

Mercer Island School District

# Superintendent Communications Plan

2022 / 2023



## **Communications Engagement Team**

**Superintendent**  
Dr. Fred Rundle

**Communications Coordinator**  
Ian Henry

**Instructional Technology Director**  
Andreeves Ronser

**Executive Assistant to the Superintendent**  
Michelle Mueller

**Public Records Officer**  
Lynn Gerking

# Mercer Island School District

## Purpose

The purpose of the 2022-2023 Mercer Island School District Superintendent Communications Plan is to outline a roadmap for communicating within our school district community. The plan addresses two main types of audiences: internal (students, staff, administration and Board of Education), and external (parents, guardians, businesses, civic groups, religious groups, and other members of the MISD community.)

The challenges MISD faces should not be underestimated, and this plan is essential for our community to ensure we have one voice- clear, credible, consistent- as a source of information for the public. The priority goal is to effectively communicate with our families and community, while building and rebuilding confidence and rooting messages in MISD's values, vision, and mission.

This communication plan is a working document designed to:

1. Foster strong relationships with district partners, contributors, and staff;
2. Provide focus and direction for messages/methods in support of the district's priorities, fundamentals, and goals;
3. Enable the district to present itself accurately and credibly to audiences; and
4. Make communication about MISD more predictable and reliable.





**MERCER ISLAND**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**STUDENTS  
ARE THE  
PRIORITY**

**VALUES**

WE BELIEVE IN:

- Supporting the whole child.
- Creating inclusive and equitable learning settings.
- Ensuring our school communities are safe and supportive.
- Providing rigorous and challenging learning.

**MISSION**

The District will foster learning by engaging students in thinking critically, solving problems creatively, and working collaboratively.

**VISION**

Inspiring our students to be lifelong learners as they create their futures.

## **MISD Fundamentals**

1. Create a personalized learning environment where differentiated instruction, student-centered education and varied learning opportunities are responsive to students' strengths, needs, interests and passions.
2. Maintain the highest learning standards in the areas of fine arts; health and physical education; English language arts; mathematics; financial education; science; environment and sustainability; social studies; world languages; computer science and educational technology.
3. Develop self-awareness, empathy, emotional/social intelligence, responsible decision-making and citizenship.
4. Engage students in analytical and critical thinking in order to identify and address global concerns.
5. Foster and embrace diversity, inclusiveness, and equity with a focus on respect and acceptance of every student.

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## MISD Audiences

Internal Audiences	
Mercer Island Education Association	Administrators
Principals and Associate Principals	MISD Board of Education
Support Staff Employees	Direct Contract Partners
External Audiences	
Students	Religious leaders
Parents	Chamber of Commerce
Community members with/without students	New residents of the District
Business leaders	Neighboring School Districts
Media	The City of Mercer Island
Parent Teacher Association	Legislators

## 2022-2023 Communication Goals

The Superintendent and MISD Communications Team developed the following communication goals for the District's Internal and External Audiences:

1. Develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with internal and external school community members to strengthen support for the Mercer Island School District.
2. Use a variety of media to maximize awareness and support of the district's goals, objectives, and services.
3. Support strong, positive connections between individual schools and their communities.
4. Achieve coordinated communications, both internally and externally, using web and mobile systems to improve two-way communication.
5. Create key messages and talking points about MISD to establish a clear voice throughout all communication platforms.

## Goals - Strategies and Actions

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- **Goal 1 - Develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with internal and external school community members to strengthen support for the Mercer Island School District.**

### Strategies and Actions for Goal Implementation and Success

- **Community Engagement** - As our community comes out of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mercer Island community groups have started to meet regularly again. District staff will join these groups and regularly attend meetings to continue positive and collaborative relationships.
  - Superintendent Rundle will be a regular attendee of Rotary meetings.
  - Communications Coordinator Ian Henry will be a regular attendee of Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis meetings. Henry's new relationship with the Chamber has borne fruit as the Chamber will hold a monthly After Hours event for their members on Thursday, November 3, in the newly remodeled MIHS library. We are looking forward to showing off MIHS to Chamber members, who will also get a sneak peek of the Fall Musical as the dress rehearsal will be taking place during the After Hours event.
  - Executive Director of Legal, Compliance, and HR Erin Battersby, will be focusing on partnerships with MI Boys and Girls Club and the Jewish Community Center.
  - The Executive Director of Finance and Operations, once hired, will select key groups they will forge relations with during the coming year.
- **MISD Change Initiatives**
  - Utilize formal and informal feedback tools to gather student, staff, and community input early in the process.
  - Involve internal and external perspectives about proposed changes.
  - Proactively inform the Board about changes in accordance with Operational Expectations.
  - OE-9- Communication and Support to the Board
  - OE-10 Instructional Program
  - Develop timelines and project outlines to plan, implement, study, and adjust as part of the change process.
- **Superintendent Advisories** - The Superintendent will maintain several advisory groups that meet regularly over the course of the 2022-23 school year. The advisory groups are a great benefit to Superintendent Rundle and the district as it gives both the opportunity to hear from and engage with our community and present the district accurately and credibly to community members. These groups include:
  - Superintendent Equity Advisory Council (SEAC)
  - Superintendent Community Advisory

**Goal 1 - continued next page**



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## Goal 1 - *continued*

- Superintendent Student Advisory
- Superintendent Teaching and Learning Advisory (STLA).
- We are looking forward to the PTA Council meetings in the 2022-23 school year. The Mercer Island Preschool Association (MIPA) is now a part of the Council. These meetings are a valuable resource to connect with and inform our community.
- **Celebrations and Recognitions** - As we look at the calendar for 2022-23 School Board meetings, we have numerous recognitions scheduled for the September and October meetings. We will endeavor to recognize as many members of our school communities for successes and accomplishments at Board meetings in 2022-23.
- **Superintendent Listening Sessions** - Superintendent Services has scheduled and facilitated meetings for the Superintendent with district staff, community agencies, families, and individuals. These meetings started in June and will continue into October. This listening tour gives Superintendent Rundle the opportunity to meet with community groups and hear their concerns while also establishing and strengthening relationships. We see this listening tour to be something we will undertake annually prior to the start of each school year.
- **Community Presence** - There are three community events we will continue to attend each spring and summer. These fun community events are a great way to interact with our community and tell our story.
  - MIPA Circus in April
  - Jewish Community Center Touch-A-Truck event in May
  - Mercer Island Summer Celebration in July



## Goal 2 - Use a variety of media to maximize awareness and support of the district's goals, objectives, and services.

### Strategies and Actions for Goal Implementation and Success

- **Social Media** - We have seen an increase in district stories posted on our social media platforms that celebrate our community since Ian Henry joined the district. These posts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn have informed and engaged our community about the many great things happening in the district. Our LinkedIn account was activated when Henry joined the District and we have found it a good platform for employment postings. Moving forward, we will look to include more video in our social media posts to diversify ways people consume stories. We will continue to analyze the analytics for our platforms to track our growth and engagement and determine future content.
- **Nextdoor** - One social platform where we have seen our community engage frequently is Nextdoor. We are exploring this social media platform and will be looking to make a decision about registering for a free Public Agency account this fall. Every person on Mercer Island Nextdoor will be automatically subscribed to the district account when it is created. If we join

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## ● Goal 2 - *continued*

Nextdoor, we will use this platform to inform our community about happenings in the district. While there could be times when we take criticism on this platform by having an account, we feel we might be better positioned to tell our story and engage better with the community if we have a presence.

- **Flash Alert and School Delay Notifications** - We will continue to use the Flash Alert notification platform, our website, and our email and text delivery platform to notify our community of school delays or cancellations due to weather. The Flash Alert platform notifies all local television and radio stations of school delays or cancellations. We have a page on our website dedicated to informing families about weather delays that will be linked to on our social media posts. We know inclement weather impacts our families and staff schedules. Annually in late fall we will remind families about confirming their email addresses and phone numbers in Skyward so we have their most up-to-date contact information for email and text notifications about weather delays or cancellations.
- **Telling Our Story** - One solution we are looking at to expand district social media content creators is repurposing district staff cell phones, which are no longer needed because of our upgraded network phone system, with apps for all relevant social platforms. These phones will be 'checked out' from our communications coordinator by district groups and athletic teams to promote their group or team on district platforms. These groups will be given parameters and rules on what is acceptable to post and what isn't acceptable to post. There will also be penalties for those groups that violate the rules. We believe this will put our platforms in the hands of those who will be evangelists for the district. This could also make it easier for groups to feel they are a part of the community because they have easier access to promoting their group to the community.
- **Video** - We will continue our Discover the District video series and our PTA Q&A video series in 2022-23. These will both highlight stories about our district and inform staff, students and families about what is happening in the education realm. We will also look for a new type of series to create and launch that will help tell our story and connect with the community.

We are communicating with Tim Hamp from TVH Keys Productions on two possible video features in 2022-23. One potential video would focus on marketing our schools and district and would be used on our platforms, and possibly by others like local realtors, the Chamber of Commerce or the City of Mercer Island. Ian Henry is in the early development process of a video that involves talking to students about local sports teams as a springboard to highlighting educational goals and fundamentals.

- **Board Connections to Community** - The Superintendent would like to discuss with the Board ways to elevate the Board's voice and connect with the broader community. A previous example is the Board Buzz newsletter.

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## ● **Goal 3 - Support strong, positive connections between individual schools and their communities.**

### **Strategies and Actions for Goal Implementation and Success**

- **Website Upgrade** - We are launching new websites for the district and our schools on January 1, 2023. We are currently soliciting feedback from the community on templates and themes of our new websites. We are also looking at menu and navigation options, search functions, and calendar displays on our new websites. Our new websites will be a trusted tool that informs families and community members.
- **Survey/ThoughtExchange** - It is very important to us to hear from our community on what is going well and what can be improved. We are looking at how we can maximize the use of community feedback tools like surveys and ThoughtExchange. We are also looking at alternate platforms that could provide our community feedback opportunities. We are looking at how we use different platforms to solicit community feedback for all school and district events. We are also looking at how we can possibly incorporate our community partners, like the PTA or City of Mercer Island, in the use of our community feedback platforms.
- **ParentSquare** - We have secured an eight-week trial of the ParentSquare platform. The platform is an easy-to-use communication tool that combines multiple communication streams into one easy-to-use interface for families and staff. The platform enables families to communicate in their preferred language. The platform also lets families choose how they would like to receive communications from the district and schools. The platform can be set to "digest" mode, which will collect all of the communication from the district, school and classroom for all students into one message a day. The multiple communication streams include email, text, app, web portal and robo-calling. We will survey our staff on who would like to use the platform in a trial run to help us determine if it is a platform we want to launch district wide. We will look to run this trial of ParentSquare in January and February, after the launch of our new websites. If adopted this platform would replace School Messenger, which we currently use for email, text, and robo-calling communications.
- **Capital and Facilities Updates** - We have begun posting construction updates on our social platforms for things happening at schools and facilities. We will strive to make this a priority as construction updates present a positive connection between schools and their communities.

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- **Goal 4 – Achieve coordinated communications, both internally and externally, using Web and mobile systems to improve two-way communication.**

## **Strategies and Actions for Goal Implementation and Success**

- **Teacher and Staff Support** - As part of our outreach to staff on the ParentSquare trial, we will send a communications survey to teachers and staff in late November/early December to better understand what platforms they use and prefer when communicating with families. Our communications coordinator wants to help schools and teachers communicate effectively and a better understanding of how that can be done will be facilitated through this survey.
- **Improving Practice** -
  - Our communications coordinator will hold a social media best practices seminar with all MIHS athletic teams and boosters in the fall. This seminar can be scheduled with other district groups as well. The purpose is to help these groups understand their platforms and what some best practices are for the platforms. We want all groups to be proud of their association with the district and enabling their success on these platforms will help the district.
  - Our communications coordinator will liaison with school staff to set up training sessions on School Messenger or ParentSquare if we use it. This training would be part of a process to slowly give our schools and staff the ability to use communication tools with the proper oversight.
- **Leadership Support** - Our communications coordinator has reached out to MIHS leadership about conducting a weekly MIHS communications meeting. This meeting would help the district and MIHS facilitate coordinated communications to the community. This meeting would also inform our communications coordinator of what is happening at the high school to help tell stories.
- **Consolidating Calendars** - Our communications coordinator has connected with Rachel Hood and Lindsey Blaine to start the process of creating an athletics calendar that can be used on the district and MIHS websites. A calendar that includes all athletic events can be linked to on our social media to inform our community the time, location and opponent of games. We will continue to focus on linking to fine arts performances and other events on district platforms.
- **School Coordination** - We will be working with each school's website coordinators to enable our schools to maximize the capabilities of our new websites.

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## ● **Goal 5 - Create key messages and talking points about MISD to establish a clear voice throughout all communication platforms.**

### **Strategies and Actions for Goal Implementation and Success**

- **Culminating Reports** - Our annual report, which won a design award from WSPRA last spring, will continue to be produced. Last year we cut the report to six pages and went with a tri-fold design, which was different from previous years. We will always look at new ways to design, layout and produce our annual report.
- **Single Voice** - We are creating a presentation deck for Superintendent Rundle to use at community meetings and listening tours with the purpose of talking about MISD in a clear voice. This presentation will help drive the conversations Superintendent Rundle has with community members.
- **School Profiles** - We currently have a MIHS Profile Document that is used to highlight the school that is updated annually. We will look to work with the middle school and elementary schools to create a profile document for each school for information and marketing purposes.
- **Marketing** -
  - The marketing video we will create with TVH Keys Productions will help to tell our story with a clear voice.
  - We will look to create more newsletters for different district groups using School Messenger or ParentSquare. This also includes continuing the Special Services email newsletter started in the 2021-22 school year.

## Monitoring

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The following resources will assist the Superintendent to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of this Communication plan:

- Educational Effectiveness Survey
- District Advisory Groups
- Website Analytics
- Social Media Engagement
- Media Coverage
- Community Feedback

## Conclusion

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Superintendent Rundle is firmly committed to proactive, consistent, and clear communication. While telling an accurate story about MISD and updating the community about critical messages is essential, so too is listening to the students, staff, parents, and others across Mercer Island. Communication will be two-way and focused on strengthening partnerships, building trust, diversifying platforms, coordinating messages, aligning district and school strategies, and establishing a clear voice. Mercer Island School District is committed to improvement and engagement.

This plan is a living document, and as such will be updated and refined.

## **Additional Information**

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### **Superintendent Rundle's Entry Plan**

Superintendent Rundle developed a multi-phase entry plan to engage the community in the first six months. A link to this plan can be accessed [\*\*here\*\*](#).

### **Superintendent Succession (OE-12)**

In the event the Superintendent, Fred Rundle, should unexpectedly become unable to perform his duties, the following line of succession has been created to maintain the affairs of the District.

- Executive Director of Legal, Compliance, and HR and Executive Director of Finance and Operations will become co-Superintendents. The Director of Special Services, Directors of Learning Services and Director of Maintenance and Operations will join the Inner Cabinet.
- The Director of Special Services (Sue Ann Bube), Director of Learning Services (Jamie Prescott), and Director of Maintenance and Operations (Tony Kuhn) will be next in line if required.

### **Communication and Support to the Board (OE-9)**

Superintendent Rundle is held accountable to the Board to provide on-going communication outlined in Operational Expectation 9. This formal expectation is an important aspect of the governance model and process but will not serve to replace the need for community communication and engagement.