

Strengthening Communication to Build Trust & Support

MARE 2025

Presenters



Tennille Banner

Superintendent
Green City R-I
School District

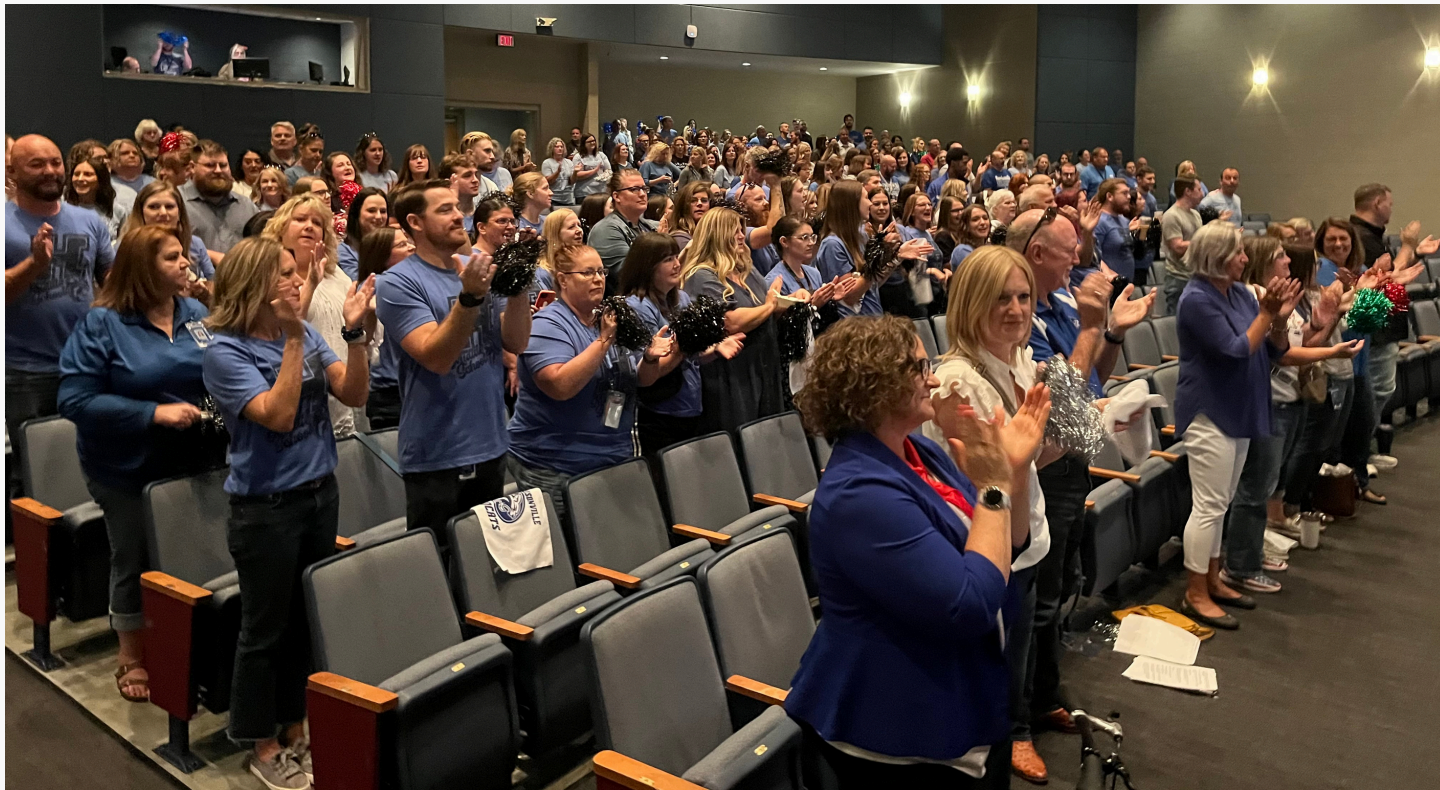


Jill Filer

Lead Strategist
CESO Communications



Communicate from the inside, out



- Builds trust with staff
- Creates positive culture/good morale
- Staff can be your best PR team
- If information is not shared, staff will create their own story
- Hierarchy of trust with parents/community

Communicate from the inside, out

- Consistent communications w/staff
 - Newsletters
 - Access for all
 - K-D-S
 - Organize by audience
 - Same day/time/format
 - Content
 - Calendar, Celebrations, Quick Links
 - Staff Meetings
 - Crisis/emergencies
 - Big issues
 - Board Updates

A School Communicator's Guide to Internal Communications

c
e
s
o

Why is it that some school systems are plagued by rumors, deal with misinformation about the district and have low satisfaction among employees? Part of the reason could be that internal communications within the organization are ineffective and need an overhaul. A solid internal communications strategy helps wipe away many of these challenges by providing staff with key information they can share with parents and community members.

The communications department can't reach all of the district's stakeholders on its own! Employees are first-line ambassadors and should be empowered as communicators. In order to do that, they must have access to the necessary information to carry the organization's message forward. When done effectively, the communication department grows exponentially, as all staff serve as reliable sources of information for the public. Additionally, since those closest to the students in a school system are the most trusted, the information carries more weight and there is more confidence in what's shared.



Inside Out

Staff should be the first audience to hear district/school news. This engenders trust among staff and ensures accurate information is shared by staff with external stakeholders, especially parents.



First-Line Ambassadors

There is no more trusted source of information about a school district than its teachers and staff. Making sure they are provided with timely and accurate information should be a priority. Nothing discourages employees more than reading or hearing something in the news that the district didn't bother to tell them first.



Expectations for Staff

The district/school has a responsibility to inform staff. On the flip side, all employees need to understand their vital role and responsibility in communicating and connecting with parents and families.

Get in Touch

Bob Noyed
Vice President, CESO Communications
612-325-2127 or bob.noyed@theceso.com
theceso.com

Tips

Know-Do-Share (KDS) Format

A simple KDS email format will consistently organize news for staff. An effective KDS implementation means staff receive an email digest of information. This weekly (or less frequent) email helps staff organize and easily find information and does not clutter their inbox. Emergency communications should still be sent as needed.

Communicate with All

Teachers are one of many key audiences in a school system. Paraprofessionals, custodians, bus drivers and support staff are typically more likely to live in the community and are trusted sources of information for parents and community members. Ensure they are informed. For some of these groups, that means communicating in ways outside of just email.

New Employee Orientation

Provide information on the brand, culture, vision and overall direction of your district with new staff. They also need to know the expectations for what to share and what not to share.

Seek Feedback

Find ways to learn from staff about how they want to receive information, what areas they feel uninformed about and how the communication from leadership can be more effective. A robust internal communication plan includes a feedback loop that allows employees at all levels to engage with school and district leadership. Passionate, informed and engaged employees help create an environment where everyone feels valued and customer service thrives.

Communicate from the inside, out

- Train your staff
 - New Staff Onboarding
 - Secretary Training
 - Rule of 3
 - Communications Expectations
 - Use of Social Media (professional & personal)



Tips for Board Member Communications

- Regular, consistent info (weekly) from Superintendent
- Talking points/key messages for issues with community
- Provide phrases to use for common situations
- Invite them into the schools on a regular day
- Give them opportunities to recognize students, staff



External Comms: Keep It Simple

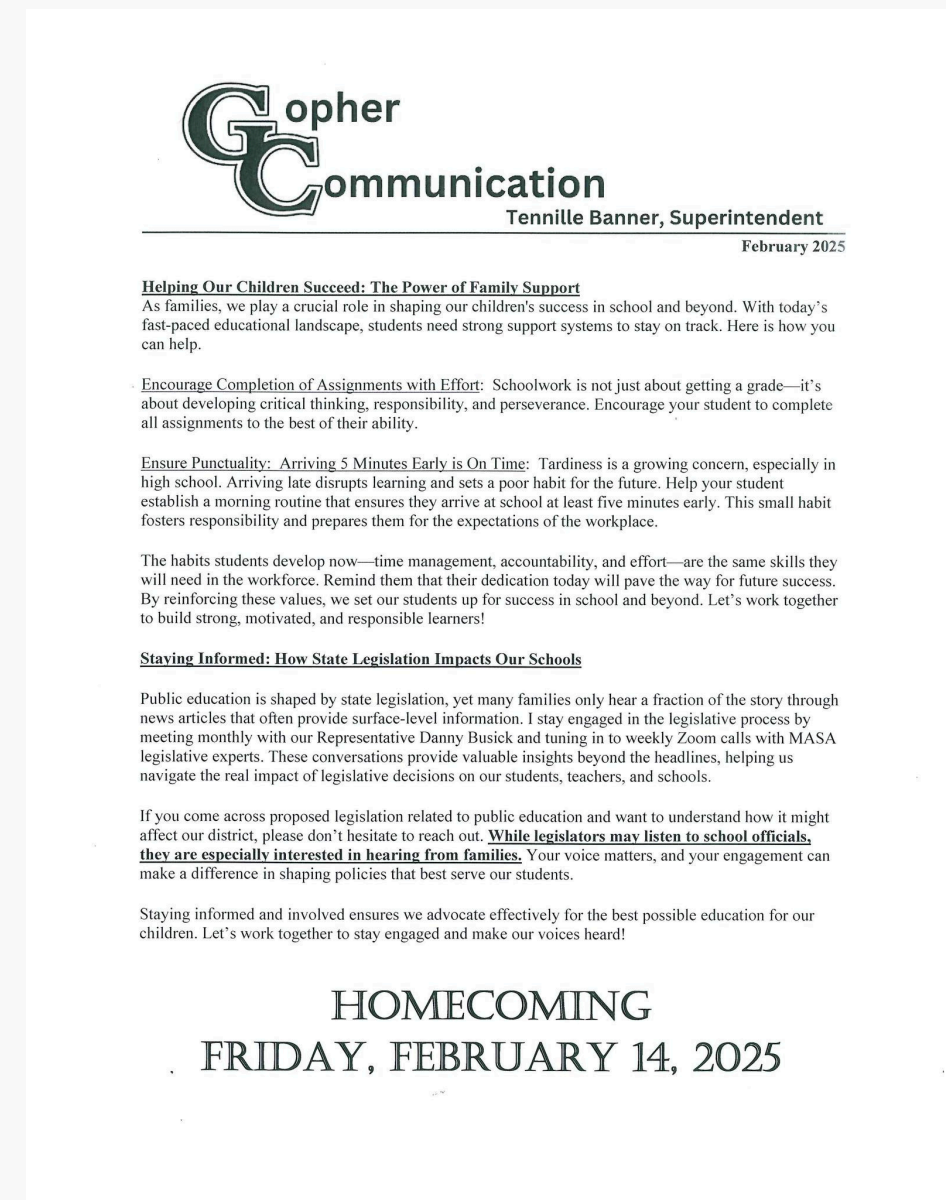
Choose one external communications method
& do it well

- Newsletter Best Practices

- Regularly distribute
- Consistent information
- Include the “why”
- Post in multiple places - send via email/text, post on website & social media

- Facebook/Instagram Best Practices

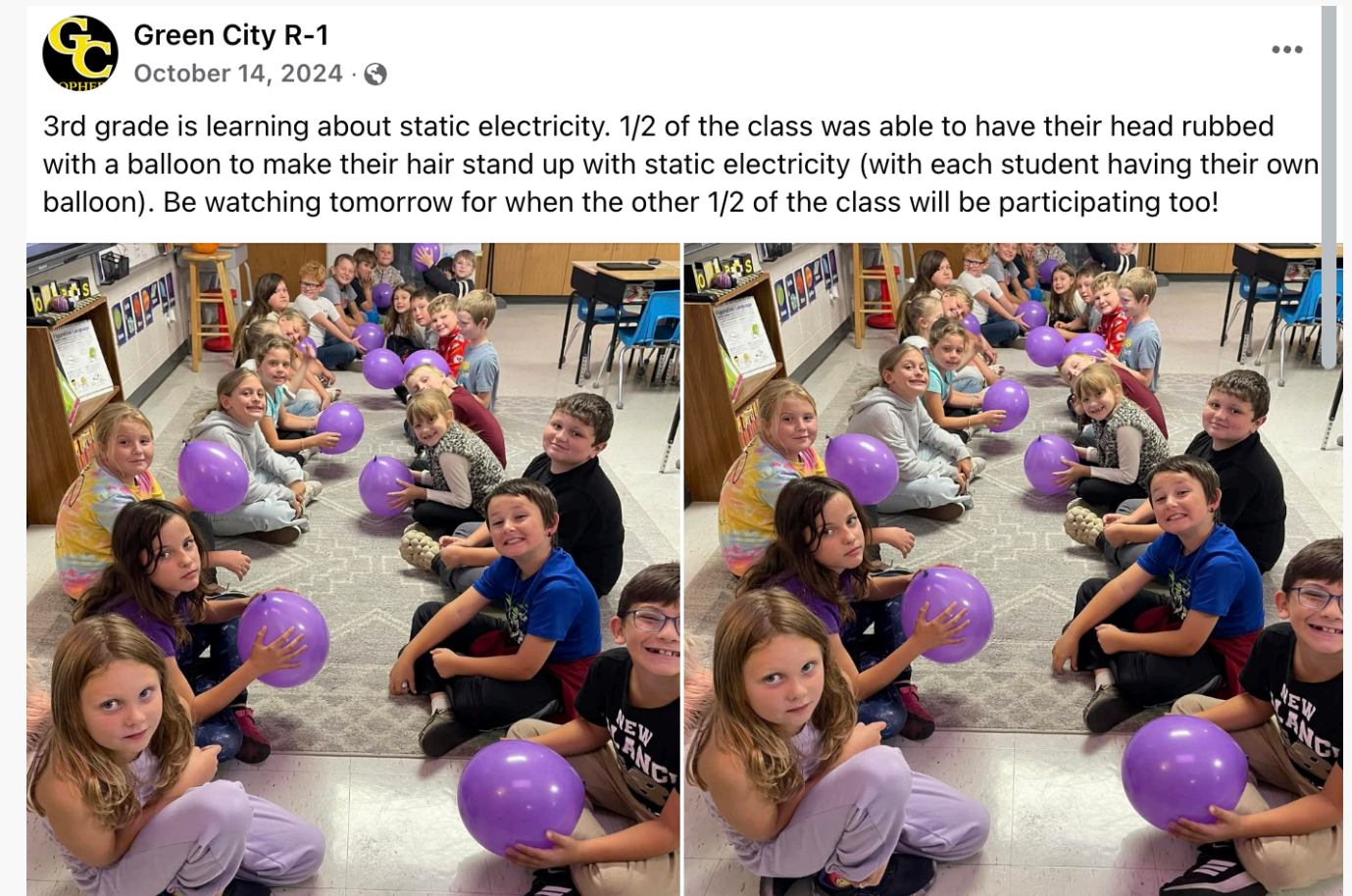
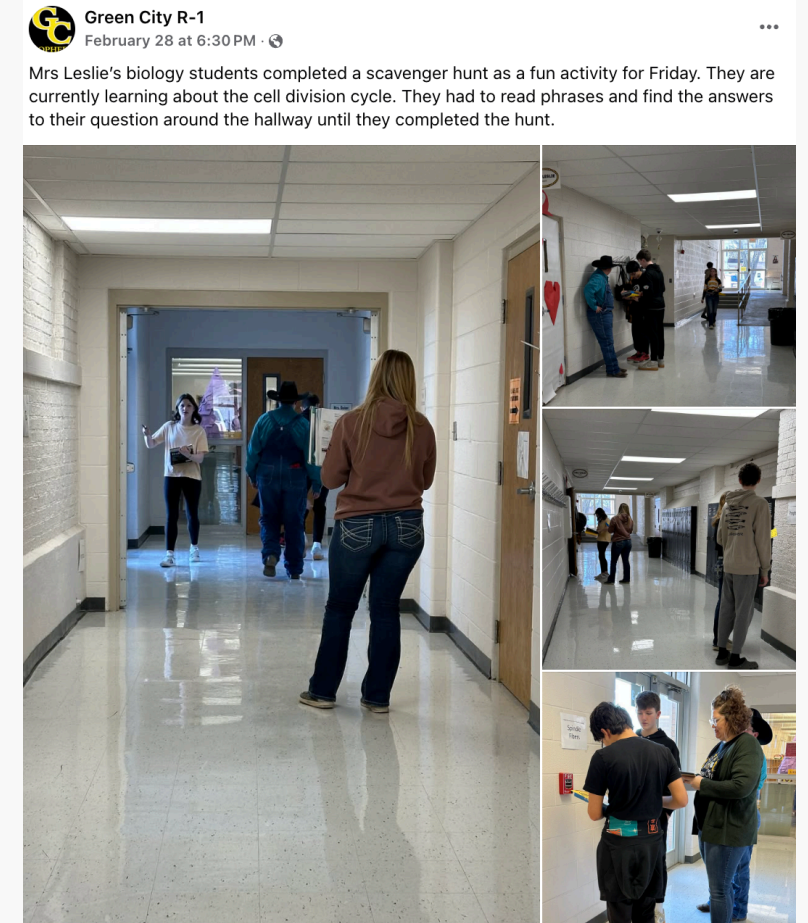
- Post at least 2-3 times per week at “best” time
- Use images or video
- Pro Tips: Be social, humanize your staff, use branded graphics



External Comms: Keep It Simple

But how do I get content/have time?

- Everytime you're in a building/at event, take a few photos
- Find PR rockstars/students to help
- Schedule Facebook/IG at one time
- Set expectations w/families, community re: social media
 - Turn Messaging Off - Email/Phone as expected way to contact school
- Ongoing work on newsletter



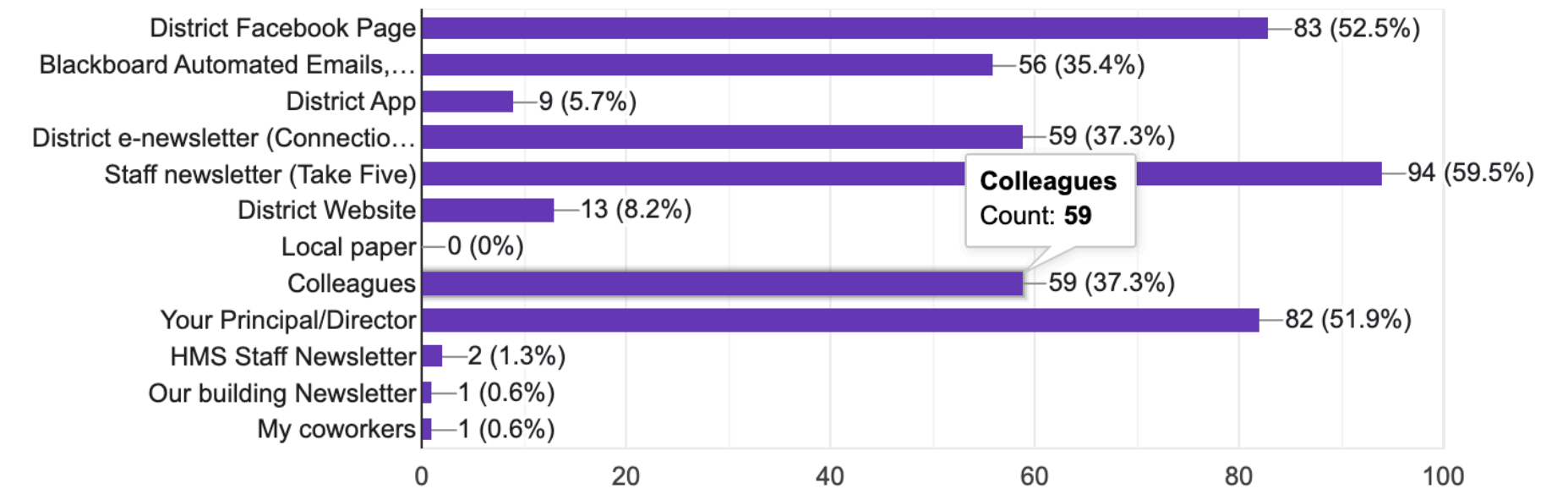
Listen

- Plan opportunities to listen
 - One-on-one/small group
 - Surveys
- Informal, Formal
 - Car rider line
 - Advisory groups
- For Staff
 - Listening Posts
 - Rounding
- When you take action on something you heard, tell people

From which sources do you receive the most district information?

[Copy chart](#)

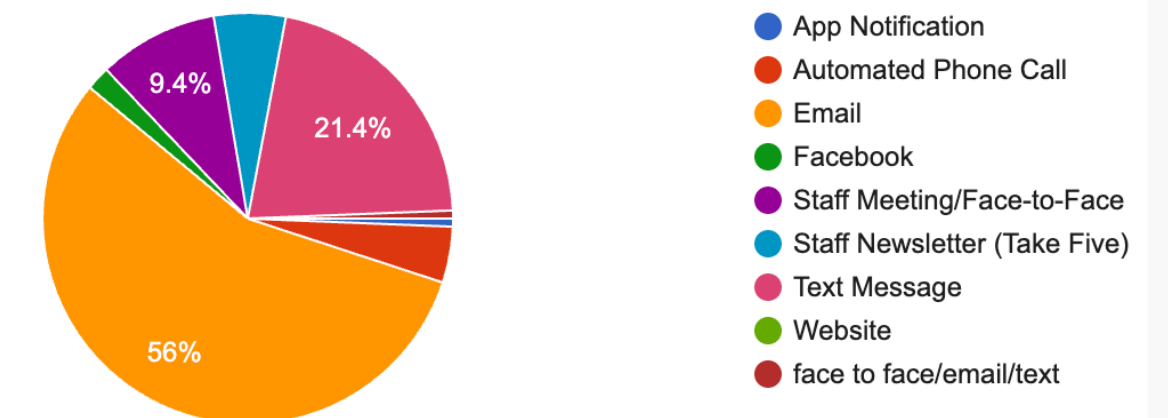
158 responses



What is your preferred method of receiving information from the district?

[Copy chart](#)

159 responses



Develop Your Message/Tell Your Story

- What are your district's key messages?
 - Possible use of #s
- Ensure the key messages are evident/included in your communications
- Use key messages/talking points for all “big” initiatives, events
- Get your staff on board

Affton School District
Yesterday at 11:00 AM · 🌐

👶 Our youngest learners are bringing lines to life! At [Mesnier Primary School](#), kindergartners explored how simple lines can transform into exciting 3-D art. Their creativity and curiosity shined through every twist, bend, and fold—what a wonderful example of learning through art! 💜💙
#AfftonStrong #AfftonLearns



Affton School District
September 30 at 5:00 PM · 🌐

🐾 Louie, Barclay, and some of the Blue Crew from the [St. Louis Blues](#) came to visit kindergarten at [Mesnier Primary School](#) last week! They promoted the launch of Blues Bookworms program and we read some fun Blues books together! 📖💙
Blues Bookworms encourages elementary students to spend their free time reading. The program kicks off tomorrow and runs through Jan. 15.
#AfftonStrong #OneAffton



Be proactive with “bad” news

- Today, there is no hiding the flaws -- as noted, tell your story, or someone else will
- Fill your bucket all the time (see previous slides)
- Transparency is vital
- In crisis, communicate often as info is available with those who need to know
- You can apologize for the situation & admit mistakes
 - Be human
- “Admire & Acquire” crisis communications templates, letters, phrases
- Ensure everyone knows their role/back-up, know who you can call for help

Be proactive with “bad” news

Framework for initial crisis response

- Initial statement (who, what, where, when ... NOT why)
 - “We understand an incident has occurred at ...”
 - “Authorities are responding ...”
 - “We have no confirmation of injuries ...”
- Priorities & Action Steps
 - The school is in lockdown ...”
 - “We have established ‘X’ for families to report to ...”
- Reassure
 - “We are working with law enforcement to ...”
 - “We will provide additional information ...”

Be strategic

- Plan your communication for effectiveness, success
- Start small - event/change communication plans
- Note Key Messages
- RPIE
 - Research
 - Plan
 - Implement
 - Evaluate

Harrisonville Schools Comms Planning Template



Event/Change Communications Planning Guide

Event/Change: Summer School 2021

Event Date: May 24-June 21

Audience: Parents, Staff, students

Key Messages:

1. Incoming grades 1-5 @ McE from 8-2 p.m., Incoming grades 6-8, 8-2 p.m. @ HHS
2. Incoming grades 9-12 online w/Edgenuity
3. Centralized pick-up/drop off for buses for K-8
4. Breakfast & lunch offered
5. Initially open for students by invitation; open enrollment in mid-April
6. Limited capacity due to buildings under construction
7. COVID protocols - masks, social distancing will be followed
8. K-8 using Summer Journey program to teach Summer School

Communication Method	Date(s)	Who's Responsible
Summer School info for staff in Take Five	3/18	Jill/Kristi
Individual teacher calls to families re: invitation to attend; siblings will be eligible too	By March 26	Individual teachers, K-8 (Kristi script)
Email Google form to invitees to complete; forms due by 4/16	4/5	Buildings (email composed by Jill/Kristi)
Open Enrollment Email to families, send home in backpacks - limited capacity; due by 4/30 - close if we reach capacity	4/21	
General summer school info - sent as part of summer info - meal pick-up, Just 4 Me, etc.	Week of 3/22	Jill
Notification/confirmation of enrollment	May 3	
Details re: summer school to those enrolled - drop-off/pick-up procedures, COVID reminders (bring mask & water bottle), etc.	May 17 (one week before)	

A few reminders...

- Use PR rockstars - students, staff
- Use Data
- Use Facebook Strategically - only positive
 - Targeted messaging for potentially controversial info
- Humanize Your Staff
- Use Your Resources
- Reuse/recycle content on multiple platforms
- Repeat information



DOUBLE BONUS TIP: ChatGPT is your friend.

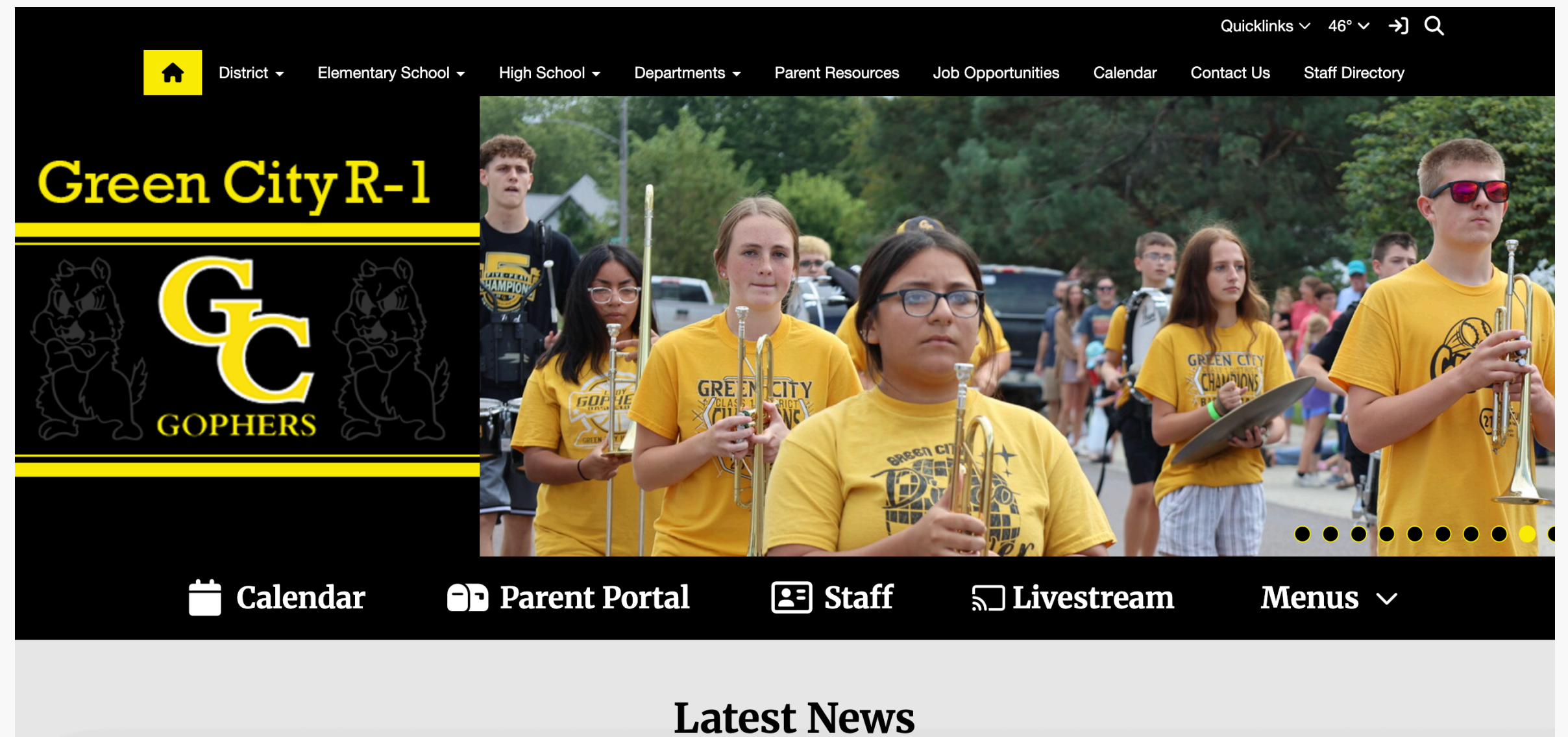
- Writing Facebook posts
- Editing email to families for clarity or tone
- Thought Partner - Brainstorming
- Summarizing survey responses



Always edit everything to ensure the district “voice” is maintained.

DOUBLE BONUS TIP: Accessibility

- PDFs
- Alt Text
- Facebook flyers



TRIPLE BONUS TIP: Take advantage of FREE CESO support

- FREE one-hour support via phone or video
- Any topic
- Each MARE member district can take advantage of this offer

**Schedule your free phone call
or video consultation today!**

Contact Jill Filer:

(816) 738-1055 or jill.filer@theceso.com

**New
MARE
Partner!**

C ●
e ●
s ●
O ●



theceso.com/communications

In Summary...

- Inside-Out Communications
- Keep It Simple
- Incorporate Listening
- Develop Your Message/Tell Your Story
- Proactively Plan for Crisis; Be Transparent
- Be Strategic
- Use Your Resources



Contact Us

Tennille Banner

Superintendent

Green City R-I

tbanner@greencity.k12.mo.us

Office: 660-874-4128

Mobile 660.265.6261



Jill Filer

Lead Strategist

CESO Communications

jill.filer@theceso.com

Mobile: 816.738.1055

