

Columbia Public Schools

Excellence in Education for All Students

Job Description

POSITION PROPERTIES

Position Title: Chief Communications Officer
Schedule / Grade: Salaried Support / Grade 10
Job Code: 94ADMIN226
FLSA: Exempt
Calendar: ADSUP-S
Benefits: Eligible (Retirees not eligible)
Contract Type: Admin
Bargaining Unit: None
Revised Date: 07/22/2026

PURPOSE

Under the direction of the Superintendent or designee, the Chief Communications Officer (CCO) serves as principal advisor providing comprehensive communications, strategies and planning, media relations, and news analysis to the Superintendent, Board of Education and Leadership Team for the 5th largest school district in Missouri with an enrollment of 18,800 students and 3,000 employees. The CCO is responsible for internal and external communications. This means working collaboratively with the Leadership Team and other key stakeholders and setting the vision for and leading the Community Relations team, including communications, media relations, community relations and related programming, cable-access television operations, external and internal websites, marketing, strategic communications, crisis communications, government and legislative relations, and information & records requests. The CCO plans and conducts a broad strategic information program concerning public education and all functions and services of the school district, implements comprehensive communication strategies aligned with the district's goals, mission, and values. This includes crafting messages and narratives that effectively convey the district's achievements, initiatives, and challenges to internal and external audiences.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

Leadership

- Serve as chief communication strategist on district initiatives, goals and priorities with focus on forward-looking strategic communications planning
- Communicate and represent the District's vision and perspective internally and to the general public/community, as designated by the Superintendent and/or Board of Education
- Build and maintain public support for public education and the school system in collaboration with the Superintendent, Superintendent's Cabinet, Executive Staff, and district administration
- Lead strong, vision-focused, service-oriented team of professionals across all aspects of media, internal and external communications, community outreach, web design and communications and marketing

- Manage the district's public communications and brand through well-developed internal communications, public relations, crisis communications and marketing plan and strategy
- Develop, direct, and evaluate the District's public relations, marketing, communications, and public relations strategy; execute effective campaigns/programs on a local, state, and national basis, with major emphasis on employee communications and communications between the District and the community
- Serve as public relations counsel and advisor to the Superintendent, and serve on the Superintendent's Cabinet and Executive Staff
- Provide professional public relations counsel and assistance to CPS administration and the Board of Education pursuant to Board Policies and Administrative Regulations
- Identify community issues and concerns, and develop strategies for dealing effectively and proactively with community issues and concerns; interact with diverse stakeholder groups, and represent the Superintendent as needed
- Assist in problem solving between and among offices in issues involving the Superintendent's input, and represent the Superintendent on teams for large-scale projects and District-wide initiatives with major employee and community impacts
- Represent the Superintendent and CPS administration at various community functions and on local, state, and national non-profit and professional boards
- Serve as the Superintendent's representative and liaison to community leaders and groups
- Serves as the district's custodian of records as designated by the Superintendent and/or Board of Education per Board of Education policy

Administration and Management

- Plan and administer District-wide functions as designated by the Superintendent and/or Board of Education
- Develop and monitor program's annual objectives, performance measures, and budgets
- Plan, develop, and maintain effective processes and channels of communication with internal and external audiences
- Develop communication strategies, tactics, and action plans for all major CPS initiatives, and serve as a public relations consultant to key District committees and task forces
- Work collaboratively with administrators, staff members, and key stakeholders in planning/developing public relations programs and strategies for both one-way and two-way communications with diverse constituents
- Manage the operations of the Community Relations Department, with direct responsibility for department personnel, budget, materials, and equipment
- Supervise, evaluate, and hold accountable the performance and professionalism of assigned staff; interview and select employees, and recommend transfers, reassignments, terminations, and disciplinary actions; plan, coordinate, and arrange for appropriate professional development opportunities for assigned staff
- Provide appropriate professional development opportunities for Community Relations department managers/directors

Media Relations

- Services as the district's official spokesperson as designated by the Superintendent and/or Board of Education per Board of Education policy
- Lead the development and delivery of news to broadcast, print, and online media to create media coverage of the school District on a daily basis.
- Serve as a liaison between the District and the media, and serve as the District's chief spokesperson, handling sensitive and controversial issues
- Leads and coordinates information requests from media outlets
- Develop, coordinate, and monitor the crisis communication plan and implementation
- Organize press conferences and the release of information to the media and the public

- Develop and maintain working relationships with community leaders, organizations, and members of the media

Public Engagement

- Represent the district at community, state, and national functions, on behalf of CPS as requested by the Superintendent and/or Board of Education
- Organize and plan regular meetings of various CPS advisory groups
- Make the community aware of CPS needs and goals; oversee fund development through corporate and philanthropic grants management, and in-kind donations
- Develop processes and systems for garnering public input and support on key initiatives and issues
- Communicate to the public the rationale for Superintendent and Board of Education decisions
- Ensures successful operations of the district's business-education partnerships, volunteer programs, and community partnerships
- Ensures successful operations of CPS-TV, the district's cable-access and web streaming television channel

Marketing/Communications

- Create and implement a marketing program that enhances the district's image with a recognizable "brand" reflective the school district's vision, mission, and values
- Develop and maintain brand image, positioning, and messaging for CPS; develop and maintain image and identity standards for CPS
- Secure the development of public opinion polls, and solicit feedback from community members through formal and informal means regarding district initiatives, programs, and decisions
- Provide analysis of results, and recommend public relations/marketing strategies and tactics
- Develop district-wide advertising and public relations campaigns and collateral materials to market and promote the district, including campaigns for district bond and levy elections
- Provide support, counsel, and direction in effective communications and marketing to school-based administrators and employees
- Manage the development and production of district marketing communications, including print and electronic publications, collateral materials, presentations, website content, social networking sites, new media productions, advertising, media relations, and television broadcasts for staff and the community
- Build capacity of district administrators and departments in communications by providing training on a variety of topics, including public engagement, marketing, and media

Employee Communications

- Develop overall strategy and plan for district-level employee communications
- Maintain open line of communication between the Superintendent, Cabinet, Executive Leadership and CPS employees using a variety of tactics and techniques
- Coach and facilitate the work of Executive Staff, managers, and supervisors in communicating more effectively with employees
- Communicate to staff the rationale for Superintendent and Board of Education decisions

Decision Making

- Authority to set overall direction for public relations program, make final decisions, and take action regarding media relations, marketing and employee communications within policies and regulations set by the Board of Education and Superintendent
- Work collaboratively with and provide communication expertise to Superintendent's Cabinet and Executive Staff on a variety of CPS projects and initiatives
- Decisions made have a direct impact on employees and public perception regarding the district's internal and external audiences
- Communicate and collaborate with the Superintendent, Cabinet and Executive Staff, Board of Education, other administrators, and district personnel to coordinate activities and programs, resolve issues and conflicts, and exchange information, model district standards of ethics and professionalism

- Communicate and collaborate with the media (local, state, and national), business leaders, CPS donors and business partners, Chamber of Commerce, elected officials, government leaders, community/faith leaders, district advisory committees, parent and teacher groups, parents, patrons/community members, and other education leaders to coordinate activities and programs, resolve issues and conflicts, and exchange information
- Perform related duties as assigned

KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of:

- Current public education trends, issues and research
- Current literature and best practices in public relations, marketing, communications, community relations and public affairs
- Federal, state and local regulatory requirements applicable to CPS communications and community outreach programs
- District functions, policies, rules, regulations, goals and objectives
- Marketing and communications theory, principles, practices and strategies
- Public institution administration and education administration strategies Missouri, Boone County and Columbia community concerns and dynamics, politics, issues, leaders and influencers
- Sunshine Laws and FOIA related to freedom of the press and free access to public information
- Correct English usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation and vocabulary
- Budget development and administration
- Computer software, hardware, and related technology, including graphics design, web publishing, social media and publication/print software.

Ability to:

- Develop and implement comprehensive public relations strategies and activities
- Generate print and broadcast media coverage
- Establish strong partnerships across organizations and develop powerful messages for different constituencies including parents, staff and community members
- Work with stakeholders including families, governmental agencies and the business community
- Become conversant quickly in CPS' work and communicate with experts
- Work on issue-based communications and/or policy advocacy through messaging, positioning, media and communications strategy, journalism, branding and constituent engagement
- Manage and lead the Community Relations Department efficiently and effectively
- Effectively plan, organize, and implement a comprehensive internal and external communications program
- Assess, evaluate and enhance formal, informal, internal and external communications programs
- Work as a member of a team. Maintain sensitive and confidential communications
- Work independently in a variety of situations often requires extensive contact with local public leaders, local media representatives, community members and special interest groups
- Think analytically and critically; judgment skills are a must.
- Establish and maintain effective communications and working relationships with school officials, school administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and the community

Perform other duties as necessary to support the mission and vision of Columbia Public School District.

DISTRICT EXPECTATIONS

All employees of the District are expected to adhere to the policies and regulations of the Board of Education, maintain appropriate certification and competencies necessary for the position, and demonstrate the values of the district at all times. For information on policies, regulations and values, visit <http://www.cpsk12.org>

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

Reports To: Superintendent

Supervises: Communications Manager, Community Relations Manager, Web and Multimedia Manager, Social Media and Digital Marketing Specialist, CPS-TV, and Front Desk Receptionist staff

QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum: Bachelor's degree in public relations, communications, journalism or related field; Previous experience in public relations and/or media work or related field experience.

Preferred: 10 years related experiences. Proven experience as a leader in communicating with a diverse community. Experience in leading and managing a team of communications professionals. Experience working proactively with the media, establishing influential productive working relationships. Experience functioning successfully as a communications strategist and spokesperson in a politically charged environment. Fiscal accountability and budget management experience.

Ideal Candidate will have executive presence, excellent presentation skills, and the ability to communicate confidently and persuasively at all levels is important.

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skills and abilities required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform essential functions.

ADA REQUIREMENTS

Language: Present information to teachers, staff, other administrators, and boards. Respond to common questions and concerns. Interview students, staff, and teachers. Read, analyze, and interpret professional journals, memoranda, policies, administrative procedures, and statutes. Write business correspondence, including staff memoranda and newsletter articles. Keep information confidential when required by law, policy, or the nature of a particular situation.

Computation: Work with mathematical concepts, such as probability and statistical inference, and analyze data for instruction. Apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios and proportions to practical situations. Perform computer word processing (including spreadsheets) and internet research. Access and create reports using the Districts student information software and databases.

Reasoning: Define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Solve a variety of problems in many different situations. Interpret instructions presented in written, oral, diagram or schedule form. Demonstrate executive functions such as planning, organizing, remembering, and regulating information and behavior as they pertain to student performance and achievement.

Technology: Use of technology in daily work; present information to colleagues, staff and students using a variety of media. Access and create reports using the District's student information software and databases. Readily utilize smart boards, projectors and other instructional technology provided by the district. Adhere to all District policies and procedures regarding technology use. These are essential functions of the job.

Physical demands: Requires sedentary work involving standing or walking for brief periods, exerting up to 10 pounds of force on a regular basis, and considerable dexterity in operating office equipment. Consistent and

regular attendance is an essential function of this position including attend Board meetings, student activities and events. Weekends or in evening hours is common.

Environmental conditions: The work environment is consistent with a typical office environment; however, they will occasionally be outside in temperatures below freezing and above 100 degrees. The individual who holds this position is frequently required to work irregular or extended hours.

Prospective and current employees with disabilities are encouraged to contact human resources to discuss reasonable accommodations to perform the essential job functions.

Equal Opportunity Employer