



PUBLIC
RELATIONS^{LLC}

Office of

COMMUNICATIONS

**Departmental Performance
Auditing Services
Addendum #1**

**NSPRA Rubrics of Practices &
Suggested Measures**





National School Public Relations Association Rubrics of Practices & Suggested Measures

ACPS Office of Communications

In 2014, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) developed a measurement tool to help school public relations practitioners benchmark their programs. The goal of framework developed by NSPRA is:

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 public relations practitioner, the superintendent and board members in the components of a successful public relations program that ultimately contributes to student achievement. This can be used as a tool for developing and launching a school PR program, enhancing an existing one or evaluating the program and practitioner.

Updated in 2018, the framework now includes five critical function areas:

- Comprehensive Professional Communication Program,
- Internal Communications,
- Parent/Family Communications,
- Branding/Marketing Communications, and
- Crisis Communication.

The NSPRA tool measures practices as **emerging, established or exemplary**, with the exemplary category detailing best practices. Following the definitions in the table below, our highlights denote our assessment of the ACPS communications program within each critical function area. To ensure the accuracy of our benchmarking effort, we conferred with the Director of Communications and took her input into consideration when finalizing this document.

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
<p>Communications program is in the early stages of development, largely responsive to immediate needs or problems with minimal proactive planning. Communications goals, if articulated, are loosely defined with minimal alignment with district goals and objectives.</p>	<p>Communications program includes series of defined approaches based on some research. Strategies, tactics and goals are defined. Communications align with district goals and objectives. Some evaluation may occur.</p>	<p>Communications are conducted according to an articulated plan following the RACE (Research-Analyze-Communicate-Evaluate) model and are aligned and integrated into district strategic plans. Communications are supported through policy, training and resources. Ongoing evaluation to improve progress is embedded into operations.</p>

Function Area: Comprehensive Professional Communication Program

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Establishing Communication as a Priority Through District Policy		
<p>Communications policy loosely articulated and resides within communications department; minimal awareness of policy among senior leaders</p> <p>Communications protocols and regulations developed largely in response to issues or challenges</p>	<p>Articulated communications policy shared with senior leaders; referred to regularly to guide communications actions</p> <p>Series of communications protocols and regulations developed with input and review by necessary parties</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Robust communication policy adopted by the School Board with widespread buy-in from the district</p> <p>Communication policy consistently updated in response to latest research and aligned with goals and objectives of the district</p> <p>Policies address exceptions for potential communication (stemming largely from Human Resources, FOIA and FERPA)</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Maximizing Communication with Trained Leadership at the Executive Level		
<p>Limited input from the communications department/professional into executive-level decision-making; largely in response to isolated requests</p> <p>Staff member(s) responsible for communications have little or no professional training or experience in public relations and communications</p> <p>Activities conducted by communications department limited to results/outcomes of leadership decisions</p> <p>Little or no communications training for senior leaders; limited largely in response to crisis or issues with no follow-up</p>	<p>Ready access to some key management personnel on the part of the communications professional/department chair</p> <p>Representation of communications department/professional on some committees</p> <p>Communications staff sought for advice and insight on major issues</p> <p>Series of strategies to maximize communication effectiveness among senior leaders, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers input from social media and public forums to use for executive-level decision-making • Drafts informational memos and talking points for various departments • Some communications training for senior leaders such as media interviews, public speaking, etc. 	<p>Communications professional/department chair is a member of executive level team</p> <p>Superintendent and other senior leaders easily accessible by communications professional/department chair</p> <p>Communications staff input included regularly in executive-level decision-making; serves in advisory role to senior leaders</p> <p>School Board accesses resources in the communications department when needed</p> <p>Representation of communications department/professional on all relevant committees</p> <p>Ongoing comprehensive communications training for all senior leaders</p> <p>Role of communications office evaluated regularly to determine effectiveness of organizational relationship</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Supporting Communication with Sufficient Resources and Ongoing Training		
<p>Minimal communications budget; resources to support communications projects elicited on an as-needed basis</p> <p>Technology to support communications not current, sometimes compromising capacity of the communications function</p> <p>Training for communications staff largely a function of their own initiative with constrained budget support</p> <p>Support for membership to professional associations limited</p>	<p>Established communications budget developed with input from the communications department/professional; covers all planned communications programs</p> <p>Technology current and sufficient to support communications function</p> <p>Series of professional development activities, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars and other online training programs • Acquisition of publications and toolkits to inform communications function • Opportunities to meet with other school communications professionals to exchange ideas and share expertise <p>Formal professional development seminars and workshops offered by NSPRA, PRSA or like organization</p>	<p>Established communications budget developed with input from the communications department/professional; process to acquire additional funds for projects/issues that arise unexpectedly</p> <p>State-of-the-art technology with built-in capacity for program expansion</p> <p>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)</p> <p>Regular evaluation of effectiveness of communications budget, technology and training</p> <p>Resources for communications function benchmarked with other high-performing school communications programs</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through Adherence to Code of Ethics		
<p>Integrity of activities of communications staff limited largely to their own personal ethics rather than an articulated Code of Ethic</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Communications staff evaluations aligned with Code of Ethics</p> <p>Code of Ethics included in school board policy; senior leadership knowledgeable of code as an operating framework for decisions regarding public relations challenges</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Managing Communication Through RACE – Research, Analyze, Communicate, Evaluate		
<p>Communications initiated largely on a reactive basis in response to questions or complaints</p> <p>Communications inconsistent across events/situations and from building to building, department to department, classroom to classroom, etc.</p> <p>Little or no formal communications planning; Communications minimally aligned with district/building goals, if at all</p>	<p>Some research conducted to identify and clarify constituent needs and expectations regarding communication as well as opinions and attitudes regarding district and programs</p> <p>Some communications programs articulated through written plans containing some or all essential plan elements (overall goals, target audiences, objectives for each audience, strategies, tactics, messages, evaluation, materials, budget, timetable)</p> <p>Some evaluation of communication effectiveness through surveys, opinion polls, participation rates or other metrics</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Comprehensive analysis of research to identify and understand needs, expectations, opinions and attitudes, and to inform communications planning</p> <p>Comprehensive written annual communications plan containing all or most of essential plan elements (overall goals, target audiences, objectives for each audience, strategies, tactics, messages, evaluation, materials, budget, timetable) and guides communications department programs; incorporated into district strategic/master plan</p> <p>Communications plan supported with adequate resources and budget for effective implementation</p> <p>Systematic evaluation of communications relative to goals and objectives; Evaluations inform program by standardized or adjusting approaches based on evaluation results</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Understanding Communication Needs and Requirements Through Research		
<p>Research into student and stakeholder perceptions and attitudes largely non-existent or limited to hearsay/informal inputs</p> <p>Limited understanding of student and stakeholder expectations and requirements regarding communications; not necessarily valid and/or reliable</p> <p>Reliability on narrow channels of information for insight into communication needs and requirements</p>	<p>Series of approaches in place to understand communication needs and requirements, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys of students, parents/families, faculty and staff and community members measuring perception and attitude, communication expectations, and communication effectiveness • Platforms to gather public opinion, such as social media outlets or custom email address for complaints • Third-party research such as census bureau information, Gallup poll, etc. • Focus groups to cull qualitative feedback • Formal structure for public input during school board and other meetings • System of informal channels to gather input and feedback such as participation in committees and task forces, attendance to PTA/PTA meetings, etc. 	<p>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</p> <p>Research adequately supported through budget/district resources</p> <p>Communications staff trained in communications research; professional development keeps pace with new trends in research</p> <p>Research results regularly shared with senior leaders to inform decision-making</p> <p>Continuously benchmarks with local and national best-in-class in communication effectiveness</p> <p>Research approaches continuously evaluated for effectiveness; new trends routinely considered</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communication Effectiveness Embedded Across District and Building Operations		
<p>Communications to stakeholders comes largely from the communications staff</p> <p>Responsibility for community outreach limited largely to the communications staff</p> <p>Communications staff as spokespeople for any/all district/school issues</p> <p>Communications staff input sought only after individual schools' or departments' promotional efforts fail</p> <p>Minimal input from district and school leaders into communications planning</p>	<p>Series of approaches to embed communications across district and building operations, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared templates, memos, letters and other resources for principals and department chairs to use in their communications • Talking points developed and distributed on key issues as they arise to assist district personnel in responding/communicating about them • District and school webpage content managed for consistency • Organized structure in place for principals and department chairs to communicate, including emergency outreach tools such as rapid alert systems • Communication planning integrated into project/program/event planning • Individual relationships between schools/departments and community organizations <p>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</p> <p>District and school leaders provide input into communications planning</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Communication planning integrated into projects and strategic planning on all levels</p> <p>District communications plan incorporates robust and ongoing strategies and tactics to deploy building and department communications; district and school leaders consistently provide input into development of communications plan</p> <p>Organized plan for community outreach that encompasses all key community groups, aligning them with best-fit schools/departments</p> <p>District and school leaders trained and empowered as spokespeople in their areas of content expertise with coordination through communications department</p> <p>Building and department-level communications consistently evaluated for effectiveness; strategies and tactics added and/or revised accordingly</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Deploying Multiple and Varied Communication Strategies Including for Accommodations for Diversity		
<p>Basic understanding of diversity of district</p> <p>Some differentiation on some levels for different audiences</p>	<p>Solid understanding of the diverse makeup of the district; awareness of some cultural preferences for communications among different groups</p> <p>Varied series of approaches to reach different audience segments (multilingual, when needed), i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Website updates • Parent newsletters • Social media • Rapid alert systems • Online gradebooks/parent portals • Letters home • Events (public hearings, parent gatherings, public forums, recognitions/celebrations, etc.) • Student communications • Community leader meetings • Text messaging • Differentiation on essential communications for most or all audience segments 	<p>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</p> <p>Consistently adjust all communications to meet the needs/preferences of all audience segments</p> <p>Ongoing support for district and school leaders to deploy multiple and varied communications to audience segments</p> <p>Accommodations for diversity in communications consistently evaluated for effectiveness and adjusted accordingly</p>

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

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

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

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Effective Finance Communications		
<p>Finance communications limited largely to minimum content and distribution mandated by law</p> <p>Responses to financial inquiries include only the information requested with little else to possibly increase understanding, expand awareness and build trust</p> <p>Little or no coordination of finance communications among key staff, resulting in possible duplication or gaps</p> <p>Communications contain finance office language with little or no translation into layperson’s terms, marginalizing message effectiveness</p>	<p>Series of approaches to build trust through effective finance communications, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget information complies with all legal and other regulatory bodies governing finance communications • Development of key messages regarding district finances and finance issues; written in layperson’s terms to foster understanding • Proactive outreach to faculty and staff with finance communications, preferably before external audiences • Timely and complete distribution of key finance information to key stakeholder groups • Effective use of graphs, tables, comparisons and other resources to increase understanding of financial information (in measuring what matters) • Finance communications delivered via multiple platforms and media to ensure outreach, i.e. public presentations, print and electronic messaging, website resources, blogs, etc. <p>Significant input from finance staff into communications plan and deployment</p> <p>Ongoing coordination of finance communications among key staff; finance staff available for interviews and comment</p>	<p>Research into key stakeholder perceptions and attitudes regarding district finances used to inform finance communications</p> <p>Written formal finance communications plan or finance communications incorporated within overall communications 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</p> <p>Ongoing professional development for communications staff and key district leaders in school finance regulations and communications requirements</p> <p>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</p> <p>Support of community advocates harnessed, especially for high-profile reductions/cuts to education or large expenditures for facilities/programs</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation of finance communication effectiveness to foster transparency and build trust; results systematically used to inform improvement</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Supporting Constituent Involvement/Engagement Through Communication		
<p>Opportunities for constituent involvement/engagement minimally posted, relying mostly on traditional media with little or no follow-up or reinforcement</p> <p>Communications efforts are largely one- way (from district to constituent), compromising receptivity for authentic involvement/engagement</p> <p>Responses to offers of involvement handled inconsistently; few structures in place for constituents to participate in educational process</p> <p>Communications staff involvement in constituent engagement limited to high- stakes issues</p>	<p>Opportunities for constituent involvement/engagement consistently communicated across a wide variety of media including print, electronic, news media, social media and others</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Successful involvement/engagement programs promoted throughout district and in local media</p> <p>Communications staff involved in many key community organizations; gleans some feedback through involvement</p>	<p>Research into constituent personal priorities for engagement informs engagement opportunities, thereby fostering alignment with personal missions and those of the district and schools</p> <p>Community involvement strategically managed by communications department; feedback from relationships shared internally through an organized system</p> <p>Involvement/engagement opportunities align with district and school missions to foster authenticity and maximize involvement</p> <p>Engagement messages/outreaches are frequent and timely; focus on how opportunities align with constituent needs and priorities</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>Constituents recognized regularly for involvement and engagement</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of constituent involvement/engagement in supporting student learning; results systematically used to inform improvement</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Advancing Identity/Brand of Your School District		
<p>Brand/identity may not be reflective of school system's current reality among key stakeholders</p> <p>Inconsistent use of district logo/slogan across district media (website, stationary, print materials, electronic messaging, etc.)</p> <p>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</p> <p>Brand management de-centralized with little or no coordination by the communications department</p>	<p>Brand/identity generally accepted and considered reflective of school system's current reality among key stakeholders</p> <p>District logo/slogan consistently deployed across district media</p> <p>District logo/slogan consistently deployed across individual school media; integration with individual school logos/slogans may or may not be consistent</p> <p>Brand management centrally coordinated by communications department</p> <p>Messaging consistently supports the school system's brand/identity in most operational areas</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Communications plan incorporates use of brand/identity across all relevant strategies and tactics</p> <p>Individual school logos/slogans coordinate with and support one another as well as district logo/slogan</p> <p>Policy and guidelines outline use of district and school logos/slogans; generally supported by district and school staff</p> <p>Messaging consistently supports the school system's brand/identity in all operational areas</p> <p>Brand/identity regularly evaluated for relevance and currency</p>

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

Function Area: Internal Communications

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Researching and Understanding Employee Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge		
<p>Limited opportunities for employees to provide input; largely passive leaving onus on employee to initiate, i.e.: online comment opportunities or suggestion boxes</p> <p>Periodic staff surveys assessing communication effectiveness, largely reactive when issues surface</p> <p>Informal, casual meetings between leadership and employees (breakfasts, lunches, coffee breaks, water cooler conversations)</p>	<p>Varied opportunities for employees to provide input, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated times at school board and faculty/staff meetings • Representation on key district and school committees, task forces, etc. • Access to communications director, supervisor(s) and senior leaders • Written and online avenues <p>Faculty and staff informed of opportunities to provide input during new employee orientation and/or hiring process</p> <p>Annual faculty and staff survey assessing communication effectiveness</p> <p>Employee advisory committees that meet regularly and advise the superintendent and/or school board on important issue</p>	<p>Integration of faculty and staff listening approaches into Internal Communications Plan (research phase – RACE)</p> <p>Multiple and regular face-to-face opportunities to hold conversations among employees and leaders</p> <p>Listening mechanisms differentiated for faculty and staff segments as needed, i.e.: location, language, access to technology, schedules, etc.</p> <p>School board members, administrators, principals, department chairs and other managers trained in critical listening</p> <p>Systematic approach for responding to and integrating faculty and staff input</p> <p>Systematic review of employee satisfaction with opportunities to provide input, i.e.: surveys, focus groups, face-to-face interactions</p> <p>Comprehensive working conditions survey with results analyzed and action plan implemented at every school (and at the district level)</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Employee Engagement		
<p>Emerging awareness of importance of engaging employees</p> <p>Employee communications are infrequent and irregular, and often in response to crises or problems</p> <p>Little or no two-way dialogue with employees</p>	<p>Series of communications approaches to foster employee engagement, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee intranet page established with key employee content including human resources information, employee calendar, ways to contact school system leaders, etc. Frequent, thorough and accurate employee communications through newsletters and email messages Employee association or union representatives meet with school district leaders for two-way dialogue Rationale for decisions made by school district leaders is shared with employees <p>New employee orientation that includes an overview of the school district and the role of employees in the organization</p> <p>Employee recognition program and/or award program supporting employee contributions to the organization's success</p>	<p>Regular and ongoing input from employees on preferred opportunities to be engaged with the district and school in support of student learning</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for engaging all parents/families to support student learning</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources for district/school leaders to use in fostering employee engagement in student learning</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in employee engagement internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback from employees and regular evaluation of employee engagement to foster student success</p> <p>Feedback is incorporated into communications action steps with evaluation component</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Employee Alignment with the School District's Vision, Mission and Goals		
<p>Unclear or poorly defined vision, mission and goals of the school district</p> <p>Sporadic communications about the vision, mission and goals by school district leaders/communications office, largely limited to start-of-year or new employee orientation</p> <p>Limited alignment of employee goals and actions with district vision, mission and goals</p>	<p>Series of communications strategies to support alignment of employee goals and actions with district vision, mission and goals, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, mission and goals communicated consistently and regularly through pictures, slogan and collateral communication materials such as letterhead, brochures, website, telephone hold message, etc. • Core messages to employees making clear the school district's vision, mission and goals; success stories include real examples and highlight employee contributions • Regular reporting on the progress of district/school/department goals <p>New employee orientation that includes focus on mission, vision and goals</p> <p>Employee award programs that recognize and reward employee excellence in the areas that align with the district's vision, mission and goals</p>	<p>Research on employee levels of awareness and understanding of the district vision, mission and goals and their preferred methods to be informed about them</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communicating district vision, mission and goals to employees and for fostering alignment of with employee goals and actions</p> <p>Ongoing professional development for senior leaders on how to raise employee awareness, understanding and alignment with vision, mission goals</p> <p>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</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in fostering alignment internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Leadership and Management Communications		
<p>Emerging awareness of the importance of leadership and management communications with employees</p> <p>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</p> <p>Channeling all communications to employees through one gatekeeper</p>	<p>Series of leadership and management communication approaches, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Regular email communications to employees from the superintendent, such as columns in an electronic newsletter or targeted messages directly to employees Email addresses of leaders available to all employees for direct contact with timely response Opportunities to hear directly from the superintendent, especially during critical times such as school year kickoff, budget proposals and adoptions, and crises 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 <p>Some professional development for leaders and managers on effective communications strategies, i.e.: public speaking, electronic messaging, "walking the talk," etc.</p>	<p>Regular research on leader and manager communication effectiveness; feedback used to update communication action plans and measurement components</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned expectations for leader and manager communications supported by adequate resources and training</p> <p>Clear articulation of district's communications expectations of schools, i.e.: school website guidelines; school media liaison and partnership liaison job descriptions; teacher website guidelines, etc.</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in effective communications for leaders and managers including workshops, classes and online resources; includes verbal and nonverbal communication</p> <p>Communications effectiveness included as a component of leaders' performance evaluation</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in leadership and management communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Managing Information Overload		
<p>Emerging realization of information overload with no overall plan to manage</p> <p>Few or no guidelines in place for communicating with employees resulting in disorganized, redundant and competing messaging</p> <p>Information sent out as needed without a plan or regular schedule to maximize communication effectiveness</p>	<p>Series of approaches to manage information overload, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited and standardized official vehicles for internal communications at various levels deployed on set schedules A common internal calendar that holds important dates for school district deadlines, meetings, testing schedules, events, etc. Limit email access to “all employees” to selected senior school district leaders <p>Employee training on organizing email accounts and inboxes, use of folders, etc.</p> <p>Information and file-sharing software to minimize email and organize access to important information by project or issue</p>	<p>Ongoing research to determine communication preferences of employees and effectiveness of existing communication information-sharing vehicles</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for information sharing among internal audiences based on research of preferences and vehicle effectiveness</p> <p>Systematic review of information-sharing effectiveness; results used to inform improvements to plan</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in managing information overload and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Customer Service		
<p>Varying levels of awareness of importance of customer service among school employees; generally dependent on individual employee or manager focus</p> <p>Spotty customer service training for school employees, generally in response to complaints</p> <p>Commitment to customer service non-existent or minimally reflected in communications goals and/or district goals</p>	<p>Commitment to customer service and customer service expectations clearly articulated</p> <p>Series of approaches to ensure responsive customer service by school employees; i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service expectations outlined during new employee orientation • Training of frontline school and central office staff on excellent customer service* • Printed and online resources on effective customer service delivery available to employees* • Some cultural competency training to serve specific segments of families and stakeholders • Some auditing of customer service levels; i.e.: • Unannounced visits where evaluators audit how friendly and welcoming the school environment is to families and stakeholders* • Quick polls on how well customers are served • Some complaint tracking and resolution 	<p>District policy supports clearly defined customer service commitment, expectations and goals</p> <p>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</p> <p>Annual plan to ensure delivery of customer service based on assessment results with input of work team composed of employee, family and stakeholder representatives</p> <p>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</p> <p>Program to recognize and reinforce outstanding customer service throughout the school system; benchmarking and sharing of best practices</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Employee Ambassadors		
<p>Varying levels of employee awareness of school district materials including handbooks, newsletters, brochures, calendars</p> <p>Varying levels of employee understanding of current district and school goals, initiatives and issues</p> <p>Minimal access to resources to seek information</p>	<p>Series of approaches to keep employees informed of key issues in support of their roles as district ambassadors, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>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</p>	<p>Ongoing assessment of employee knowledge and understanding of district goals, initiatives and issues; ongoing assessment of employee preparedness to effectively serve as ambassadors</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for effective employee communications to support them in their roles as ambassadors</p> <p>Sufficient resource and budget to support effective employee communications</p> <p>Communications training for frontline and key employee leaders to maximize their effectiveness as ambassadors; i.e.; public speaking, answering questions, minimizing negativity, etc.</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communicating with Employees During a Crisis		
<p>Lack of or minimally defined crisis communications plan outlining steps/layers and strategies for communication during crisis and deployment of internal staff to support communications during crisis</p> <p>Minimal proactive outreach to faculty and staff during crisis limited to general information with few details</p> <p>Communications with faculty and staff during crisis delayed or inconsistent with regards to timing and coverage</p> <p>Details regarding crisis largely articulated on reactive basis typically in response to inquiries or complaints</p> <p>Reliance on news media to release information</p>	<p>Series of approaches to communicate with faculty and staff during crisis, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis communications 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 <p>Automated messaging capability including email, voice and text messaging to support swift and accurate communications with faculty and staff during all phases of crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Systematic approach to keeping faculty/staff informed during crises based on customized employee preferences</p> <p>District/school policy and clearly articulated crisis communications plan updated regularly with involvement from police and safety officials and supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Plan for provision of emergency back-up and additional support for district communications office in the event of large-scale crisis or catastrophe</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in crisis communications plan, procedures and strategies for all district personnel</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of crisis communications resources to administrators, principals and faculty/staff</p> <p>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</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in crisis communications internally and benchmarking same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications to improve faculty/staff engagement and ensure student and staff safety</p>

Function Area: Parent/Family Communications

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Researching and Understanding Parent/Family Needs, Expectations, Opinions, Attitudes, Knowledge Levels		
<p>Limited opportunities for parents/families to provide input; largely passive, leaving onus on parent to initiate, i.e.: online comment opportunities or suggestion boxes; complaint guidelines; calls or emails</p> <p>Understanding and assessing parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels limited to anecdotal input</p> <p>Sporadic and random parent/family surveys assessing parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels; largely reactive when issues surface</p>	<p>Series of formal and informal assessments to listen and gain insights into parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels; i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and electronic surveys • Focus groups • Representation on key district and school committees, advisory councils, task forces, etc. • Forums, town hall meetings, parent conferences, etc. • Opportunities for small-group interaction with parents/families such as coffee with the superintendent, grade-level parent meetings with the principal, etc. • Designated times at school board and faculty/staff meetings • Access to communications director, principal, supervisor(s) and senior leaders • One-to-one interactions including open door policy • Written and online avenues including forums, social media, etc. • Feedback through PTA/PTO and other organized parent/family groups • Exit interviews with parents/families transferring students out of district <p>Parents/families informed of opportunities to provide input during new family orientation and/or registration process</p> <p>Annual parent/family survey assessing communication effectiveness</p> <p>Some tracking on effectiveness of assessments</p>	<p>Integration of research and assessments of parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels into Parent/Family Communications Plan (research phase ☐ RACE); findings systematically analyzed to improve parent/family communications</p> <p>Comprehensive system of formal and informal listening posts and assessments for parents/families at all locations throughout district.</p> <p>Listening mechanisms and assessments differentiated for parent/family segments as needed, i.e.: language, access to technology, schedules, etc.</p> <p>Assessments span life of relationship with parent/families from entry-level of students in pre-school/kindergarten through graduation/alumnus status</p> <p>School board members, administrators, principals, department chairs, other managers and teachers trained in critical listening</p> <p>Systematic approach for responding to and integrating parent/family input</p> <p>Assessment findings systematically shared and analyzed by district and building-level leaders to inform and improve services to students and families</p> <p>Resources are made available to parents as a result of research and assessments. (For example: parent training, access to computers; web-based resources, etc.)</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Deploying Multiple, Varied and Targeted Communication Strategies, Including Accommodations for Diversity		
<p>Communication strategies largely one- size-fits-all with little or no differentiation for varied segments of parents/families</p> <p>Communications limited to more traditional media, i.e., memos, print/electronic newsletters, announcements at meetings, news releases, websites, emails, etc.</p> <p>Communications random and inconsistent across schools and classrooms</p>	<p>Series of communication strategies to address varied parent/family segments; i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written correspondence including memos, printed newsletters, letters, flyers, brochures, etc. • Electronic correspondence including email, electronic newsletters, websites, etc. • Automated messaging including voice and text messaging • Face-to-face and interpersonal correspondence including meetings, presentations, forums, office hours, etc. • Social media including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, forums, chats, etc. • Articulated policy on minimal reply timelines for electronic and voice messaging <p>Some accommodations for parent/family segments, i.e.: school/grade levels, geographic location</p> <p>Some accommodations for language and cultural diversity; Programs to build cultural awareness</p> <p>Some accommodations for varied family structures</p> <p>Some tracking of effectiveness of communications for diverse audiences</p>	<p>Communications tailored for key parent/family segments based on assessments of parent/family needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels</p> <p>Communications tailored for key parent/family segments based on assessed preferences for media, messaging and scheduling</p> <p>Accommodations for language and cultural diversity for all parent/family segments represented in district; i.e. translators</p> <p>Sharing of best practices for diverse parent/family communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of effectiveness of communication with diverse audiences</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communicating Academic Programs and Expectations with Parents/Families		
<p>Minimal proactive outreach on academic programs and expectations largely limited to annual listings with little or unclear detail</p> <p>Specifics regarding academic programs and expectations largely articulated on reactive basis only with onus on parents/families for inquiry</p> <p>Inconsistent and random communications regarding academic programs and expectations with parents/families</p>	<p>Series of approaches to outline academic programs and expectations with parents/families, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details by class/teacher outlined at the beginning of each school year during Back-to-School/Meet-the-Teacher events • Printed and online access to class requirements (classroom/teacher web pages), grading structures, homework assignments, project schedules, etc., by class/teacher • Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from teacher via email/voicemail/face-to-face • Presentations/meetings with principals, teachers and curricular staff to educate and inform parents/families on academic expectations, new curricula, etc. • Announcements and coverage of new programs or program changes through local news media • Reinforcement of academic expectations through coverage of student success in local news media <p>Communications vary by building based on principal practice</p> <p>Some professional development in parent/family communications strategies for teachers and building level staff</p> <p>Some parent/family communications resources provided to teachers and building-level staff</p> <p>Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on academic programs and expectations</p>	<p>Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of academic programs and expectations based on researched parent/family preferences</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about academic programs and expectations</p> <p>District/school policy re: minimum academic program and expectations communications including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families on academic programs and expectations</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for teachers and building- level staff</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources to teachers and building- level staff</p> <p>Sharing of best practices of communications about academic programs and expectations internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about academic programs and expectations to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communicating Student Conduct Expectations and Discipline Policies with Parents/Families		
<p>Minimal proactive outreach on conduct and discipline expectations and policies with parents/families largely limited to annual notices with little or unclear detail</p> <p>Specifics regarding conduct and discipline expectations and policies largely articulated on reactive basis, typically in response to incidents or violations</p> <p>Inconsistent and random communication regarding conduct and discipline expectations and policies with parents/families</p>	<p>Series of approaches to outline conduct and discipline expectations and policies with parents/families, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbook outlining expectations, policies and consequences for violations distributed to parents/families annually with parent-signed acknowledgement form returned to school/teacher • Online access to expectations, policies and consequences for parents/families • Presentations/meetings with principals and administrators to educate and inform parents/families on expectations, policies and consequences • Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from principal/administrators via email, voicemail, face-to-face • Periodic reminders to parents/families about expectations and policies, including related incidents or current events <p>Communications vary by building based on principal practice</p> <p>Some communications resources provided to principals and administrators regarding conduct and discipline expectations and policies</p> <p>Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on conduct and discipline expectations and policies</p>	<p>Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of conduct and discipline expectations and policies based on researched parent/family preferences</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about conduct and discipline expectations and policies</p> <p>District/school policy re: conduct and discipline expectations and policy communications including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families about conduct and discipline expectations</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for communicating and enforcing conduct and discipline expectations and policies for principals and administrators</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources on conduct and discipline to principals and administrators</p> <p>Sharing of best practices of communications about conduct and discipline expectations and policies internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about conduct and discipline expectations and policies to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communicating Extra- and Co-Curricular Offerings and Requirements with Parents/Families		
<p>Minimal proactive outreach on extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements largely limited to annual listings with little or unclear detail</p> <p>Specifics regarding extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements largely articulated on reactive basis only with onus on parents/families for inquiry</p>	<p>Series of approaches to outline extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements with parents/families, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details by program/club/team outlined at the beginning of each school year during Back-to- School/Meet-the-Teacher events • Printed and online access to program/club/team offerings, eligibility expectations, schedules, etc. • Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from advisors/coaches/program directors via email/voicemail/face-to-face • Presentations/meetings with principals, program directors, advisors and coaches to educate and inform parents/families on offerings, requirements, changes in program, etc. • Announcements and coverage of new programs or program changes through local news media, district/school website and social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc.) • Reinforcement of extra- and co-curricular involvement through coverage of student success in local news media <p>Some professional development in parent/family communications strategies for program directors, advisors and coaches</p> <p>Some parent/family communications resources provided to program directors, advisors and coaches</p> <p>Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements</p>	<p>Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements based on researched parent/family preferences</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements</p> <p>District/school policy about minimum extra- and co-curricular requirements communications, including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in parent/family communications strategies for program directors, advisors and coaches</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family communications resources to program directors, advisors and coaches</p> <p>Sharing of best practices of communications about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications about extra- and co-curricular offerings and requirements to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communicating School and District Goals, Plans, Programs, Finances and Issues with Parents/Families		
<p>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</p> <p>Specifics regarding school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues largely articulated on reactive basis typically in response to incidents or complaints</p> <p>Inconsistent and random communications regarding school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with parents/families</p>	<p>Series of approaches to outline school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with parents/families, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and district goals, plans, programs and finances outlined annually in meetings, printed and online communications • School and district issues communicated in a timely manner via meetings, printed and online media, and covered through local news media • Online access to information and details on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues • Ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from school and district administrators • Reinforcement of school and district goals, plans, programs and finances through coverage in local news media • Key Communicator program to extend flow of information about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with trusted and reliable sources • Town Hall meetings offered to provide information on updated goals, plans, programs, finances and other important issues. • 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 <p>Some internal communications on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues with district faculty and staff in their roles as ambassadors</p> <p>Some resources provided to building-level staff on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues</p> <p>Some tracking of effectiveness of communications on school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues</p>	<p>Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed of school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues based on researched parent/family preferences</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues</p> <p>District/school policy about school and district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues communications, including schedule and media supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for communication with all parents/families about district goals, plans, programs, finances and issues</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Communicating with Parents/Families During a Crisis		
<p>Minimal proactive outreach with parents/families during crisis limited to general information with little detail</p> <p>Communications with parents/families during crisis delayed or inconsistent with regards to timing and coverage</p> <p>Details regarding crisis largely articulated on reactive basis typically in response to inquiries or complaints</p> <p>Reliance on news media to release information</p>	<p>Series of approaches to communicate with parents/families during crisis, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis communications plan to support parent/family communications • Automated messaging capability including email, voice and text messaging to support swift and accurate communications with parents during all phases of crisis • Online access to information regarding crisis with accurate and timely postings • Current and accurate emergency contact listing in the event parents need to be reached personally • Current and accurate lists of persons authorized to pick up students during early dismissals/emergencies • 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 • Articulation of relevant information and details regarding crisis through local news media • 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.). <p>Some internal communications with district faculty and staff during crisis in their roles as ambassadors</p> <p>Regard to protection of student/staff privacy as per federal and state legal requirements (FERPA, FOIL, etc.)</p> <p>Some tracking of crisis communication effectiveness</p>	<p>Systematic approach to keeping parents/families informed during crises based on researched parent/family preferences</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications during crises</p> <p>District/school policy and clearly articulated crisis communications plan updated regularly with involvement from police and safety officials and supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>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</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development in crisis communications plan, procedures and strategies for all district personnel</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of parent/family crisis communications resources to administrators, principals and faculty/staff</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in crisis communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of communications to improve parent/family engagement and ensure student safety</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Supporting Parent-Teacher and Parent-Building Communications		
<p>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</p> <p>Inconsistent and random support for parent-teacher and parent-building communications</p>	<p>Series of approaches to support effective parent/family-teacher and parent/family-building communications, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared memo, letter, newsletter and other printed correspondence templates for principals and teachers to support effective parent communications and facilitate consistency in messaging • Prepared electronic text and templates for principals and teachers to support effective parent communications and facilitate consistency in messaging • Prepared talking points and presentations for principals and teachers to use in parent presentations and meetings • Prepared talking points for principals and teachers to use regarding building/classroom issues and incidents <p>Some professional development for principals and teachers on effective parent/family communication strategies</p> <p>Some tracking of parent-teacher and parent-building communications effectiveness</p>	<p>Comprehensive parent/family communication plans for each building based on researched preferences of parents/families</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred communications from the school building and the classroom teacher</p> <p>District/school policy about parent-teacher and parent-building communications that is supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development for principals and teachers on effective parent/family communication strategies</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support effective parent-teacher and parent-building communications</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in parent-teacher and parent-building communications internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent-teacher and parent- building communications to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Involving Parents/Families in Decision-making to Support Shared Responsibility		
<p>Minimal proactive support for parent/family involvement in decision-making with onus left largely to parents/families to seek avenues</p>	<p>Series of approaches to involve parents/families in decision-making to support shared responsibility, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation and participation of parents/families in district and school committees and task forces developing policies and programs • Representation of parents/families on the board of education and opportunities for parents/families to address the board with input related to board decisions • Opportunities for parents/families to provide input into district and school policies and programs via printed and online opportunities such as surveys, polls, etc. • Regular input from parents/families on school and district finance and budget decisions • Parent/family-led advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements <p>Some tracking of parent/family involvement effectiveness</p>	<p>Ongoing input from parents/families on preferred opportunities to be involved in decision-making</p> <p>District/school policy about parent/family involvement in decision-making that is supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support parent/family involvement in decision-making</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in parent/family involvement internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent/family involvement in decision-making to support shared responsibility</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Supporting PTA/PTO Activity and Success		
<p>Minimal district/school support for PTA/PTO activity and success with onus left largely to PTA/PTO to initiate and secure</p>	<p>Series of approaches to support PTA/PTO activity and success, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of PTA/PTO leaders in development of annual school and district calendar to ensure coordination of programs and events and minimize conflicts • Communications support of PTA/PTO programs and events through district and school channels such as automated messaging services, backpack flyers, bulletin boards, school websites, social media, etc. • Involvement and support of PTA/PTO through faculty and staff attendance to meetings and participation in program development and delivery • 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 <p>Some evaluation of PTA support effectiveness</p>	<p>Regular and ongoing input from PTA/PTO representatives on preferred support mechanisms from district and school</p> <p>District/school policy about provision of support to PTA/PTO, including adequate technology and resources</p> <p>District-wide PTA/PTO Leadership Council; Meets regularly with district leaders</p> <p>Deploy and support PTA/PTO leaders as key communicators to larger parent constituency</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in PTA/PTO support internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of effectiveness of PTA/PTO support from district and school</p> <p>Collaborative efforts are in effect (Examples: joint volunteer guidelines, co-sponsored events, etc.)</p> <p>Collaborative efforts in setting policies and procedures for volunteers in schools – i.e., sign-in procedures, background checks, guidelines when working directly with students and/or staff, etc.</p> <p>Providing orientation meetings and materials for all parent volunteers and PTA/PTO groups that includes best practices for volunteers</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Fostering Parent/Family Involvement in Community Collaboration		
<p>Minimal collaboration between parents/families and community members on district and school- related issues with onus left largely to parents/families to initiate</p>	<p>Series of approaches to foster parent/family involvement in community collaboration, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of parent/family representatives alongside district and school representatives and community representatives on school and community committees, task forces and forums • Educational foundation and/or other fundraising efforts involving parents/families and community members to support district and school programs • 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 • Coordination of events and dissemination of information about community activities that link to and/or support learning • Community service programs for students/families • Active alumni association to support school programs <p>Some tracking and evaluation of parent/family involvement in community collaboration</p>	<p>Ongoing input from parents/families on preferred opportunities to be involved in community collaboration</p> <p>District/school policy about parent/family involvement in community collaboration that is supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support parent/family involvement in community collaboration; i.e., parent leadership development programs</p> <p>Sharing of best practices in parent/family involvement in community collaboration internally and benchmarking the same externally to drive improvement</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of parent/family involvement in community collaboration</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Fostering Problem Solving and Resolving Complaints		
<p>Minimal proactive communication with parents/families regarding how and where to direct complaints with onus left largely to parents/families to navigate</p> <p>Problem-solving and complaint-resolution inconsistent across district and buildings, and varies with individual handling issue</p> <p>Little or no support provided to faculty and staff on effective customer service strategies</p>	<p>Series of approaches to foster problem solving and resolve complaints, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation of where and how parents/families should direct concerns and complaints • Articulation of successive channels for problems and complaints not resolved • Some involvement of parents/families in development of problem solving and complaint resolution approaches • Some tracking of complaints to determine key causes and support corrective actions to improve service • Some follow-up with parents/families following complaint resolution to track and ensure satisfaction <p>Some professional development for faculty and staff on effective customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution</p> <p>Some evaluation of problem solving and complaint resolution effectiveness</p>	<p>Comprehensive complaint resolution and problem-solving processes standardized across district and each building based on researched preferences of parents/families</p> <p>Ongoing involvement from parents/families on preferred problem solving and complaint resolution processes</p> <p>District/school policy about problem solving and complaint resolution supported by adequate technology and resources</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing professional development for faculty and staff on effective customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution</p> <p>Comprehensive and ongoing development and provision of resources to support effective customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution</p> <p>Ongoing feedback and evaluation of customer service strategies, problem solving and complaint resolution to improve parent/family engagement and foster student success</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Evaluating Communication Effectiveness to Inform Strategy		
<p>Minimal approaches for evaluating communication effectiveness largely reactive in response to problems/issues</p> <p>Reliance on anecdotal examples or limited sampling, i.e., talking only to friends or those you know, specific constituent group</p>	<p>Series of approaches to evaluate communication effectiveness to inform strategy, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual or periodic surveys of parents/families on communication effectiveness • Focus groups with parents/families on communication effectiveness and opportunities for improvement • Online forums and suggestion boxes for parents/families to provide input regarding communication effectiveness • Involvement of parents/families on task forces and advisory committees where focus is on communication • Monitoring and tracking of parent/family complaints and concerns regarding communication • Exit interviews with parents/families departing from district on communication effectiveness • Exit polls on finance and bond referenda on communication sources and effectiveness • Periodic communications audits performed by external evaluators 	<p>Comprehensive plan for regular and ongoing evaluation of communication effectiveness</p> <p>Regular review and analysis of communication evaluation results to inform changes and improvements in communication plan and strategies</p> <p>Tracking of communication effectiveness results with improvement targets and timelines</p> <p>Regular communication audits performed by external evaluators</p> <p>Benchmarking with best-in-class performers on parent/family communication effectiveness to improve results</p>

Function Area: Branding/Marketing Communications

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Conducting Thorough Market Research to Understand Demographics, Products and Services, Competition, Market Trends, Market Segments		
<p>Understanding and assessing district and school markets and target audiences limited to anecdotal input</p> <p>Sporadic and random surveys assess district issues; rarely include questions targeted to support marketing efforts</p> <p>Leadership ideas for marketing shared sporadically with communications staff, largely reactive when issues surface</p>	<p>Series of formal and informal assessments to understand demographics, products and services, competition, market trends, and market segments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audiences identified • 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 • List of neighboring districts and nearby competitive schools such as charter schools and private schools with relevant demographics • Competition defined and compared/contrasted with district <p>Situation or other analysis developed by communications office that outlines key points learned from assessments, surveys and relevant data</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Demographics of district and target markets continuously defined and monitored</p> <p>Enrollment trends into and away from competitors regularly reviewed and analyzed</p> <p>Comprehensive audit of district’s brand conducted; all touchpoints assessed and outlined; analysis of faculty and staff knowledge of and support for brand completed</p> <p>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</p> <p>Integration of research into marketing plan (research phase – RACE); findings systematically analyzed to improve market/brand position</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Developing Your School District's Brand Position, Attributes, Points of Pride, Promise and Traditions		
<p>Brand position, attributes, points of pride, promise non-existent or not reflective of district's current reality among key stakeholders</p> <p>Vision and mission statements non-existent or not updated to reflect district's current reality among key stakeholders</p> <p>Communications professional/brand manager not designated, leading to inconsistencies in use of brand elements</p>	<p>Brand position, attributes, points of pride and promise developed and largely accepted among key stakeholders</p> <p>Vision and mission statements updated to reflect the district's current reality among key stakeholders; positioning statement established</p> <p>Communications professional/brand manager designated</p> <p>Deployment of brand position and messaging across the district's internal and external audiences; possible variations and inconsistencies of deployment</p> <p>Limited budget to effectively grow brand and district traditions</p> <p>Elements of storytelling included in communications plan to support the brand's promise, attributes, points of pride and positioning statements</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Communications professional/brand manager 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</p> <p>Ongoing training for district staff to effectively develop the district's brand position, attributes, points of pride, promises and traditions</p> <p>Adequate resources and budget to effectively develop brand position, attributes, points of pride, promise and traditions</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Defining Brand Experience for Target Audiences		
<p>Communication efforts largely one-way (from district to target audience), sometimes compromising authentic involvement/engagement</p> <p>Little to no tailoring of brand messaging to target audiences</p> <p>Stories mainly about process and procedure rather than impact on audiences</p> <p>Some district involvement in the community.</p> <p>Staff trained as brand ambassadors limited to district administrators, if any</p>	<p>Some research conducted to understand priorities and communication preferences of target audiences.</p> <p>Series of events, communications and partnering opportunities to create brand involvement and engagement, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District bands, choruses and other student groups participate in community events such as parades and tree lightings • Focused events such as Senior Citizens Day to engage target audiences. • Key target audience leaders members of budget or other key district advisory committees • District leadership members of local chamber of commerce or other community organizations. • Social media presence with some level of response to posts • Ongoing communications to support target audience's awareness of district projects and priorities • Some storytelling to help target audiences emotionally connect to the brand <p>Some training of district staff in effectively representing the brand</p> <p>Evaluation of target audience involvement and engagement with the brand in early stages</p>	<p>Research systematically conducted to ascertain each target audiences' customs, subdivisions, expectations, priorities and preferred language, methods and mediums for communication (RACE)</p> <p>Delineation between primary and secondary target audiences based on marketing goals and objectives</p> <p>Comprehensive, integrated and aligned plan for engaging all target audiences by tailoring messages specifically to them</p> <p>Established key communicator network to comprehensively address cultural, socio-economic, geographic or other diversity in different stakeholder groups</p> <p>Clear, concise and memorable brand promise story to exemplify the desired brand attributes.</p> <p>Communications that emphasize emotional connection, not process</p> <p>Effective use of visuals – photography, video and/or illustration – to depict brand attributes</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>District personnel at all levels trained and empowered to act as brand ambassadors to ensure the brand experience is consistent</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of target audience involvement and engagement with the brand; results systematically used to inform improvement</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Developing a Comprehensive and Effective Marketing Plan in Support of the Brand and District Marketing Goals		
<p>Marketing tactics random and developed by communications office in isolation; efforts not aligned with district vision or strategic plan</p> <p>No additional communications staff or budget allocated for implementation of marketing tactics</p> <p>Key messages used sporadically, not strategically</p> <p>District values and vision may help guide faculty and staff behavior</p> <p>Outputs tied to periodic marketing efforts tracked sporadically</p>	<p>Marketing efforts incorporated into overall communications plan and aligned with goals developed jointly by communications office and leadership; some budget allocated</p> <p>Desired brand experience and overarching key messages included in plan</p> <p>Objectives included but may be difficult to measure</p> <p>Range of tactics listed and organized in some way; deadlines included for most tactics; tactics may indicate which audience they are designed to reach</p> <p>Brand standards and expected usage distributed to faculty and staff</p> <p>Plan outcomes by goals and/or objectives may be reviewed periodically</p> <p>Storytelling supports the brand's promise, attributes, points of pride and positioning statements</p>	<p>Marketing plan follows RACE model and aligned 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</p> <p>Overarching key messages designed to address issues identified through research included in plan</p> <p>Specific and measurable goals and objectives outlined along with clearly identified faculty and staff responsibilities, timelines, budgets and both intermediate and final intended outcomes</p> <p>Plan's strategies and tactics organized by audience, goal and/or objective</p> <p>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</p> <p>Plan includes key messages that support the district brand while appropriate for each target audience</p> <p>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</p> <p>Brand standards aligned with the actual experience stakeholders have with the district</p> <p>Faculty and staff receive regular support such as training, information and other resources to uphold the brand experience</p> <p>Entire plan evaluated regularly to assess progress toward goals and response to specific tactics; modifications made based on evaluation results</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Providing Standards and Guidelines for Consistent Use of Adopted Brand Assets (Logo, Slogan/Tagline, Home-Base Message/Mission) Through a Brand Standards Guide		
<p>Emerging awareness of inconsistencies across district and within schools of logo usage, slogan/tagline and mission on various communication pieces</p> <p>Schools within district rarely/inconsistently identify with district logo, slogan/tagline and/or mission</p> <p>Usage of brand assets is inconsistent on marketing materials</p> <p>Usage of brand assets is inconsistent on social media platforms</p> <p>Standardization of guidelines addressing consistent usage of adopted brand assets is in infancy stage</p>	<p>Published guide that addresses brand standards for proper usage of some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School/district logo (color palette, minimum size, placement on materials), slogan and mission for paper and electronic, publications, social media and other marketing materials • Formatting for letterhead/stationary (electronic and paper) • Formatting for letters, memos, forms and presentations (electronic and hard copy) • Interior and exterior signage • Business cards, name plates, nametags • Editorial style and any local/district acceptable style changes • Photos and graphics • Email signatures • Branding on apparel and other marketing items <p>Key school/district personnel receive training on using published guide</p> <p>School/district personnel largely following guidelines for external marketing materials and communication pieces</p> <p>School/district personnel largely following guidelines with electronic and published communications and social media</p> <p>School/district personnel inconsistently following guidelines with some internal communication pieces</p> <p>Process initiated to trademark district logo, name and slogan/tagline</p>	<p>Published comprehensive guide that addresses brand standards for proper usage of all items listed under “established” program (see left)</p> <p>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</p> <p>Staff in all buildings follows guidelines consistently in all internal and external communication pieces, social media and marketing materials.</p> <p>Ongoing training on guidelines to key staff members and brand coordinators</p> <p>District logo, name and slogan/tagline</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Fostering Brand Ownership and Loyalty Among Staff and District Leadership in Their Roles as District Ambassadors		
<p>Varying levels of awareness of importance of brand promise</p> <p>Inconsistent brand training for school employees often in response to brand violations</p> <p>Commitments to brand promise non-existent or minimally reflected in communication goals and/or district goals</p> <p>No channel audits of brand promise conducted at the school level</p>	<p>Series of approaches to ensure staff and district leadership own and promote brand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand promise expectations outlined during new employee orientation • Training of frontline school and central office staff on brand promise • Printed and online brand style guide available to employees • Staff communications include examples and reminders of how to promote brand <p>Some audits of brand promise conducted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unannounced visits where evaluators audit literature, logos and signage • Periodic reviews of district and school communications (print, electronic, social media) for brand consistency 	<p>School district strategic plan supports clearly defined brand promise, expectations and goals.</p> <p>Sufficient resources and budget support ongoing training, executing and upholding of brand promise at the school/district level</p> <p>Brand ownership and loyalty among district leaders and staff permeate the district's culture</p> <p>Fostering and executing brand promise and adhering to brand style guide integrated into key employee evaluations</p> <p>Comprehensive annual evaluation on the effectiveness of school board members and faculty/staff in their roles as brand ambassadors</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Measuring/Evaluating Impact of Marketing Plan/Brand		
<p>Evaluation largely anecdotal based on observation and “word of mouth” feedback from stakeholders</p> <p>Insufficient resources for communications professional/brand manager to evaluate the marketing plan/brand</p> <p>Specific and measurable goals and objectives, staff responsibilities, timelines and budgets loosely defined with no coordination to final intended outcomes</p> <p>Brand touchpoints and messaging loosely utilized and inconsistently integrated into tactics</p>	<p>Some evaluation conducted that may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal surveys/polls to determine satisfaction and effectiveness of district communications • Response rates of various online campaigns • Website analytics metrics and social media metrics • Informal focus groups representing various key stakeholders • Media coverage monitored for frequency and tone <p>Messaging consistently supports the brand/marketing plan in most tactics and operational areas</p> <p>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</p> <p>Adjustments to the marketing plan/brand based on available budget</p>	<p>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 touchpoints as well as effectiveness of faculty/staff and school board members in their roles as brand ambassadors</p> <p>Evaluation results systematically used to revise/improve communications</p> <p>Professional development opportunities identified through marketing/program weaknesses</p> <p>Adequate budget and other required resources available to support marketing plan/brand revisions</p> <p>Marketing/branding program benchmarked against top performers to inform improvement</p>

Function Area: Crisis Communication

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Ensuring Communication Effectiveness Through a Crisis Communication Plan		
<p>Written crisis communication plan non-existent or in early stages of development</p> <p>If exists, plan lacks measurable goals and evaluation component</p>	<p>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.)</p> <p>Plan identifies members of the crisis communication team, their roles and responsibilities</p>	<p>Comprehensive written crisis communication plan aligns with Emergency Response Information Plan (ERIP)/National Incident Management System (NIMS) and procedures</p> <p>Crisis communication plan consistently updated in response to latest research and aligned with goals and objectives</p> <p>District leadership seeks input from law enforcement and municipal officials for joint review and development of plan</p>
<p>If exists, crisis communication plan occasionally reviewed during crisis by communication staff and generally not involving leadership, administrators, or external stakeholders or agencies</p>	<p>Crisis communication plan annually reviewed as part of the communication office's overall strategic planning process</p> <p>Review occasionally involves cabinet and external stakeholders and agencies, including law enforcement</p>	<p>Crisis communication 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</p> <p>Plan incorporates evolving expectations of community, analysis of changing information landscape (for example, social media, where influential conversations are happening)</p> <p>Plan systematically benchmarked against other school or agency crisis communication efforts to identify and incorporate best practices</p>
<p>Crisis message templates (for example, response statements, message mapping) are scant and available only to communication department</p>	<p>Crisis message templates (for example, response statements, message mapping) are developed for multiple channels (website, electronic, social media, phone, news media)</p> <p>Training on use of crisis message templates occasionally takes place</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Training on how messages are shared with different audiences is provided annually to all district and school leaders</p> <p>Templates are available to access by all communication staff and selected district leaders identified as back-ups</p>
<p>Parents and families are unaware of school or district emergency response plans unless a crisis occurs or following its conclusion</p>	<p>District and building emergency response plans are shared with parents annually through multiple communication channels</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Communication practices are adjusted using the RACE model for continuous improvement</p>

<p>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</p>	<p>Comprehensive crisis communication plan includes back-up systems and network to communicate critical information relevant to district staff, families and stakeholders</p>	<p>Redundant communication systems established and tested in simulated disaster and in collaboration with responding agencies</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Drills typically focus on a single-scale crisis response</p>	<p>Crisis communication plan contains processes that allow for scalability based on the complexity of the crisis</p> <p>Team members are clear on the process by which to assess level of deployment needed and execute plan accordingly</p> <p>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</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Maximizing Communication Effectiveness with Trained Staff and Leadership		
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) 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
Communication staff and district leaders have limited or no understanding of a crisis communication lifecycle	Communication staff and district leaders have knowledge of a crisis communication lifecycle and plan some messages accordingly to meet the district's information goals	Communication staff and district leaders internalize the crisis communication lifecycle 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 crisis communications annually with school and district leaders, but no tabletop or scenario training 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 and no coordination of training efforts	Some involvement of local agencies in district-planned training efforts	Joint training activities conducted by 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 includes informal assistance agreements; Public Information Officers 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 in collaborative meetings to establish crisis response protocols
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 communication leader attends occasional trainings and has general knowledge of support available to district in a crisis	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

<p>Loosely defined crisis communication standards and protocols established but only understood by top district leaders</p>	<p>Crisis communication standards clearly defined and understood by district and site leaders</p> <p>Occasional trainings occur for district and site leaders but do not include department directors and managers</p>	<p>Well-established and district-wide standards and protocols for crisis response understood by district, site and department leaders</p> <p>Regularly scheduled trainings for site and department teams on crisis protocols, including process by which to train new employees hired between regularly scheduled trainings</p>
<p>Communication strategies and materials largely developed during a crisis</p> <p>Key stakeholders and objectives identified after a crisis emerges and as situation evolves</p>	<p>Communication staff activates comprehensive crisis communication plan and deploys all relevant materials during crisis duration</p> <p>Key school system staff play minimal role and have limited knowledge of elements in crisis communication plan</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Staging areas for news media, parent- student reunification, etc., identified after crisis incident has occurred</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Staging areas established as part of comprehensive crisis communication or emergency operations plans before any incident necessitating their use</p>
<p>No substitutes identified to relieve key communication staff during crisis</p>	<p>At least one substitute identified to relieve key communication staff during a crisis</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Multiple substitutes or potential shifts identified in advance of crisis so that key communication staff can be relieved during crisis response activities</p> <p>Predetermined district-designated staff member is assigned task of monitoring key response team staff to ensure self-care and effectiveness of team over time</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Effectively Engaging Target Audiences Through Electronic Tools in a Crisis		
<p>Notification system in place but rarely used to communicate with stakeholders</p> <p>Phone, text and email database of stakeholders not updated regularly</p>	<p>Notification system in place and serves as the primary communication tool for both regular and emergency messages</p> <p>Stakeholder database updated annually</p>	<p>Notification system in place and used strategically to communicate emergency messages</p> <p>Stakeholder database updated frequently and easily by stakeholders</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Some social media posts linked to resources and updates on district website</p> <p>Minimal or no effort in place to develop social media following to expand reach in a crisis</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Official district social media platforms broadcast frequent updates If available, multimedia resources (video, audio, photo, statements) pushed out through social media to increase engagement and expand audience reach</p> <p>Use of pre-scheduled, automated social media content paused during crisis</p>
<p>Few social media channels (for example, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) used with little monitoring</p>	<p>Multiple social media channels used strategically for different audiences and monitored regularly</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Social media use limited primarily to school, district and weather-related events</p>	<p>Social media use includes some communication during a crisis or emergency</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Two-way conversations limited on social media channels; no protocols exist to address negative conversations</p> <p>No district webpage exists that outlines crisis or emergency protocols, terms, and standards</p>	<p>Evidence of two-way conversations on social media channels; protocols established to address negative conversations</p> <p>District webpage exists with limited information on crisis or emergency protocols, terms, and standards</p>	<p>Clear, ongoing proactive coordination exists among district staff with posting rights; social media team meets regularly</p> <p>District webpage exists with complete information on crisis or emergency protocols, terms, and standards</p> <p>Crisis webpage ready to take over all or part of district home page if needed</p>
<p>No tracking of analytics of social media posts, homepage or emergency page visits, or notification alerts during a crisis</p>	<p>Analytics by each platform tracked during a crisis and analyzed by communication team</p>	<p>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</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Continuously Improving Through Post-Crisis Communication Processes and Procedures		
<p>No or minimal debriefing held among district leadership, communication team, and responding agencies to analyze and evaluate crisis communication</p> <p>District-level discussions take place following local or regional incidents or small-scale crises, but all impacted staff members may not be included</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Notes from debrief summarized and communicated to school administrators and district leadership</p> <p>Findings communicated to collaborating agencies</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Formal report created for leadership in all participating agencies</p>
<p>Debriefs, when they do occur, lack an intentional focus on assessment of the crisis response plan, process, and roles</p> <p>No formal communication shared with partnering agencies about debrief findings</p>		
<p>Minimal or no revisions made to crisis communication plan</p>	<p>Comprehensive crisis communication plan revised based on review and debrief with key school system staff</p> <p>Updated plan communicated to district leadership</p>	<p>Comprehensive crisis communication plan revised based on formal review of incident</p> <p>Updated plan communicated to all stakeholders including district leadership, staff, and multiagency collaborators</p> <p>Any applicable board policies and administrative regulations reviewed and revised, if necessary</p>
<p>Informal sharing of notes from incident debrief</p>	<p>Case study professional development session offered to district leadership using findings from formal incident review and crisis communication plan revisions</p>	<p>Ongoing professional development trainings for leadership and school staff updated to reflect findings from most recent incident and revisions to crisis communication plan</p>
<p>No formal assessment of incidents or events taking place outside of the district</p> <p>No adjustment of plans takes place after incidents or events outside of the district</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Plans may not be updated in the wake of local or state incidents</p>	<p>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</p>

Emerging	Established	Exemplary
Engaging the Community on Safety and Crisis Communication		
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 Stakeholders' expectations are regularly assessed and incorporated into crisis communication planning
		Key communicators informed through media statements, press releases, and electronic tools as part of crisis communication response
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	School board observes, participates in or receives summaries of tabletop drills and after incident debriefing sessions so they are prepared to respond to stakeholders
Minimal outreach to and engagement with stakeholders on safety issues Minimal or no understanding of student, parent, family, and staff perceptions of crisis communication preferences and satisfaction	Town hall, summit or community forum on school safety or specific issue held in response to and following a crisis Prevention and intervention strategies published in school newsletters and on district and school websites in response to and following a crisis 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	Established	Exemplary
Incorporating Cultural Competency with Crisis Communication		
Crisis communication plan largely devoid of addressing needs of English language learner (ELL) families	English language learner (ELL) families, interpreters or translators, community agencies that serve immigrant families are occasionally or rarely consulted for input on crisis communication plan	<p>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</p> <p>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.)</p>
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	<p>Interpreters or translators are trained in crisis communication, district, and school safety protocols and emergency procedures</p> <p>Interpreters or translators meet with families they serve at least annually to share crisis communication protocols and resources</p>
Translation of crisis messages for ELL families is inconsistent and dependent on time of crisis and availability of translators	<p>District communication staff works with schools regularly and knows which families and languages are needed for translation in a crisis</p> <p>Messages are translated consistently during crises for ELL families for rapid notification calls, emails, and texts regardless of time of crisis</p>	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
No translations available of parent manuals on student safety, security, emergency procedures, and communication	Parent manuals on student safety, security, emergency procedures, and communication are translated only if requested	<p>Translated parent manuals on safety, security, emergency procedures, and communication are disseminated at the start of each school year</p> <p>Onsite interpreters help new parents understand safety, security, emergency procedures, and communication material and annually thereafter as needed</p>
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	Interpreters available at start-of-school open houses or ELL events that help explain school or district safety protocols and emergency procedures and communication	<p>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</p> <p>Feedback from ELL families refine crisis communication practices and plan</p>

<p>Few crisis messages templates are developed in multiple languages</p>	<p>Key crisis message templates are developed in multiple languages and available to multiple communicators, staff members, and key district leaders</p> <p>Message templates are translated for parent emails, texts, phone scripts and website</p>	<p>Templates are reviewed and updated by communication staff with translators at least annually</p>
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