



West Northfield School District 31

# Comprehensive Communication Plan 2024-2026





# West Northfield School District 31

## Communication Project Goals

School District 31 is committed to empowering students and families through proactive communications. This Communications Plan sets forth a proactive approach to foster efficient, transparent, and effective public communication for District 31 for the 2024-2026 school years.

The purpose of this Plan is to establish a set of measurable strategies and actions to:

- Increase open two-way, communication externally and internally,
- Enable strong and consistent messages that reinforce and reflect the goals of our strategic plan,
- Provide families clear, accurate, and timely information, and
- Continue to promote the District's brand and identity and build on our District's positive image...

## Communication Team

### District Level

- Superintendent
- Communication Manager
- Board of Education President
- \*Other District Level Individuals as Delegated*

### Field Middle School

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Communications Manager

### Winkelman Elementary School

- Primary Principal
- Intermediate Principal
- Communications Manager

## Strategic Plan

**Mission:** Empowering every student to make a positive impact on tomorrow's community.

**Vision:** Every student is empowered and prepared to make meaningful contributions to the community through:

- Equitable opportunities for ALL students
- An environment that is culturally responsive and celebrates diversity
- A focus on future-ready learning skills and high expectations
- Authentic learning experiences and innovative resources designed to inspire and develop students' passions
- An enriching, creative, and collaborative environment

**Core Values:** We embrace the following Core Values as we work to achieve our Mission, Vision, and Goals:

- High Expectations
- Diversity and Inclusivity
- Continuous Improvement and Data Informed Decisions
- Future-Ready Learning
- Student Engagement through Agency
- Collaboration
- Partnerships
- Shared Leadership Accountability

**Portrait of a Graduate:** These are the values and characteristics we wish to see demonstrated by our students when our vision is fully achieved:

- Critical Thinkers
- Problem Solvers
- Collaborators
- Effective Communicators
- Empathetic
- Responsible Global Citizens
- Self-Advocates
- Resilient
- Curious Life-long Learners

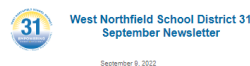
# 31 Communication

## Text Messaging

District 31 sends text messages about important news, events, and emergency situations. Subscribe by texting “yes” to 67587. District 31 also uses Talking Points allowing for two-way communication with families in 145 different languages.

## Email

- **Principal Weekly Messages** -Principals send out weekly messages with school specific information and events.



Dear District 31 Community,

I can hardly believe that we are approaching mid-September already! Every day we are grateful to see our students and staff in our buildings collaborating and learning. We have been very busy these past few weeks establishing the school routine, welcoming students and families, celebrating learning, and kicking off our fall assessment window.

As we celebrate Library Card Sign-up Month, we are thrilled that both the **Glenview and Northbrook Public Libraries have waived non-resident fees for children ages 11 and younger**. I know that getting my first library card was a pivotal moment when I was a child. We are thankful that ALL students in District 31 now have the opportunity to experience all that our wonderful public libraries have to offer. It is our hope that all District 31 students become the proud owner of a public library card. Actress Katherine Hepburn once said, “What in the world would we do without our libraries?”

Now that we are moving into the fall and settling into the patterns and routines of the school year, we are looking forward to even more opportunities to engage in activities that celebrate our students, staff, and schools. Thank you for your partnership.

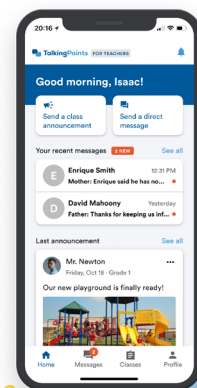
Warmly,

Dr. Erin K. Murphy, Superintendent

- **Teacher Communication** - Winkelman teachers send out twice monthly communication via email or Seesaw and Field teachers send out monthly grade-level newsletters.

- **Monthly eNews** -The District sends out monthly newsletters comprised of district-wide updates, important district and community information, and upcoming events.

- **Important Updates and Safety Alerts** -The District sends out updates and alerts as needed.

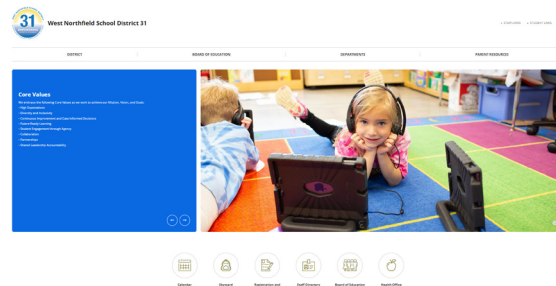


## Emergency Voice and Text Notification System

Families will receive text or call notifications from the District in the event of emergency situations or critical school alerts. Examples include: school closures, evacuation notices, lock-downs, and threats.

## Website

The website is the primary source for the District’s most up-to-date information for families, staff, and all other stakeholders. Updates are made each day by District staff to ensure transparent, up-to-date information to the public at all times.



## Board of Education Meetings

Board of Education Meetings are held once a month. The public is welcome to attend. Those who cannot attend in person can watch meetings live via Zoom. Meeting minutes are available on the District’s Board Docs website.



## Social Media

The District actively utilizes Facebook ([facebook.com/ WestNorthfieldD31](https://facebook.com/WestNorthfieldD31)).

## Skyward

Skyward provides student class schedules, attendance records, progress reports, and other important information.

## Press Releases

The District sends out press releases as needed to all local media.



# Community Collaboration

Improve District Communication to and from District Families,  
Staff, and Community Organizations.

## Strategies and Initiatives

### 1. Cross-Promote Events, Programs and Services

The District will continue to ensure cross-promotion of relevant community programs and services through weekly emails, website, social media outlets, and the local press. This ongoing tactic will involve coordination between community partners. This initiative aligns with the District's overarching vision to provide authentic learning experiences and innovative resources designed to inspire and develop students' passions and to provide an enriching, creative, and collaborative environment.

### 2. Meet Regularly with Local School and Government Leadership

District staff will meet regularly with leadership from local school districts, park districts, library districts, and villages to share resources, set collaborative goals and objectives, and improve communication, transparency, and efficiency community-wide. District 31 will continue to improve communication and collaboration with local school districts in an effort to maintain open lines of communication and work together to advance opportunities to benefit all families.

### 3. Meet Quarterly with the Parent Engagement Committee

The District will meet quarterly with the newly formed Parent Engagement Committee. The Parent Engagement Committee provides important input and feedback on District 31 communication and outreach including district-wide emails, newsletters, social media, and website content to increase parent engagement. The first task of the parent engagement committee was providing feedback on the District's website and assisting in decisions related to the website design.

### 4. Define Community Partners

District 31 will clearly define community partners to better differentiate what community communication is shared by the District. This definition can be found on page 9 of this document.

### 5. Utilize Virtual Backpack for Community Information

District 31 will continue to use the Virtual Backpack website page [www.district31.net/virtualbackpack](http://www.district31.net/virtualbackpack) to house information from community partners. A link to the Virtual Backpack is included in weekly principal messages as well as monthly eNewsletters.

# Digital Communication

Explore, update, and use multiple technologies to enhance the delivery of District communications with District community members in a timely and relevant manner.

## Strategies and Initiatives

### 1. Regularly Update and Maintain the District Website

The District will regularly update all website pages to ensure all information is current. The District will also continue to post all updates and news on the website so families are able to use the website's robust translation feature that aligns with the District vision to provide an environment that is culturally responsive and celebrates diversity.

### 2. Explore the Use of District Podcast

The District will explore the use of a podcast to be distributed via text around student pick-up time. The "While You Wait" podcast would deliver important or interesting information in 3-5 minutes of audio. This initiative aligns with the District's communication goal to explore opportunities to enhance and expand outreach.

### 4. Follow Communication Timeline

The District has a communication timeline in place to ensure timely communication for all families. This timeline will be reassessed annually.

The current external communication timeline structure for the 2024-2026 school year is below.

- Daily: Automated phone call if student is absent and parents did not call to report
- Weekly: Principal weekly message to parents
- Bimonthly: Winkelman teacher emails are sent out twice a month
- Monthly: Superintendent Report to the Board of Education, School eNewsletter, Field grade level newsletter

### 5. Utilize Board Docs Website to House Board of Education Meeting Material

The District uses the website Board Docs to organize and house all Board of Education Meeting information including agendas, board packets, minutes, and Zoom Links. The use of Board Docs has allowed for more transparency and public participation.

# Two-Way Communication

Foster an environment in which the public can easily communicate with the District and provide feedback to the District on initiatives, programs, and services.

## Strategies and Initiatives

### 1. Provide Responsive and Valuable Communication on a Daily Basis

District 31 values its relationship with families, staff, and our community. Staff members are dedicated to providing responsive and quality communications to community members on a daily basis. The District will uphold this value in all communication whether in person, on the phone, or through electronic means. Social media users are encouraged to contact the District through email or phone to more effectively resolve issues or address concerns.

### 2. Continually Update Media Contact List

Staff will continually update a media contact list with contact information for current news agencies and reporters.

### 3. Coordinate Parent Meetings

The District hosts and supports a variety of meeting opportunities throughout the year to solicit feedback and answer questions about District priorities and opportunities to enhance the quality of education. Meetings provide an opportunity for families to speak with District leadership in a welcoming, friendly, and informal environment. Examples of parent meetings include Principal Tea, Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) meetings, and monthly Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings.

### 4. Engage Families and Staff with District-Wide Surveys

The District will utilize surveys as needed for feedback. These surveys will be used to provide the District with valuable input to enhance District operations and opportunities. i.e. 5Essentials Parent Survey, HumanEx, Calendar Survey, and others as needed.

### 5. Expand the Use of Talking Points

The District will continue to expand the use of Talking Points, which allows staff members to communicate with families in their home languages to build strong partnerships all year long. There are 145 languages available which allows for two-way communication from school to home and from home to school. This initiative aligns with the District's communication goal to increase open two-way, communication externally and internally and aligns with the District vision to provide an environment that is culturally responsive and celebrates diversity.

# District Identity

Align all communication channels to promote one cohesive identity across all networks.

## Strategies and Initiatives

### 1. Monitor effective use of District Brand, Logos, and Materials

The District continues to monitor and utilize communication tools including the website, newsletters, press releases, letters, fliers, and other material to ensure the designs are branded with the District logo and colors and well-received and easy to navigate based on staff and parent feedback. This initiative allows the District to provide one cohesive identity across all networks.

### 2. Increase School Photography to Use in District Communications

Staff will continue to update the District photo stock and include photos of events, classrooms, students, staff, and all other aspects of the District. The photo stock will be used and kept on file for the website, newsletters, Superintendent reports, fliers and any other communication efforts. The District will continue to encourage photo enthusiasts to share photos through social media, contests, and more. The District will also hire a professional photographer biannually to keep current professional photos for the website and promotional materials.

### 3. Distinguish District 31 from Other Districts

The District will continue to share special events, accomplishments, awards, honors, and any other news that distinguishes District 31 from other Districts and helps share the District 31 narrative. Google Alerts have been set to notify District staff of any District, Field, or Winkelman news.



# Proactive Messaging

Ensure messages are clearly communicated in a timely manner by planning and preparing for communication to external and internal stakeholders.

## Strategies and Initiatives

### 1. Put together an Annual Social Media Plan

The District will update the annual social media plan guiding the District's social media communication for the year. The plan will highlight what information will be shared each month, and will allow the District to provide timely, culturally responsive communication.

### 2. Share District News

The District will continue to share relevant information regarding District information, events, and initiatives with media via press releases and other communication. This initiative ensures key messages are clearly communicated in a timely manner by planning and preparing communication.

### 3. Conduct Social Media Campaigns

The District will engage in various social media campaigns such as staff recognition posts, fun fact Fridays in which facts about the district or community will be posted, throwback Thursdays in which historic photos of the district or historic facts will be posted, and alumni posts celebrating Field or Winkelman alums. The campaigns will run continuously but not necessarily every week and tie into relevant/timely topics. These campaigns are an important engagement tool for District social media.



## Community Partners Defined

District 31 divides community partner communication into three categories.

### **1.) District 31 Parent Organizations (Ed Foundation and Parent Teacher Organizations)**

The District ensures parent organizations missions and activities are communicated. This includes linking their organization website to the District website, inclusion in newsletters, posting events and information on the District website, utilizing District social media to share information, sending weekly independent update on events as appropriate.

### **2.) Community Not for Profit Organizations or organizations in a formal partnership with District 31**

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Villages of Northbrook and Glenview (including Police and Fire),
- Northbrook and Glenview Park District,
- Northbrook and Glenview Public Library,
- True North Educational Cooperative 804,
- Northfield Township,
- CATCH,
- North Suburban YMCA,
- Northfield Township School Districts,
- Organizations providing paid after school opportunities for District 31 students.

Information from these organizations may be included in weekly principal communications, monthly district communications, social media, and the district website.

### **3.) Other local organizations**

Organizations that provide lessons and activities for students that do not meet the definition above may send program and event information or fliers to the District Manager of Communication to be posted on the District's website in the Virtual Backpack.

To be included in the District's Virtual Backpack, an organization must be:

- a local tax-supported community agency,
- OR a not-for-profit community organization offering sports and recreation program options for students,
- OR a charitable group which has a current service learning connection or curricular connection with our schools or class groups.
- AND be approved by the Superintendent

Organizations that meet the criteria may include fliers that promote their services, activities, or events and a link to their respective websites. Fliers must:

- Be in PDF format
- Not refer to fundraisers unless the program is sponsored by District 31
- Not conflict with public tax supported efforts already in effect



Questions about this Communications Plan can be directed to the District's Communication Manager at [hgarard@district31.net](mailto:hgarard@district31.net).