

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

DEFINITION

Under direction, develops and implements internal and external communication strategies for the San Mateo County Office of Education (Office) to promote its programs, services and progress towards strategic goals; elevates the capacity of the communications team to solve problems innovatively and with the greatest impact, elevates the County Office of Education's public profile and increases awareness of and support for its strategic priorities; effectively communicates and engages with a diverse range of audiences; provides professional assistance to County Office of Education and school district staff in areas of expertise; and performs related duties as assigned.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives direction from the assigned supervisory or management personnel. Exercises no direct supervision over staff.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This journey-level classification is responsible for independently performing professional duties in support of strategy and communications. Positions at this level exercise judgment and initiative in their assigned tasks, receive only occasional instruction or assistance as new or unusual situations arise and are fully aware of the operating procedures and policies of the work unit.

EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL JOB FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change, or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.

- Coordinates editorial production processes and supports internal and external communications.
- Researches, develops, drafts, and edits content for a variety of digital and print communications including newsletters, reports to the community, website content, media releases, and social media; coordinates with Multimedia Designer for graphics relative to the subject matter.
- Collaborates with and advises others on strategic and effective messaging, content, and presentation of online and printed materials; makes recommendations for improvement and optimization of current communications vehicles and the incorporation of new methods.
- Oversees and coordinates communication campaigns and project workflow; receives requests from and discusses project objectives, timelines, and budgets with departments/offices, consults with communications staff at appropriate project milestones, and follows the project through its lifecycle; coordinates appropriate outreach activities following project completion.
- Develops and implements public awareness, outreach, and promotional efforts; creates media strategies to publicize the County Office of Education's programs, services, and accomplishments.
- Gathers educational news information by reviewing media outlets, public communications, interviewing school and public officials, employees, and representatives of community agencies.
- Captures and edits photographs, supports formatting and layout, and proofreads copy for publication, marketing, and information materials including flyers, infographics, brochures, and pamphlets.
- Researches, prepares, and reviews reports, talking points, presentations, and other materials for senior

- management staff, district, and community partners for a variety of audiences.
- Responds to requests of employees, district representatives, and community agencies in developing creative, descriptive, technical, and factual articles concerning educational events and timely issues.
- Serves as the County Office of Education's website manager, guides staff and participates in the creation of content, design, and layout for the County Office of Education's website; ensures posted information is current, accurate, and accessible; provides training and support in website editing and accessibility; oversees website budget, analytics, and strategic planning to improve user experience.
- Manages the County Office of Education's social media accounts including posting, reviewing, responding, and monitoring; plans and purchases advertising across platforms as appropriate.
- Provides public relations advice, training, support, and tools to school district administrators and communications staff.
- Provides prompt and accurate public information during emergency or disaster situations including receiving and assessing information, cooperating with news media and others, and informing County Office of Education and district personnel.
- Maintains positive working relationships with members of the print, radio, and television media; consults with the senior management team on strategies to inform the public about matters of particular interest.
- Provides advice and guidance on dealing with the media and the general public concerning sensitive public relations issues.
- May attend community meetings on behalf of the Superintendent and Office leadership.
- Performs related duties as required.

QUALIFICATIONS

Education and Experience:

Any combination of training and experience that would provide the required knowledge, skills, and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required qualifications would be:

- Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with major coursework in communications, journalism, English, marketing, or a closely related field; and
- Three (3) years of increasingly responsible experience in professional level public/media relations.

Licenses and Certifications:

- Some positions may require possession of a valid California Driver's License and a satisfactory driving record to be maintained throughout employment.

Knowledge of:

- Principles, practices, and techniques of effective and equitable communications and marketing.
- Practices and techniques of utilizing social media as a marketing and communications vehicle.
- Attributes and characteristics of various styles of writing and the appropriate adaptation of communication style for targeted audience.
- Fundamental principles and practices of developing, writing, formatting, and editing creative content for internal and external websites, social media, and various digital and print communications.
- Standard and accepted public/community relations, communications, customer service, and information presentation methods, and procedures.
- Research, analysis, implementation, and evaluation of programs, projects, and materials.
- Educational and social issues and their impact on schools, youth, and public education.
- Principles of business letter writing and report preparation.
- Applicable federal, state, and local laws, codes, and regulations as well as industry standards and best

practices pertinent to the assigned area of responsibility.

- Techniques for providing a high level of customer service by effectively dealing with the public, vendors, contractors, and County Office of Education staff.
- The structure and content of the English language, including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- Modern equipment and communication tools used for business functions and program, project, and task coordination, including computers and software programs relevant to work performed.

Ability to:

- Write and edit clear, concise, accurate, and effective content for internal and external communications by adapting tone, voice, and technique as appropriate for various audiences and vehicles.
- Plan and coordinate the content and production of County Office of Education publications and marketing materials.
- Plan, organize, and carry out assignments from management staff with minimal direction.
- Research, analyze, and evaluate new service delivery methods, procedures, and techniques.
- Develop effective public and community outreach strategies and campaigns; work effectively with diverse groups of different ages and various socio-economic backgrounds; listen to and discuss problems and complaints tactfully.
- Respond to inquiries, complaints, and requests for information in a fair, tactful, and timely manner.
- Understand the organization and operation of County Office of Education as necessary to assume assigned responsibilities.
- Plan, develop, and deliver training for various audiences on various communications topics.
- Oversee the maintenance of accurate databases, records, and files.
- Organize and prioritize a variety of projects and multiple tasks in an effective and timely manner.
- Understand, interpret, and apply all pertinent laws, codes, regulations, policies and procedures, and standards relevant to work performed.
- Effectively represent the department and County Office of Education in meetings with governmental agencies; community groups; various business, professional, and regulatory organizations; and in meetings with individuals.
- Prepare clear and concise reports, correspondence, documentation, and other written materials.
- Use tact, initiative, prudence, and judgment within general policy and procedural guidelines.
- Organize work, set priorities, meet critical deadlines, and follow-up on assignments.
- Communicate clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing, using appropriate English grammar and syntax.
- Establish, maintain, and foster positive and effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.
- Effectively use computer systems, software applications relevant to work performed, and modern business equipment to perform a variety of work tasks.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person and over the telephone. This is primarily a sedentary office classification although standing in work areas and walking between work areas may be required. Finger dexterity is needed to access, enter, and retrieve data using a computer keyboard or calculator and to operate standard office equipment. Positions in this classification occasionally bend, stoop, kneel, reach, push, and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information. Employees must possess the ability to lift, carry, push, and pull materials and objects up to 10 pounds.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Employees work in an office environment with moderate noise levels, controlled temperature conditions, and no direct exposure to hazardous physical substances. Employees may interact with upset staff and/or public and private representatives in interpreting and enforcing divisional policies and procedures.