

Communication Department



Program Evaluation
2018-2019

Communication Department Program Evaluation 2018-2019

District Communications Overview

The Communication Department is committed to providing open, honest, and timely information about the Shawnee Mission School District.

Relationships with the community are essential to a strong school system. This report shares details about the comprehensive and varied ways the Communication Department supports the district and individual school communities in order to strengthen those relationships. This is an interactive document, providing links to connect with many examples of communication resources produced and distributed by the Communication Department.

The department's work aligns with district goals, which are set through the strategic planning process. The 2019 Strategic Plan, currently in progress, will continue to instruct, inform, and guide the work of the department. (Click [here](#) to view the webpage, built by the Communication Department, to provide the community information [about the strategic planning process](#) currently underway).

A variety of methods and media are utilized to maximize awareness and support of the district and school communities.

Key Goals

Develop and support positive, collaborative relationships with all stakeholders to strengthen and engage the Shawnee Mission School District community.

Provide information and tell stories through a variety of media platforms to connect with the Shawnee Mission School District community.

Staff

David A. Smith, Chief Communications Officer

Kristin Babcock and Laura Harsch, Communications Coordinators

Owen Denniston, Television Production Coordinator

Brad Dutton, Tom Stephens, and Clayton Turrentine, Television Technicians

Mandy LaVelle, Graphic Designer

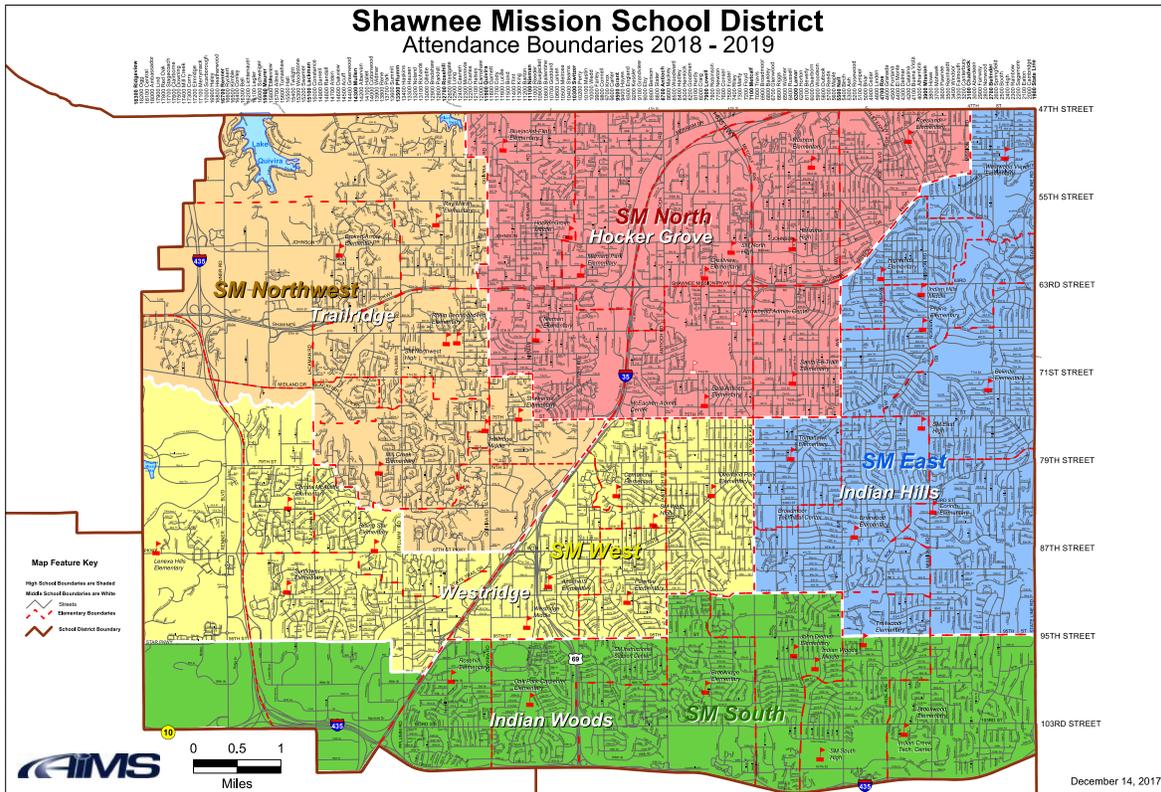
Judy Blankenship, Administrative Assistant

Areas of Focus and Support

The Communication Department serves in a support role to all departments and schools throughout the district. The department also serves parents and patrons throughout the community.

Audience

- 27,500+ students and their family members
- 4,300+ Employees
- 100,000+ Households within the Shawnee Mission School District boundaries



Key Audiences

Internal audiences include certified and classified staff members, administrators, and members of the Board of Education.

External audiences include parents, district patrons, community members without children in school, current and potential business and community partners, members of the media, and volunteers.

The audience for district communication is broad and the media preferences and resources used by the community are very diverse. Staff members in the department continue to evaluate modes of communication in order to address the diversified access to resources and preferences of those who consume and seek information about the district.

Areas of Support

- Media Relations
- Crisis and Support Communications
- Direct Parent and Staff Communication

- Website
- Website News Stories
- Social Media
- Video, Storytelling and Support
- SMTV
 - Student Education and Training – Categories/Encounters
 - Live Broadcasts - Basketball and Graduation
- Board of Education Meeting Support
- Print Publications & Marketing Materials
- Event Planning, Hosting and Story Coverage
- Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Fall Breakfast
- Annual Retirement/Service Pin Recognition Ceremony
- Scoreboards
- Special Projects and Curriculum Support
- Professional Development, Collaboration and Recognition
- Skylert Communications
- Media Monitoring
- Freedom of Information Office – Responsible for Kansas Open Records Requests, Board Notices
- Public Information Resource
- Ambassadors and Points of Contact for Stakeholders

Media Relations



The Shawnee Mission School District is a primary area of interest in the Kansas City area, with the district serving more than 27,500 students and their family members in 14 cities. The Communication Department serves as a timely, accurate resource for members of the media, and works to proactively engage media interest in the district.

The Communication Department serves as a primary point of contact for members of the media seeking information and accurate detail about the district and its schools. The Communication Department answers questions and facilitates interviews and coverage opportunities across the district.

The Communication Department also proactively shares frequent tips with members of television, radio, and print media through press releases, weekly News Tips, posts on social media, and ongoing communication.

Crisis and Support Communication

The Communication Department supports all departments and schools by providing timely and pertinent information to families, staff, and patrons on any time-sensitive crisis, or potential crisis-related incident or situation. The department works in collaboration with multiple departments across the district to provide accurate and timely information.

The Communication Department regularly supports principals with providing direct messaging to parents and staff, so that in a crisis or a time-sensitive situation, a principal keeps focused on the safety of students and staff and carry out plans of action as needed.

Direct Parent and Staff Communication

The Communication Department sends direct-to-staff, and direct-to-parents communication on a regular basis through the Skylert communication system. Here are a few examples of how this platform is used:

Board Recaps

Board Recaps, which provide information about actions that take place at Board of Education meetings, are sent to more than 32,000 individuals following each board of education meeting. Recipients include parents and all staff in the Shawnee Mission School District. In addition to the direct e-mail communication, the board recap is posted on the district website and on the district's social media platforms as a resource for any community member seeking information about recent board meetings.

Departmental Support

The Communication Department regularly provides support for various departments across the district to reach and connect with targeted audiences. Some recent examples of communication support through this avenue include:

- Strategic Plan Information Update and Invitation for Community Members to Participate in Thoughtexchange
- Notices about the upcoming transfer window opening
- Information about the beginning of Pre-Kindergarten enrollment

Inclement Weather Cancellations



WEATHER ALERT

The Communication Department shares information about inclement weather cancellations with the public. When a cancellation is officially determined, the department uses multiple platforms to reach all staff, parents, and individuals throughout our community to ensure they know of the cancellation as soon as

possible. These announcements are made through a variety of platforms in order to reach the broadest number of individuals, who have varied preferences and access to resources to receive the information. This information is shared via:

- Direct e-mail, voicemail, and text message
- The district website, smsd.org
- The district's official twitter and Facebook accounts
- All local news outlets (television, radio, print media)



Website

On July 6, 2018, the Shawnee Mission School District launched a new website. The website is an essential resource for the community, serving as a central resource for information for all stakeholders.

The Communication Department began work in collaboration with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) department to develop a new website, one

that would provide a refreshed design, mobile-friendly navigation, and provide a more user-friendly experience for users and content managers.

The implementation of the new mobile-sensitive website also allowed the discontinuation of the SMSD App, which provided a \$16,000 annual savings.

Internal and external focus groups including more than 40 individuals were engaged to provide information on key features and important content they wanted to see included on the new site. Employees and school webmasters received regular communication about necessary milestones that needed to be met for migrating content to the new platform. Training was provided to 15 district departments and to more than 44 school web editors on the new platforms and features. Training continues to be provided as new web editors join the team.

Direct e-mails and stories posted on the website and social media provided notice to members of the community that a new website was coming. Once the website launched, information was shared on social media.

With the launch of any new website, there is an adjustment period, which has required staff support for users to become acquainted with the new site. In addition, the department provided opportunities for community members to share feedback, to ensure continual improvement of the website. Focus groups were reconvened following the launch. District leaders, employees, parents, and members of the advisory boards have sent positive feedback for the new platform.

Website – News Stories

By telling stories regularly, the community has a way to see the learning that takes place across the district, and the incredible creativity and innovation of our students and staff members. The front page of the district website and social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) serve as daily news resources for the district and community.

Stories feature district, school, and individual achievements, examples of students and teachers preparing for college and career, and important information for the community. Staff members are consistently invited to share story ideas with the department. Anyone wanting to share a story for consideration is able to do so by emailing adcommun@smsd.org.

The goal is to highlight at least one story or celebration from each school in the district at least once per year, while also providing necessary information about the district and schools. In the 2017-18 school year, the department shared more than 370 stories on the website and social media.



News Story Metrics from July 1, 2018 to January 31, 2019

The Communications Department has already shared more than 200 stories during this school year. One quarter of these stories are district stories, which include the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation and district-wide programs such as Pre-kindergarten and Signature Programs. It is a goal to feature stories in all attendance areas.

Below is some statistical information about story coverage. These stories may be viewed [on the district website](#) (stories are shared under the “Recent News” header), on [Twitter](#), and on [Facebook](#).

Website News Stories

District 81 stories

Feeder Areas

East 28 stories

North 26 stories

Northwest 23 stories

South 22 stories

West 23 stories

Social Media

The Shawnee Mission School District social media platforms provide an opportunity for staff, students, patrons, community partners, and individuals beyond our boundaries to opt into

receiving school district stories, information, and news, by “liking” or following the Shawnee Mission School District. Platforms include [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

These resources provide one more important resource to engage with individuals seeking information about the district and schools. The level of engagement with these platforms continues to grow:

Social Media statistics and trends

	Feb 2019	Nov 2018	May 2018	April 2016
Facebook Followers	12,257	10,473	7,828	6,576
Twitter Followers	13,100	10,100	6,593	5,147

More people tag the school district on Twitter with daily events versus any other platform, and Twitter serves as the platform that generates the most engagement among district employees.

Video Storytelling and Support

Video is an incredibly powerful storytelling medium, and a departmental distinction is having a staff of videographers. Short videos of interesting and visually engaging content consistently generate significant engagement on various platforms. Staff members create and share videos depicting the classroom experience, and help highlight the voices and experiences of students and staff through interviews.

School Website Videos

Video stories, specific to each school community, can now be added to each school’s website homepage. Here are a couple of examples:

[Sunflower Elementary School currently features a Kindergarten Career Day](#) (find the video at the bottom of the page).

[Hocker Grove Middle School’s webpage currently features the school Kindness Club](#) (find the video at the bottom of the page).



Shawnee Mission All-Star

Shawnee Mission All-Stars is a staff recognition program to honor certified and classified employees who embody the vision of the Shawnee Mission School District in serving students, teams, and the community with excellence. A nomination form is online for anyone wanting to suggest potential honorees. A committee meets to review nominations and complete the selection process.

The videographers provide the stories for all Shawnee Mission All-Star recipients. These stories provide a thoughtful and compelling look at these individuals and provide positive recognition for our certified and classified staff members at school board meetings and on social media. These are some of the most shared videos within our community and beyond.

Program and Event Coverage

Video team members also highlight a variety of district programs, celebrations, and events.

If a potential community partner or organization is unable to attend a meeting or a tour, a video often serves as a way to share information about programs and opportunities for engagement with the district.

The team has provided video support for the following:

- Shawnee Mission Education Foundation and the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Fall Breakfast
- Center for Academic Achievement Signature Programs
- Career and Technical Campus Signature Programs
- Broadmoor Bistro events
- Superintendent Open House
- School milestones and anniversaries
- Kansas Teacher of the Year nominees
- Pre-kindergarten Program
- Jump Start
- The English Language Learner program
- Lunch Bunch
- Teacher Professional Development and Curriculum Support



Video on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube

Videos are among the most viewed and engaging forms of content on the web and social media. Videos directly posted to social media platforms regularly engage 2,000 to 10,000 views.



Here are some recent examples:

[Shawnee Mission School District Signature Program Students Put Life-Saving Skills into Action](#)

More than 27,500 people reached on Facebook

More than 19,346 impressions and 1,950 people reached on Twitter

[Strategic Planning Awareness Kickoff](#)

More than 10,000 individuals reached on Facebook

26,201 impressions and 3,804 engagements on Twitter

The SMSD YouTube channel serves as a main video host and archiving resource for the school district. This channel provides a library of district-related videos including, but not limited to:

[Board of Education Meetings](#)

[Categories Episodes](#)

[Videos of District News and Events](#)

[Student William Allen White Reviews](#)

To view the district’s library of videos, [click here](#).

SMTV

Shawnee Mission Television (SMTV) is the district’s local access cable channel, which provides television programming for members of the community and beyond, and highlights the students and staff of the Shawnee Mission School District. Shawnee Mission programs include Categories, sporting events, graduations, and school district highlights.

SMTV provides original programming on local cable channels as follows:

- Spectrum - Channel 2 (98-2) and 18 (98-18),
- Consolidated Communication - Cable channel 18
- AT&T U-Verse - Channel 99



Categories

“Categories,” is the longest-running quiz show in the area. It is a district scholastic competition and game show. Students from all Shawnee Mission high schools participate as team members in competition with students from Blue Valley School District high schools.

Competitors on “Categories,” along with those playing along at home, answer questions related to art, science, history, current events, and more. Categories also provides a unique

broadcast learning opportunity for students. Several students enrolled in broadcast courses provide support on this “live-to-record,” multi-camera, multi-light show.

Communication videography team members tape two shows each week for the season, which runs from October to March. During the summer, new competition questions, the upcoming season schedule and updated rules are created and produced by the Communication Department.

Categories Staffing

- 1 Producer, director, engineer
- 1 Sound engineer
- 1 Timekeeper, lighting assistant, and scorekeeper
- 1 Judge
- 1 Host
- 2 Camera operators (students may work as additional camera operators)

[Click here to view Categories.](#)



Encounter Shawnee Mission

Encounter Shawnee Mission is a show produced by students enrolled in broadcast classes at their high school. There are eight shows produced each year from October to May. The high school teams find, develop and report on stories featured in their feeder elementary schools, middle schools, and their home high school. A team of hosts tape the show in the studio, under the direction of a video technician. Encounter

Shawnee Mission is broadcast on SMTV and available on YouTube.

[Click here to view Encounter Shawnee Mission.](#)

Live Sports Broadcasts

The Communication Department video team provides broadcast students the opportunity to work the different facets of a live sports event during basketball season. Each year the students and Communication Department feature at least one competition representing each Shawnee Mission high school.

Working with Communication Department videographers, students assist with video technology, filming, and provide live broadcast commentary for the games.

[Click here to see examples of live sporting event broadcasts.](#)



Graduations

The Communication team provides video and photography support for all high school graduations. Each ceremony is available through links for livestream, and is later broadcast on local cable channels. After each graduation has concluded, the video is also posted to YouTube.

These video resources provide an opportunity for supportive individuals who want to view the ceremonies, but are unable to attend in person. These broadcasts often allow family members who are unable to attend a way to view the ceremonies. In some cases, this has allowed family members from across the country or around the world to join the celebration from afar.

[Click here to view Shawnee Mission School District Commencement Ceremonies.](#)

Board of Education Meeting Support

The Communication Department provides support at each Shawnee Mission Board of Education meeting by:

- Providing notice of meetings to requesting individuals in the community, along with members of the media
- Creating a Keynote slideshow highlighting district news
- Producing monthly “All-Star” videos and recognition ceremonies for certified and classified staff members
- Streaming live video of the board of education meeting. The video is archived on YouTube and available for viewing later.
- Creating the Board Recap, which is sent to all staff members and parents and posted on the website and social media following each board meeting

Print Publications & Marketing Material



Inside Shawnee Mission School District

Inside is a magazine that is published online and delivered directly to more than 100,000 mailboxes throughout the Shawnee Mission School District boundaries three times a year. The magazine shares information about schools and students and their unique stories and accomplishments.

This valuable resource also includes information about district events, news, successes, and partnership opportunities. A column from the superintendent is included in each issue.

[Click here to view Inside Shawnee Mission School District. \(Located in the center of the webpage\).](#)

Informational Materials

The Communication Department provides support with designed and printed informational materials to a variety of departments, programs, and schools. Here are a few examples of initiatives that received informational material support from the Communication Department:

- JumpStart
- Pre-kindergarten
- Human Resources, Job Fair, and Teacher Hiring Events
- Center for Academic Achievement Information Card
- Summer Enrichment Informational Material

Event Planning, Hosting, and Story Coverage



The Communication team hosts a variety of events in collaboration with various departments across the district during the year.

These events include, but are not limited to: School Dedications, Groundbreakings, Open Houses, and new superintendent open houses, which were hosted at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. This past year support was provided to the Lenexa Hills Elementary School opening

ceremony, Sunflower Elementary School Learnscape dedication, and an EPA recognition event for the district and Christa McAuliffe Elementary.

Upcoming events include the Brookwood Elementary School Dedication Ceremony and Aquatics Center dedication.



Annual Fall Breakfast

The Communication team works in collaboration with the Shawnee Mission Education Foundation to produce the annual Fall Breakfast. Support includes:

- Developing concept and theme
- Designing all graphic elements including the event brand, invitation, program, t-shirts, and digital graphic elements.
- Producing three to five video stories and the slideshow
- Writing scripts and supporting documents including the run-of-show
- Coordinating high school choirs, song selection, and rehearsals
- Marketing and sharing event information on website and through parent/staff messaging, and with media
- Coordinating transportation for participating students
- Coordinating equipment and musical instrument pickup and delivery
- Running rehearsals and show including all technical and backstage support

Annual Retirement/Service Pin Recognition Ceremony

The Communications team works with the human resources department and food service department to host the annual Retirement/Service pin recognition ceremony in the spring. The event honors staff members who are retiring and who have reached milestones in service years. Support includes:

- Developing concept and theme
- Designing all graphic elements including theme graphic mark, invitation, program, banners, etc.
- Producing pre-slideshow
- Writing scripts for emcee and hosts and supporting documents, including run-of-show
- Securing decorations, i.e., balloons, flowers, tablecloths, etc.
- Creating nametags
- Providing recognition mementos
- Setting up the event space
- Photographing the event

Scoreboards

The Communication Department produces content and technical support for the Shawnee Mission School District Stadium, North location and Shawnee Mission School District Stadium, South location stadium scoreboards. Student broadcasters run the operation of the scoreboards during games, with the guidance of a Communications technician. The Aquatic Center will open with a Daktronics Scoreboard in 2020, and the Communications team will assist with content and technology support.

Special Projects and Curriculum Support

As scheduling allows, the Communication Department provides additional support for special, long-range, and project-based learning opportunities for departments and schools across the district. Here are a few examples:



[Apple Distinguished Schools](#)

The Communication Department has worked with Briarwood, Bluejacket-Flint, Broken Arrow, Rosehill, and Trailwood Elementary Schools to tell their stories of innovative and creative learning, with help from technology. Eight Apple Distinguished School designations have been presented to Shawnee Mission elementary schools since 2016.

You can [view more information and download the Apple Distinguished School iBooks here](#).

#ZeroReasonsWhy

The Shawnee Mission School District serves on a Communications Cabinet for the #ZeroReasonsWhy campaign. This is a community mobilization campaign, including all school districts in Johnson County, to prevent teen suicide.

Professional Development, Collaboration and Recognition

The Communication Department regularly collaborates and communicates with members of professional school public relations organizations, including the Kansas School Public Relations Association (KANSPRA) and the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) to stay apprised of best practices, emerging trends and resources, and connected with partnering districts and districts of similar size.

As part of this professional development, the Communication Department regularly has work evaluated through competitions offered by KANSPRA and NSPRA. In addition to recognition, these competitions offer valuable feedback from school public relations professionals for continual learning and improvement for the department.

Here is a look at some of the awards presented in the last year to the Shawnee Mission School District Communication Department:

NSPRA- June 2018 Recognitions:

- 2017 Shawnee Mission Education Foundation Fall Breakfast, Golden Achievement Award
- Shawnee Mission School District All-Stars, Golden Achievement Award
- Center for Academic Achievement Grand Opening, Golden Achievement Award

- Inside: Shawnee Mission School District, Publication and Digital Media Honorable Mention
- When PLTW Worlds Collide: Aviation Exploration in Shawnee Mission, Publication and Digital Media Honorable Mention

KANSPRA- 2017-18 Recognitions:

- Shawnee Mission All Means All-Star, Certificate of Excellence
- Center for Academic Achievement Information Card, Certificate of Excellence
- Inside Shawnee Mission School District, Certificate of Excellence
- New Shawnee Mission Banner Stands, Certificate of Excellence
- Shawnee Mission Board Recap, Certificate of Merit
- Shawnee Mission Website, Certificate of Merit

Future Focus

Strategic Plan

The Communications team will work with the superintendent and cabinet members to communicate all aspects of the strategic planning process.

Shawnee Mission School District Celebrates 50 Years

July 1, 2019 will mark the beginning of the 50th year the school district has been unified as Shawnee Mission School District 512. The Communications team will support and celebrate this milestone with events, media and additional resources.