

CONSOLIDATED HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 230

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Carla Erdey

Director of Communications

Established: January 2020

Updated: 2022



INTRODUCTION

Successful organizations are guided by a strategic plan, which is normally supplemented by plans that include, but are not limited to, financial, facilities, technology and continuous educational improvement. This Strategic Communications Plan serves as an overarching guide for Consolidated High School District 230 in the area of communication recommendations and strategies. This plan was drafted by the Director of Communications with community feedback and recommendations from a comprehensive Communications Audit conducted by the National School Public Relations Association and data gathered through the Strategic Planning process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategic Communications Plan supports the school district by providing direction for improving internal and external communications. The objective of all communication strategies is to advance the D230 Inspires & Empowers District Improvement Plan and to build, maintain and enhance public understanding and support for Consolidated High School District 230.

Internally, this Strategic Communications Plan provides recommendations, strategies, and tactics to keep employees informed. Additionally, the plan provides methods for District internal stakeholders to be able to tell our story to internal and external publics.

Externally, this Strategic Communications Plan also provides recommendations, strategies, and tactics to more effectively communicate and build relationships within the greater district community. Effective communications must be two-way and consistent, using a variety of tools, all with the primary goal of supporting the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.

Communications is the responsibility of every stakeholder within Consolidated High School District 230 and every stakeholder has a responsibility of telling our story. This plan supports all employees and stakeholders in communicating the school district story.

Having a department to lead and coordinate communications is essential to supporting the organization. This plan provides the structure for communications that support the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan. The plan provides measurable tactics so that objective analysis can determine the strengths and challenges needed to improve communications internally and externally within the district.

The plan, while comprehensive, does not and cannot identify all variables. The plan was originally established in January 2020 following a communications audit by the National School Public Relations Association. As we emerge from the pandemic and have transitioned to the leadership of new Superintendent Dr. Bob Nolting who has led the D230 Inspires & Empowers strategic planning process, we adjusted the communications plan. Should the district's needs continue to change significantly during this time period, the plan will be altered.

D230 INSPIRES & EMPOWERS



MISSION

D230 is an interconnected learning community that inspires *innovation, empathy and leadership.*



VISION

We empower
young adults to impact
their communities.



PILLARS

- ★ Authentic Learning Experiences
- ★ Communication & Engagement
- ★ Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- ★ Responsive Curriculum
- ★ Social-Emotional Development

D230 INSPIRES & EMPOWERS

Intentionally left blank.

Insert D230 Inspires & Empowers Goals
when finalized.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Communication must support the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.
- Strategic communication and public relations are management functions.
- Strategic communication requires research and evaluation to be woven throughout the communication effort.
- The communication effort should focus on engaging stakeholders to take action on behalf of students.
- Two-way communication about issues builds trust among constituents.
- A combination of building-level and district-level communication constitutes the most effective public relations effort.
- Technology should be used and enhanced to support an efficient, timely, and effective system of communication.
- Resources should be allocated to tell the stories of all students and staff.

DESIRED BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES

Internal

- Will understand and support district and school communication procedures.
- Will consistently participate in the communication process.
- Will engage participants in achieving the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.
- Will exhibit D230 Pride in the strategic direction of the school district.
- Will help tell the story of the Consolidated High School District 230.

External

- Will exhibit community pride and trust in Consolidated High School District 230.
- Will be collaboratively involved and engaged in our schools and the district.
- Will choose to enroll and remain learners in Consolidated High School District 230.
- Will understand the challenges, opportunities, and successes of the district.
- Will provide feedback and support to improve the school district.
- Will support Consolidated High School District 230 in achieving its D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Internal

- All district employees
- School Board
- Students
- Associations
- Parents of current students
- Parent organizations/D230 Foundation
- Advisory Committees
- Retirees
- Alumni

External

- District taxpayers
- Prospective parents
- Government and elected officials
- Chambers and businesses
- Religious organizations
- Senior citizens
- Adults without children in schools

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a 2019 National School Public Relations Association Communications Audit, the following process was established to prioritize and strategically plan for next steps. Each of the audit recommendations has been incorporated into this plan.

GOAL

**Develop a strategic communication plan
that supports D230's improvement plan.
(Audit recommendation #1)**

PHASE 1: RESEARCH

Analyze current
communication strategies,
products and styles to increase
effectiveness.
(Audit recommendation #2)

PHASE 2: PLAN

Determine strategies, timelines
and necessary supports to
incorporate into strategic
communication plan.
(Audit recommendations #3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8)

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENT

Implement strategic
communication plan.

PHASE 4: EVALUATE

Evaluate outcomes of strategic
communication plan
implementation to inform
future communication.

NSPRA

Communications Audit Recommendations

1. Develop a strategic communication plan that supports D230's improvement plan.
2. Review communication strategies, products, and styles to increase effectiveness.
3. Streamline and clarify the district's use of communication tools during a crisis.
4. Strive to connect with more stakeholders via social media and digital communications.
5. Communicate with non-English speakers and technology-limited families using expanded methods that increase their ability to access and understand the information.
6. Create a stronger brand identity for D230 as a district.
7. Develop and support opportunities for student-generated storytelling.
8. Consider functional and staffing adjustments in the Communications Department.

COMMUNICATION GOALS

The Communications Department 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. Strategic communication plans utilizing the four-step Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (R-PIE) Process will be developed for each of these goals.

1. **Strategic Planning: Create strategic communication plans aligned with the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.**
 - a. Use the four-step R-PIE process to develop the overall district strategic communication plan to support the goals established in the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.
 - b. Use communication protocol questions to establish school and initiative-specific communication plan expectations and supports that address the R-PIE process for major district initiatives, especially those tied to student performance and recognition.
2. **Communication Channels: Use a variety of communication channels to maximize awareness and support of the district's goals, objectives, and programs.**
 - a. Review communication strategies, products, and styles to increase effectiveness including the use of readership surveys and analytics of school and district newsletters, websites, and mobile app.
 - b. Streamline and clarify the district's use of communication tools during a crisis.
 - c. Strive to connect with more stakeholders via social media, digital communications, and video.
 - d. Communicate with non-English speakers and technology-limited families using expanded methods that increase their ability to access and understand the information.
3. **Brand Identity: Create a stronger brand identity for the district and build on that image and reputation.**
 - a. Establish a brand identity guide to create consistency in messaging, voice, and visuals across district-level and school-level communications.
 - b. Conduct brand training and distribute brand guidelines to staff members.
4. **Skills Development: Provide appropriate communication resources and nurture skills development to empower stakeholders to tell the district's story.**
 - a. Evaluate the functional and staffing needs of the Communications Department to best support the implementation of the strategic communication plan.
 - b. Assess the communication skills development needs of administrators, teachers, and support staff and implement professional development to meet those needs.
 - c. Develop and support opportunities for student-generated storytelling.
5. **Strengthen Relationships: Develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with school community members to strengthen support for High School District 230.**
 - a. Enhance the use of the Key Communicator method for Advisory groups and committees to involve staff, students, parents, and community members.
 - b. Build and maintain partnerships with business, community, and religious leaders to support key initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

Goal	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
1. Strategic Planning	Focus	Focus	Focus	Focus	Focus
2. Communication Channels	Intro	Focus	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
3. Brand Identity	Focus	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
4. Skills Development	Intro	Focus	Focus	Focus	Focus
5. Strengthen Relationships	Intro	Focus	Focus	Maintain	Maintain

2022-23 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- **Strategic Planning: Create strategic communication plans aligned with the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.**
 - Use the four-step R-PIE process to develop the overall district strategic communication plan to support the goals established in the D230 Inspires & Empowers plan.
 - Collaborate with each Assistant Superintendent to develop a communication plan for their goal areas.
 - Use communication protocol questions to establish school and initiative-specific communication plan expectations and supports that address the R-PIE process for major district initiatives, especially those tied to student performance and recognition.
 - Collaborate with each Principal and Assistant Principal for Activities to develop a communication plan for School Improvement Plans.
 - Collaborate with Assistant Superintendents to develop communication plans for major department initiatives.
- **Communication Channels: Use a variety of communication channels to maximize awareness and support of the district's goals, objectives, and programs.**
 - Review communication strategies, products, and styles to increase effectiveness including the use of readership surveys and analytics of school and district communications.
 - Explore the use of ThoughtExchange or a similar product to engage students, staff, families, businesses, religious, and community leaders in district and school decisions.
 - Utilize the chosen tool to support engagement with D230 Inspires & Empowers plan objectives.
 - Utilize the chosen tool to assess the effectiveness of communication channels and campaigns.
 - Streamline and clarify the district's use of communication tools during a crisis.
 - Collaborate with Crisis Plan Review Committee to establish and implement crisis communication protocols aligned with crisis plans.
 - Strive to connect with more stakeholders via social media, digital communications, and video.
 - Explore the use of Parent Square to streamline mass communication messaging giving students, families, and staff choices in how they receive information.
 - Utilize D230 Impact Maker and The D230 Experience videos to tell the D230 Inspires & Empowers story.

2022-23 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Communicate with non-English speakers and technology-limited families using expanded methods that increase their ability to access and understand the information.
 - Assess the communication and engagement needs of families.
 - Develop an engagement plan.
- **Brand Identity: Create a stronger brand identity for the district and build on that image and reputation.**
 - Integrate brand identity into all communication channels.
 - Conduct brand training and distribute brand guidelines to staff members.
- **Skills Development: Provide appropriate communication resources and nurture skills development to empower stakeholders to tell the district's story.**
 - Evaluate the functional and staffing needs of the Communications Department to best support the implementation of the strategic communication plan.
 - Explore the addition of an Engagement Specialist to implement engagement plans.
 - Assess the communication skills development needs of administrators, teachers, and support staff and implement professional development to meet those needs.
 - Develop and support opportunities for student-generated storytelling.
- **Strengthen Relationships: Develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with all school community members to strengthen support for Consolidated High School District 230.**
 - Enhance the use of the Key Communicator method for Advisory groups and committees to involve staff, students, parents, and community members.
 - Build and maintain partnerships with business, community, and religious leaders to support key initiatives.

R-PIE DEFINED

The four-step public relations process — Research, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation (R-PIE) — informs a public relations plan with qualitative and quantitative data, and lifts the public relations function from tactical to strategic. The R-PIE process also transforms public relations measurement from output-based to outcomes-focused.

Source: Public Relations Society of America

CODE OF ETHICS

Consolidated High School District 230 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