



# **Oxbow High Schools Communication Plan January 2025**

The purpose of Oxbow High School Communication Plan is to ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed of key updates, goals, events, and changes in a timely manner and in alignment with the district's mission, vision, and strategic plan.

## Table of Contents

<b><u>Oxbow High School Organizational Structure</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><u>Mission Statement</u></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><u>Vision Statement</u></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><u>Board Policy</u></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><u>Strategic Plan</u></b>	<b>7</b>
<b><u>Communication Priorities</u></b>	<b>8</b>
<b><u>Communication Strategies</u></b>	<b>10</b>
<b><u>Website</u></b>	<b>11</b>
<b><u>Social Media</u></b>	<b>11</b>
<b><u>Email Communication Protocols</u></b>	<b>13</b>
<b><u>Internal Communication</u></b>	<b>14</b>
<b><u>Summary</u></b>	<b>20</b>

# Oxbow High School's Organizational Structure

## **School Board**

Danielle Corti, Board Chair  
Angela Colbeth, Board Vice-Chair  
Leanne Hatch, Board Member  
Carol Cottrell, Board Member  
Timothy Ross, Board Member  
Maegan Ballou, Board member

## **Administration**

### **Central Office**

Randy Gawel, Superintendent  
Marla Ianello, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support and Operations  
Linda Metcalf, Business Manager  
Pam Easton, Director of Human Resources  
Nicole Bell, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment  
Sabrina Brown, Director of Student Services  
Jason Mix, Technology Director

### **Building Administration**

Ken Cadow, Principal

Sarah Jalbert, Principal

Cate Beaton, SEL Director

Heidi Wright, Athletic Director

Dylan Greer, Building Operations Supervisor

## **Introduction**

A communication plan can be an essential tool for any public school when aligned with the district's mission, vision, and strategic plan. It helps school boards, administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of important updates, goals, events, and changes. It also provides a clear strategy for how communications should be delivered, who should receive them, and when they should be sent. A communication plan helps to ensure that everyone is on the same page and is kept up to date. It will also help to promote transparency and build trust between the district and our various stakeholders, including parents, students, and the community.

This plan includes key strategies tailored to Oxbow's needs. These strategies include easily accessible and consistently utilized in-person and online communication channels. The plan also provides clear and open communication channels for feedback and input.

This communication plan is intended to provide consistent communication that ensures all stakeholders, internal and external, have timely access to information. The plan will identify specific communication channels and strategies for using those channels. To ensure that all stakeholders have access to the same information, the district will identify and limit the platforms used for communication. When stakeholders know the locations and methods in which the district communicates, it will decrease confusion and miscommunication, as well as reduce the amount of time and resources needed to select and maintain communications on different platforms.

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## **Mission Statement**

Oxbow High School's mission is to create a learning community where students can grow, feel welcome, and be empathetic, inquisitive, and socially responsible. The school also aims to develop well-rounded students with integrity and a shared vision of success.

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## **Vision Statement**

### **Oxbow High School Vision Statement**

At Oxbow High School, we strive to cultivate a dynamic learning environment where all students are empowered to achieve academic excellence, develop strong character, and engage as responsible citizens. Through innovative teaching, meaningful relationships, and a commitment to inclusivity, we prepare students for success in an ever-changing world. Our vision is to inspire lifelong learners who think critically, contribute to their communities, and pursue their passions with confidence and resilience.

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## **Board Policy**

The Oxbow Unified Union School District (OUUSD) Board has approved several district policies that are directly related to communication. This communication plan is an extension of those policies.

[A34 Board Relations with School Personnel](#)

[E30- School Community Relations](#)

[CODE E1 Title 1 Part A Parental Involvement](#)

## Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a living document that communicates the district's goals and priorities. It ensures that all stakeholders are working toward common goals and focuses the district's energy and resources on achieving them. As we look towards the future, we recognize that schools are asked to do more, and in many cases, with fewer resources. Planning for the future is more important than ever.

In July 2022, the Orange East Supervisory Union Superintendent and the OUUSD School Board created a three-year strategic plan. This process was data-driven, inclusive of district stakeholders, and focused on the priorities that will help the district succeed in the future.

The Board established its purpose for the Strategic Plan:

- Provide direction, connectivity, and a common language
- Encourage growth
- Stress the importance of continuous improvement
- Serve as a district compass
- Establish the culture of our organization
- Focus resources on district goals
- Advertise to parents the district's future/current direction (retain/recruitment)
- Align current initiatives with future goals
- Provide clarity in the respective roles of the Board of Education, administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and the community

The OUUSD [strategic plan](#) establishes five Strategic Goal Focus Areas:

1. Communication and Public Relations
2. Community Engagement
3. Leadership
4. Teaching
5. Student Development

The Communications and Public Relations Focus Area illustrates the district's focus on communication protocols that value transparency and stakeholder input.

### Strategic Goal Focus Areas

**Communications and Public Relations**

**Goal Statements:**

- Improve communication and public relations with all stakeholders

**Activities:**

- Update the board reporting structure to provide ongoing and shared communication with the entire community.
- Discuss with OESU the need for a communications and public relations director


## Communication Priorities

Oxbow High School must prioritize effective communication to ensure that all stakeholders are informed about its goals, initiatives, and events. The school strives to create multiple channels of communication, both in-person and online. This includes hosting meetings and events at schools, utilizing social media platforms, and maintaining a website with up-to-date information. The school should also actively reach out to parents, teachers, and administrators to ensure that all stakeholders are informed about the school and its plans.

The priority of the communication plan is to be clear and transparent about when and where stakeholders can access school information. As technology evolves, so do the platforms that we use for communication. The school can't utilize every social media or internet platform that our stakeholders may use. Instead, the school will be selective yet consistent with the platforms that it uses while making sure that all stakeholders know the location or avenue for gaining information, asking questions, and providing feedback.

The school is committed to creating a safe and open environment for feedback, allowing stakeholders to provide their thoughts and suggestions at every level of our organization. Open communication will ensure that people feel informed and included in the decision-making process. It is important to follow the point of contact progression chart so that feedback involves those with the most information on a topic.

The *OHS Communication Preferred Method Chart* is intended to provide a quick reference to what method of communication the school will utilize based on the type of communication. The information being sent will determine who will receive the information using these methods of communication. All emergency alerts and school closings will be sent to the Emergency Contacts listed for each student in the district's Student Management System (Infinite Campus).



### OHS Communication PREFERRED METHOD CHART

TYPE OF COMMUNICATION	WEBSITE	PHONE ALERT	EMAIL	SOCIAL MEDIA	MEDIA
Emergency Alert	✓	✓	✓		
School Closing	✓	✓	✓		✓
Event Promotion	✓		✓	✓	✓
Announcements	✓		✓	✓	
General Information	✓		✓		
Campaigns	✓		✓	✓	✓

It is critical that our stakeholders reach out when they have concerns or questions. If information is not available through our primary channels as illustrated in the *OHS Communication Preferred Method Chart*, then the next step is to contact the school. This is the most effective and expedient way to gather the information needed. It is important to start communication with the person who is closest and has the most information on the situation. The *Point of Contact Progression Chart* provides a progression of contacts that can be used to effectively gather information and work through situations. When contacting the school please utilize this progression chart. School staff will ask and redirect your calls as needed to maintain the integrity of this system.

## Point of Contact Progression Chart



Main Office  
802-222-5214

TOPIC	1 <sup>ST</sup> CONTACT	2 <sup>ND</sup> CONTACT	3 <sup>RD</sup> CONTACT	4 <sup>TH</sup> CONTACT	5 <sup>TH</sup> CONTACT
Classroom/Instruction	Teacher	School Administrator	Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Academics	Teacher	Counselor	School Administrator	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Curriculum	Teacher	School Administrator	Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Behavior/Discipline	Teacher	Student Support Specialist	School Administrator	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Special Education	Teacher	Student Services Coordinator	Director of Student Services	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Athletic	Coach	Athletic Director	School Administrator	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Extracurricular	Advisor	Athletic Director	School Administrator	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Technology	Teacher	Technology Coordinator	Director of Technology	Superintendent's Office	School Board
School-Other	School Administrator	Superintendent	School Board		
Transportation	School Administrator	Superintendent	School Board		
Food Services	Abbey Group 802-933-4747	School Administrator	Assistant Superintendent	Superintendent's Office	School Board
Building & Grounds	Building Operations Supervisor	School Administrator	Assistant Superintendent	Superintendent's Office	School Board
District Protocols/Policies	Superintendent	School Board			
Contact Information	Oxbow 802-222-5214	OESU Main Office 802-222-5216	Butlers Bus 603-787-6925	Abbey Group 802-933-4747	
Student Mental Health		Counselor	School Administrator	24 Hour Hotline: 800-639-6360	988 Suicide Hotline
School Safety (Immediate Concern Call 911)		School Administrator	Superintendent	Police Department	State Police

We understand that receiving challenging information from school personnel or your child can be difficult, and it is natural for emotions to run high in such moments. However, maintaining respectful and constructive communication is essential. If communication becomes disrespectful, aggressive, or accusatory, we will transition away from the use of email communication and schedule in-person meetings with OHS administration and those involved to address and resolve the issue.

## **Communication Strategies**

Several strategies can be used for effective communication. This school focuses on the following seven strategies for internal and external communication.

### **1. Use the Most Appropriate Approved Channel:**

- Choose the most appropriate channel for the message (phone/email/meeting)
- The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face
- Ensure the message is compliant with district policies
- Check with the administration before using any new channels (i.e., social media)

### **2. Clear, Concise, and Error Free:**

- Write in simple, easy-to-understand language
- Be as precise as possible
- Keep messages concise and to the point
- Proofread for informational errors as well as any grammar, punctuation, spelling, omitted words, repeated words, spacing/format, and typographical errors.

### **3. Talk to the Audience:**

- Understand the needs of the audience (parent, community member, teacher)
- Show respect for the other person and their feedback
- Communicate in a friendly and helpful way
- Be open to feedback and questions

### **4. Communicate Early and Visibly:**

- Be proactive in communicating information to stakeholders
- Get the message out in multiple ways (e.g., email, website, etc.)
- Make sure messages are seen and heard

### **5. Develop Common Messaging:**

- Develop a unified approach to communication
- Ensure all messaging is consistent and clear
- Be aware of any cultural differences that may affect the message

### **6. Utilize Proper Communication Chain of Command:**

- Ensure messages are delivered through the correct channels
- Follow the communication hierarchy
- Be aware of any protocols that must be followed

### **7. Provide Opportunities for Feedback and Questions:**

- Encourage feedback and questions
- Be open to constructive criticism
- Be responsive to inquiries

## Website

Having an up-to-date website is essential for effective communication. It can provide a platform to share important information and updates and engage with key stakeholders. It can also showcase events and services, improve customer service and support, and build brand awareness. An up-to-date website is key for staying competitive and staying connected with those who matter most. The district website is the primary source of information for our students and parents.

To maximize the potential of an up-to-date website for communication, there are a few strategies to consider.

- Ensure the website is easy to navigate and all information is clearly laid out
  - Keep the website content up-to-date with fresh content, including any recent news or announcements
  - Ensure that all content posted to the website is consistent with the school district's mission and vision
  - Maintain an accurate calendar and include new events as soon as they are available
  - Leverage the website to communicate upcoming events and activities
  - Utilize the website to provide useful information and resources for families
  - Utilize multimedia elements such as images, videos, and audio to engage visitors
  - Make sure the website is accessible to all users, regardless of device or disability
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## Social Media

Social media should not be the primary source of information from the school as it may not reach all of the school's stakeholders. Social media is often used to connect with younger generations, but parents, staff, and other stakeholders may not be as active on social media platforms. Additionally, messages shared on social media can be easily lost among the vast amount of content that is shared on these platforms. The school district website or direct email/phone communication should be the primary source of information as it is more comprehensive and can reach all stakeholders.

It is important for the school to only approve specific social media platforms because it ensures that all communication is consistent, clear, and in line with the district's objectives. By limiting the number of platforms used, the school can ensure that all messages are cohesive and that there is no confusion among stakeholders. Also, it helps to save time and resources, as it reduces the need to monitor and manage multiple accounts. Additionally, using only approved platforms allows the school to better control the message and ensure that all posts comply with school and platform policies and standards.

Social media can be used to support the official communication provided on the website or through email and phone alerts by providing an additional platform for disseminating information to stakeholders. It is a great tool that can be used to share quick updates, announcements, or reminders with the school's followers. It can also be used to highlight positive stories and accomplishments from the school, which can help build a positive reputation and create a sense of community.

Any social media account for a district-sponsored activity will need school approval and consistently follow the standards and strategies listed below. Requests for new social media accounts will be reviewed and approved by the administration and will start with the employee's immediate supervisor (building administrator, athletic director, director of special education, assistant superintendent).

The following standards will be used by the district when developing official accounts:

- Gain school permission to establish an account
- Establish a clear purpose for the account
- Develop an appropriate name and use consistent district branding
- Create a detailed profile that includes contact information, a link to the school district's website, and other relevant information
- Ensure that all security measures are in place to protect the account and its content
- Turn off/disable or require approval for any public comments
- Provide clear guidelines for staff regarding the use of the official social media accounts

The following strategies shall be used by staff utilizing social media for district communication:

- Make sure all posts adhere to the school's mission and vision
- Only post content that has already been communicated through the website or phone/email messaging
- Use social media to promote important messages and updates from the school
- Share positive stories and accomplishments from the school
- Utilize social media to promote upcoming events
- Don't post any confidential or sensitive information
- Don't post content that is not related to the school or district

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## Email Communication Protocols

When done correctly, email is a great resource for communicating information. An email should never replace a meeting or face-to-face conversation when those are more appropriate.

When communicating via email, keep in mind the following drawbacks:

- **Lack of emotion:** It can be difficult to accurately convey emotions through email. This can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations.
- **Lack of immediate feedback:** Responding to emails can take time, meaning that the recipient may not get an immediate response.
- **Overload:** People can become overwhelmed by the influx of emails they receive, and may miss important messages.
- **Errors:** Emails can be sent with errors, such as typos or incorrect information, which can lead to confusion.
- **Security risks:** Emails can be vulnerable to security risks such as phishing attacks.

The following strategies should be used when communicating through email:

- **Be Responsive:** Respond to emails promptly. Same-day response is preferred but no longer than forty-eight hours when possible. Don't leave emails unanswered for too long. If needed, provide an update instead of waiting until all information is gathered.
  - **Verify Recipients:** Only send emails to the appropriate and intended recipients. All emails should be limited to the specific people who need the information. Verify all recipients in a group email before sending. Do not add a recipient to an email without stating it at the beginning of the email. Do not use Reply All unless all recipients need the information. Always ensure that internal communications do not have external recipients.
  - **Use Clear Subject Lines:** A clear and descriptive subject line will help the recipient quickly understand the content of the email.
  - **Personalize Messages:** Try to personalize emails when possible. Use the recipient's name and relevant details to make the message more personal.
  - **Use a Professional Tone:** Always use a professional and respectful tone when communicating through email. Avoid using slang or jargon, and use appropriate language and grammar. Signature blocks should be professional.
  - **Be Concise:** Keep emails as concise as possible. Stick to the relevant points and avoid writing long emails.
  - **Use Appropriate Formatting:** When necessary use bold text, bullet points, and other formatting options to make emails easier to read. Be strategic in the use of formatting options as too much will make emails difficult to read.
  - **Proofread:** Before sending an email, proofread it to make sure it is free of any errors.
  - **Use Attachments:** If necessary, use attachments to provide additional information. Make sure the attachments are in a format the recipient can open.
  - **Be Professional:** Do not forward emails or attachments without the consent of the sender. Do not forward internal communication to external recipients.
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## Internal Communication

A significant amount of information is shared daily within the school district. Internal communication plans need to be developed to ensure the effective and timely sharing of information within the district.

### Goals of Internal Communication

1. Provide open and transparent communication
2. Set clear expectations for when and how to communicate
3. Foster collaboration through communication
4. Provide timely information sharing for effective decision-making
5. Include effective feedback loops

### Strategies for Internal Communication

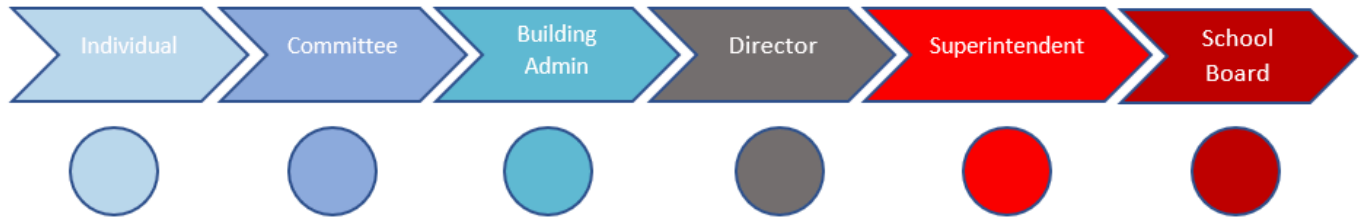
- When possible communicate face-to-face
- Facilitate regular staff and committee meetings
- Use email for sharing information
- Schedule important dates early and make them available on common calendars
- Ask for feedback

# Oxbow High School Internal Communication

## Develop a Communication Plan

To properly ensure timely and effective communication, it is imperative that buildings, programs, and committees develop a written communication plan.

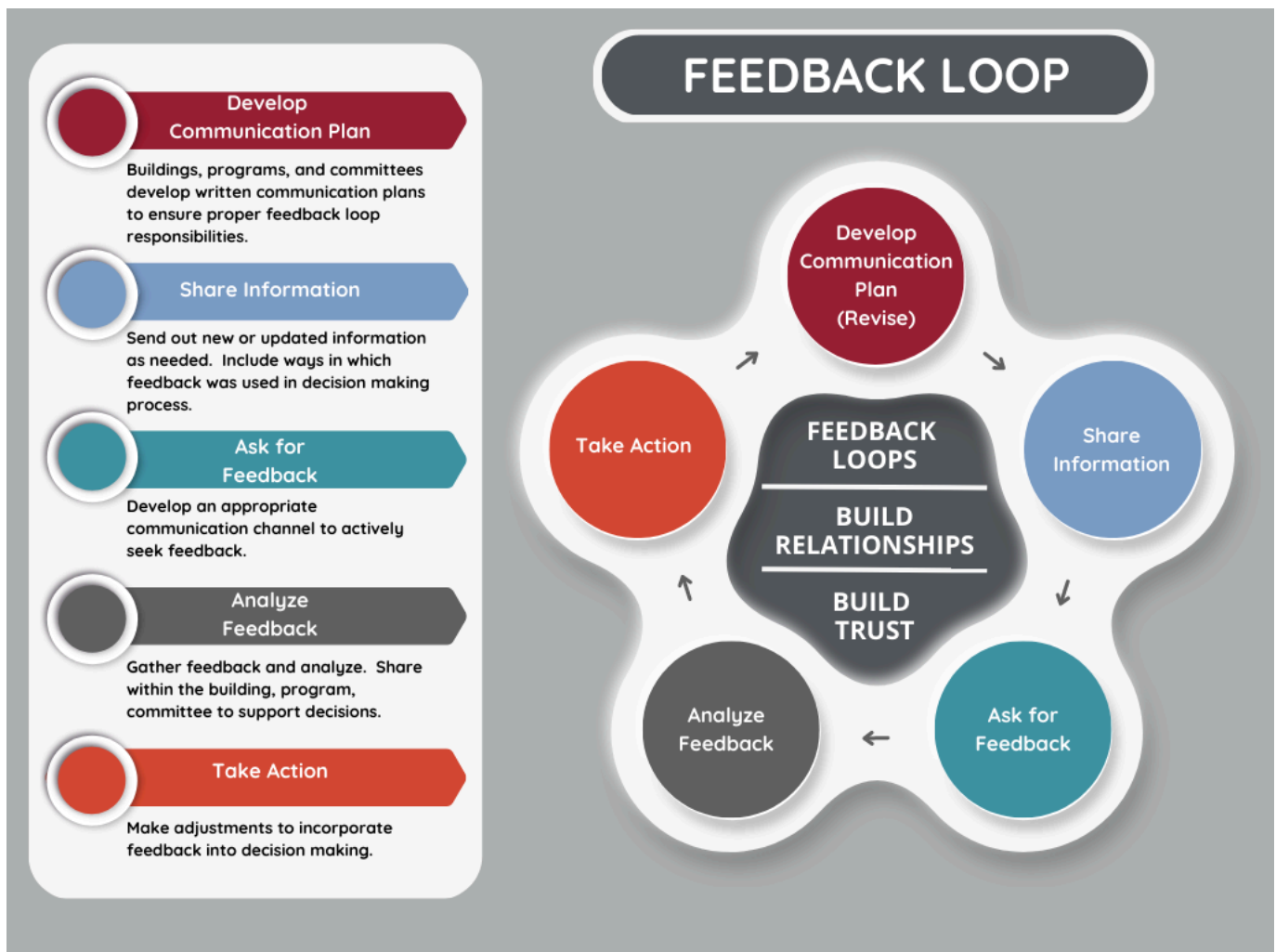
Communication Plans Include	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication Goal                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you need to know?</li> <li>○ What do others need to know?</li> <li>○ Who is responsible?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target Audience</li> <li>• Method of Communication</li> <li>• Who is responsible</li> <li>• Frequency</li> <li>• Feedback Loop</li> </ul>



<b>Individual</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Superintendent</b>	<b>Board</b>
What's working and what's not?  What are my options?  Communicate that a need for information exists.	What do you need to know?  What do others need to know?  Develop a communication plan.	Is information flowing internally and externally?  Are communication plans being developed?  Develop communication protocols.	Is the information flowing between buildings and departments?  Are feedback loops effective?  Develop communication protocols.	Is internal and external communication effective?  Is appropriate information communicated to the board?  Develop District protocols.	Is the board receiving information needed for decision making?  Update/revise Board Policies on communication and strategic plan.

## Feedback Loops

It is important that any time information is shared by the school a method for feedback is available. A feedback loop is a process of collecting and responding to feedback from stakeholders to continuously improve district communications. It involves five steps which include the development of a communication plan, sharing information, asking for feedback, analyzing the feedback, and taking action on that feedback. Feedback loops can be used to not just improve communication, but also the programming, protocols, and policies of the district. The intent of the feedback loop is to help decision-makers understand the impact that we make as a school and as a district. Effective use of feedback loops will help build trusting relationships with our stakeholders.



## Strategies for Meetings

For communication to be effective, it is important to be intentional about how and when we communicate. When conducted thoughtfully and intentionally, in-person, face-to-face meetings are highly effective for communication goals. An agenda that identifies activities or topics (including what is going well and concerns or challenges), the purpose, as well as whether and how decisions will be made helps support the common goals.

Time	Activity or Topics:	Purpose:	Decision Making:	Notes	Actions/ Decisions
5 min	Good News Share	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Sharing <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationship building	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Majority <input type="checkbox"/> Consensus		

## Board-Staff Communication Chain of Command

The organizational structure of the school district is reliant upon effective internal communication. For this to happen it is imperative that a chain of command is established and followed so that important information travels up and down the chain of command as needed. Failure to follow this chain or jump the chain creates an information gap that may prevent effective decision-making processes. It is important to note that all communication to and from the School Board goes through the Superintendent as outlined in *Board Policy*:

*The Board desires to maintain open channels of communication between itself and the staff. The basic line of communication will, however, be through the Superintendent.*

- *Staff Communications to the Board - All communications from staff members to the Board or its committees shall be submitted through the Superintendent. This procedure is not intended to deny any staff member the right to appeal to the Board on important matters through established procedures.*
- *Board Communications to Staff - All official communications, policies, and directives of the Board of staff interest and concern to the staff will be communicated through the Superintendent, who shall also keep staff members fully informed of the Board's problems, concerns, and actions.*
- *Social Interaction - Both staff and Board members share a keen interest in the schools and in education generally, and it is to be expected that when they meet at social affairs and other functions, they will informally discuss such matters as educational trends, issues, and innovations, and general activities of the District. However, since individual Board members have no special authority except when they are convened at a legal meeting of the Board or vested with special authority by Board action, discussions between staff and Board members of personalities or personnel grievances will be considered to be unethical conduct.*

## Summary

A school-based communication plan is essential for any public school. It helps school administrators, teachers, and staff to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of important updates, goals, events, and changes. It also provides a clear strategy for how communications should be delivered, who should receive them, and when they should be sent. A clear and effective communication plan helps to promote transparency and build trust between the district and its various stakeholders.

To ensure that the communication plan is effective, school staff should follow the established guidelines and protocols. This includes choosing the appropriate communication channels and methods for each stakeholder group, developing a unified and consistent message, and regularly evaluating and updating the communication plan to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Staff should also take steps to ensure that all communications are reaching their intended audiences and that the visual style is consistent across all channels. By following these steps, staff can help to ensure that the communication plan is successful in meeting the needs of all stakeholders.