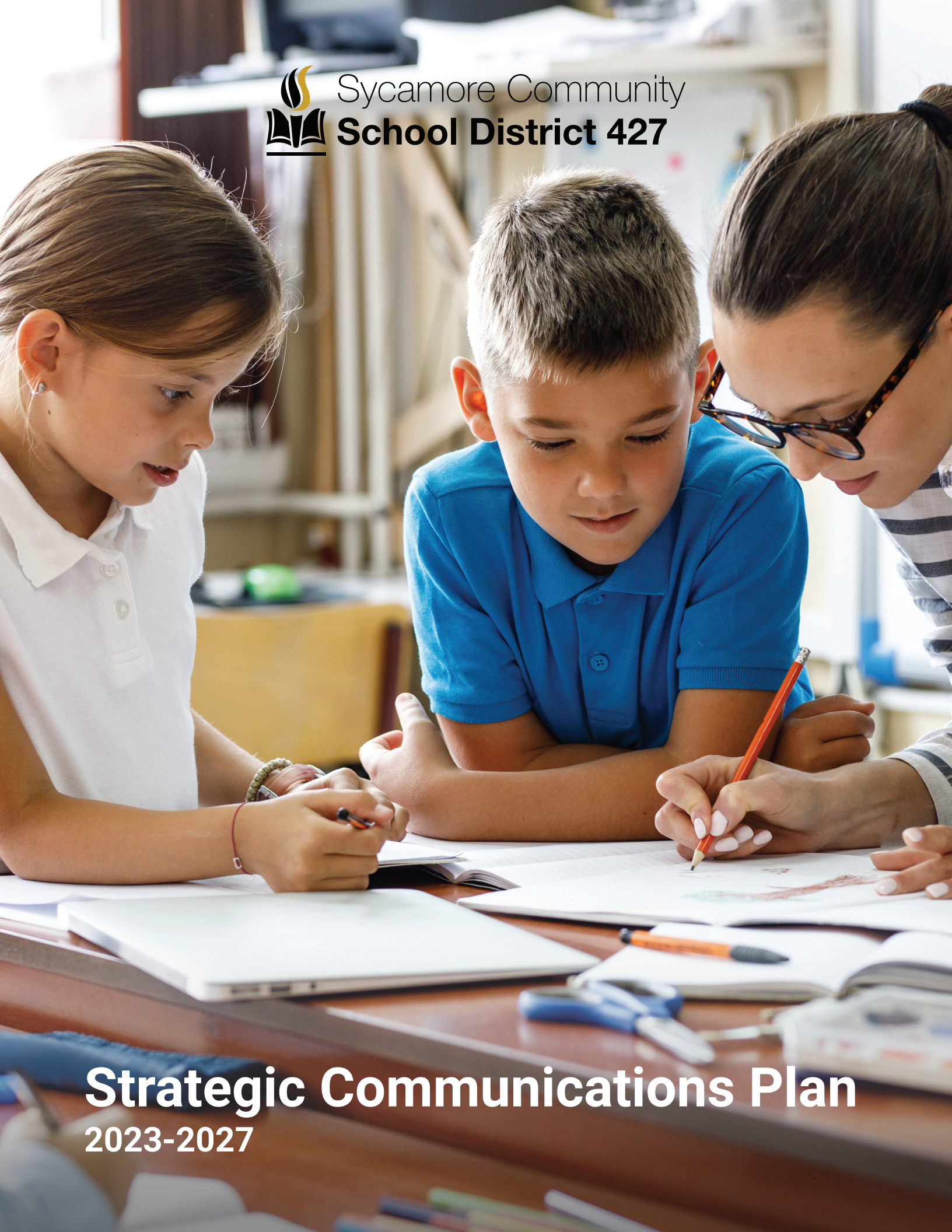




Sycamore Community
School District 427



Strategic Communications Plan

2023-2027



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EMPOWERING ALL LEARNERS TO SUCCEED IN *THEIR* WORLD



Sycamore Community School District 427's mission statement, Empowering All Learners to Succeed in Their World, was the result of conversations with community members, staff and students during the district's first strategic design in 2001. All of these stakeholders were proud of our past and our promising future. In particular, students wanted their voices heard, which is why the word "their" is emphasized in the statement. The word "learners" appears in the statement because learning is the district's main focus.

OUR CORE VALUES

HONESTY

Honest people are truthful and sincere.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthy people keep promises, fulfill commitments, and abide by agreements.

INTEGRITY

People with integrity adhere to ethical principles and soundness of character.

EQUALITY

Equitable people believe in inclusiveness and embrace diversity.

EMPATHY

Empathetic people strive to compassionately understand and share in the experiences of others.

RESPECT

Respectful people acknowledge, understand, and support the rights of others to express their beliefs.

CITIZENSHIP

Citizens are lifelong learners who contribute to the community (local/global) in active, positive, and creative ways, and encourage the participation of others.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Digital citizens embrace our core values regarding all technology uses. They reflect before engaging.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible people anticipate and accept the consequences of their actions.

COLLABORATION

Collaborative people create constructive relationships, and actively participate with others in sharing information and ideas toward a common goal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Sycamore Community School District 427 is focused on providing information in a timely, efficient, and effective manner. It is our goal to engage in productive two-way communication with all stakeholders including parents/guardians, staff, students, and community members.

The Communications Department is dedicated to telling the authentic stories of the district. We strive to be the transparent source of information for Sycamore 427. We are focused on credibility, consistency, and transparency. We are guided by the district's mission of empowering all learners to succeed in their world. We believe that we are all in this together **#SpartansTogether**.

This Communications Plan is a framework for engaging district stakeholders, and it is designed to be dynamic and thorough. It will serve as a working document to be updated and reviewed by the Superintendent of Schools and the Director of Communications and Community Engagement.

Under this plan, the Communications Department will foster a strong, interconnected school community through strategic communication and implement four key strategies:

1. Elevate the district's image, brand and reputation through the use of existing and new platforms.
2. Develop relationships and partnerships within the district and with local media, businesses, and community leaders to magnify our message and enhance visibility in our community.
3. Achieve coordinated and proactive communication, both internally and externally, regarding school safety, emergencies, and crises.
4. Provide ongoing support and training to staff, families, and students to provide a clear understanding of best practices and available tools.

AUDIENCE

INTERNAL AUDIENCES

The exchange of information within our district should be unified under one voice and direction. The employees of the Sycamore Community School District are our largest asset. The communication should cultivate exchanges that develop a sense of connectedness, pride, and community.

- Board of Education
- District leadership
- Certified staff
- Non-certified staff

EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

How can we make the district more visible to our community?

We will seek out our stakeholders and their preferred methods of communication in the future and coordinate communications to share relevant district news and information, market our programs, promote our image, provide reports, and ask for feedback.

- Students
- Parents and guardians
- PTOs and Booster organizations
- Taxpayers
- News media
- Community leaders and business partners
- Civic groups
- Alumni
- Sycamore Education Foundation
- Government officials



OBJECTIVES

As Sycamore Community School District 427 adopts a proactive, strategic communication system, this will enable to the district to:

1. Utilize the skills and expertise of the communications department to promote the district as a whole and support the administration and Board of Education in achieving its strategic goals.
2. Foster strong relationships with district staff, families, community partners, and local media.
3. Promote innovation throughout our district by showcasing creativity and advancement in our schools.
4. Provide guidance and direction to staff for messages/ initiatives in support of district goals.
5. Strengthen internal communications to improve employee engagement and morale.
6. Create key messages to establish “one voice” throughout all communication channels.
7. Engage all members of the community, seek feedback, and respond to concerns.
8. Provide excellent customer service and increased efficiency.
9. Connect all stakeholders to the district’s mission and strategic design.
10. Effectively communicate the district’s successes and challenges.

STRATEGY 1

ELEVATE DISTRICT'S BRAND

The Communications Department will work to strengthen communications efforts by refining and maximizing the use of current and new platforms to elevate the district's image, brand and reputation with positive stories and programs.

Strategy 1 Actions:

1. Update and enhance the design of the staff portal to better support district staff.
2. Ensure the website is kept up to date with content and continue efforts to make it ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliant.
3. Increase social media engagement and followers by creating a strategic social media calendar.
4. Update the design and focus on creating engaging content for the internal newsletter, The Exchange.
5. Re-launch monthly Spartan Chat podcast to address key topics affecting education as well as highlighting positive stories and innovation in our district.
6. Launch ParentSquare as the district-wide communication platform. We will need to send regular download reminders and make sure it is being used to its full potential.

Communications Channels Available:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| • Email | • Traditional media | • Social media |
| • Texts and phone calls | • Print | • Facebook |
| • Digital | • Digital signage in | • X |
| • ParentSquare | our schools | • Instagram |
| • Interpersonal | • SpartanTV | • Threads |
| meetings | • Spartan Chat Podcast | • YouTube |
| • Board of Education | | • LinkedIn |

STRATEGY 2

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE VISIBILITY

The Communications Department will focus on developing relationships and partnerships within the district and with local media, businesses, and community leaders to magnify our message and enhance visibility in our community.

Strategy 2 Actions:

1. Plan and promote “Back2School Bash” as a community engagement event focused on creating partnerships with local businesses and service organizations.
2. Plan and present a “State of the District” event in partnership with the Sycamore Education Foundation and annual report for stakeholders containing key data including budget information, student performance, and new program and initiatives.
3. Cultivate media contacts and provide a constant flow of stories to local coverage. Stories will highlight examples of students and staff leading the charge in innovative ways and/or giving back to their schools and communities.
4. Hold town hall events to provide engagement opportunities around topics that affect stakeholders, including school safety, facilities needs, etc.
5. Increase community visibility by attending and supporting city and county-wide events to represent our district.
6. Promote Shop427 within our local community and beyond in an effort to enhance visibility of the Spartan brand and our district as a whole.
7. Market the Sycamore High School auditorium as a premier event venue in our community.

STRATEGY 3

COORDINATED AND PROACTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

The Communications Department will work to achieve coordinated and proactive communication, both internally and externally, regarding school safety, emergencies, and crises.

Strategy 3 Actions:

1. Create and put into practice Crisis Action Plan flow chart.
2. In collaboration with the Safety Committee, provide refresher training for principals and school staff.
3. Educate our families and the community on emergency communication procedures, including safety updates and consistent messaging.
4. Pursue additional professional development in crisis management and communication.
5. Provide immediate central and school-site communications support to principals and key staff during emergency situations and crises, so they can effectively communicate their school's message to their families, faculty, and staff.
6. Provide district leadership with in-person support, key statements, fact sheets, talking points, and other collateral materials as issues arise.

STRATEGY 4

PROVIDE COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Communications Department will provide support and training to staff, students, and families.

Strategy 4 Actions:

1. Develop and implement Communications Best Practices with guidelines and training materials to support our school staff.
2. Create and roll out Social Media Guidelines for our district.
3. Conduct media and social media training sessions for staff and one-on-one as needed to empower better communicators.
4. Provide training sessions and support for all district staff on ParentSquare.
5. Provide staff training and support for digital signage system (carousel) to increase staff accessibility.
6. Commit to ongoing professional development for the entire Communication Department so that we can continue to be knowledgeable and innovative in all of our areas of expertise.