



WILLOUGHBY-EASTLAKE CITY SCHOOLS

COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS

TEACH - LEARN - GROW



Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools is committed to open, honest, and ongoing communication; we understand that maintaining a two-way conversation with our community, parents, and students is essential for building relationships. These relationships are the foundation for a strong school system.



-
- *Purpose*
 - *Mission*
 - *Goals*

PURPOSE

The Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools Communications Department and Public Relations Coordinator exist to manage communication for the District and the Board of Education with their respective internal and external audiences.

MISSION

The mission of the Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools Communications Department is to establish positive relationships and credibility between the District and its audiences through the timely and accurate dissemination of information.

The department also serves as a crucial link between the media and the District in both proactive and reactive news situations.



Communications Goal #1

RELEVANT - TIMELY - ACCURATE

Willoughby-Eastlake will remain at the forefront of District messaging and communicate in a timely manner. The District will provide information to stakeholders that is accurate, factual and transparent. While demonstrating these principles, the District will deliver messages that support District priorities and initiatives, are clear, consistent and delivered in a consistent voice.



Rationale: Communicating effectively with all audiences ensures a clear understanding of the District's message and helps to build trust and confidence with all stakeholders.

Timely communication is especially critical during emergency situations.

Communications Goal #2

RECOGNIZABLE - ACCESSIBLE

The Willoughby-Eastlake Communications Department will provide access to key messages to all stakeholders across the District (internally and externally) while maintaining brand recognition and promoting the daily operations of the District. Access will be provided to stakeholders through:

- Electronic Transmission
- Face to Face Communication
- Print

Rationale: Access to communication fosters positive relationships between the District, families and the community.



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Communications Goal #3

RESPONSIVE - CREDIBLE

The Willoughby-Eastlake Communications Department will provide ongoing support for administrators, the community and staff by providing information relevant to the District operations and responding in a timeframe conducive to maintaining District credibility and its reputation.



Rationale: Proactively and strategically manage internal hazards to minimize the impact on our reputation, credibility, and ability to lead.

Communications Goal #4

INFORMATIONAL - TRANSPARENT

The Willoughby-Eastlake Communications Department will publish and distribute informational items:

- District Strategic Plan
- District/school informational brochures
- District Newsletters
- District and school websites
- Willoughby-Eastlake videos on District website
- Social media posts
- Press releases, articles and narratives
- Emergency notifications

Rationale: Effective communications enhances the image of the District and creates a positive image within the community.



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Functions of District Communications



Community Relations

- Investing in community relations results in increased public support and understanding of the District.

Media Relations

- Media relations increases the positive stories in the media, showcases student achievement, and helps the District communicate with target audiences about the goals of our Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools.

Communications Consulting

- Communications consulting supports our schools and departments in developing and maintaining strong relationships with students, team members, families, and the community. Providing high-level, strategic counsel to the Board of Education, Superintendent, and Administrative Leadership Team will improve individual and school performance in the areas of communication and public relations.

Key Stakeholder Engagement

- By engaging our key stakeholder groups, we empower them to take ownership in our schools and District.

Crisis Communication

- Crisis communication promotes the desired response in the event of a crisis, mitigates negative impacts in the community, and encourages fair and objective media coverage.
- Proactively and strategically manage internal hazards to minimize the impact on our reputation, credibility, and ability to lead.



Key Messages



- Students first, time on task, quality instruction
- Everyone in the community contributes to the child's education success. Together we will raise our students to their highest potential.
- We remain responsive to our students' needs by evolving with the changing educational environment and by embracing advances in technology so that our programs remain relevant and engaging.
- We strive to maintain the right balance of resources so that a child's education is never compromised.
- Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools is focused on making our schools unique, valuable and attractive to students, families and employees.
- We value and believe in:
 - Trusting relationships based on respect, integrity and ethical behavior
 - An environment that motivates and actively engages learners
 - Innovation and creativity
 - Strong partnerships, especially between home and school
 - Accountability and shared responsibility
 - Individual, professional and organizational growth
 - Celebration and accomplishments
- We strive for educational excellence by creating and maintaining a learning community that embraces diversity, honors relationships and prepares all learners for a changing world.
- We will provide a safe, supportive environment for our students and staff while students receive a diverse education in order to develop into responsible, compassionate citizens and successful, lifelong learners.
- We are a District joined by a team of parents and the community to assist our students in developing skills to become independent and self-sufficient adults able to succeed and contribute responsibly in a global community.



Communication Standards



- **Keep Communications Simple**
 - Use clear, concise language for all publications
 - Vary the types and level of communication to target all audiences
- **Create Information Sheets**
 - Create information sheets when necessary for specific topics
 - Use templates for uniformity so that new topics can be addressed rapidly
- **Communicate Early and Often**
 - Prepare information sheets when appropriate and send to stakeholder audience
 - Make telephone calls if in doubt
- **Communicate Face-to-Face**
 - The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face
- **Keep communications Brief and to the Point**
 - In order to keep a person's attention, be brief and to the point
 - Use bullet points when appropriate
 - Highlight message in the title
 - Proofread all documents for errors
- **Emphasize Customer Service**
 - Customers must leave with an answer to their concern or question
 - Never be dismissive
 - Actively listen to understand the message beyond the words
- **Train Staff**
 - Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors and people in the community has an impact on how Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools is perceived
 - Engage frontline staff in conversation and make sure they have access to information immediately when necessary. They are the best link to the community.



Communication Standards



- **Develop relationships**
 - Develop relationships by keeping others informed
 - Ask for input when others show concern
 - Develop key communication and deliver messages. Others will take the message to the community.
 - Maintain a high level of visibility for the District
- **Study the Media**
 - Pay attention to the types of stories aired and published
 - Note who is generally the source of information
 - Develop relationships with media personnel
- **Prepare our Messages**
 - Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with information
 - Develop responses that represent the District and our schools
 - Avoid technical jargon by keeping it simple
 - Prepare stories in formats that match each situation
- **Prepare all messaging consistent with district branding**



Internal & External Communication Strategies



Face to Face

- External
 - Parent/Teacher Conferences
 - Advisory Councils/Parent Organizations
 - Public Events in School Buildings
 - District Level Public Events
 - Extra Curricular Activities
 - Community Meetings – District Level, Office of the Superintendent
- Internal
 - Staff Conferences
 - Staff Advisory Councils
 - Staff Meetings – building level and Office of the Superintendent
 - Building Walk Throughs – Office of the Superintendent
 - Principals' Meetings
 - Department Chair Meetings – District level, building level
 - Operations Meeting – Office of the Superintendent

Written

- External
 - Student Planners and Handbooks
 - Classroom Newsletters
 - Paper notes and reminders
 - Signs/Marquees
 - Brochures: District, school, and departments
 - District Newsletters, monthly Community Update
 - District Policies and Administrative Guidelines
- Internal
 - District Policies and Administrative Guidelines
 - Brochures: District, school and departments
 - Paper notes and reminders
 - Signs/Marquees
 - District Newsletters
 - Weekly Staff Update – Office of the Superintendent



Internal & External Communication Strategies



Electronic

- Internal & External
 - All Board meeting minutes, posted in a timely manner on the District website
 - Department and school information on District and school websites
 - Edmodo
 - Facebook – District level, building level
 - Twitter – District level, building level
 - Instagram – building level
 - Text reminders
 - Email – District level, building level
 - Student and parents as needed
 - Updates, weekly/daily/as needed (District and building level)
 - Community Calendar
 - Community Update – Monthly, District Level
 - End of Year Report – District level
 - Quality Profile – District level
 - Website – District level, building level
 - Media – District level when appropriate
 - YouTube
 - Facebook Live – District level, Office of the Superintendent
 - Local media – television, newspaper
 - Magazine forums – Mimi Magazine, District level
 - Videos, Check-In With the Sup – Office of the Superintendent
 - Newsletter – District level, building level
 - Annual Media Recognition – Senior Class, award recipients, etc
 - Presentations – Office of the Superintendent
 - Updates to the Board of Education – Office of the Superintendent

School Messenger

- Internal & External
 - Text, Robo Call, Email
 - School level – Used to relay vital information that needs to be known (immediate and scheduled)
 - District level – Used to relay immediate information to parents (immediate and scheduled)



Stakeholders & Target Audiences



INTERNAL AUDIENCE

- The Board of Education
- District staff
- Students
- Parents/Guardians

SECONDARY AUDIENCE

- Unions
- Professional education affiliated associations and organization
- District/Parent Advisory Council
- Chamber of Commerce and Business Community
- Elected Officials – all levels of government
- Media (a conduit to reach target audiences)
- Civic Groups
- Non-profit organizations
- Faith-based Groups
- Community Service Clubs
- Private Schools
- Charter Schools
- Prospective employees
- Prospective residents
- Residents in and around the school community without students enrolled in Willoughby-Eastlake City Schools
- Post-Secondary institutions – i.e. trade and community colleges, universities, Job Markets
- Public residents, parents/guardians and business owners/community leaders, extended family and Alumni Association

