EVANSTVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Maximizing Student Achievement

Communications Plan

Learn

ECSD
A Vision of Excellence

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Mission
The Evansville Community School District, in active partnership with families and the community, will provide a positive learning environment that challenges all students to achieve personal excellence and become contributing citizens of the world community.

Vision
Creating a culture of excellence in:

- Academic achievement
- Character development
- Pursuit of arts, athletics, and other activities
- Community engagement
- Highly effective staff
ECSD Communications Plan

The purpose of the Evansville Community School District (ECSD)
Communication Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for
communication with our school community. The plan primarily addresses
two types of school district audiences: **Internal**, which includes students,
parents, teachers, staff, administration and the Board of Education, and
**External**, which includes District residents, senior citizen groups,
businesses, civic groups, religious groups, and other members of the ECSD
community.

Staff support for and involvement in this plan is vital – particularly, teachers
and office staff who are highly influential sources of information for the
public. The ECSD staff carries the message of the School District to their
families and friends who in turn form opinions about our schools.
Communicating our unified messages at all times is a top priority.

The Continuous System Improvement Communication Committee will
implement and manage community relations, publications, marketing and
offer leadership on all comprehensive communication services and
strategies for the ECSD under the direct supervision of the District
Administrator.

Two guiding questions for every program or activity will be:

1. How does this benefit our students?
2. How do we communicate the message to our stakeholders?
Target Audiences

Internal

1. Students
2. Parents
3. Parent Organizations
4. District and School Staff
   A. Administrators, Directors and Coordinators
   B. Certified Staff
   C. Support Staff
   D. Custodian, Cleaners and Maintenance
   E. Food Service
5. Board of Education

External

1. ECSD Residents
2. Home School Families
3. Key Communicators
4. Business Community
5. Elected City Officials
6. Elected State Officials
7. Elected Federal Officials
8. Civic Groups
9. Senior Citizen Groups
10. Community Groups
11. Religious Groups
12. Education – other school districts, colleges and universities
13. Media
Objective:
Improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open, two-way communication between the internal and external audiences.

1. Clarify ECSD flow of information
   
   1.1 Communicate organizational charts to all staff showing decision making process, reporting and accountability structure.

   1.2 Organizational charts will show individual areas of staff responsibility for communication.

2. Provide ongoing training and support for administration in effective communication with staff and the public

   2.1 Provide continuing training sessions as part of administrator meetings on how to train teachers and staff to communicate school messages.

   2.2 Subscribe to school communication publications (National School Communications Relations Association and Wisconsin School Public Relations Association) and relay pertinent information to administrators.

   2.3 Provide administrators with public relations fact sheets and easy-to-use communication tools as needed and when available.

   2.4 Provide communications training sessions to site-level staff.

   2.5 Create web based documents to utilize when reporting an upcoming event to the District Administrator and Board.
3. Provide regular information on district-wide issues

3.1 Distribute information from meetings on need-to-know basis.

3.2 Distribute all external publications and news releases to all employees by email and post on website.

3.3 Issue short, bulleted FYI information to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern.

3.4 Formalize a policy for District communication with teachers and building staff.

3.5 Establish a “State of the District” report delivered by the District Administrator to the staff and the public.

4. Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents/community to the District

4.1 Encourage parents and community members to sign up for District-wide and school-wide internet automatic email and call lists.

4.2 Conduct electronic surveys at District and site levels to provide feedback on flow of information.

4.3 Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.

4.4 Establish informal email account feedback from the community.

4.5 Expand use of the Parent Portal to facilitate communication between parents and schools.

5. Publish and distribute informational documents

5.1 Develop informational documents:
   5.11 District/School Informational Brochures
   5.12 Newsletters
   5.13 Press releases

5.2 Post information on District website.
6. Communicate with civic, community and religious groups

6.1 Include groups in mailings and provide opportunities for groups to sign up for community email/call lists.

6.2 Attend community meetings as needed to provide and gather information.

6.3 Provide District communication materials to key leaders.

6.4 Develop partnerships with groups.

6.5 Develop a program for touring the District that includes tours of school and facilities. Partnerships may include senior citizen groups, community members, civic leaders, etc.

7. Visibility in the community

7.1 Attend community organization meetings and events.

7.2 Encourage participation in local service clubs.

7.3 Host ECSD “town hall” meetings or forums when appropriate.

7.4 Encourage school staff to talk positively about ECSD schools to friends, neighbors and community acquaintances.

7.5 Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups.

8. Promote the success of the ECSD personnel

8.1 Highlight staff with articles in District communications, outside media and through recognition events.
Communication Strategies

1. Keep Communication Simple
   ➢ Use clear, concise and non-educational style for all general publications
   ➢ Vary the types and level of communications to target diverse audiences
   ➢ Translate communication documents when appropriate for various language groups

2. Create Information Documents
   ➢ Create information documents on four to five topics such as District and state budgets, school safety, accountability, etc.
   ➢ Post information documents on-line for quick reference
   ➢ Use communication templates for uniformity so that new topics can be addressed rapidly

3. Communicate Early and Often
   ➢ Prepare information documents when appropriate to send out to administrators, administrative assistants, and other staff as needed
   ➢ Follow-up with memos or communications to all staff as needed

4. Communicate Face-to-Face
   ➢ The more challenging the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face
   ➢ Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interactions when appropriate

5. Keep Communication Brief and to the Point
   ➢ Be brief to help retain the recipient’s attention
   ➢ Use bullet points when appropriate
   ➢ Highlight the message in the title
   ➢ Proofread all documents
6. Emphasize Customer Service
   ➢ The customer should leave with an answer to their concerns or question when possible
   ➢ Never be dismissive
   ➢ Actively listen to understand the message beyond the words

7. Train Staff
   ➢ Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors and people in the community has an impact on how ECSD schools are perceived
   ➢ Engage frontline staff in the conversation and make sure they have access to information immediately. They are a first link to the parents in the community

8. Develop Relationships with our Community
   ➢ Develop relationships with merchants by keeping them informed of the school year calendar, early dismissals, special event days, etc.
   ➢ Ask for input on areas of concern
   ➢ Develop key communicator groups and deliver messages to them as needed. They will take the message to the community
   ➢ Maintain a high level of visibility for the District through participation of key staff and the Board in various professional and community activities

9. Study the Media
   ➢ Pay attention to the type of stories aired or published
   ➢ Note who is generally used as a source of information
   ➢ Develop relationships with editors and education reporters

10. Prepare our Messages
    ➢ Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with messages that represent the school and District
    ➢ Avoid education lingo and technical jargon by keeping the message simple and use quotable messages when appropriate
    ➢ Prepare articles/stories in formats that match those used by local media
Communication Methods

1. **Printed Materials**
   - "Community Bulletin Board" – Website tab for flyers with community organizations information
   - "School Newsletter" – School and District articles sent to homes electronically
   - "From the Desk of the District Administrator" – Articles in the local newspaper and on Facebook
   - Brochures – as needed to highlight District programs or provide general school and District information
   - Memos from the District Administrator as needed

2. **Email Communication – ECSD Email and Phone Lists**
   - Links to the website for Board agendas and minutes
   - Press releases and articles
   - Principals send out monthly newsletter or email to encourage parents to go to the website for information

3. **Publications Posted Online/Website**
   - Continuous System of Improvement Plan
   - Vision and Mission
   - Board agendas and minutes
   - "About the ECSD"
   - Press releases
   - Calendars
   - "What’s New"
   - School and District Newsletter
   - ECSD Communication Plan

4. **Online Message Board**
   - District-level communication and crisis management

5. **Recorded Board Meetings**
   - Board meetings will be voice recorded and placed on the District website
Assessment and Accountability

➢ **Benchmarking** – Determine what communication strategies are used in other school districts

➢ **Surveys** – Electronic surveys to determine opinion and collect measurable data

➢ **Email** receipt requests - counters to measure the number of hits on website for each area/article/story, etc.

➢ **Focus Groups** – Collect information on a specific topic

The Communication Plan will be reviewed annually by the Continuous System of Improvement Communication Committee.