## Communications Staff

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<th>Position</th>
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Strategic Plan
Topeka Public School District
2021-2026

Goal 1: Student Learning
All students will demonstrate academic growth and be well-prepared for their future.

Goal 2: Highly Effective Staff
Recruit, attract, develop and retain highly effective staff to carry out the district’s mission, goals and objectives.

Goal 3: District Finance
Ensure efficient operations and accountability for responsible use of district resources.

Goal 4: School Climate
Create a safe and caring learning environment that includes a positive school culture and positive collaboration and communication throughout the school and community.

Goal 5: Career Preparation & College Career Placement
Implement career pathways and prepare students for career and college placement opportunities.

Mission
Engage students in the highest quality learning. Prepare students for responsible, productive citizenship. Inspire excellence for a lifetime.

Vision
Topeka Public Schools will be recognized nationally for:
- academic excellence,
- postsecondary and career success, and
- achievement in the arts, athletics and extracurricular activities.

Strengthened by diversity and a welcoming and inclusive environment, our district will cultivate partnerships with staff, families, business and industry and the greater community to develop students’ educational, physical and social-emotional well being.
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Introduction

The Topeka Public Schools District is committed to open, honest and ongoing communication with our school community. We understand that maintaining a two-way conversation with parents and community members is essential for building relationships. These relationships are the foundation for a strong school system.

The Topeka Public Schools Communications team is responsible for telling the district’s stories, while also providing clear, current and effective communication with all TPS employees, parents, students and members of the community.

We tell the story of our district and its more than 13,430 pre-K - 12 students and 2471 employees through a variety of publications, electronic communications, broadcasts and events. We also work with news media to deliver timely and accurate information about our TPS community.

This comprehensive plan is a working document that is reviewed annually by the Communications Department. It is used as a basis for the district’s accountability, as well as for providing a framework for future resources and budgetary consideration.

The Comprehensive Communications Plan is intended to do the following:

1. Implement a communications program that directly helps achieve our goals.
2. Foster strong relationships with community members.
3. Provide focus and direction for messages/methods to support the district.
4. Enable the district to present itself accurately to audiences.
TPS Communications provides leadership, counsel and training in order to accomplish the following communication goals. Goals are listed in no particular order of priority and should be recognized as integrated activities for achieving long-term success.

- Define goals and execute plans that results in an integrated communications plan aligned to Topeka Public Schools Strategic Plan.
- Coordinate strategies that deliver clear, timely and accurate information so our communities understand and support Topeka’s public education.
- Improve two-way communication and employee engagement.
- Produce professional quality videos that tell the Topeka Public Schools story.
- Ensure our schools have the support to communicate effectively with their community.
- Develop and maintain an online presence that connects many parts of the Topeka community.
- Administer all web-based services for TPS Communications.
TPS Communications is responsible for planning and executing the district’s communication and public relations efforts. We work closely with the Board of Education, Superintendent and all USD 501 departments and schools to support the district’s mission, vision and goals through effective communication strategies.

Goal: Define goals and execute plans that result in an integrated communications plan aligned to TPS Strategic Plan.

Strategy: Create an environment that promotes meaningful communication and innovation of messaging and resources through these five steps.

1) Research: Provide data that will lead to insights, as well as understanding of opportunities and challenges.
2) Analysis: Translate research (quantitative and qualitative) into creative content while guiding real-time, tactical shifts in each channel.
3) Measurement: Identify benchmarks, return-on-investment results and potential for opportunities.
4) Teamwork: Empower the talents and skills of TPS communications professionals to meet the needs of our students, staff, parents and community – according to their area of expertise.
5) Efficiency: Ensure the efficient use of department resources and budget to meet the communication needs of the TPS community.

Strategy: Achieve integrated communications for emergency and crisis management.
• Maintain safety communication resources (print and online) to be updated with key messaging and crisis management information.
• Host crisis workshop with emergency officials in the Topeka area.
• Develop strategy plans and messaging maps for potential crisis management and consistency in emergency communication.
• Ensure the automatic notification system has updated groups and messaging is prepared for key situations.
• Work with department leaders to coordinate the sharing of information about crisis and health issues with the community.
**Strategy:** Involve parents and community members in schools and education.
- Facilitate connections among community groups and district administrators: religious leaders, business groups, private/parochial schools and area legislators.
- Engage the community with Superintendent Town Hall meetings.
- Expand on external key communication initiatives and share information to promote education with the Topeka residents who may not have children in our schools.
- Facilitate PTO Presidents’ Forum leadership and dialogue sessions.

**Strategy:** Provide strong communication channels for all members of the TPS community.
- Analyze the usage reports and measurements to recommend best practices for principals to use systems and channels effectively.
- Maintain active email lists of key communicator groups for an external reach.
- Promote Board of Education meetings through BoardDocs, Facebook, and YouTube.

**Strategy:** Ensure consistency in TPS brand and identity by providing ongoing professional development for Topeka Public Schools leadership.
- Consult with district leaders to provide best practices in communication planning - committees, culture, initiatives, and programs.
- Provide communication training for TPS administration.
- Prepare talking points and other communication materials for staff members and Board of Education.
- Approve communication for district-wide dissemination.
- Serve on the following committees: Strategic Planning process and implementation.

**Measurement:** Develop communication plans that define the approach the district will use to communicate with communities. The Director will ensure systematic information sharing and two-way communication based upon research to address key aspects:
1. Identify the district objectives.
2. Choose our target audiences.
3. Design key messages.
4. Select your communication methods.
5. Plan for two-way communication.
6. Establish your time frame.
7. Draft a budget.
8. Implement the plan.
9. Monitor the results and look for ways to improve.

Each communication plan will include an evaluation method to determine success and next steps to meet the needs of our community.
Communications Coordinator

Communications Coordinator works to build trust and support between our school district and the public we serve through a quality communication program. The Coordinator will develop and implement a systematic effort to communicate with the public through strong content and effective mediums.

**Goal:** Coordinate strategies that deliver clear, timely and accurate information so our publics understand and support TPS public education.

**Strategies:**
- Research, analyze, orchestrate and evaluate communication to align with the strategic plan of the Topeka Public Schools District.
- Review and determine needs, define goals, and recommend plans needed to carry out a coordinated communications program consisting of print, broadcast and electronic communications.
- Generate, edit, publish and share daily content that builds meaningful connections with TPS audiences through web content, enewsletters and print mediums.
- Develop a departmental editorial calendar integrating content from communication team members, school news and district information.
- Maintain a positive media relations program to enhance the district’s reputation on local, state and national levels.
- Build and implement a social media strategy based upon competitive research, messaging and audience identification.
- Prepare and disseminate materials and coordinate interaction with members of the news media, department, school district staff and general public in presenting information.
- Demonstrate continuous effort to improve operations, accelerate news release turnaround times, streamline processes and work cooperatively and jointly to provide quality, seamless customer service.

**Measurements:** Quarterly review social media analytics, website page views and unique visitors and media placements.
Web Services

Web Services maintains the security and integrity of websites and e-systems utilized by the school district, schools and departments. The Web Services Coordinator provides supervision and leadership in the planning, development and operation of TPS communication channels.

Goal: Administer all web-based services for Topeka Public School District.

Strategies:
• Safeguard and develop internal and public websites, including: external websites, staff directory, web content archive, website accessibility, curriculum website, strategic planning website, et. al.
• Provide technical solutions to facilitate communication, including survey management, social media channels and broadcast monitoring.
• Implement and manage third-party communication applications: BlackBoard, etc.
• Provide technical solutions to expedite data collection and facilitate distribution of data to meet student, school and departmental goals.
• Interact and collaborate with administrators to facilitate form management.
• Provide training and instruction for staff to effectively use online tools to communicate.
• Improve web communication by staying current on trends, applying creative solutions, and implementing enhancements to improve the district's electronic communication.

Measurements: Each Web Services plan will have objectives that can be measured and evaluated. In addition, quarterly reports will be provided on Web Services channels such as Blackboard.
Internal Communications

Internal Communication provides clear, concise and consistent messages for TPS employees through a variety of staff channels. The Internal Communications Specialist focuses on creating opportunities for staff engagement through electronic, print and personal communication.

Goal: Improve two-way communication and employee engagement in the Topeka Public Schools District.

Strategies:
- Develop the weekly editorial calendar and prepare content for CNews.
- Research, write and edit newsworthy articles for the weekly staff eNewsletter: CNews
- Maintain and update web content on the district website in cooperation with department content managers.
- Monitor the TPS Twitter/Instagram and Facebook accounts.
- Manage the Distinguish Staff and other Awards programs to increase recognition in our school community.
- Collaborate with TPS department leaders to ensure consistency and clear communication at all levels.
- Schedule opportunities for staff engagement with district leadership.
- Serve on the Calendar Committee and develop communication planning for committee news and information.

Measurements: Provide quarterly reports on usage: CNews as well as surveys - both staff and evaluations of recognition events/programs.
Digital Communications

The Digital Communications Specialist builds the district’s reputation through an integrated video/social media program that highlights student learning, school climate, effective teachers, fiscal responsibility and strong leadership. The Specialist uses artistic and journalistic skills in broadcast production and social media content involving the input and combined resources of students and staff.

**Goal:** Produce professional quality videos and social media content that tells Topeka Public School’s story.

**Strategies:**
- Produce, record and edit video projects to be featured on TPS digital channel and websites.
- Develop social media content for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and emerging platforms.
- Create and update the editorial calendar for social media to support key messages.
- Strategically evaluate need for emerging digital communications channels and make ongoing recommendations for improvement.
- Create, implement and evaluate social media guidelines and provide training/support to schools and district departments.
- Assist in the design of documents and brochures to align with TPS branding guidelines.
- Provide consultation, advice and training on latest digital media trends and best practices for administrators, teachers and staff.
- Create resources for employees and students, including tutorials on video production.
- Acts as the district’s copyright advisor for schools and departments.

**Measurements:** Provide quarterly reports on usage for TPS social media channels.
School and Community Relations works collaboratively with staff and parents to improve school-to-home and home-to-school communication. The focus is to support schools in developing news and information that builds relationships and develops partnerships within the TPS community.

**Goal:** Coordinate strategies that deliver clear, timely and accurate information so our publics understand and support TPS.

**Strategies:**
- Manage and implement event planning for district events: Board of Education Ceremonies, Annual Breakfast, Convocation,, and special events.
- Work with PTOs and DCA to assist with parent communication.
- Research and write accurate, timely and interesting content for school and district websites and communication channels.
- Collaborate with schools to develop content and maintain pages on school websites.
- Assist with website development training for TPS employees.
- Collaborate with local municipalities to enhance the district’s partnership at events, such as business expos and parades.
- Assist with content for TPS social media channels.
- Manage the United Way campaign.

**Measurements:** Provide quarterly reports on analytics from school websites, school’s automatic notification system and the school’s mobile app.
Public school districts exist with the trust and permission of the school community. In Topeka every district initiative and project needs a communication plan in order to manage complex change and build awareness within our school community.

Communication is a management function in any organization. TPS Communications works with departments and schools to ensure a systematic flow of communication using a 10-step method that guides careful planning and alignment with the district’s strategic goals.
Department of Communications Communications
Planning Worksheet

Strategic communications planning is essential for any initiative. This worksheet is used to ensure the various planning components are addressed. Online communication plans for all TPS schools are available on the Communication: Schools site.

1) GOALS: (Broad statement of purpose – must be tied to district goal areas)
   1. Student Learning
   2. Highly Effective Staff
   3. District Finance
   4. School Climate
   5. Career Preparation and College and Career Placement

2) OBJECTIVES: (Specific, Audience, Outcome, Measurement/Attainment Level (%) and Time Frame)

3) STRATEGY: (Approach to achieving the objectives)

4) AUDIENCES: Who needs to know?
   1. Internal
   2. External

5) MESSAGES: What do they need to know? Why?
   1. Why is this change/action/event taking place?
   2. What does this mean for me? What is the impact to me?
   3. What do I need to do? Is there an action required of me?
Messages to be communicated to (audience)
1.
2.
3.
Messages to be communicated to (audience)
1.
2.
3.

6) TIMELINE: When do they need to know?

7) TACTICS/ACTIVITIES: How will messages be communicated? Internal External

8) COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

9) BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

10) EVALUATION: How will we know the message has been received?

   R - Research
   A - Analyze
   C - Communicate
   E - Evaluate

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Audiences and Outcomes

Internal Audiences

■ Certificated Staff
■ Principals
■ Support Staff Employees

External Audiences

■ Students
■ Parents
■ Taxpayers of the district
■ Senior citizens
■ Business leaders
■ Media
■ Parent-teacher organizations
■ Civic leaders
■ Legislators

Desired Behaviors and Attitudes

Through plan implementation, the following desired behaviors and attitudes are the focus:

Internal Audiences

■ Take pride and ownership in the district.
■ Keep informed of key issues.
■ Work as a high-performing organization whose employees respect and value customer feedback.
■ Exhibit district values of caring, integrity and collaboration.

External Audiences

■ Feel involved and engaged in their public schools.
■ Exhibit community pride and trust in schools and the district.
■ Support Topeka Public Schools District.
Communication Channels

The district can more effectively provide consistent and unified messages by identifying and managing all communication avenues. A multifaceted approach to overall communications helps ensure greater impact of messages. The following list details the internal and external communication channels TPS uses:

**Communication Vehicles: Electronic**
- Community News
- Staff News
- District website
- School websites
- Teacher Websites
- Curriculum website
- TPS Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Blackboard: Phone, Text and Email message
- Blogs: principals and leaders
- Key External Email Groups:
  - Religious Leaders, Private and Parochial Principals
  - Municipal Officials
  - Legislators
  - Emergency Management Officials
  - District Partners

**Communication Vehicles: Media**
- Print newspapers: Cjonline, News stations, Radio Stations

**Communication Vehicles: Interpersonal**
- PTO/PTA Forum
- Administrative Council meetings
- Principal meetings
- District committees

**Communication Vehicles: Print**
- CNews
- Annual Report to the Community
- Advertising: Chamber of Commerce Mailings
Key Messages

Key messages are the master narrative and essence of what TPS needs to communicate. It’s the bite-size summations that articulate what we do, what we stand for and what value we bring to the TPS school community.

Communication cannot always be controlled; key messages can. Messaging helps a school district do the following:
• Prioritize and crystallize information.
• Ensure consistency, continuity and accuracy.
• Measure and track success.
• Stay focused when speaking with the media or our school community.

Careful attention needs to be paid to key messaging.

• Concise: Optimally three key messages on one page; each statement only one to three sentences in length or under 30 seconds when spoken.
• Strategic: Define, differentiate and address benefits/value proposition.
• Relevant: Balance what needs to be communicated with what the audience needs to know.
• Compelling: Meaningful information designed to stimulate action.
• Simple: Easy-to-understand language; avoid jargon and acronyms.
• Memorable: Easy to recall and repeat; avoid run-on sentences.
• Tailored: Effectively communicates with different target audiences, adapting language and depth of information.
Topeka Public Schools is committed to open, honest and ongoing communication with our school community. We understand maintaining a two-way conversation with students, parents, teachers, staff and community members is essential for building relationships. These relationships are the foundation for a strong school system.

Research shows people support public schools that have an ongoing, everyday commitment to transparently and proactively communicating with their community about the important decisions in the district. Furthermore, increasing and improving communication between teachers and parents increases parent involvement and student achievement.

TPS Communication develops communication plans that align and support Topeka Public Schools Strategic Plan. Communication team members work with our school community to ensure that effective communication is a component of every district and school program and initiative.
TPS Communications is a member of the National School Public Relations Association and is guided by the hallmark of professionalism established by the organization’s Code of Ethics:

1) Be guided by the pursuit of the public interest through truth, accuracy, good taste and fairness; follow good judgment in releasing information; not intentionally disseminate misinformation or confidential data; avoid actions that lessen personal, professional or organizational reputation.

2) Give primary loyalty to the employing organization, insisting on the right to give advisory counsel in accordance with sound public relations ideas and practices; cooperate with other groups while avoiding conflicts with primary responsibilities; object to untenable policies or activities.

3) Be aware of personal influence, avoiding promises or granting of unprofessional advantages to others; refrain from accepting special considerations for influences on organizational decisions; avoid unauthorized use of organizational facilities, resources or professional services for personal gain or for promotion of the candidacy of aspirants to elected offices; forego derogatory acts or utterances against other professionals.

4) Recognize that effectiveness is dependent upon integrity and regard for ideals of the profession; not misrepresenting professional qualifications; give credit for ideas and words borrowed from others; cooperate with professional colleagues to uphold and enforce this Code.

Adopted July 1981.