ST. JOSEPH
SCHOOL DISTRICT







SJSD Communications Plan

Updated August 2026| Prepared by Becky Dunn

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Department Overview

To support SJSD in preparing students for a successful future and empowering every learner, every day, the Communications Department executes functions in these areas:

1. Internal and External Communications
2. Marketing and Advertising
3. News and Information
4. Media Relations
5. Event Planning
6. Website Services
7. Graphic Design
8. Video Production
9. Social Media Management
10. Staff and Student Recognition Programs

Budget

The Communications Department operations budget ($37,865) includes three budget lines.

- Community Improvement ($8,000) includes advertisements and promotional materials.
- Communications ($24,165) includes supplies, software subscriptions, Sports Marketing expenses, and special events budgets.
- Communications Professional Learning ($4,700) includes membership dues for professional associations and expenses for attending conferences and regional meetings.

District Focus Areas

- CSIP Priorities for 2025-2030
    - Priority 1: Effective Teaching and Learning
    - Priority 2: School Finances
    - Priority 3: Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Staff
    - Priority 4: Facilities
    - Priority 5: Communication, Climate, and Culture
- Portrait of a Graduate: Building Future-Ready Graduates
- ADA Digital Accessibility: WCAG 2.1 Level AA

SJSD Communications Plan

Purpose

The St. Joseph School District Communications Plan provides a framework for consistent, transparent, and effective communication with stakeholders. The plan establishes a districtwide structure to support the district's Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP), strengthen stakeholder relationships, and promote trust through clear and timely communication. The Communications Plan will be reviewed annually per Board Policy KB.

Belief Statements

- Communication is a core leadership responsibility shared by all district employees.
- Open, ongoing two-way communication strengthens relationships with students, staff, families, and the community.
- Effective communication:
    - Engages both internal and external audiences.
    - Supports student success and positive stakeholder experiences.
    - Builds trust, transparency, and community support.

Objectives

1. Support administrators and staff in effective communication and public relations.
2. Maintain a visible and responsive communications presence across the district.
3. Provide clear, consistent information about district priorities, initiatives, and operations.
4. Create systems that encourage two-way communication with staff, families, students, and the community.

Crisis Communication

The Communications Department will work closely with the Director of Student Services to align emergency messages with district safety protocols.

The AIM framework provides a consistent structure for initial crisis communication and helps ensure that staff, families, students, and community members receive timely and accurate information during emergency response efforts.

AIM Framework

Alert – Provide an initial statement. An incident has occurred, and authorities are responding.

Inform – Provide priorities and actions. The district has implemented its emergency response plan, and district leaders are determining the next steps.

Message of Reassurance – Provide additional information as needed.

Stakeholders & Communication Methods

The district uses multiple communication channels to provide timely information, encourage engagement, and support two-way communication with stakeholders.

Audience	Communication Method	Purpose	Frequency
Staff	SJSD Express (ParentSquare Post)	Provide news, updates, reminders, upcoming events	Weekly on Tuesdays
Staff	BOE District Message (ParentSquare Smart Alert)	Provide a preview of discussion topics	Monthly on Friday before Monday meeting
Staff	Instructional Leaders Network -in-person meeting and materials shared through Google Classroom	Provide Communications Update	Monthly
Staff	All Staff Email	Time-sensitive information	As Needed
Staff, Families, & Students	From the Source (ParentSquare Post)	Provide news, updates, BOE regular meeting recap, upcoming events	Monthly following the BOE regular meeting
Staff, Families, & Students	Digital Backpack	Posting digital flyers from approved community partners	As needed
Families	BOE District Message (ParentSquare Smart Alert)	Provide a preview of discussion topics	Monthly on Monday of meeting
Families	ParentSquare Posts, Direct Messages, and Smart Alerts	Messages from teachers, coaches and administrators	As needed
Community	Website	News, calendars, staff contact info, department info	Updated as needed
Community	Facebook	News, event reminders, celebrations, photos	Regularly
Community	News Releases	Announcements, news, awards, etc.	As needed

Board Policy KB: Public Information Program

Open communication with the district's students, parents/guardians, employees, and the public is essential for the school district to operate effectively and maintain public trust. The district will regularly communicate to all district stakeholders the progress toward the district's mission, vision, and goals, as well as other information about the use of taxpayer funds and district operations.

The district will make a systematic effort to communicate with the public using a variety of communication channels. The board authorizes the expenditure of funds for the purpose of preparing and distributing information to the general public. Employees and board members will maintain an effective working relationship with the news media.

Spokespersons

The superintendent, board president, or designee will serve as official spokespersons for the district. All employees and board members will direct public or media requests for official statements about district business to the district's spokespersons. Board members should emphasize to the media and members of the public that they may speak only as individual board members unless empowered by the board to speak on its behalf.
Communications Plan

The board directs the superintendent or designee to create a written communications plan that outlines multiple methods for two-way, reliable communication with all stakeholders. The superintendent or designee will review this plan on a regular basis and present it to the board.

The board directs the superintendent or designee to develop and disseminate written guidelines to staff to further the goals of the communications plan, including:

1. Employee communications with the media.
2. Communicating during emergency situations.
3. Use of the district's website and social media.
4. Sharing information within the district.
5. Sharing information with the public.

Effective Communications

The district recognizes that board members and employees have regular contact with students, parents/guardians, and the public in general. When interacting with the public, all district employees and board members are responsible for communicating accurate information about district policies and programs and promoting effective school-home-community partnerships.

In all communications, the board and its employees will:

1. Disseminate accurate and timely information about district policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions, and critical issues.
2. Eliminate rumors and misinformation.
3. Observe confidentiality and other restrictions imposed by law and board policy.
4. Promote a climate of trust.

District employees will not be disciplined for speech that is protected by law.

ADA Digital Accessibility Standards

The U.S. Department of Justice issued a Title II rule under the Americans with Disabilities Act requiring state and local government organizations, including public school districts, to meet digital accessibility standards.

Under this rule, public schools must comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards within the required implementation timeline. Because St. Joseph serves a population greater than 50,000 residents, the district must comply by **April 26, 2027**.

The new standards follow four core accessibility principles known as POUR: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust.

POUR Principles:

- **Perceivable** – users must be able to access information in ways they can see, hear, or understand.
- **Operable** – users must be able to navigate content using tools and methods that work for them.
- **Understandable** – content must be clear, readable, and easy to use.
- **Robust** – content must function across devices, browsers, and assistive technologies.

Why Does this Matter?

Legal Compliance

- Public schools must comply with federal accessibility requirements.
- Accessibility protects the district and reduces barriers to information.
- Accessibility compliance is required, not optional.

Alignment with the Portrait of a Graduate

- **Communication** – using clear and accessible information.
- **Respect** – removing barriers for all.
- **Courage** – doing what is right, even when it requires change.
- **Problem Solving** – designing with intention.
- **Engaged Citizen** – expanding participation and access.

Equitable Access

Accessible communication benefits all users and creates a more equitable experience for students, staff, families, and community members.

Key Requirements

1. Electronic Documents (PDFs, Flyers, Newsletters, Forms, Reports). All documents posted online or shared digitally must be accessible.
2. Social Media. Accessibility applies to posts and digital outreach, not just websites.
3. Testing and Learning Platforms. Digital platforms used for testing, grading, and learning management systems (LMS) must also be fully accessible, ensuring students with disabilities have equal access.
4. Multimedia (Video and Audio). All videos must include captions. Audio-only content must include transcripts. Livestreamed events must include real-time captioning or interpretation if requested.
5. Mobile Apps. Any district-provided apps must meet the same accessibility standard.
6. Websites and Portals. All public-facing district websites, portals, and learning platforms must conform to WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards (and move towards WCAG 2.2 as adopted).

SJSD Approach to Accessibility

Accessibility starts at creation. Documents should be accessible in their original format before being converted to PDF.

Consistency reduces barriers. Standardized fonts, styles, and layouts improve readability and usability.

Microsoft-first approach. Microsoft applications provide stronger built-in accessibility tools.

Creating Accessible Content

Use built-in styles and formatting tools.

- Use headings, lists, and paragraph styles.
- Heading levels should follow a logical order (h1, h2, h3); do not skip levels.
- Use ALL CAPS only for acronyms.
- Use underlines only for hyperlinks.

Write clearly with plain language.

Use short sentences, familiar words, and active voice.

Write alternative text (alt text) for images.

If an image includes important information, provide that information in text.

- Be concise: describe the image clearly in one or two sentences.
- Focus on meaning: explain why the image is included, not every visual detail.
- Avoid starting with “image of”: screen readers already announce that it is an image.
- Match the context: the same image may need different alt text depending on how it is used.

Create accessible social media posts.

- Avoid posting print flyers on social media.
- Limit posting graphics or images with text.
- Put important information in the post text, not a graphic.
- Add alt text to every image or graphic.
- Shorten URLs instead of posting full links.
- Use CamelCase hashtags.
- Limit emojis and do not use them as bullets or replacements for words.
- Do not rely on color alone to convey meaning.
- Videos must include captions.

Create descriptive hyperlinks.

Link text should clearly describe where the link goes. Avoid vague phrases like “click here” or “learn more.”

Use tables for data, not layout.

- Tables should not be used to format layout or spacing.
- Always include a header row.
- Avoid empty or merged cells.

Use accessible color contrast.

Color contrast is the difference between text color and background color. Text must stand out clearly from its background.

- Avoid light text on light backgrounds.
- Avoid text placed over busy photos.
- Avoid using color alone to convey meaning.

Add captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions for multimedia.

Captions include spoken words and important sounds.

- Use the social media platform's built-in captioning features. Captioning functionality depends on the platform and whether you're using a mobile device or a computer.
- Review and edit auto captions for accuracy.
- For better accuracy, upload an SRT file (SubRip Subtitle text file) which includes the text of what's being said in the video along with the start/end timecodes.

Check content for accessibility.

Built-in accessibility checkers flag common issues like missing alternative text, unclear headings, and low color contrast. We are using Microsoft-first approach because Microsoft provides stronger built-in accessibility tools. Google does not currently include a full built-in accessibility checker, though there are extensions available.

Create accessible documents.

Not everything needs to be a PDF. If information can be shared directly in a webpage, email, ParentSquare, or Facebook post, that is often the more accessible option.

- Do not "Print to PDF."
- Do not scan a document to create a PDF.
- Always save or export your document as a PDF.

Website Procedures

The Communications Department maintains oversight of district and school websites. Designated web content contributors may be assigned at the building or department level as needed.

All website content must comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards. Uploaded documents should meet accessibility requirements or be converted to accessible HTML whenever possible.

All content must follow district-approved branding guidelines, including logos, fonts, and colors.

Guidelines & Standards for Community Flyers

The St. Joseph School District partners with approved community organizations to share information about opportunities, events, and resources with students and families. All flyer distribution is subject to Board Policy KI – Public Solicitations/Advertising in District Facilities and the District's established guidelines.

Board Policy

As set forth in Board Policy KI, the district operates a nonpublic forum, meaning only certain groups may advertise within the district, and only certain things may be advertised. For purposes of Board Policy KI and this procedure, "advertising" includes, but is not limited to, in-person solicitation; signage; verbal announcements using communication equipment; pamphlets; handouts; distribution through district technology; other distribution of information regarding products or services available or for sale; or the solicitation of information including, but not limited to, political campaigning.

Organizations Eligible to Post in the Digital Backpack

- District-sponsored groups
- PTAS and Booster Clubs
- Partner with Pathways participants
- Curriculum-related events and organizations
- Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other Title 36 organizations
- Nonprofit community organizations
- School sponsors

Organizations Not Eligible to Post in the Digital Backpack

- For-profit businesses
- Individuals and general organizations
- Political organizations or campaigns

Approval Process

Groups should complete the Community Flyer Request Form to submit flyers for consideration. District staff will review each request to ensure it meets District guidelines and Board Policy KI.

Flyers submitted by organizations other than District-sponsored groups must include the following disclaimer:

This flyer is provided as a community resource and does not constitute sponsorship or endorsement by the St. Joseph School District.

If approved for Digital Backpack distribution, the flyer will be posted electronically for families to access. Approval for one flyer does not guarantee approval of future submissions.

Direct Distribution to Students

In limited circumstances, approved flyers may also be distributed directly to students. This option is limited to:

- District-sponsored groups
- PTAs and Booster Clubs
- Partner with Pathways participants
- Curriculum-related events

Organizations wishing to distribute flyers directly to students must contact the Communications Department for approval and distribution arrangements. Direct distribution is not automatic and must follow District guidelines and Board Policy KI.

Media Guidelines

The district will work cooperatively with news media to provide accurate information about district events, programs, students, and staff while protecting learning environments from unnecessary interruptions.

To support consistent communication practices:

- Reporters requesting access to district facilities or interviews with employees should contact the Director of Communications and Community Relations.
- The superintendent or designee serves as the district's official spokesperson.
- Reporters and photographers must check in at the school office before conducting approved interviews.
- District employees may participate in media interviews only with the approval of the superintendent or designee.
- The district prohibits the use of video or audio recording equipment on district property or at district activities by outside entities without permission from the superintendent or designee unless otherwise authorized by law.
- The district will follow **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** requirements at all times.

Interview Requests

The district has three official spokespersons: the Board President, the Superintendent, and the Director of Communications and Community Relations.

All media requests must go through the Communications Department.

Employees who receive media interview requests related to district operations, programs, staff, students, or initiatives must contact the Director of Communications and Community Relations before participating in an interview.

Social Media Procedures

The district uses social media to communicate with students, staff, families, and community members across multiple platforms.

School social media accounts are official extensions of the district's communication network. Content published on these accounts, including posts, comments, and direct messages, may constitute public records and must comply with district policies and procedures.

Training and Accessibility

Staff responsible for managing social media accounts must complete district-provided Digital Accessibility Training. The training is designed to help staff create accessible content and support compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards.

The Communications Department will provide training, resources, and guidance regarding social media best practices and digital accessibility. When concerns related to school social media accounts are identified or reported, the Communications Department will notify the appropriate building administrator and provide recommendations for corrective action.

Oversight

Building administrators are responsible for overseeing social media accounts operated by staff within their buildings and should maintain a current list of accounts associated with their building.

At least two district employees should have administrative access to each account. One of those individuals should be the building administrator or a designated administrator.

Social Media Comment Guidelines

The district moderates social media pages and reviews comments regularly. The district encourages respectful interaction but is not responsible for comments posted by users.

People making comments on the page are requested to show respect for their fellow users by ensuring the discussion remains civil, especially since many social media platforms allow individuals 13 and over to join. Comments are also subject to the Terms of Use and Code of Conduct of each social media platform.

Remember that your name and photo will be seen next to your comment, visible to anyone who visits the page.

We reserve the right, but assume no obligation, to remove comments that are racist, sexist, abusive, profane, violent, obscene, spam, that advocate illegal activity, contain falsehoods or are wildly off-topic, or that libel, incite, threaten, or make ad hominem attacks on students, employees, guests, or other individuals. We also do not permit messages selling products or promoting commercial, political, or other ventures.

To ensure exchanges that are informative, respectful of diverse viewpoints, and lawful, we will not allow comments that are or include:

- **Off Topic.** We will delete comments not related to the subject of the page entries.
- **Spam.** Comments focused on selling a product or service will not be posted.
- **Personal Attacks.** If you disagree with a post, we'd like to hear from you. We ask that you refrain from personal attacks or being disrespectful of others.
- **Illegal.** Laws that govern use of copyrights, trade secrets, etc., will be followed.
- **Profane or Provocative Language.** Comments including but not limited to profane or provocative language, hateful, racially or ethnically offensive or derogatory content, threats, obscene or sexually explicit language will be deleted.

Users should utilize the “Report” links when they find abusive content. SJSD students and staff are governed by the district's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) when using school-owned technology or equipment.

If you have questions about any of the St. Joseph School District social media pages, please email the Communications Department.

District Logo & Branding Guidelines

The Communications Department maintains official district logo files, templates, and branding resources.

Staff may access:

- District logo downloads through the Communications Department webpage.
- Department and school letterhead templates through Staff Resources.
- Email Signature Creator through ClassLink.

Appropriate district logo uses include:

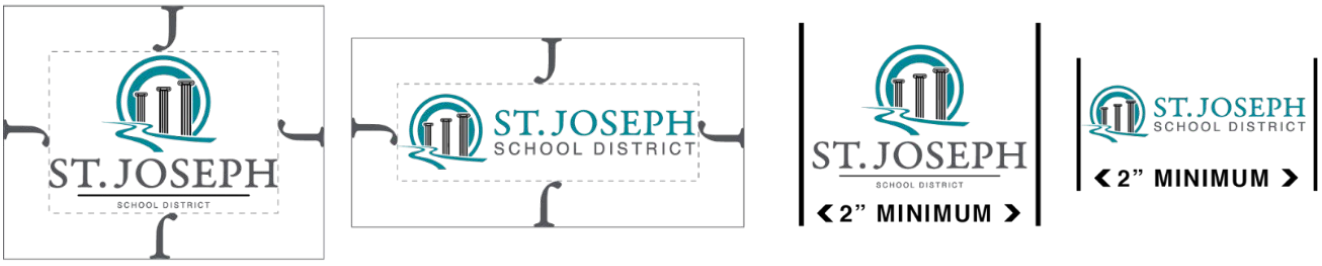
- Logos displayed with proper proportions and orientation
- Logos used with approved color variations
- Logos used with approved fonts
- Logos placed on approved background colors with sufficient contrast
- Logos used at high resolution, ensuring clarity and legibility
- Logos surrounded by the required amount of clear space on all sides
- Logos sized large enough to remain legible in all applications.



Inappropriate district logo uses include:

- Logos stretched, compressed, or skewed in any way
- Logos with altered spacing between elements
- Logos with unapproved colors
- Logos with unapproved fonts
- Logos rotated at an angle
- Logos placed over complex backgrounds
- Logos cropped, with any portion removed or obscured
- Logos recolored for holidays, spirit days, or themes
- Logos used at low resolution or in a way that appears pixelated or blurry
- Logos that are crowded or used in a space that is too small





High School Logos



Official school HEX color codes for Benton and Central.

#C30E37 #171F51

Middle School Logos



Official school HEX color codes for Bode, Lafayette, Spring Garden, and Truman.

#1A266B #0D5029 #B40503 #0D233F

Elementary School Logos



Official school HEX color codes for Carden Park, Coleman, Edison, and Ellison.

#66368E #235197 #0201FE #586D41



Official school HEX color codes for Hosea, Hyde, Lindbergh, and Oak Grove.

#882533 #E22725 #018001 #204B8F



Official school HEX color codes for Parkway, Pickett, Robidoux, and Skaith.



Other School Logos



Official school HEX color codes for Hillyard and Webster.

