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Communications and Public Relations Role

Supporting schools, staff, students, and families by sharing proactive, timely and accurate information with our staff, students, families, community and the media.

The District online: webpages, Board Docs, ParentSquare - District Navigator Newsletter, social media, Next Request

Pictures and stories shine a light on the awesome things the happening in South Whidbey School District.

Responsibilities include:

- School Board
- Media relations
- Website
- Family notifications - robo calls
- Social media
- Publications - Navigator
- Public records requests
- Food service applications
- Choice transfer/homeschool

Tips for teachers (legal requirements):

FERPA (Family Educational and Rights Privacy Act) is a federal law that protects personally identifiable information about students. FERPA requires confidentiality of student information by telling schools **what information** it may share, and **when & who** they may share such information with. It also gives parents the right to consent to the disclosure of their child's directory information.

*Parents/guardians may fill out the optional **Release of Directory Information Form** to indicate their preferences for the release of directory information. By default, directory information *can* be shared. With this form, parents/guardians may *"opt out"* of sharing certain directory information. Know which students CANNOT be photographed.

Accessibility through ParentSquare and the Website

Federal law (Americans with Disabilities Act – ADA and Sections 504 and 508) of the Rehabilitation Act requires school districts to provide accessible online content to students, families and the public. Accessibility is an

important issue for educational equity. Regardless of disability or other challenges accessing technology, everyone should be able to access information and resources made available online.

Accessibility best practice:

- ✔ Use a **font size of at least 12 px.**
- ✔ Left aligned text is best.
- ✔ **Add alternative text** (alt-text) for images that is descriptive and conveys the full meaning of the image for people using screen readers.
- ✔ Include **captions and descriptions** for every video.
- ✔ Use **text formatting** (bold, heading styles, underline links) to convey meaning rather than or in addition to color.
- ✔ Use **high-contrast design** (keep color contrast in mind - black or dark text on a white page works best).
- ✔ **Embed links** into meaningful descriptions rather than spelling out URLs or embedding into the words "link" or "here."
- ✔ **Avoid tables** unless they show data – always include column headers.
- ✔ **All documents** such as PDFs, PowerPoint, Excel, Word, etc. must meet accessibility requirements. Best practice, when possible is to place content on-page rather than as an attachment. Don't use scanned documents.
- ✔ Have **clean content** – fix broken links and errors.

Public records

If you receive a request for records (outside of a student or parent/guardian request for students records) please send the request immediately to the Director of Communications.

As a publicly funded system, our district is subject to the Washington Public Records Act which makes ***most*** records created and maintained in our course of work open and available to the public when requested.

What is a Public Records Request?

A public records request is a request for **existing records** (hard copy or electronic, email, texts, social media posts, photos, audio and video recordings, google docs, faxes, sticky notes, etc.) that are related to a public agency and its business.

<u>Every employee</u> in the district is subject to the Public Records Act

Tips

- Every document you create *may* be subject to disclosure, including things in your electronic trash can, even if the trash has been "emptied."
- Everything you write in email is PUBLIC…ask yourself:
    - Do you want to read it in the local paper?
    - Do you want your family, friends, co-workers, supervisor or neighbors to read it?
- In 2015 a Washington Supreme Court ruling determined even messages located on personal cell phones, computers and other personal devices or in private email accounts may be considered public records if created while acting in an 'official capacity'

District Preferred Teacher Communications Tool:

ParentSquare

There are many tutorial videos to become more familiar with ParentSquare.

- Activate Your Account (https://parentsquare.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/12415321049357-Activate-Your-Account)
- Getting Started Parents ▶️ (https://parentsquare.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/203414049-Getting-Started)
- Getting Started – Teachers https://parentsquare.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/360001600432-Teachers

Download the ParentSquare App

The ParentSquare app is available in both iOS or Android stores. Downloading the mobile app is the easiest way to receive all Posts, Events, Sign Up Requests, Photos and Files.

iOS App - Apple Store

Android App - Google Play Store

Additional methods:

- District email
- Google Classrooms