

Strategic Communications Plan



Santa Barbara Unified
Every child, every chance, every day.



Santa Barbara Unified School District





Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to guide the Santa Barbara Unified School District in developing standards, systems and protocols for delivering reliable, engaging, thoughtful and relevant information to our key audiences: families, students, staff, and the community at large. Additionally, the plan identifies opportunities to create environments that foster two-way communications and connections that will make our various audiences feel seen and heard. The plan also serves as a reference and toolkit for staff to deliver consistent, high-quality communications and customer service.

Ultimately, the strategies and tactics outlined in this plan will assist in building understanding and support of the work of Santa Barbara Unified, and will reinforce our commitment to improving the outcomes of all students and in particular, those whom our school system has traditionally failed to elevate and serve.

As Santa Barbara Unified enters its 155th year, and with the District's first bilingual, Latinx leader at its helm, we reflect on lessons learned from the pandemic crisis and look to build on the momentum of a national, societal awakening and call for educational justice. Public education is the lever for change and growth, and will need vision, leadership, courage, focus, resources and action to create true change.

Problem Statement

Santa Barbara Unified faces challenges communicating and connecting with the students, families, staff and community we serve. A comprehensive, strategic communications plan is instrumental as we look to empower our staff, connect to our audiences, and build understanding and advocacy for our initiatives.



District Vision

Every child, every chance, every day





Situation Analysis

Not unlike public education systems across the nation, Santa Barbara Unified has long grappled with disparate academic outcomes between students of high and low socioeconomic backgrounds. The District sees pockets of success, but not systemwide results. Ongoing, inequitable outcomes have been identified for students who are:

- Latinx/Hispanic
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged
- Emergent multilingual
- Foster and/or homeless
- Special needs

Cumulatively, these historically underserved populations make up the majority of our student population. A District and School Board public resolution and call for action was set in motion to improve outcomes for marginalized, underperforming student groups. Evidence cited in support of these efforts include;

- Compared to their peers, Latinx students are more than three times as likely to be identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD).
- Latinx students are underrepresented in advanced courses and are [less likely](#) than their white peers to attend college.
- A college and career going culture is not evident for all students. According to a [state measure](#) that evaluates how well districts and schools are preparing students for success after high school, **74%** of Santa Barbara Unified's white students are "prepared for college/career" compared to **38%** of Latinx students.
- [Fewer](#) Latinx students are meeting A-G requirements (the mandatory coursework all high school students must complete in order to qualify for attending a California State University or University of California (UC)).

Goals

- 1) Engage and educate stakeholders about Santa Barbara Unified programs and inspire understanding and support of our equity initiatives.
- 2) Develop strategies that influence stakeholder mindsets, perceptions and behaviors in ways that support positive change throughout the organization.

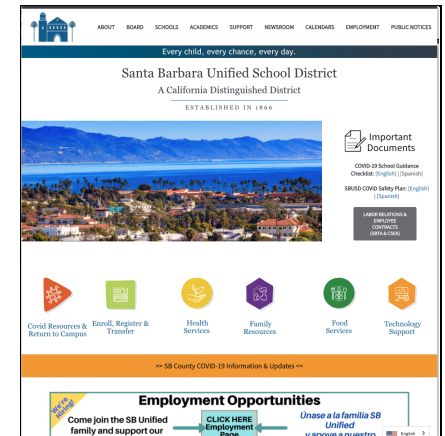
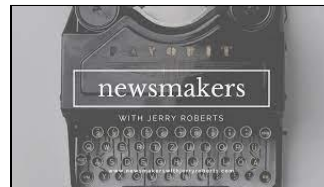
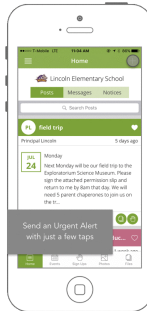




- 3) Create environments that foster trusted relationships and connections.
- 4) Create systems and protocols for the delivery of clear, consistent messaging that considers various, intended audiences and learning styles.
- 5) Implement a communications plan that directly supports the District's student-centered vision.

Objectives/Timeline

- 1) Increase student and family awareness of A-G required coursework by 15 percent by June 1, 2022.
- 2) Increase awareness of Dual Language Immersion programs amongst students and families by 15 percent by June 1, 2022.
- 3) Increase by 15 percent the staff/families who have downloaded the ParentSquare mobile application by October, 2021. (27% current)
- 4) Increase traffic by 10% to the District website.
- 5) Increase positive coverage in local news media outlets, as measured by media analytics, by December, 2021.





By the Numbers [\[Source: California Department of Education_DataQuest: excluding District charter students\]](#)

Ethnicity	Enrollment	Percent
African American	90	0.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	36	0.3%
Asian	365	2.8%
Filipino	60	0.5%
Hispanic or Latino	7,778	60.4%
Pacific Islander	13	0.1%
White	4,077	31.7%
Two or More Races	303	2.4%
Not Reported	155	1.2%
Total	12,877	100.0%



75.8%

Students Headed to College/University



15.4%

Emergent Multi-lingual Learners



13%

Students Who are Homeless or Living in a Distressed Housing Situation



50.7%

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged





Audiences	Communication Tools	
<p>Internal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Board of Education • Certificated Staff • Classified Staff • Cabinet • District leadership • Part-time employees <p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents, guardians and caregivers • Parent leadership organizations (Site Council, PTSA/ELAC/DELAC) • Community & business partners • Civic leaders • Taxpayers • News media • Realtors • Religious leaders • First responders & peace officers 	<p>Internal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Memo • Parent Square <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Phone voice message ◦ Text message ◦ Email • Formal Letter (i.e mailer) • Email • Newsletter • Slack • Google Docs • Phone • Employee Meeting/Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ In-Person ◦ Virtual/Zoom • Employee Literature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Flyers/Poster ◦ Banner ◦ Mailers ◦ Video ◦ Promotional products ◦ Social media • Professional Development & Trainings • School Website • District website/Intranet • Surveys • Board Meetings 	<p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Square <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Phone voice message ◦ Text message ◦ Email • Video messaging • Formal Letter (i.e. mailer) • Email • Newsletter • Social Media • Newspaper • Radio • Television • Press Release/Conference • Community Forum/Meetings/Events • Literature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Flyer/Poster ◦ Billboard or Banner ◦ Mailers ◦ Promotional products ◦ Advertisements • Board Reports/Annual Reports • District website • School site website • Surveys • Phone & Email • Board Meetings





Strategy One: Develop Communication Systems, Resources & Opportunities

Feedback from our school communities indicates that internal communications need improvement. Families tend to trust and listen to their school site leaders more than the district officials when receiving information. We want to empower school sites to build on established relationships through constant, branded communication that aligns with the voice of the district, and in turn, helps us to avoid redundancies and conflicts.

Tactic	Details	Audience	Evaluation
Tactic #1- Expand professional development offerings to support communication best practices	Create an opportunity for District Communications to support site leaders and other district leadership to navigate communication outreach. Quarterly workshops consist of locally-relevant presentations custom-designed by District Communications, including: <i>Navigating Media Relations</i> ; <i>Managing Negative Feedback</i> ; <i>Tools of the Trade: Communications 101 for School Leaders</i> ; <i>How to Be A Social Media Warrior for your School</i> .	Teachers, administrators & other leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training attendees • Post training survey
Tactic #2- Establish Google Drive For Communication Protocols & Efforts	In this folder, District Communications will upload and share information and tools needed to improve communications, such as; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual templates for common crisis communications • Sample, editable “principal newsletters” to share with families and staff • Easy-to-follow checklist for remembering Circles of Communication (See appendix) • Steps for sharing your school’s good news with others • Staff Report best practices and templates 	Administrators and designated staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of individuals who sign into google drive





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding/logo guidelines • Tips for best practices for customer friendly communication and outreach, such as standards for response times, sample letters, etc. 		
Tactic #3 - Build Capacity for District and Site-Level Social Media and Comms Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a social media best practices tool kit database, a mastersheet, and handbook to guide schools leaders in engaging new audiences and building community. • Communications “ambassadors” made up of student leaders and a site administrator will be identified at each site and will collaborate with District Communications on a “shared” calendar for the distribution of information, news and other engaging content. 	Students, families, staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of school social media posts
Tactic #4- Develop and Distribute ParentSquare Communications Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a checklist for communications best practices to guide leaders in developing ParentSquare messaging that is relevant, meaningful, timely and engaging. • Create an easy-to-follow bilingual video/message to show how to download the ParentSquare app and use this tool. 	Teachers, staff, and administrators	Analytics of ParentSquare
Tactic #5- Printed Editorial Calendar for Annual Events	Research and compile digital and printed editorial calendar of annual, recognized events	Communications Office	Content Created
Tactic #6 - Internal communications protocols	Develop guidelines for internal communication flows. District Communications will evaluate attitudes and behaviors toward internal communications practices and recommend enhancements. (standards, workflows, rhythms, etc.)		





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Strategy Two: Strengthen Media Relations

Developing and maintaining strong relationships with local news media will allow the district to build trust with stakeholders through an objective third party. Media can also reach new audiences through multiple channels. Being responsive to the news media is critical as they represent the general public and taxpayers who we serve and allows us to be included in and positively impact coverage by telling our story.

Tactic	Details	Audience	Evaluation
Tactic #1- Strategic Media Pitch Calendar	A 'pitch calendar' plans all 'newsworthy' events for a quarter. This allows the communications office to plan ahead for media coverage. Replace Meltwater with Google Alerts and Hootsuite for analytics.	Administrators and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of stories published • Number of stories turned from neutral to positive
Tactic #2- Quarterly Media Analysis Report	Research local reporters, their topics of interest, and how often they write about the district, allowing the communication office to create a 'Journalist Profile' to quickly and efficiently pitch stories and make connections.	Staff, Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of stories published • Number of stories turned from neutral to positive





Tactic #3- Develop Crisis Communication Channels for Media Requests	The communication office has placed a priority on developing a full Crisis Communication Plans, however, creating crisis communication guidelines for principals to follow is immediately needed. A “card” with a checklist will be generated to provide to school leaders.	Administrators, principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cards handed out • Informal Feedback from Administrators
Tactic #4- Seek opportunities for joint Op-eds & media pitches	The communications office will seek opportunities with current (and potential) community partners for content creation. Joint op-eds and press releases strengthen chances at media coverage and introduce the District to new audiences. Opportunities will be explored to invite media to organized events to learn more about initiatives and other district happenings that allow us to showcase our work.	Community members, leaders, Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of OpEds published • Number of partnerships created with Community Members for future opportunities

Strategy Three: Build Awareness & Educate Community of District Programs/Initiatives

Proactively share positive news and stories that build understanding and support for Santa Barbara Unified schools, improve trust and perceptions, and increase awareness of and access to programs, plans and initiatives.





Tactic	Details	Audience	Evaluation
Tactic #1- Develop information campaigns and materials in support of District initiatives	Build awareness of Dual Language Immersion programs, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), A-G coursework requirements, and other initiatives identified as priorities.	Families, staff and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of collateral material disseminated to community and parents • Informal feedback • Surveys • Participation
Tactic #2- Campaign to download ParentSquare App	Create an easy-to-follow, bilingual communication to show how to download the ParentSquare app and utilize this important tool.	Families, students, staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of ParentSquare App downloads and messages viewed/read
Tactic #3- Drive traffic to Weekly Superintendent Message and Master Calendar on district website homepage	In an effort to boost the message, we will implement ways of driving more traffic to our Superintendent's message. Ideas include asking principals to share the video at staff meetings, and asking high school news teams to incorporate into their productions. Moving out of "crisis" mode means adapting to new communications rhythms. A recommendation is to create a video message <u>every other</u> week (on non-school board meeting weeks) and create a Superintendent's digital "Newsletter" on board meeting weeks, which allows us to share timely highlights and information.	Families, students, staff and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of impressions or site visits





Tactic #4- Improve Website Content	Website content should reflect our priorities and contain the information we want families, students and others to have at their fingertips to stay informed about items such as A-G requirements, how to enroll their student, what's coming up at Board Meetings, important updates and other opportunities and resources. Chief of District Communications currently services as webmaster. Website redesign Phase 1 is complete and it's now time to move into Phase 2, which includes updating "archived" pages, improving content, and supporting each school site in moving their platforms to Finaliste platform.	Families, staff and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of impressions or site visits • Informal Feedback
Tactic #5- Expand relationship with Diversity, Equity & Family Engagement team	To better serve, engage and be more responsive to Spanish-speaking families, create a regular meeting schedule with the Executive Director of Family Engagement to strategize, organize and put plans in motion, including culturally inclusive social media campaigns, information sessions, surveys, representation at community events, use of Promotores network and mailers home to welcome, educate and build understanding.	Families, staff, community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance & participation of Spanish-speaking families





Strategy Four: Coordinate special events that engage audiences around strategic interests

District Communications will partner with Human Resources and Partnerships & Community Engagement teams to develop opportunities to build a sense of community and belonging for employees and district families. This may include annual Superintendent's luncheons and recognitions, employee celebrations, construction milestone events, support of the annual State of our Schools event, ribbon cuttings, student and community recognitions, and showcase events.

Tactic	Details	Audience	Evaluation
Tactic #1-With SB Education Foundation, co-produce annual State of our Schools event	State of our Schools annual event	Families, staff, community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event participation
Tactic - #2 Support Employee Recognition opportunities	Help plan, coordinate and/or provide support for employee appreciation opportunities to build engagement and community.	employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morale, feedback, surveys
Tactic #3 - Celebrate modernization and construction milestone events	Create awareness, events and experiences to build understanding for taxpayer and community investments in educational resources. (Peabody Stadium, SB Junior High project, etc)	Staff, families, community, media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance, engagement with collateral materials Media coverage





Timeline	
Quarter	Tactic
Q2: April 1- June 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build out journalist profile • Create communication calendar • Have schools develop calendar of important events • Create Leaders Communications Workshop #1 • Awareness campaign for Dual Language Immersion program & Enrollment/Registration
Q3: July 1- September 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 of Website redesign, including supporting transition of school site websites to Finalsight platform so websites are streamlined/connected districtwide • Identify Communications ambassadors and create meeting agenda/invitations • Create media pitch calendar, with first media-invite event: First day/Back 2 School tours • Create an easy-to-follow, bilingual communication to show how to download the ParentSquare app and utilize this tool. • Create a schedule for bi-monthly video messages (every other week, on non-school board meeting weeks) and create a template for a Superintendent's digital "Newsletter" on board meeting weeks, to share timely highlights and information. • Information campaign around website to drive traffic to district Back 2 School programs/resources • Build out social media annual calendar and collaborate on content creation
Q4: October 1- December 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosting views for weekly message • Create Leaders Communications Workshop #2 • Awareness campaigns for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), A-G coursework requirements • Branding/logo guidelines • Create Leaders Communications Workshop #3 • Crisis Communications Database: Bilingual templates for common messaging • Sample, editable "principal newsletters" to share with families and staff
Q1: January 1 - March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance for internal communications protocols: District Communications will evaluate attitudes and behaviors toward internal communications practices and recommend enhancements. (standards, workflows, rhythms, etc.) to be shared with staff in the form of digital handbook





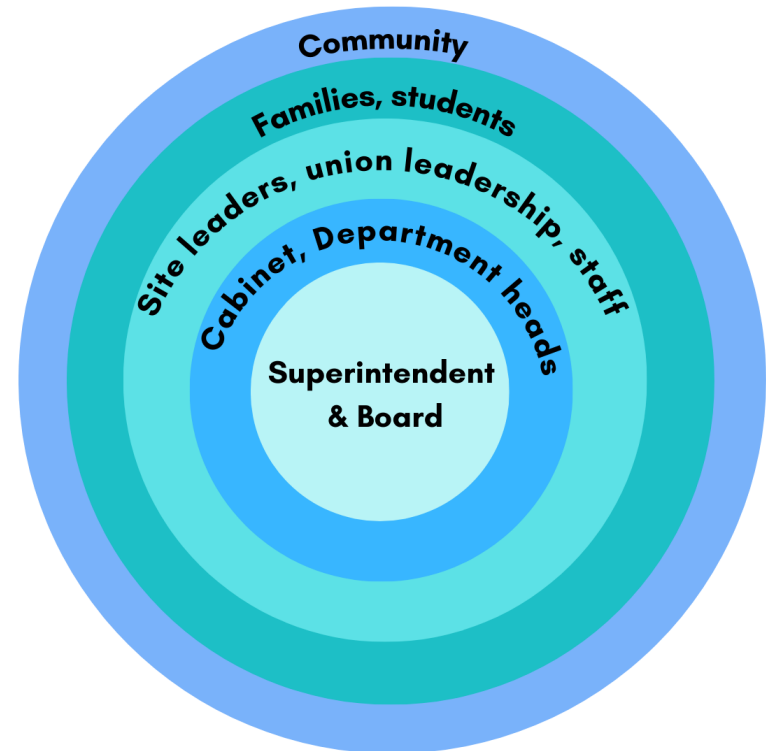
Appendix

*Circles of Communication

Check list:

Ask: Who needs to know what, and when?

- ☐ Board of Education
- ☐ Cabinet
- ☐ Site Leaders
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Union Leadership
- ☐ District Office
- ☐ Staff Maintenance Department IT Department
- ☐ Parent Groups
- ☐ Public Officials
- ☐ Media partners
- ☐ Neighbors
- ☐ Alumni
- ☐ Community Stakeholders Business Community
- ☐ Faith Community
- ☐ Others (e.g., Law Enforcement, County Health, CDE, etc.)
- Website/Social Media



Strategic Communications Plan

