

HATTIESBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



*Built for
Greatness*

VISION

Hattiesburg Public Schools will become a model teaching and learning environment that graduates **EVERY** student prepared for success in life, college, and the workforce.

MISSION

Hattiesburg Public Schools' mission is to educate **ALL** students to become productive citizens of a dynamic, global community.

GOALS

1. **Academic Success: EVERY** student proficient and showing growth in all assessed areas.
2. **Effective and Committed Staff: EVERY** classroom and department is led by caring, supportive, and highly effective staff.
3. **Positive School Climate and Culture: ALL** schools are safe, supportive, and welcoming.
4. **Family and Community Engagement: ALL** families and the community are informed, connected, and contribute to the success of our students and schools.
5. **Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainable Resources: ALL** District resources support the full implementation of the strategic plan.

DISTRICT BELIEFS

- ❖ We believe students are the central focus of all District activities and can achieve at high levels.
- ❖ We believe every adult plays a vital role in our students' growth and development.
- ❖ We believe in strategically allocating resources to educate students in high-quality learning environments.
- ❖ We believe in providing students a wide range of academic and extracurricular opportunities and experiences.
- ❖ We believe everyone is a leader.
- ❖ We believe the community plays an essential role in the District's success.

BRAND VOICE

HPS' brand voice, **Burg Built**, consists of the following five (5) characteristics:

1. Strong- ability to withstand opposition.
2. Leadership - doing the right thing; motivating others to reach their full potential.
3. Resilient - ability to recover quickly.
4. Persistent – constantly pursue goals.
5. Unified – demonstrates a sense of community.

The phrase **Burg Built** celebrates our students, parents, and the community. In addition, **Burg Built** speaks to the strength of the City of Hattiesburg. The following themes are connected to the phrase **Burg Built**.

- Burg Built
- Built for Greatness
- Tigers are Built Strong
- Tigers are Built Leaders
- Tigers are Built Resilient
- Tigers are Built Persistent
- Tigers are Built Unified
- Every day (Today) is a Great Day to be a Tiger

COMMUNICATION VISION

Hattiesburg Public Schools strategic plan Goal 4: Family and Community Engagement provides that **ALL** families and the community are informed, connected, and contribute to the success of our students and schools. In support of this goal, the communications plan sets the framework to align all District communications with the strategic goals. In addition, this plan will help stakeholders be knowledgeable ambassadors for the district as they communicate key messages to the community.

The activities contained in this plan ensure that the Hattiesburg Public Schools will always be proactive in telling our story and responding appropriately to external events. The communications plan targets parents, students, business partners, media, and the community at large, as well as Hattiesburg Public Schools employees and the Board of Education, and will focus upon the following areas:



Media Relations

- Jasmin Baxter, **Communications and Engagement Coordinator**
- Angelica Richardson, **Communications and Engagement Assistant**
- The Communication and Engagement Coordinator serves as the point of contact with the media.
- All media requests are to be forwarded to the Communications and Engagement Coordinator.
- If the media calls a person directly, direct the media request to the Communications and Engagement Coordinator.
- Use local publications to communicate strategic plan information.
- Create spotlight videos highlighting evidence of strategic plan implementation.
- Write and distribute op-ed pieces about the district's educational and promotional issues to local media.

“We need to make the positive so loud that the negative becomes almost impossible to hear.”

- **George Couros**

Public Relations Training

- Develop and maintain this communication plan.
- Train school site public relations representatives and supervisors (i.e., principals, directors, and frontline staff).
- Create written and oral material templates, including school newsletters, letters home, brochures, key message development, media requests, etc.
- Partner with local colleges for an intern media program.
- Subscribe to school communications publications (i.e., National School Public Relations Association) and relay pertinent information to school-level public relations representatives.
- Create and train key personnel on talking points and facts sheets about each school and department.
- Establish communication timelines.
- Create press release templates.

“Create the highest, grandest vision for your life. You become what you believe.”

- **Oprah Winfrey**

Family and Community Engagement

- Update the student information system data with accurate parent contact information.
- Participate in Council of Neighborhood meetings.
- Create a Strategic plan/recruitment video (i.e., a great place to live, learn, and work)
- Include key civic, community, social, and religious groups in periodic mailings.
- Develop business partnership groups.
- Develop an Adopt-A-School/volunteer program.
- Participate in key city events (i.e., mobile street, Hubfest, city parades, city-wide volunteer day, etc.)
- Schedule District town hall meetings
- Tiger Perks program
- District events (i.e., parent university, Back-to-School events, etc.)
- Superintendent Advisory Council Meetings
- Teacher Advisory Council Meetings
- Student Advisory Council Meetings
- Ensure purposeful P-16 Councils and supportive PTAs.
- Provide channels for feedback (i.e., comprehensive needs assessment surveys, Leader in Me MRA survey, Thought Exchange, and other forms of surveying)
- Seek speaking engagements to highlight and promote the District.
- Continuously update key communicators list (mayor, council, dept. heads of city, supervisors, elective officials, past board members, university officials, foundation members)
- Spotlight features (alumni, parents, students, and teachers)
 - Alumni Spotlight
 - Teacher Thursday Spotlight
 - Student Achievement
 - Random Acts of Kindness
 - School Highlights
 - Board Meeting School Spotlights

“Children are the priority. Change is the reality. Collaboration is the strategy.”

Judith Billings

Crisis Management

- Provide schools/district leaders with crisis management communication training.
- Create emergency communication templates.
- Streamline emergency communication platforms and authorizations.
- Provide crisis media relations when schools are locked down or have experienced an incident.
- Schools and departments should consult with the Hattiesburg Public Schools Crisis Team and follow designated protocols as needed.
- [Media/Interview Tips](#)

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” – **Albert Einstein**

Communication Platforms

1. Publications, Events and Social Media

- a. The Superintendent will keep employees and the community informed through videos, publications, events, and social media. (i.e., videos are available on the district website)
- b. Multimedia presentations are produced for community meetings, budget forums and internal leadership meetings. Photographs are also used in all our publications, presentations, and the District website.
- c. *Tiger Connects: Newsletter* (3x a year) placed at churches, businesses, and key areas






2. Social Media

- a. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Bluesky, and YouTube Channel
 - i. Hattiesburg Public Schools will continue to use *Facebook* and *Twitter* to provide real-time district and school news to the community. The pages relay information on school closures, emergencies, good news, and events. In addition, the pages aim to engage the community about local, state, and national education news/topics and post student and staff pictures and achievements.

3. **SchoolStatus-** *SchoolStatus* is a communication tool that enables teachers and staff to communicate with the parents of our students at any time. From direct messaging concerning student progress to districtwide announcements of upcoming events, news, and polls.

4. Hattiesburg Public Schools Website

The district’s website is a comprehensive source of information about district programs, schools, curriculum, policies, events, and operations. The website is designed to meet the informational needs of parents, students, and the community. The site was created using web best practices. The site's performance is monitored using analytics. In addition, an annual online user survey is conducted to ensure the site meets key indicators and the district's strategic plan goals.

Type of Information	 Website	 Email	 Phone Call	 Text Message	 Social Media
General Info	✓	✓			✓
Emergency/Weather Threat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Dismissal/Delayed Opening	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School Spotlights/Features	✓	✓			✓
Forms	✓	✓			

“Even the simplest tools can empower people to do great things.”

-Biz Stone

Schools PR Representatives

- Post at least two positive stories highlighting students, faculty, etc., weekly on social media
- Send newsworthy content to the communications department to be included in our Monthly Newsletter (Tiger Connect Newsletters, both physical and digital)
- Maintain communication with stakeholders about school updates (weather-related, early/late dismissal, etc.)
- Share the Good News

Schools Employee Communications

- Monday Memo-Weekly update to principals, assistant principals, directors, and supervisors
- Student Advisory Council (quarterly listening sessions between students and the Superintendent)
- Teacher Advisory Council (monthly meetings via ZOOM or in person between teachers and the Superintendent)

- Superintendent Advisory Council (monthly meetings via ZOOM or in person between stakeholders and the Superintendent)
- *Highlight employees “BurgBuilt”* (slogan, branding)
- Tiger Perks Partnerships
- Internal Communications
- External Newsletter

“An organization’s ability to learn, and translate into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage” – **Jack Welch**

Key Strategies

1. Keep Communications Simple
 - a. Use clear, concise, and educational style for all publications.
 - b. Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences.
 - c. Translate communication pieces when appropriate for various language groups.
2. Provide Timely Information
 - a. Provide information on key topics of interest such as student/teacher success, events/awards for public knowledge, and important information.
 - b. Update as needed, delete if necessary.
 - c. Use the website as a reference.
3. Communicate Early and Often
 - a. Provide information when appropriate to send out to principals, department heads, curriculum leaders, teachers, and other employees as needed.
 - b. Follow-up with memos or communications to all staff, as directed.
 - c. Make telephone calls (or delegate other staff) in emergency situations.
 - d. Communicate Face-to-Face.
 - e. The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate early.
 - f. Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate.
4. Keep Communications Brief and to the Point
 - a. To keep a person’s attention, be brief and to the point.
 - b. Use bullet points when appropriate.
 - c. Proofread ALL documents for errors.
5. Emphasize Customer Service
 - a. Develop Customer Service guidelines for all HPS employees.

- b. Provide Customer Service training for all employee groups.
- 6. Train Staff
 - a. Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, parents, and community members has a direct impact on how HPS schools are perceived.
 - b. Engage frontline staff (secretaries) in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately, as they are the best link to parents and the community.
 - c. Maintain a high level of visibility for the district through the participation of key staff in various professional and community activities.
 - d. Develop Relationships with our Community.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

The following resources will be utilized to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of this communications plan.

- Media survey
- Employee survey
- Media hits – proactive
- Social media usage: *Facebook* and *Twitter* followers
- Community feedback
- Staff feedback
- Website usage

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Hattiesburg Public Schools encourages public interaction and communication about the content posted on our social media channels. However, the goal of using social media channels by HPS, including all of the schools in the District and teachers or sponsors associated with those schools, is to share important information with the public and engage in an open and respectful dialogue.

Please note: Abuse of the guidelines below may result in the removal of a specific comment or the blocking/removal from our social media page.

Below is a list of guidelines we asked that you abide by:

-Engage in open conversation, not personal issues.

This page is not intended to circumvent regular communication channels for sharing personal issues and concerns.

-Be respectful.

Personal attacks or comments that are deemed offensive to any member of our community will not be tolerated. Inappropriate remarks and profanity will be removed.

- Comment, share, like relevant information

Want to boost your product sales? Running for political office? Publish a personal Facebook page and leave ours for sharing news and insights about our District, schools, and activities.

-Stay on topic.

This page is dedicated to highlighting the education of students at HPS. Let's keep the conversation related to our District, schools, and activities. Comments of all kinds are welcome so long as they relate to our District, schools and activities.

-Have a question for a specific employee?

Contact them privately. Fans should not expect responses to every question or comment posted on this page.

-Be aware of the mission.

The mission of the HPS is to educate all students to become productive citizens of a global, dynamic community. Please be certain that comments are suitable for an educational environment and fans of all ages.

-Be factual.

Blatantly inaccurate information will not be allowed. False information will be removed, and factual information will be posted.

SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENT POLICY

Hattiesburg Public Schools encourages public interaction and communication about the content posted on our social media channels. However, the goal of using social media channels by HPS, including all of the schools in the District and teachers or sponsors associated with those schools, is to share important information with the public and engage in an open and respectful dialogue.

HPS does not discriminate against views or opinions posted to our district-owned accounts, but we reserve the right to remove any comment made on any of our channels. Public comments will never be modified or edited by HPS; the comment will be deleted in its entirety.

Below is a list of reasons we may remove a comment or ban an individual:

- Abusive, vulgar, obscene, racist, threatening, or harassing comments made in the direction of others
- Libel, slander, or personal attacks of any kind, including the use of offensive terms or slurs that target specific individuals or groups
- Spam, including content that promotes products or services or contains gratuitous links
- Makes unsupported accusations towards district employees, students, or other parents
- Comments that suggest or encourage illegal, dangerous, or destructive activity
- Vulgar or obscene language
- Duplicate posts
- Clearly off-topic
- Personal issues/grievances
- Political campaigning
- Misrepresentation/misinformation of Hattiesburg Public Schools
- Posing as Hattiesburg Public Schools
- Fake/duplicate accounts.
- Comments using the names of students/staff that contain information that could violate FERPA guidelines

WARNING: It is against policy to impersonate an official Hattiesburg Public Schools social media account or post false information about or from the school system under an anonymous account or alias. Depending on the nature of the post, such action may result in notification to local law enforcement. If made by an employee or student, it could result in disciplinary action.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Social media forums can include blogs, social networks (e.g., Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, BlueSky, LinkedIn, etc.), personal websites, and other media. Hattiesburg Public Schools has a

Guideline 1: What belongs on social media?

Hattiesburg Public Schools' social media platforms showcase accomplishments, positive highlights, and important information to the public.

Examples

Dos for Social Media:

Social media posts about a teacher winning an award ✓

Social media posts about students receiving an award or form of recognition ✓

Social media posts of students engaging in a fun, learning activity ✓

Don'ts for Social Media:

Teacher work conference (This does not connect with all audiences.) ✗

Wordy posts, pdfs, or documents (All posts should include an eye-catching graphic or quality photo) ✗

Pictures of students with busy desks/backgrounds ✗

Pictures of food (in certain instances) ✗

Guideline 2: Length for Social Media Posts

Shorter posts usually receive more likes, comments, and shares on social media. This is because people like it when a message makes its point quickly and concisely. **Social media posts: 80-200 characters**

Recording in Classrooms:

Students are prohibited from using cell phones or any other device to make audio or video recordings at school to cheat or plagiarize, to bully, haze or harass others, to disrupt the learning environment, to view pornographic, vulgar, or inappropriate content, to post derogatory content on social media sites, or take unsolicited or unwelcome photographs, videos, and/or recordings of students, staff or facilities.

Failure to adhere to this policy will result in disciplinary actions.

[Communication Tips and Styles](#)