

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

April 2018

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Overview

The Somers Public Schools is committed to providing students with the best possible learning environments and opportunities. To achieve this, we must consider a multi-tiered approach to education. Included in this approach is the need to establish and maintain open and efficient communications. The public must understand the school system's story in order to support our educational programming.

Principles

This plan was developed to assure:

1. All communications support the school system's goals
2. Two-way communications with all Somers constituents
3. The school district's "story" is accurately told
4. Transparency in school district operations

Audiences

External

- Businesses
- First responders
- Legislators
- Media
- Parents
- Parent/Teacher Organizations
- Realtors
- Religious leaders
- Senior Citizens
- Somers Education Foundation
- Somers municipal governing bodies
- Somers town agencies
- Surrounding school systems
- Taxpayers

Internal

- Administrators
- Board of Education
- Non-certified staff
- Students
- Support staff
- Teachers

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

I. Community

Facilitate meaningful and open communications with the Somers community.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
A. Build connections with community members	1. Superintendent Blog to answer questions and update community
B. Facilitate two-way communication	2. Utilize social media to promote school system
C. Facilitate community and BOE engagement opportunities	3. Revamp Campus View structure, content, and frequency
D. Responsibly utilize a variety of media	4. Participate in community forums where appropriate
	5. Invite public to special events
	6. Increase visibility at schools and community events
	7. Host “town-hall” events or forums when appropriate
	8. Meet with Somers Education Foundation monthly or when appropriate

II. Student / Parents

Facilitate meaningful and open communications with the Somers Public Schools students and parents.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
A. Develop meaningful communications with parents and students to assure their voices are heard	1. Superintendent Blog to answer questions and update community 2. Parent notification system
B. Increase recognition of parents and students internally and externally for their accomplishments	3. Student reporting at BOE meetings 4. Focus groups organized as appropriate
C. Responsibly distribute school information to students and parents	5. Inclusion in the strategic planning process 6. Recognize outstanding parents and students at BOE meetings 7. Attend PTO meetings regularly to provide updates 8. Expand use of social media 9. Develop uniform newsletter schedule from schools. 10. Increase visibility at school and community events 11. Increase access and use of PowerSchool 12. Establish anonymous student reporting system

III. Media

Establish and maintain collegial relationships with media outlets to enhance school district's image.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
A. Partner with media to promote positive stories in Somers Public Schools B. Establish and expand professional relations with the media	1. Press-releases, briefings and photo opportunities 2. Letters to the editor of local papers 3. Establish monthly article for local media

IV. Staff

Enhance communications with staff making information acquisition and dissemination more frequent, efficient, and uniform.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
A. Increase staff communication skills	1. Develop new employee induction program and introduction video
B. Provide necessary, resources and professional development	2. Use email to communicate with staff frequently on school and community issues
C. Utilize effective communications strategies to develop trusting relationships	3. Superintendent to attend staff meetings to address concerns and answer questions
D. Streamline administrative and communications processes	4. Recognize employees for their accomplishments and contributions at BOE meetings, Campus View and via parent notification system 5. Expand use of parent notification system to the teachers 6. Integrate business systems and technology to streamline administrative tasks 7. Develop communications in-service workshops.

V. Crisis Communications

Develop crisis communication plans to inform parents, students and a community in an effective and efficient manner.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
A. Develop detailed crisis management plans	1. Crisis management and communications training and ongoing professional development
B. Provide timely and accurate information to internal and external audiences	2. Post reunification sites and procedures for parents
C. Develop pre-determined chain of command and incident commanders	3. Frequently update demographic information
D. Partner with media to provide accurate and timely information	4. Utilize social media
	5. Update website to have a dedicated crisis management section
	6. Update All Hazards Plan and sub-plans annually
	7. Review all crisis team plans and protocols with staff annually
	8. Establish media protocols for emergency incidents
	9. Consult and include local emergency management officials in planning
	10. Identify, acquire and utilize internal communications tools and resources

Protocols

Outside Organization Information Dissemination

Any outside agency that wishes to have a flyer sent home via the parent communications system must get the approval of the Superintendent and generally meet the following criteria:

1. Must not contradict the Somers Public School mission, values or policies
2. Must have a direct benefit for the students of Somers Public Schools
3. Must be a non-profit entity
4. Other as determined by the Superintendent

All outside agency distributions will be emailed (pending approval of the Superintendent) every Friday. They will be grouped together as one email.

Individual parents cannot utilize the parent communications system for dissemination of information.

School Newsletters

Each school will send home newsletters via the parent notification system on the first Monday of the month (October-June).

The back to school newsletter will be email home via the parent notification system the first week after Labor Day.

Board of Education Meetings

- Student/Parent/Staff Recognition – 1st meeting of the month
- High School Student Report – 2nd meeting of the month

Campus View






- October – Welcome back to School Edition
- March – Budget Edition
- June – End of the School Year Edition

Field Trip Communications (Emergencies)

It is the expectation the Principal will communicate any emergency information (e.g. delayed return) to the parents of students on a field trip. While the students may choose to communicate with their parents, the official information should be coming from the Principal via email, text, and/or voice.

- When the roster of the field trip is known, a temporary list must be created in SchoolMessenger. This will be used by the Principal to send the official communications to the parents (list should be deleted upon completion of the trip).
- Teachers who go on Field Trips must have both building administrators cell phones with them.
- Principals will inform staff of this emergency communications protocol when they leave for a field trip.
- Principals must have cell phone access while students are on a field trip. It is essential that chaperones have access to you for emergency purposes (this includes after hours if the field trip).

Communications Matrix

Type of Information	 Website	 Email	 Phone Call	 Text Message	 Social Media
General Info	✓	✓		✓	
Emergency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Dismissal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Delayed Opening	✓	✓		✓	
School Closures (weather related)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Forms	✓				
Promotional (non-school)		✓			

Note: the above matrix is a guide. Every effort will be made to adhere to this guide. Circumstance may dictate deviations.

Sources and References

Excelsior Springs School District Communications Plan 2016-2017

http://www.essd40.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_663380/File/ESSD%20COMMUNICATIONS%20PLAN.pdf

Framework for Effective Communications 2013-2016

Glastonbury Public Schools, Glastonbury, CT

National School Public Relations Association

<https://www.nspra.org/>

School Communications Planning Guide; Campus Suite

<http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/296999/School-Communication-Planning-Guide.pdf>