



School to Home Communication Strategies

Madeira City Schools Planning Commission
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School to Home Communications

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Objective

Explore how our Madeira families receive and understand communication from schools and where improvements could be made. Are communication tools (email, newsletters, etc.) effective and user friendly? Do families feel informed about school events, policies, and student progress? How can we align our strategies between teachers, grade level teams, administration and district to keep families informed?

Methodology

- Reviewed how Madeira City Schools is currently communicating with families
- Interviewed neighboring school districts' current practices and compared to Madeira
- Surveyed Madeira families that currently have students in our schools
- Explored the different ways the City of Madeira communicates with Madeira families
- Recommended next steps

The Planning Commission Committee reviewed current building communication practices with Chandley Bacher, Principal, Madeira Elementary School, Nicole Huelsman, Principal, Madeira Middle School, David Kennedy, Principal, Madeira High School. Additionally, insights were gathered from the City of Madeira and neighboring school districts. In addition to interviews, a survey was published and distributed to current Madeira families.

Creating the Survey

In collaboration with Madeira City School district Administrators, the Planning Commission Committee created survey questions to be distributed to current Madeira families that would provide a range of data.

Publishing the Survey

The survey was administered through Google Forms and published in March 2026 by Dave Bergan, Assistant Superintendent, Madeira City Schools. The survey allowed families to answer the same set of questions for each child they have in the district. In total, 306 responses were gathered.

Key Findings

Madeira Elementary School

Primary communication with families is through bi-weekly email newsletters, with additional communication from teachers and school platforms delivered in between. Families value the strong connection with school leadership but could benefit from more consistent communication tools.

- Smore Newsletters are the main communication tool
 - Communication is compiled through the week by staff and shared with families 2-3 weeks before event if possible for planning

- Families also receive information through PikMyKid, Google photos, PTO Meetings and Social media groups.
- Report Card distribution is an opportunity for paper handouts to go home with students, as well as test scores.
- Blue and Gold digest contains more information on school wide opportunities
- Parents expressed some interest in clearer explanations of student progress and testing scores, as well as more website resources (i.e. videos, school tour for new families, event information descriptions, sports, school activities - Madeira 101 concept)

Madeira Middle School

The primary mode of communication from MMS is through email and sent multiple times per month to families from various sources:

- Building level emails are sent through the principal monthly or twice a month (typically beginning and mid-month)
- Grade level emails are sent on a weekly basis (6th and 8th grade gets sent on Friday; 7th grade gets sent on Mondays). There is a point person at each grade level who CCs the newsletter to all grade level teachers so they are aligned on what is being communicated. Occasional non-Smore emails are sent throughout the school year depending on the importance of information.
- The Athletic Department, including team coaches, send communication through Final Forms as needed.
- Individual teachers may also send email to families to update them on current learning topics, quiz reminders, etc.
- Schoology is used primarily to communicate directly to students (ie. club information, class progress)

Smore is used for newsletters which helps maintain a consistent format (eg., upcoming dates, grade/building level info on top, then pictures).

Information in newsletters tend to be school-related information only unless specifically requested (ie. the City of Madeira occasionally asks to relay information about city events, rec sports open registration, etc.). Other student opportunities are communicated through the Blue and Gold Digest (district level).

In terms of who communication is sent to, a distribution list gets pulled from school messenger/final forms at the beginning of year. Parents can also inform administration and teachers if they are not receiving communication.

Madeira High School

Primary forms of communication include:

- A Monthly newsletter, "The Principal's Corner", which focuses on high level information regarding key dates and events, available opportunities (ex. ACT tutoring), as well as student spotlights (Students of the Month, sports accomplishments, etc.). They are created in Smore and are sent on a predictable rhythm so that parents know when/what

to expect, and to avoid creating too much "noise". 500-750 of the emails are opened (may include repeats) on average, out of 1300 sent.

- Additional ad hoc emails sent from the principal for special events, important reminders, etc. Specific grade-level communications may also be sent - ex. senior parents for senior events, ACT testing info for sophomores/juniors.
- "Counseling Department Updates" emails sent as-needed using Smore. These communications provide more detailed information on key activities led by the guidance counselors; they are usually grade-level specific - example content includes details on scheduling, college processes, College Credit Plus.
- Communications from the Athletic Department, as well as individual team coaches, sent using Final Forms, on an as-needed basis (i.e. no regular newsletter). The sending mechanism is kept separate (i.e. Smore vs Final Forms) between principal communications and those from the Athletic Dept so that the purpose is apparent - i.e. parents know that if they get an email from Final Forms, it's about athletics. The Athletic Department also uses Instagram for communicating upcoming sporting events and results; individual sports may also have their own Instagram pages (as well as X). Additionally, some teams may use the TeamSnap app to share schedules, reminders, etc.
- Schoology is used primarily for student progress and assignments; it is primarily for students.
- Information for school clubs can also be posted in Schoology. A lot of clubs also use Instagram to communicate reminders on events, etc.
- Teachers/grade levels/departments do not usually send out broad communications to classes. Student-specific emails are sent as required to parents.

It is reinforced that students pay attention to morning announcements or class meetings to receive details on what is going on at school so that they can pass the information on to parents. The general philosophy is to keep parents informed on what is going on at a high level so that they can talk to their students about it.

District of Madeira

Primary forms of communication include:

- A weekly e-mail newsletter, Blue and Gold Digest – parents, students, teachers, staff, also by signup -weekly email. The bottom of each e-mail has links to important sites.
 - School Messenger is current platform
 - New addresses from parent registration, drop when unenroll or graduate.
- Paper Mailers – 2x per year
 - District Digest - for graduating class and awards – Postcard with QR Code
 - Quality Profile – now a postcard with QR code. In the fall
- Website – intent is to keep static with intentional exception areas (news articles like Latin state victory). Intent is to share news stories frequently
 - Push news to Cincinnati.com
 - Push those District news articles to the other school buildings' pages when fit..
 - Stories – teachers, admin, others provide stories, or parents highlight and Diane Nichols writes these.

- Diane would like more news items sent her way so she can write them up and send out.
- Text messages / phone calls reserved for time sensitive / emergency messages
- Social Media – Instagram and FB aren't used anymore. Kenji is so ubiquitous that the District doesn't really need SM pages to communicate in this mode.
 - Some clubs and groups have SM. Boosters have SM.
- Calendars – these have a lot of information families need beyond the date. Examples: hours, numbers, names at each school, organizations they can become involved with, district services like food services and transportation, and district financial information.

City of Madeira

Primary forms of communication include:

- Quarterly newsletter. Each newsletter includes a section for Madeira City Schools.
- Weekly Friday Flash Newsletter e-mail - City info only due to goal of making as brief as possible
- Electronic Sign - great place to share information with the right time horizon (e.g., weeks rather than months out)
- Social Media
 - FB posts are reshared upon request – school adjacent organizations. The City would be willing to share more (within reason), but lack of MCS using it creates a gap.
 - City won't create FB posts for other organizations – but will reshare
 - Other SM options are not in-play: X was not found to be effective given user base, audience and cadence.
- Direct e-mails for specific purposes are only very rarely done

City vis-a-vis the School System Communications

- Currently is OK – but could do better in both directions.
- Between City and Schools: the effectiveness is limited due to limited knowledge of process and who to contact.
 - The right resource at City to push out information is usually not broadly known.
 - City insight of the right folks within the school system for certain topics is not 100% either.

Neighboring School Districts

The Communications Directors for Peer school systems were very kind in offering their time and insights:

1. Deer Park
2. Mariemont
3. Wyoming

This section shares 1) Common Themes and 2) Nuggets found which may be reapplied at Madeira. Details on discussions with each peer System is found in the appendix.

Common Themes:

1. Mass E-mail System (e.g., School Messenger): All districts rely on regular e-mails as their core communication approach. All districts split this between a district e-mail (weekly/monthly) and building principals communications (often weekly). Grade- and teacher-level emails are more variable.
 - a. There is no consensus on which system is best - each District has its own with its attendant pros / cons. All agree the value of tailored and accurate distribution (district-wide, by building, by grade) is valuable. However, this value is offset somewhat by the lack of functionality (links, formatting, etc).
2. Texts / phone calls are primarily reserved for emergency situations (range from snow days to dangerous situations).
3. Website: some districts keep this as static as possible while others design their sites' content to be more fluid (e.g., news stories)
4. Paper mailings: These are minimized due to cost. Most districts mail 2 per year to all residents within their municipalities. For example: Madeira has opted for postcards for the Quality Profile.
5. Madeira sees significant value in the printed calendar versus online calendar only, nothing that it has a great deal of more information than simply dates
6. Social Media – Districts are divided on use here. Some districts have minimized SM reliance while others lean-into this mode of communications. Note that extracurricular activities are separate from this with a wide range of approaches re SM.

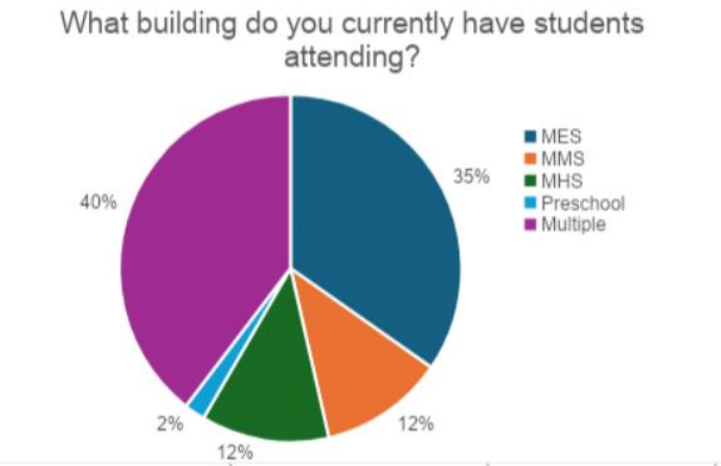
“Nuggets” Uncovered During Discussions

1. Kenji's in-person Coffees with Seniors is innovative and effective. Other districts did not report doing anything like this.
2. The Madeira Chamber of Commerce provides a welcome “goodie bag” for all new residents. Including a printed calendar with these bags would be effective and give new residents much of the information they may need if they have school-age children.
3. For families trying to limit children's exposure / reliance on social media, schools and extracurricular organizations' reliance on SM is a headwind. Consider reducing or eliminating organizations' use of this mode, perhaps allow at the high school level (only?).
4. Wyoming invited Hamilton County to audit their Communication practices. This yielded helpful feedback and led to improvements.
5. Keep in-mind the City Building Sign on corner of Euclid and Miami - great place to share timely messages.

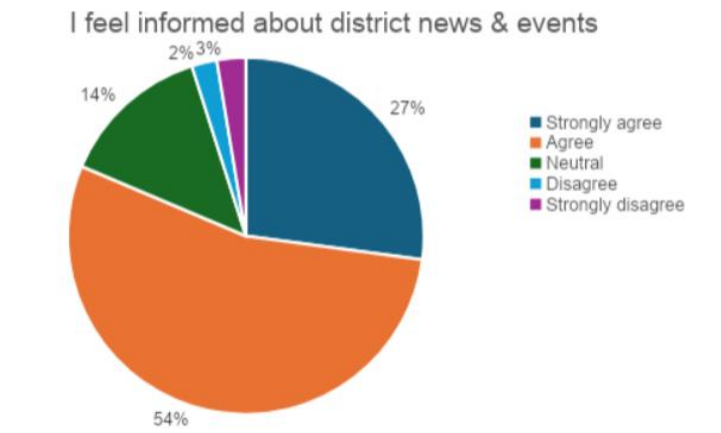
Family Survey Results

Results from the 306 responses are as follows:

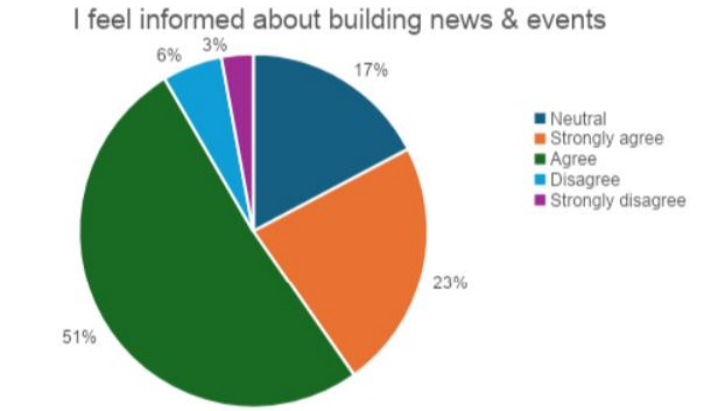
What building do you currently have students attending:



I feel informed about district news and events:

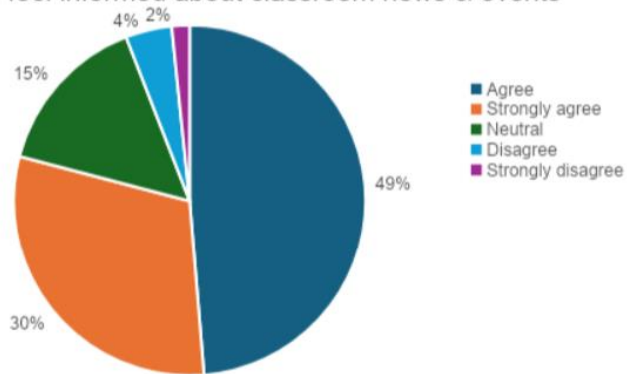


I feel informed about building news and events:



I feel informed about classroom news and events:

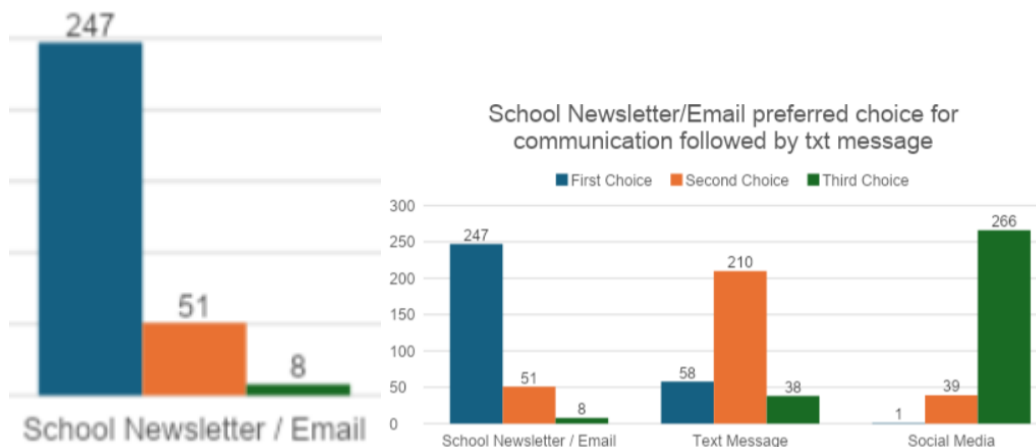
I feel informed about classroom news & events



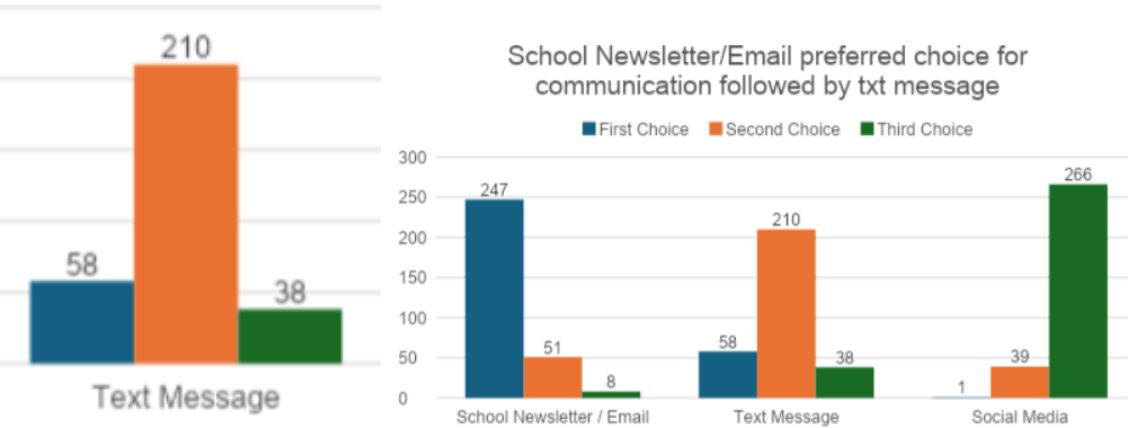
Besides emails and newsletters, how else do you receive information about school information and events (select comments, complete list in appendix):

Social media (Facebook, Instagram, X), word of mouth, Schoology, my child, website.

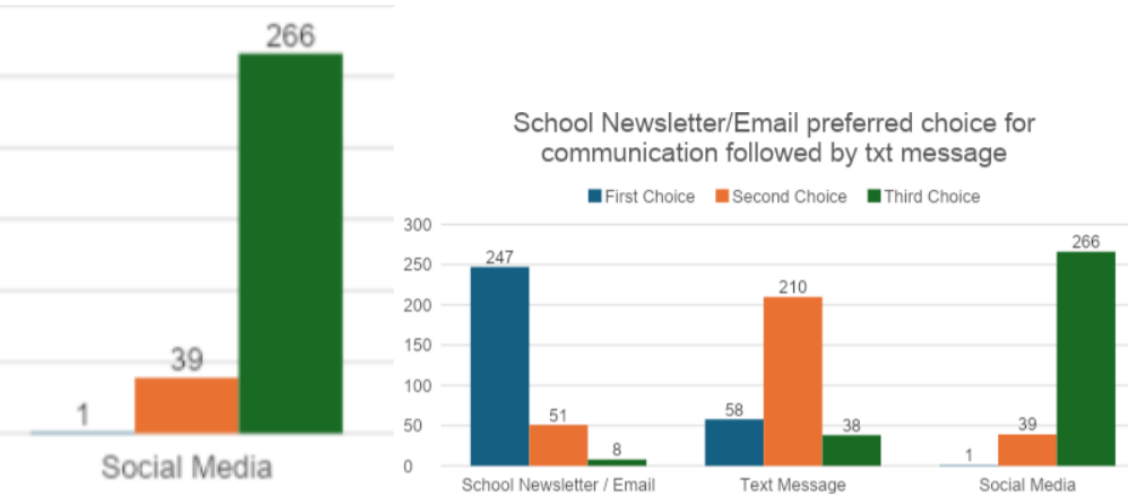
Rank your preferred method of receiving information [School Newsletter/Email]:



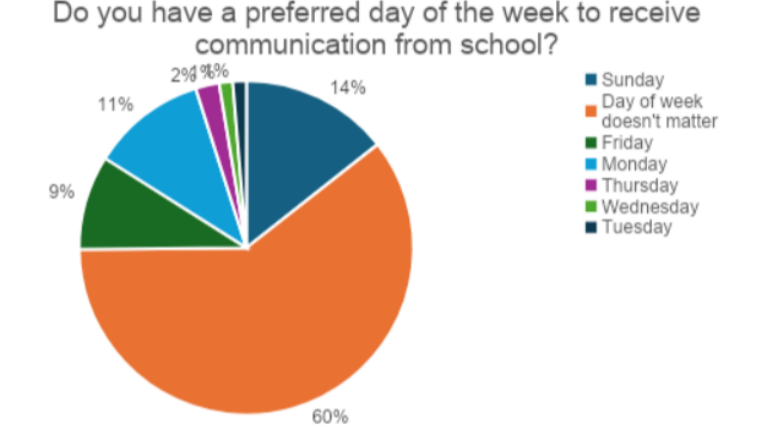
Rank your preferred method of receiving information [Text message]:



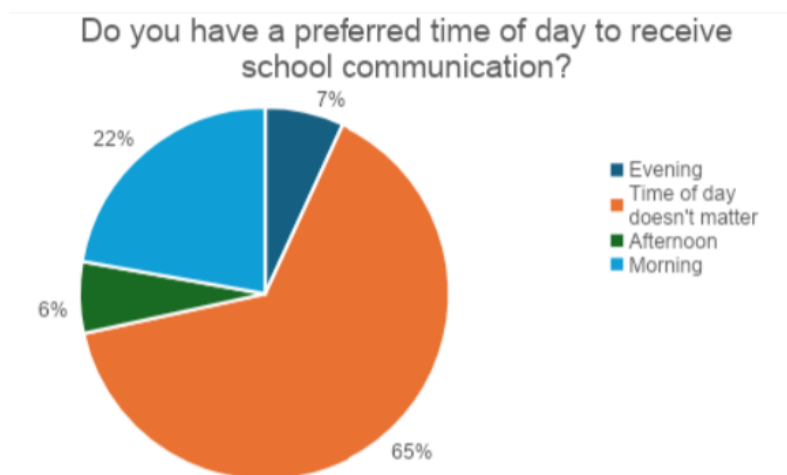
Rank your preferred method of receiving information [Social Media]:



Do you have a preferred day of the week to receive communication from school:



Do you have a preferred time of day to receive school communication:



Conclusions and Recommendations

- Explore using text messaging, especially for important reminders, as those messages are less likely to get lost (vs e-mail)
- Professional audit/review of media and communications for comparison to other districts and suggestions on best practices
- Continue to consolidate information being sent by a single point person as much as possible in order to reduce the amount of emails families receive
- Investigate using a different program (other than Smore) or a standardized template across all buildings for sending emails that is more Madeira-branded and that feels more professional and personalized to our district
- Consider a Madeira City Schools app that links individual schools and announcements.
- Based on survey results social media is not the preferred communication method from school to home, but it's far reaching so should be leveraged where appropriate
- Partner with Madeira Moms and Friends (Facebook Group) as an official source for selected announcements
- Ensure consistency across buildings in regards to what type of communication is communicated through different forms, for example, Principles Corner, Peek of the Week, Family Newsletter
- Create an "opt in" or "opt out" in Final Forms for all school communications so teachers are not managing distribution lists
- In general, majority of respondents satisfied with today's communication process
- Majority of families receive multiple forms of communication; opportunity to streamline communication processes across schools & forms of communication
- Continuous communication follow up is recommended
- Families are receiving communication outside school issued communication; opportunity to leverage Madeira network to link buildings to families

Appendix A

[Survey](#)