics should be clear, concise and easy to understand, with key information easy to find.

In addition, whenever a school district asks its residents to vote on financial proposals, there are a number of key steps (detailed on the following pages) that should be taken to ensure all stakeholder groups are included, engaged and informed throughout the process, from the research and planning phases, to fleshing out and finalizing a formal proposal for residents to consider. These steps will help stakeholders understand why the district is asking for permission to raise and/or spend additional funds, and why the proposal is both appropriate and necessary. It is also essential to communicate clearly and consistently about how much the proposal will cost, and the financial impact on individual taxpayers.

These steps are foundational for building informed consent before residents vote on a school district operating budget, capital project proposal, millage increase or other bond/finance election campaign.

Most states prohibit (or at least significantly restrict) school districts from asking stakeholders to vote a particular way ("Vote yes!"). In such cases, district communication and community engagement efforts related to bond/finance elections and campaigns must be solely informational.

Election plans and campaigns are typically most effective when they are based on the four-step strategic public relations planning model, referred to by the acronyms RPIE (Research-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation) or RACE (Research-Analyze/Action Plan-Communicate-Evaluate). These formal, systematic plans and campaigns are designed to achieve specific and measurable goals, include audience-specific strategies and tactics built on key messaging, and include feedback loops for continual evaluation and improvement. Each campaign builds upon previous elections, and each serves to inform future campaigns.

## Program Components

The following program components have been identified through research and anecdotal evidence to be best practices in bond/finance election campaign communications. Evidence of emerging, established and exemplary communications programs are outlined in the table that follows.

**Understanding and following all legal requirements:** Each state/province and municipality has its own laws governing elections, including school elections. Before embarking on a bond or finance campaign, it is imperative that school leaders and school communicators understand and follow all of the requirements they must meet to be in compliance with laws and regulations. Please be aware that some of the activities described in this document may not comply with the election laws governing your district.

**Building stakeholders' informed consent through community engagement:** People are much more likely to understand the problem or opportunity the district would like to address when they are informed and engaged throughout the process, and when their input is considered along the way. This is the heart of building informed consent, or the willingness for stakeholders to go along with a proposal even if they don't like some or all aspects of the plan. It's time consuming and messy sometimes, but these are necessary steps when seeking stakeholder support. "It would be easy for administrators themselves to choose which projects end up on the proposal. After all, maintaining control keeps the proposal neat and the process efficient. However, taking the proposal out of the hands of the community at any point in the process leaves space for cracks to form in the structure of the bond – ones that may cripple the proposal" (SchoolCEO, 2019).

**Researching and understanding stakeholders' needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes, knowledge levels:** Both internal and external stakeholders should be engaged to help identify community priorities for programs, services, facilities, transportation, school configurations, and all other key aspects of the operations for public schools. With stakeholder input, school leaders can more confidently develop plans and procedures that meet identified needs and that will more likely gain public support. Without stakeholder input and sustained efforts to build their informed consent for measures they may find objectionable, school leaders face greater risk of voter rejection of their plans and proposals at the polls as well as organized opposition efforts.

**Developing and following a communication plan, with distinct phases:** Whether following the Research-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (RPIE) model, the Research-Analyze/Action Plan-Communicate-Evaluate (RACE) model or something similar, communication planning is key to successful communication campaigns. As presenters share PowerPoints, as PR staff produce and post videos on the finance campaign section of the website, as the superintendent meets with editorial boards of local media outlets, clear and consistent messaging will highlight the needs, explain the plan of action, and help make sure stakeholders know how the proposal will affect them.

**Developing and communicating key messages across multiple communication platforms:** Go internal with messaging and outreach before going external. Those with the closest relationships to parents—typically teachers, office staff and principals—are parents' most trusted sources of information. These staff ambassadors for the school system need to know how the proposal was developed, what the proposal focuses on and what that means for their individual schools so that they can then reinforce the district's messages in a clear, concise and consistent manner.

**Focusing on branding so stakeholders can easily recognize district communication efforts:** A school district's brand consists of the value it offers to stakeholders; the brand identity it perceives, desires and develops for itself; and the visual ways in which it represents that identity. Key messages for a bond/finance campaign are more likely to be seen and processed by voters when they align with the district's brand and are delivered with a consistent "look" and "feel" across multiple communication channels, including social media, website, direct mail, newsletters, posters, etc.

**Listening to public sentiment throughout the process, and adapting messages and strategies based on stakeholder input:** Staying in touch with what the community is saying and feeling about the proposed election is critical to being able to modify as needed all key messages, strategies and tactics. Offer opportunities prior to the election for two-way communication between district officials and both internal and external audiences. This will allow for questions and concerns to be addressed and for incorrect information that may be circulating in the community to be corrected.

**Communicating year-round about school and district goals, plans, programs and finances:** Effective campaigns engage stakeholders before, during and after the election. Avoid reaching out to stakeholders only when the district needs something from them. Instead, communicate with them on a consistent basis, demonstrating the return on their continued investment and how it ties into a larger plan that has student success at its heart. This will give voters an opportunity to see and understand the value of supporting proposed bond and finance campaigns. Bottom line: Be the first and best source of information about your school district, year round.

**Evaluating communication effectiveness to inform future strategy:** Take time to evaluate the effectiveness of the bond/finance communication campaign, identifying what worked well and what should be done differently for the next election. Reach out to various stakeholders to seek multiple viewpoints in assessing your messaging, strategies and tactics. This step will strengthen future election campaigns. Planning for a future election should begin the day after the vote, especially if a proposal doesn't pass and the district will need to go back out to the voters.

**Ensuring continued communication takes place after the vote:** Whether the proposal passed or failed, stakeholders will need to be informed about next steps, including any changes in the approved plan because of unforeseen circumstances or what the district will do in the face of voter rejection of the plan. Post-election communication strategies and tactics will vary based on the outcome of the vote, with key messages re-examined, reformulated and expanded as needed.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

## COMPONENT: Understanding and Following All Legal Requirements

My Points = 3 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ School district leaders generally inform communication staff when they need to take action on legal matters within the communications purview. Based on that guidance, the communication staff:<br><br>◆ Establish deadlines for when information needs to be delivered to all voters; determine deadlines for mail-in ballots, early voting and ballots sent to military and overseas voters.<br><br>◆ Determine the language that is legally required to be included in voter information pamphlets.<br><br>☐ Communicate about how, when, where to vote, including:<br><br>◆ Gathering information and communicating to the public about voter requirements, absentee ballots, and who votes where if there is more than one polling location.<br><br>◆ Publicizing all voting locations and poll hours.<br><br>◆ Publicizing required identification/ documentation needed at the polls in order to vote.<br><br>☐ No guidelines or direction provided to employees about the roles or positions they can take regarding the bond proposal during work time and after hours. | ☐ Communication staff are aware of the full scope of legal requirements related to election communications and proactively consult with the appropriate staff, departments and agencies to ensure that all requirements are met across the district. Determine the following:<br><br>◆ The legal requirements and deadlines for a bond/finance campaign for your location (state/province, region, local, federal).<br><br>◆ The threshold of "yes" votes needed in order for the measure to pass (e.g., simple majority of more than 50%; supermajority of 60%).<br><br>◆ The deadlines for generation of proposition number and ballot title.<br><br>◆ The number and locations of polling places.<br><br>◆ If state or local laws require voting to take place within a school, and if so, if board policies require schools to be closed during voting.<br><br>◆ If there are mandatory voting dates or hours.<br><br>◆ If there are legal requirements to publish vote information in languages other than English.<br><br>☐ Encourage residents to both register and vote on election day through the school district's print and digital materials, website and social media. | ☐ In consultation with the appropriate people, departments, and agencies, the communication staff create a timeline and master plan for all school district staff to follow to meet all legal requirements related to election communications.<br><br>☐ Facilitate a voter registration drive. Share voter registration links so residents will know whether they are registered to vote and can register online.<br><br>☐ Communication staff play a key role in strategy and planning for, as well as communicating about, voting logistics:<br><br>◆ Establish and clearly communicate the expected traffic flow within polling location (including setting up sign-in tables, seating, voting machines, etc.), so voters enter and exit in an efficient, logical manner.<br><br>◆ Monitor same-day events happening on school grounds and/or in nearby neighborhoods that could create traffic congestion. Arrange for directional road signage and traffic control support during peak voting times. Proactively communicate about peak traffic times to potential voters.<br><br>◆ If polls are located at a school, arrange for security/law enforcement presence and/or establish a single point of entry for voters that prevents them from having access to all sections of the buildings where there are students. Communicate to parents and potential voters about these voter and student safety procedures. |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | ☐ Communication staff provide input into school officials' decisions about voting logistics, including:<br><br>◆ Choosing poll locations that are geographically central for residents (when locations are not pre-determined by law or policy).<br><br>◆ Anticipating estimated voter turnout to ensure sufficient ballots and to plan for traffic control and managing internal spaces in locations where a long line of voters may be waiting.<br><br>◆ Ensuring there is handicap accessibility at polling locations.<br><br>◆ If polling locations are at a school while classes are in session, proactively communicating with staff and parents about how student drop-off and pick-up procedures will be affected.<br><br>☐ Establish stringent guidelines or suggestions regarding roles or positions employees can take regarding the bond proposal during work time and after hours. Communication about these guidelines/suggestions is conducted with some or all staff. | ☐ Establish stringent guidelines regarding roles or positions employees can take regarding the bond proposal during work time and after hours, and then communicate with all staff about the guidelines. |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Building Stakeholders' Informed Consent Through Community Engagement**

My Points = _3_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Planning work and decisions are made relatively swiftly and/or without community input. | ☐ Planning work and decisions are made at a modest pace after some efforts have been made to understand the needs of stakeholders and to include them in decision-making processes, through informal discussions with individuals and small groups. | ☐ Planning work and decisions are made only after extensive efforts, which may take several months to multiple years, have been made to understand the needs of stakeholders and to include them in decision-making processes such as through formal focus groups, community round-table conversations, scientific surveys, a digital idea sharing app, etc. |
| ☐ A proposal is built around the district's perceived needs, with little or no community input. For example, when facing facilities needs and enrollment changes, school district leaders might: | ☐ A proposal is built around the district's perceived needs and priorities, perhaps with the unanimous support of the school board, and then the district presents its proposal to the community and invites public feedback before it decides whether to schedule a vote. Vocal resistance to all or parts of the proposal may lead the district to revise the proposal or to drop it entirely in response to public pressure. | ☐ A proposal is built around both the district's and the community's perceived needs and priorities. Community perceptions, goals and priorities are identified through roundtable discussions, town hall meetings and random-sample, statistically valid surveys conducted on a routine basis. |
| ◆ Establish a property or building assessment rubric that quantifies conditions of all buildings throughout the district to help determine those that need most critical attention. | | |
| ◆ Build a priority list from that rubric as evidence of addressing critical needs above others. | | |
| ◆ Calculate and take into consideration the impact of past and/or projected population or business growth in the region, and the resulting impact this growth may have on school facilities. | ☐ A range of print and digital resources are provided to teachers and building-level staff to explain how the proposal relates to, supports or addresses school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues. Employees are equipped with facts, which they must interpret on their own to speak knowledgeably with members of the community about district needs/opportunities. | ☐ School leaders and/or project planners meet with teachers and building-level staff to explain how the proposal relates to, supports or addresses school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues, and the importance of district employees sharing accurate information with the community. Employees are informed and empowered, through a range of print and digital resources, to speak knowledgeably with members of the community about district needs/opportunities. |
| ◆ Determine whether the district can address identified needs through such measures as scheduling changes, redistricting and/or school-building grade realignments before considering renovations, additions or new construction. | | |
| ◆ Develop, announce and schedule a vote on a proposal based on its findings. | | |
| ☐ No resources provided to teachers and building-level staff to explain how the proposal relates to, supports or addresses school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues. Employees may not have accurate information to share with members of the community about district needs/opportunities. | ☐ A citizen advisory committee that includes staff, parents and students is in place to study building needs, review district financial reports, and to make recommendations to the school board when needed. Its findings are primarily communicated to district leaders and during board meetings. Some confusion may exist in the community as to whether the committee is making the decision or the school board. | ☐ The work of the citizen advisory committee is regularly communicated internally and externally to all key stakeholders. The committee and the public clearly understand its advisory role in the decision-making process. Committee members represent a variety of stakeholder interests and types, and their diverse voices are represented in campaign messaging. |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Minimal efforts are made to include community members in needs assessments, financial analysis, and/or making recommendations to the school board. | | |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Researching and Understanding Stakeholders' Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels**

My Points = _3_ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Past research into stakeholder needs and priorities are non-existent or limited to informal methods.<br><br>☐ Little or no additional research is undertaken.<br><br>☐ Little or no efforts are made to assess general community engagement.<br><br>☐ Review past election results to determine voting patterns and trends.<br><br>☐ No efforts made to analyze previous failed elections (if any). | ☐ The school district already has several approaches in place to identify stakeholders' needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels. Its decisions are informed by the available data from past research done through:<br><br>◆ Scientific and non-scientific surveys<br>◆ Formal facility assessments<br>◆ Focus groups<br>◆ Town hall meetings<br>◆ Informal conversations with task forces, committees, PTA/PTO meetings, etc.<br><br>☐ The school district conducts additional surveys and/or hosts community small-group discussions early in the process—prior to the adoption of a formal proposal for voter consideration:<br><br>◆ To assess how informed stakeholders are of the problems and/or opportunities the district is looking to address; and<br>◆ To collect insights into stakeholders' needs, expectations, opinions and attitudes.<br><br>☐ The school district also plans for and distributes exit surveys at all polling locations during the vote.<br><br>☐ Informal efforts are made to gain a sense of how engaged the community is in general with school district messages, of whether additional efforts are needed to further engage stakeholders, and to identify the best ways to engage them. | ☐ The school district regularly uses multiple approaches to provide a strong balance of formal and informal, primary and secondary, and qualitative and quantitative research. Its decisions are informed by the available data from past research. In addition:<br><br>◆ Communication staff are trained in public policy/funding research and/ or have the budget/district resources to contract for such services.<br>◆ Research results are regularly shared with policymakers and senior leaders to inform decision making.<br>◆ Methods used to identify stakeholders' values and priorities are relevant to new trends in research.<br>◆ Past election data is reviewed to determine community engagement levels.<br><br>☐ The school district conducts additional research prior to the adoption of a formal proposal for voter consideration as well as during the vote via exit surveys. In addition, key communicators are identified among internal and external audiences. They are individually encouraged to:<br><br>◆ Join planning committees;<br>◆ Hold informal conversations with stakeholders to talk about the needs/ opportunities to be addressed; and<br>◆ Report back to district leaders on feedback they received from stakeholders.<br><br>☐ Support of key communicators/community advocates is harnessed, especially for high- |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
|  | ☐ Analyze past election results, using election management software and/or prior exit survey data, to determine demographics of voters and their voting habits, both as an aggregate and to assess which demographics typically vote yes and which vote no on similar ballot measures.<br><br>☐ An analysis of the reasons behind previous failed elections (if any) has been conducted, and some effort has been taken to prevent their occurrence in the next election. | profile reductions/cuts to education or large expenditures for facilities/programs.<br><br>☐ Formal, detailed efforts are made to gain a sense of how engaged the community is in general with school district messages and specifically with messages about the ballot items; of whether additional efforts are needed to further engage stakeholders with ballot item messages; and to identify the best ways to engage them.<br><br>◆ Conduct an additional survey four to six weeks prior to election to gauge progress and identify any areas of misunderstanding, and then focus remaining communication efforts in areas that need to be strengthened.<br><br>◆ Monitor social media, editorials, letters to the editor, and community lawn signs to determine whether there is organized opposition to the proposal.<br><br>◆ Meet with key communicators representing organized opposition to answer questions and clarify any misconceptions they may have.<br><br>☐ Conduct a professional survey of registered voters to assess how likely individuals are to vote, their understanding of district needs, their personal priorities for education in the community, and their opinions about possible tax increases to support capital or educational initiatives.<br><br>☐ Planning for a new election takes into consideration the identified reasons for any previous failed elections (if any). Research is conducted into the best way to overcome those failures. Formal objectives, strategies and tactics are identified and implemented to overcome them in the next election. |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Developing and Following a Communication Plan, With Distinct Phases**

My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ No formal plan has been developed or the plan is primarily a to-do list of activities. | ☐ A strategic communication plan is developed following the RPIE format (research, planning, implementation and evaluation). | ☐ A strategic communication plan is developed following the RPIE format. Communication staff also conduct a situational analysis (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and identify key messages. |
| ☐ Informal planning is done in isolation of what may or may not have worked in the past. | ◆ All communication efforts are designed to educate and inform stakeholders on the issues so they understand the result of successful and unsuccessful outcomes. | ◆ All claims regarding district needs, potential benefits of school improvements and advantages for students are supported by facts established during the research phase. |
| ☐ Determine the problem or opportunity to be addressed. | ◆ The plan identifies and incorporates appropriate strategies (e.g., social media campaign, media relations, public engagement, employee engagement) and tactics/tools (e.g., meetings, publications, community events, news releases, online information, social network posts, video storytelling). | ◆ Campaign objectives are specific about the action to be taken and the target audience involved. The objectives are measurable, achievable, realistic and time-specific (e.g., Increase support among staff by 10% from the previous school election). |
| ☐ Collect relevant information from school officials as it is available. | | |
| ☐ Communication efforts don't distinguish between internal and external audiences (what they each need to know, when and how). | | |
| ☐ Little or no effort is made to calculate how much each communications vehicle/approach will cost and whether there is sufficient funding available to cover those costs. | ◆ Activities are listed in detail (e.g., six meetings, four publications, three blog posts and one tweet per day) along with a timeline, budget and responsible person for each key step. | ◆ Identified strategies and tactics include both personal communications and mass communications, and are aligned with school and department communication plans. |
| ☐ Communication strategies focus primarily on external communications. | ☐ Review the district's prior election campaigns and replicate award-winning or successful communication strategies. | ◆ Communication staff regularly listen to stakeholders and modify the plan as needed, remaining fluid to adapt to changing priorities, strategies and tactics. |
| ☐ No efforts are made to engage community members in critical school-related issues. | ◆ Collect history of what's been done or tried before: what worked, what didn't and why. | ☐ Review the district's prior election campaigns as well as successful election campaigns held by other districts. Replicate award-winning or successful communication strategies, but customize them to the needs and interests of local stakeholders. |
| | ◆ Review prior exit survey data. | |
| | ☐ Attend planning meetings whenever potential ballot initiatives are discussed. | |
| | ☐ Communication plan identifies internal and external audiences, but doesn't customize the messaging, timing and delivery mechanism for each audience. | ☐ Help plan and facilitate meetings where potential ballot initiatives are discussed. |
| | ☐ Projected costs are calculated for each planned communications vehicle/approach, | ☐ Communication plan includes a detailed action plan grid, which identifies internal |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | and an appropriate budget is established with sufficient funding encumbered to achieve the plan. | and external audiences and the sub-audiences within each main audience. The messaging, timing and delivery mechanism for each audience is customized. Internal audiences are the first to know. |
| | ☐ Communication strategies focus on both internal and external communications relatively equally, including directing messages to all faculty and staff; parents and students; taxpayers, residents and business owners; and local news reporters and editorial boards. | ☐ A cost-benefit analysis is conducted prior to choosing each planned communications vehicle/approach, and based on that analysis some options may be eliminated even if there is sufficient funding available. |
| | ☐ The plan includes two-way communication opportunities for stakeholders to discuss school-related issues directly related to the identified issues/opportunities. | ☐ Communication strategies focus on both internal and external communications, but the plan prioritizes internal communications first. Efforts underscore the importance of ALL school employees—at all levels and locations—understanding the issues/opportunities as well as what is included in the proposal and why so they can effectively serve as school district ambassadors. |

On the Exemplary column, the following bullet points appear:

♦ These efforts begin with school administrators, who serve as key leaders in their communities and help determine whether parents, students, staff and other community members understand the measure.

♦ The plan also recognizes the need to engage business leaders, community organizations and elected officials, with whom the district meets regularly (including non-election years). These groups understand that quality schools bring economic development to a community, and they understand what a return on an investment means.

☐ Opportunities for two-way communication with stakeholders are continuous and ongoing over time regarding a wide range of issues and topics, not just during election years about identified issues/opportunities.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Developing and Communicating Key Messages Across Multiple Communication Platforms**

My Points = __3__ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Key messages are not identified. | ☐ Key messages are loosely articulated, not used consistently and/or are not very specific to the ballot item. | ☐ Clear, concise key messages that resonate with internal and external audiences are used consistently throughout the election campaign. |
| ☐ Messages are largely based just on what administrators want to tell the public. | ☐ Key messages include technical terms or jargon, without translating them into layperson's terms, which reduces the effectiveness of messages. | ☐ These key messages: |
| ☐ Finance communications are unclear and difficult to understand. Delivery of those communications is limited to whatever standard methods are used for everyday communications by the school district. | ☐ Messaging reflects input from internal and external stakeholders as well as information administrators feel is important to communicate. Stakeholder input is incorporated into messaging by: | ◆ Are developed based on research, including surveys and the work of the citizen advisory committee. |
| ☐ District messages are identified but not customized for each school setting. | ◆ Talking with students and staff about the challenges they face and how those challenges would be addressed by the proposal. | ◆ Are carefully articulated to meet campaign objectives. |
| ☐ Little or no tracking of effectiveness of each communication channel relative to delivering key messages to target audiences. | ◆ Talking with external stakeholders such as business leaders and nearby property owners about the value of the proposal from their perspective. | ◆ Clearly describe the need/opportunity. |
| | | ◆ Specifically address how the proposal equitably addresses all students' needs. |
| | ☐ Graphs, tables, comparisons and other resources are used effectively to increase understanding of financial information. Finance communications are delivered via multiple digital and print platforms and media (public presentations, social posts, fliers, website resources, blogs, editorials, videos, etc.) to ensure outreach to staff and potential voters. | ☐ Messaging reflects input from internal and external stakeholders as well as information administrators feel is important to communicate. Key messages are consistently woven into all communications vehicles. |
| | | ◆ Draft one-sentence summary and one paragraph statement of the problem and opportunity. |
| | | ◆ Develop background document with pertinent history, data, talking points, etc. |
| | | ◆ Develop FAQ based on questions people are actually asking. |
| | ☐ District messages are identified and some custom messages are provided at the school level. | ◆ Use photos and/or videos to deliver key messages, including showing, not telling, the need. |
| | ☐ Some micro-targeting in messaging is in place, based on geographic location, grade level, etc. | ☐ Finance communications are clear and easy for all stakeholders to understand. In addition, ongoing professional development is provided for communications staff and district leaders in school finance regulations |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| | ☐ Some tracking of effectiveness of each communication channel relative to delivering key messages to target audiences. | and communications requirements. Ongoing opportunities are provided for two-way communication on finance topics between the district and its internal and external stakeholders. Responses to inquiries are timely and thorough, and comments are monitored to identify and correct rumors and misinformation. |

Messages are identified both at the district level and for each school, and are tied to not only what schools will be getting but also why.

- ◆ Messaging around the proposal includes overarching district messages that are tailored at the school level. It should be clear to stakeholders what the benefits are for each school community under the proposal and how the proposal was developed.

- ◆ Communications are tailored to values and priorities of target audience and sub-audiences such as parents at a specific school.

☐ Ongoing feedback and evaluation of effectiveness of various communication channels in delivering key messages and influencing opinion and ultimately, behavior, of intended target audiences.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Focus on Branding So Stakeholders Can Easily Recognize District Communications Efforts**

My Points = 3 out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ The district does not have a clear brand. Communications about the proposal do not demonstrate how it aligns with the district brand since there is not one.<br><br>☐ There are limited or no design standards in place, so communication vehicles lack a consistent look and feel across multiple platforms. | ☐ The district has a brand, but it may not be widely or consistently communicated. The district brand is represented on communications about the proposal. There is some effort to explain how the proposal aligns with the district's brand.<br><br>☐ Basic design standards are established to help ensure consistency in look and feel of communications, but they are not always followed. | ☐ The district has a clear, well-defined brand based on the value it offers to stakeholders, the identity it desires for itself and the written (tagline) and visual (logo, colors, fonts, etc.) components it uses to represent its brand. District branding is present and communicated consistently in all election materials. Election materials may have their own campaign-specific tagline and logo, but all components align with the district's brand.<br><br>☐ Design standards are established, with a formal style guide in place that is shared with all staff responsible for formal communication efforts, ensuring consistency in look and feel across all communication channels. |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Listening to Public Sentiment Throughout the Process, Adapting Messages and Strategies Based on Stakeholder Input**

My Points = __3__ out of 3

☐ Communication messages and strategies are maintained regardless of whether they resonate with stakeholders or if unanticipated challenges arise.

- No formal opportunities for two-way communication with stakeholders.
- Public meetings offer only one-way communication, with school officials talking at stakeholders.
- Heavy reliance on static written materials.

☐ Communication messages and strategies are adapted when internal and external audiences give negative feedback, including concerns or lack of understanding about the need, process or proposal.

- Public sentiment is monitored through such channels as social media, news reports, letters to the editor and editorials.
- Public meetings offer some opportunities for two-way communication, with school officials leading discussions with stakeholders.
- Efforts are made to engage a wide range of stakeholders, including both likely supporters and detractors, as well as those who may be undecided.
- Written materials are modified based on stakeholder feedback.

☐ Communication messages and strategies are refined throughout the election process, based both on monitoring stakeholder feedback and actively seeking public input through two-way guided discussions.

- Active listening to stakeholder feedback allows for questions and concerns to be addressed, and for incorrect information that may be circulating in the community to be corrected.
- Key messages are adapted throughout the process to reflect stakeholder input while still furthering the school district's goals.
- Key communicators are coached throughout the process about changes in strategies and talking points to ensure their messages are both current and reflective of stakeholder feedback.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Communicating Year-Round About School and District Goals, Plans, Programs and Finances**

**My Points = 2 out of 3**

☐ Communication about school and district goals, plans, programs and finances is done sporadically and largely in response to requests from school leaders.

☐ A loose plan is in place to communicate periodically about school and district goals, plans, programs and finances.

- ◆ Communication staff share responsibility with administrators for developing the timeline for these communication efforts.
- ◆ Communication staff routinely ask questions of key officials to help guide their research, decision-making and planning efforts, and then communicate about them on a regular basis.

☐ Communication staff develop and lead a systematic, year-round approach designed to keep stakeholders informed of school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues.

- ◆ Identify each stakeholder group's preferred communication vehicles, methods and topics through print and digital surveys, focus groups, online conversation apps, informal conversations, etc.
- ◆ Target message content based on stakeholders' preferred interests, and deliver messages via target audiences' preferred media.
- ◆ Deploy multiple, varied and equitable communication strategies that reflect and respect stakeholders' diverse languages, cultures, financial ability, technology access and family demographics.

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Future Strategy**　　　　My Points = _2___ out of 3

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ No formal evaluation takes place.<br><br>　◆ Little or no effort is made to understand why residents voted the way they did.<br><br>　◆ Little or no evaluation is done to determine the effectiveness and reach of the strategies, tactics and tools used.<br><br>　◆ Continue to rely on past communication habits/customs in the future.<br><br>☐ Next steps related to future elections are determined based on:<br><br>　◆ The current vote outcome;<br><br>　◆ Assumptions/hunches as to why residents voted the way they did; and/or<br><br>　◆ Input from a limited number of stakeholders. | ☐ Some formal and informal evaluation takes place, with efforts made to understand election results and voter demographics, through methods such as:<br><br>　◆ Reviewing exit survey data with a limited analysis on the results.<br><br>　◆ Reviewing the effectiveness of communication tools/tactics used, focusing primarily on output numbers from communication staff (e.g., number of press releases and mailers sent) and digital analytics (e.g., open rates, page visits, post likes).<br><br>　◆ Conversations with individual key communicators for their observations on the election process and related communications.<br><br>☐ Next steps are informed, at least in part, by the results of some formal and informal evaluation measures. Communication staff report to administrators on their communication output during the election campaign and on key findings from exit surveys and other community input-gathering activities. These findings are reviewed when planning future bond/finance election campaigns. | ☐ In-depth, formal evaluation takes place, using quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather data from a variety of sources such as:<br><br>　◆ Deep-dive discussions with internal audiences, including board members, administrators and staff responsible for the election process about the process, outcomes, successes and unanticipated challenges;<br><br>　◆ Focus groups with external stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, business leaders, other taxpayers, elected officials) to capture their feedback about the effectiveness of the communications process; and<br><br>　◆ Internal and external surveys to determine which tactics and key messages resonated with stakeholders, why and how they influenced the election outcome.<br><br>☐ Next steps are identified based on the results of a range of evaluation measures. Communication staff report to administrators on the outcomes of their communication efforts and on key findings from their qualitative and quantitative research. They offer data-based, best-practice recommendations for next steps. Their recommendations become the basis for planning future bond/finance election campaigns. |

| EMERGING (1 point) | ESTABLISHED (2 points) | EXEMPLARY (3 points) |
|---|---|---|

**COMPONENT: Ensuring Continued Communication Takes Place After the Vote**

My Points = 3 out of 3

☐ Post-election communication focuses on vote outcome. Old web pages with election-related content are not updated for some time, possibly until a new election. Minimal information is communicated on next steps after the election and what the outcome means for stakeholders.

☐ Few, if any, updates are provided on the progress of projects or initiatives approved by voters until they are fully completed.

☐ Post-election communication goes beyond the vote outcome to include more in-depth information on the:

   ◆ Financial impact;

   ◆ Logistical impact of any changes that need to be made (e.g., parking, building entry, classroom re-location, etc.); and

   ◆ Timeline and details for each next step.

☐ All relevant, old online content is updated within a month to reflect the election results.

☐ Regular updates on the progress of projects or initiatives approved by voters are provided through the standard digital and print communication platforms used by the school district. This might include text, photos and videos featured in:

   ◆ Emails, website and social media;

   ◆ Printed and electronic newsletters;

   ◆ Fliers, fact sheets, brochures and letters to stakeholders;

   ◆ Press releases and media outreach; and

   ◆ Board meetings, parent-teacher association meetings, committee meetings and other community meetings.

☐ Post-election communication includes in-depth information on the vote outcome and the impact of the project or initiative approved by voters. Communication is tailored for each stakeholder group, with the understanding that failure to keep the district's stakeholders informed could cause "buyer's remorse" and affect future election campaigns.

☐ All relevant, old online content is updated immediately after the vote to reflect the election results.

☐ Regular updates on the progress of projects or initiatives approved by voters are provided through targeted messages and communication platforms selected based on the preferences of different stakeholder groups.

   ◆ Continually revisit the problem/opportunity addressed by the election, with key messages re-examined, reformulated and expanded as needed.

   ◆ Two-way communication efforts are maintained, along with periodic stakeholder surveys. This feedback loop provides data, anecdotes and insights to inform future steps.

   ◆ Communication staff continue to attend internal planning and evaluation meetings to remain informed about progress and changes, and to give input on needed communications related to unforeseen challenges or changes in the plan.

## RATE YOUR...
## BOND/FINANCE ELECTION PLANS AND CAMPAIGNS

1. **Enter your "my points" score for each program component** in the chart at right. As a reminder, each individual component should get either 1 point (emerging), 2 points (established) or 3 points (exemplary) based on where the majority of your checked boxes fell in the previous charts.

2. **Total your points** for all program components.

3. **Compare your total points to the "overall rating" score range** below to assess the current status of your school district's communication program in this critical function area.

## Overall Rating in Critical Function Area

**Emerging** = 0 - 14 total points

**Established** = 15 - 24 total points

**Exemplary** = 25 - 30 total points

| Program Component | My Points (1, 2 or 3) |
|---|---|
| Understanding and Following All Legal Requirements | 3 |
| Building Stakeholders' Informed Consent Through Community Engagement | 3 |
| Researching and Understanding Stakeholders' Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels | 3 |
| Developing and Following a Communication Plan, With Distinct Phases | 3 |
| Developing and Communicating Key Messages Across Multiple Communication Platforms | 3 |
| Focus on Branding So Stakeholders Can Easily Recognize District Communications Efforts | 3 |
| Listening to Public Sentiment Throughout the Process, Adapting Messages and Strategies Based on Stakeholder Input | 3 |
| Communicating Year-Round About School and District Goals, Plans, Programs and Finances | 2 |
| Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Future Strategy | 2 |
| Ensuring Continued Communication Takes Place After the Vote | 3 |
| TOTAL = | 28 (30 max) |

## SAMPLE MEASURES

Following are methods that school districts might use to measure the success of their bond/finance campaign strategies and tactics.

- Outcome of current election (i.e., vote results)
- History of local bond/finance election passing rates
- Voter turnout for current election among different stakeholder groups
- History of local voter participation rates
- Exit poll distributed at polling location(s)
- Participant survey distributed after public forums
- Feedback received via a digital idea-sharing app or other such online discussion platform for stakeholders
- Number of stakeholders participating in informational events related to the bond/finance election
- Professional polling of potential voters via scientific surveys conducted before and/or during a campaign
- Analytics demonstrating engagement with election-related social media content
- Analytics on election-related webpages and other digital content, including e-newsletter open and click-through rates
- Number of independent, supportive statements appearing in traditional media outlets

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- Boise School District – https://www.boiseschools.org/our_district/bond_progress/bond_projects_by_school_with_progress_updates

- Holly Area Schools – https://www.hask12.org/has-bond/2019-2022-bond-project-updates/

- Lexington County School District One – http://www.lexington1.net/about/building-plan/building-plan-progress

- Rochester Community School District – https://www.rochester.k12.mi.us/pages/128650/bond-updates

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- Woodburn School District – http://www.woodburnsd.org/bond-updates

# Benchmarking Tip Sheet

**What is benchmarking, and how can you use it to bring value to a school communication program?**

Benchmarking is a structured process for comparing your organization's work practices and performance results to the best similar practices and results you can identify in other organizations and then incorporating the best practices into your own processes in order to improve your results. Both practices and results can be benchmarked.

## The Benchmarking Process

While the process of benchmarking can vary widely, there are basic common approaches and steps:

1. Begin with clearly articulating exactly what it is you are seeking to evaluate or improve. It is easier to measure and compare a well-defined outcome over one that is vague, subjective or nebulous, e.g., "Percentage of parents satisfied with communication" vs. "Support for my district."

2. Identify best-in-class or superior performers among other similar schools/organizations. Gather their performance results.

3. Compare your performance against these superior or best-in-class performers.

4. Identify gaps if they exist. Use comparative, benchmarked measures to set your own performance targets.

5. Develop an improvement plan to reach your performance targets. This may include your benchmarking practice with superior or best-in-class performers. Benchmarking practice involves the sharing and comparing of approaches, strategies and tactics, ideally those that resulted in high performance or best-in-class results.

6. Implement your improvement plan. Evaluate for effectiveness against your original performance results and your benchmarked targets. If your results improved, standardize your new practice. If not, revise your improvement plan.

## The Value of Benchmarking

1. Benchmarking supports data-based decision-making through the use of reliable, defined measures upon which to plan and implement school communications programs that achieve targeted results. Process results measure the effectiveness of specific strategies and tactics (e.g., readership on a finance publication) while outcome results measure the overall effectiveness of the approaches (e.g., support on a finance referenda).

2. Although primarily intended to foster improvement, benchmarking results can also serve to inform or justify the effectiveness of current practice (e.g., when performance results are similar to those of your benchmarked best-in-class results).

3. Benchmarking superior results and corresponding best practices can also support the case for increased resources for your program (or protecting existing resources). It is easier to defend a program "with 96% satisfaction from parents on district communications" than one that "does a good job."

4. Benchmarking is a learning experience. At its roots are research and identification of best performance and of best practice to improve your own performance.

5. Benchmarking is both a science and an art. Tracking and comparing evaluative measures and research practices are scientific. Determining how those benchmarked practices apply to your school district and your school communications program is an art.

6. Look beyond the school yard! It is not uncommon for organizations to benchmark outside their sector. For example, if your goal is to improve the open rate on your staff e-newsletter, consider comparing your open rates with those of well-respected employers in your region. Organizations are often more willing to share results and practices with organizations they view as "non-competitors."

7. The success of benchmarking is not contingent on absolute certainty that you have found the ultimately highest performer. This is almost impossible to ensure. An ethical, thorough, good-faith effort that produces respected and solid performance results against which you can evaluate your own is the goal.

8. Consider the evaluative method used by your benchmarked performer in your comparison. Drastically different evaluative measures can compromise the comparative and evaluative power of the results. At the same time, the evaluative tools do not have to be identical to be of value in benchmarking results. Again, this is where both the science and art of benchmarking come into play.

9. Sometimes those originally not willing to share results and practices change their minds when the sharing becomes two-way. Offer to become a benchmark partner. Some organizations struggling with obtaining comparative data have found success in establishing benchmarking groups who collectively agree to share and compare.

10. Benchmarking is a continuous process. New and better results are continuously being realized by organizations everywhere. What was best-in-class yesterday may not be superior today. Make benchmarking a part of your standard practice to ensure your success.

Ultimately, the goal is for your results to be those that others aspire to achieve!

# Glossary

**Words to know**

### APR: Accreditation in Public Relations

Voluntary certification program that measures a public relations practitioner's fundamental knowledge of communications theory and its application; establishes advanced capabilities in research, strategic planning, implementation and evaluation; demonstrates a commitment to professional excellence and ethical conduct. Administered and granted by the Universal Accreditation Board.

### Benchmarking

A structured process for comparing your organization's work practices and performance results to the best similar practices and results you can identify in other organizations and then incorporating the best practices into your own processes in order to improve your results. Both practices and results can be benchmarked.

Benchmarking practices maximize resources and energy by eliminating the "reinvention of the wheel."

Benchmark results are one form of comparative data.

Organizations engage in benchmarking to understand the current dimensions of world-class performance and to achieve breakthrough (non-incremental) improvement.

### Bond

When school districts need to borrow money for a capital improvement (renovation, repairs or construction) or similar large one-time purchases, they can ask residents to vote on a ballot measure that, with voter approval, would allow them to borrow money by issuing a bond (promissory note) for investors to purchase. The district then makes payments with interest to the investors over a set period of time to pay off the loan. School districts typically get the money to pay back bond debt by increasing the school tax levy, meaning local residents will pay higher taxes in order to pay off the bond.

### Brand

The sum total of how someone perceives a particular organization. Branding is about shaping that perception to create a powerful and lasting emotional connection with your customers and stakeholders. Originally considered to be simply the organization's name, term, logo, slogan or promise, branding has evolved to encompass much more.

A brand is created and influenced by people, visuals, culture, style, perception, words, messages, PR, opinions, news media, social media and interaction. It is the total of all experiences that students and stakeholders have with a school district.

### Brand Ambassadors

A marketing term for a person employed by an organization to promote its products or services within the activity known as branding. The brand ambassador is meant to embody the organizational identity in appearance, demeanor, values and ethics.

Organizations may consider all of their employees as potential brand ambassadors and provide training and other resources for them to be effective in this role. Brand ambassadors typically excel at customer service and communicating key messages.

## Brand Assets

A brand comprises a set of elements or brand assets that in combination create the perception of the organization in the eyes of its customers and stakeholders. Brand assets include visual, written, vocal, recorded and interpersonal representations in support of the brand identity and marketing/communications goals.

## Direct Marketing

When an organization communicates directly with its customers, often including a call for action and usually targeted to a specific audience. Examples of direct marketing include email, text messaging, direct mail, etc. Direct marketing allows for the tailoring of messaging to specific target audiences and the tracking of measurable results.

## Emergency Response Information Plan (ERIP)

Steps to take to prepare for a crisis as outlined by the Department of Homeland Security at https://www.ready.gov/.

## Engagement

The extent of commitment, both emotional and intellectual, to the district/organization. Student and stakeholder engagement refers to their investment in your organization, characterized by a desire to work collaboratively for change and improvement, a sense of ownership and responsibility, and a willingness to work on behalf of and actively advocate for the organization.

Faculty and staff engagement refers to their investment in accomplishing the work, vision and mission of the organization through collaborative efforts that promote change and improvement. It is characterized by high-performing work environments where people have a voice in decision-making and are motivated to do their utmost for the benefit of the students and stakeholders and for the success of the organization.

## Experiential Marketing

Connecting customers and stakeholders with an organization through live face-to-face experiences, creating lasting perceptions. Experiential marketing considers quality of the interaction over quantity of the number of people reached. Examples of experiential marketing for a school district can include open houses, classroom visitation days, teacher or administrator shadowing programs, etc.

## In-Process Measures

Process measures track the progress of a communication process. They help determine the effectiveness of a strategy/tactic and identify opportunities for improvement. Examples include number of hits to website, percentage of parents attending parent/teacher conferences, content analysis of press coverage, etc. (There will be many more process measures than key outcomes measures, as there are typically multiple tactics for goals/objectives.)

## Joint Information Center (JIC)

A central location that facilitates operation of the Joint Information System and where personnel with public information responsibilities perform critical emergency information functions, crisis communication, and public affairs functions. JICs may be established at various levels of government or at incident sites, or can be components of Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Systems (for example, MAC Groups or EOCs). A single JIC location is preferable, but the system is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate virtual or multiple JIC locations, as required. (See https://www.fema.gov/)

## National Incident Management System (NIMS)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency released the refreshed National Incident Management System (NIMS) doctrine on October 17, 2017. NIMS provides a common, nationwide approach to enable the whole community to work together to manage all threats and hazards. NIMS applies to all incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.

## Outcomes Measures

General end-result evaluative measures that track the overall effectiveness of the communications program in changing knowledge, opinions and/or behaviors among target audiences. Outcomes measures should align with and/or support the district/organization goals and objectives. Examples include percentage of employees reporting feeling informed about district priorities, parent satisfaction with teacher communication, plurality vote on finance referenda, etc.

## Overrides/Levies

Overrides or levy votes are ballot measures that, with voter approval, will generate additional tax revenue to fund programs, operations or facilities improvements for a local school district.

These are used when a school district wants to raise additional funds beyond what the state or municipality provides. Note: Overrides are not a legal option in every community or state. In states and other locales where public override votes are permissible, there are generally limits to how much additional revenue a district can ask voters to approve and/or how much local taxes can increase to raise that additional revenue.

There are generally three types of overrides: A maintenance and operations override (M&O) supports such things as salaries and benefits, supplies and general operations. A special override supports specific programs, such as full-day kindergarten, art, music or physical education. A capital override funds equipment, furniture, technology, vehicles, etc.

## RPIE/RACE

The desired four-step strategic planning model for the public relations practice. It includes research, planning/analyzing, implementation/communication and evaluation in an overall plan as well as in the mini plans for program components.

Communications are developed in response to researched and analyzed needs, attitudes, opinions and expectations.

Communications are delivered via mechanisms conducive to the message and preferred by the target audiences in a timely and cost efficient manner.

Communications are systematically evaluated for their effectiveness to inform improvement.

Exemplary PR programs follow this basic four-step process:

- Research – up front analysis on where the district stands in regard to all publics it wishes to reach

- Plan/Analyze – using research in developing public relations goals, measurable objectives, strategies and tactics that go hand-in-hand with the district's overall mission and goals

- Implement/Communicate – carrying out the strategies and tactics necessary to meet the objectives and goals

- Evaluate – looking at outcomes of plan implementation to determine if objectives were achieved, the effectiveness of actions taken and what changes are needed in the future

## Relationship Marketing

A strategy designed to foster customer loyalty, interaction and long-term engagement. It is designed to develop strong connections with customers and stakeholders by providing them with information directly suited to their needs and interests and by promoting open communication.

Relationship marketing focuses on working hand-in-hand with prospects and customers to co-create a more meaningful, personalized and lasting experience.

Examples of relationship marketing include follow-up surveys with customers and stakeholders following an interaction to determine satisfaction and opportunities for improvement; maintaining a customer relationship management system whereby the organization tracks and builds on interactions with customers; and maintaining open channels for customer and stakeholder input with timely acknowledgment and response.

## Target Audience

The intended group for which something is performed or marketed; the specific group to which advertising or communications is directed. For schools, examples include: parents and families; faculty and staff; district residents/

taxpayers; parents of preschoolers; civic and community group leaders; etc. Determining target audiences is a key step in an effective marketing/communication plan.

## Touch Point

Any point of contact between a buyer and a seller, or the organization and its customers and community. For school districts, touch points span a wide spectrum due to the many varied interactions that faculty and staff, students, schools, parents and other stakeholders have on any given day. Touch points include interactions with both existing customers as well as potential customers.

Examples include: building signage; school/district websites; telephone greetings and conversations; emails; print materials; building/grounds appearance; school entryways; voice mail greetings; social media posts; parent-teacher conferences; school events.

## Stakeholders, stakeholder groups

A stakeholder is anyone who can affect—or can be affected by—the actions, strategies, operations, and decisions made by an organization. Stakeholders can be internal (e.g., employees) or external (e.g., community residents). Stakeholders can be individuals, businesses, social groups, other organizations, or the general community. What defines them is they have a stake in, or are affected by, a specific organization or entity.

## SWOT Analysis

A structured method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats involved in a project or an organization. It involves specifying the objective of the project or organization and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective. Organizations typically use a SWOT analysis as part of their strategic planning process. SWOT is also a common tool used during the development of communications and marketing plans.

Use of SWOT helps organizations identify achievable goals and objectives.

- Strengths – characteristics of the project or organization that give it an advantage over others
- Weaknesses – internal characteristics that place the project or organization at a disadvantage relative to others
- Opportunities – elements in the external environment that the project or organization could exploit to its advantage
- Threats – elements in the external environment that could cause trouble or pose barriers for the project or organization

## Tax Levy

The term "tax levy" may have different meanings depending upon the common practice of each state, but in general it refers to the total amount of money to be raised through school property taxes.

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