



Communications Plan

2023-2027

Introduction

The Big Lake Schools Communications Department plays an integral role throughout the district every day. Through a variety of integrated communications initiatives—from website and social media tactics to media relations, crisis communications and beyond—the department is a critical link between the district and its stakeholders. Department staff are dedicated to delivering high-quality communications to families, students, staff and community members, all while supporting the district’s mission to challenge, educate, and inspire all students to reach their highest level of achievement in academics, athletics, and the arts.

The main purpose of the Big Lake Schools 2023-2027 Communications Plan is to ensure that the district’s communications initiatives are aligned with and in support of its Strategic Plan. This document provides a high-level overview of that work, outlining communications goals, strategies and tactics to ensure key stakeholders are informed and engaged. This plan is also designed to be flexible, giving communications staff the autonomy to adapt and adjust key work based on metrics gleaned from quantitative and qualitative evaluations.

Questions about this plan may be directed to Director of Community Education & Communication Services Stephanie Hillman at s.hillman@biglakeschools.org.

Communications Department Overview

The Big Lake Schools Communications Department seeks to provide internal and external stakeholders with clear, high-quality communication via print and digital channels. Guided by the district’s mission and Strategic Plan, communications team members are committed to creating and delivering professional content that enhances the experience that every student, family, staff member and resident has with Big Lake Schools. Communications staff achieve this by:

- Defining appropriate and necessary communications systems and processes,
- Leveraging various channels to ensure stakeholders are well informed, and
- Communicating authentically and often to build trust.

District Communications Stakeholders

Big Lake Schools focuses its communications efforts on several key stakeholder groups, including:

- Current Big Lake families (parents/caregivers and students)
- Prospective Big Lake families

- District residents
- District staff members
- Members of the Big Lake School Board
- Community partners (local businesses, organizations, and more)
- Realtors

Partnerships with School Leaders

Big Lake Schools' communications team partners with leaders at each school every day. These relationships are crucial to the department's work in supporting students, families and staff throughout the year. Maintaining strong relationships across all district schools and departments also helps communications staff produce higher quality content, ensure consistency in communications, and foster better experiences for stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Alignment and Support

The Big Lake Schools 2023-2027 Communications Plan has been thoughtfully designed to ensure its alignment with and support for the district's [Strategic Plan](#). Communications team members view their work in terms of strategies and tactics (outlined in the following two sections), and also consider which objectives from the Strategic Plan are supported by those tactics.

Communications is an integral function that impacts every aspect of district operations and, when used effectively, can help achieve the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. This work matters to Big Lake Schools, its internal and external stakeholders, and its success in achieving its mission for all students.

Communications Strategies

The Big Lake Schools communications team takes a strategy-focused approach to its work. This work falls into four different integrated communications strategies:

1. Engaging Print and Digital Communications
2. District and School Websites
3. Storytelling and Media Relations
4. Cohesive Districtwide Branding and Messaging ([Big Lake Schools Branding Guide](#))

This approach helps district communications staff view their work through a strategic lens. Communications initiatives not encompassed by these strategies are evaluated for their alignment with and support for the district's mission and Strategic Plan, as well as for their importance to the school/district community.

Communications Tactics

Select examples of communications tactics prioritized by Big Lake Schools, their connections to the four strategies outlined in the previous section, and how they support the district’s Strategic Plan include:

Strategy 1: Engaging Print and Digital Communications

Communications Tactics	Target Stakeholder Group(s)	Strategic Plan Objective(s) it Supports
Bright Spots videos	District staff	6.1, 8.1
Building-specific newsletters	Enrolled families	8.2
District newsletters	Enrolled families	8.2
Social media posts	Families, staff and community members	4.1, 4.4, 7.1, 8.1
Community mailers/newsletters	Enrolled families and district residents	8.2, 9.1, 9.2

Strategy 2: District and School Websites

Communications Tactics	Target Stakeholder Group(s)	Strategic Plan Objective(s) it Supports
Convert all sites to the Finalsite platform (2023-2024 school year initiative)	Enrolled families, prospective families, staff and community members	8.1, 9.1
Create an online Resource Hub	Enrolled families, prospective families, staff and community members	7.1, 8.1, 8.2
Create, post and share written and multimedia content	Enrolled families, prospective families, staff and community members	7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2

Strategy 3: Storytelling and Media Relations

Communications Tactics	Target Stakeholder Group(s)	Strategic Plan Objective(s) it Supports
Draft press releases for local media	Enrolled families, prospective families, community members	8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2
Create a system for stakeholders to submit story ideas and content	Enrolled families, staff and community members	7.1, 7.2, 8.1, 9.1, 9.2
Create student, staff and alumni spotlights	Enrolled families, prospective families, staff and community members	7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2

Strategy 4: Cohesive Districtwide Messaging and Branding

Communications Tactics	Target Stakeholder Group(s)	Strategic Plan Objective(s) it Supports
Build a brand asset library	District staff	7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1
Create and update school informational flyers, district brochures and other collateral	Prospective families, community members	7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1
Provide strategic and tactical support at key events	Enrolled families, prospective families, staff and community members	4.1, 4.4, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Communications Tactics

Big Lake Schools’ communications team prioritizes data-driven decision making when evaluating the effectiveness of its communications tactics. By looking at metrics available within each channel—from social media and web analytics to newsletter open rates and more—the team leverages data to make adjustments to its plan when needed. Communications staff also considers qualitative feedback to ensure messages and tactics resonate with various stakeholder groups.

Communications Channels

The Big Lake Schools communications team utilizes several channels to communicate with key internal and external stakeholders year-round. The [Stay Connected with Big Lake Schools](#) Google Doc provides an overview of these channels, lists examples of the type of content shared via each channel, and notes how stakeholders can access this information.