Communications Framework

VISION: **Woodland Park School District:**
A Place of Becoming

MISSION: *Together, we embrace a culture where all learners are empowered to pursue intellectual, personal, and collective excellence.*

FRAMEWORK PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Woodland Park School District Communications Framework is to present a clear system for communicating within our school community. The Framework addresses two audiences:

- **Internal** (students, teachers, staff, administration, Board of Education)
- **External** (parents, businesses, civic groups, and community)

Our primary objective is to bolster relationships among these internal and external stakeholders through purposeful communication. Stakeholder support for, and involvement in, this plan is vital. WPSD staff are influential sources of information for all audiences, carrying the message of the District to families and friends, who in turn form opinions about our schools. Clear communication of unified messaging must be a top priority.

Relationship-based communication thrives on confident, attentive interaction; active listening; understanding; timing; and appropriate tone. The best communicators are those who demonstrate empathy; are slow to pass judgement; check for understanding; and recognize the importance of non-verbal communication.

How this Framework benefits students:
Pertinent information will be available to all students regarding rules, expectations, important dates, opportunities, academic progress, etc.

How this Framework benefits staff:
Staff will understand the importance of relationship based communication; how parents and families wish to receive information; what communications tools are available; when to receive and provide necessary updates. **Staff will be the first to know crucial facts prior to informing the public.**

How this Framework benefits external stakeholders:
It will be available on the website via PDF. Each school and Central Office will have hard copies available upon request.

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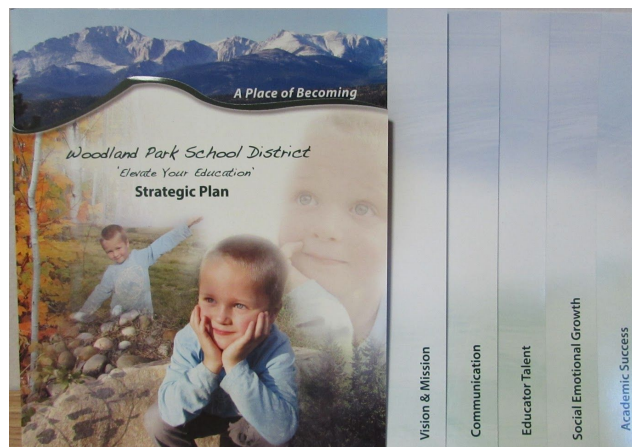
Target Audiences

Internal:

- Students
- Staff
  - Leadership-to-Staff
  - School-to-School
  - Volunteers
- Board of Education
- Contracted Services
  - Food Service
  - Transportation

External:

- Parents/Families
  - Leadership-to-Parents
  - Teachers-to-Parents
  - Parents-to-Teachers
- Prospective Students
- Prospective Families
- Prospective Employees
- WPHS Alumni
- Parent Organizations
- Senior Citizens
- Business Community

- Government Officials
- Civic/Community Groups
- Chamber of Commerce
- Media
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Emergency Services
- Sponsors/Donors
- Colorado Department of Education
- Other School Districts
- Families who do not attend WPSD
- Families whose kids graduated from WPHS
- Families who do not have children in the house

Communication Objectives

Bolster relationships through purposeful communication

Emphasize effective sharing of information internally and externally with District stakeholders

Clarify District flow of information:
- Distribute organizational charts to all staff showing decision-making process, reporting, and accountability structure
- Information to include individual area of staff responsibility for communication

Provide regular information on district-wide issues

- Distribute information from meetings on a need-to-know basis
- Distribute all external publications and news releases to all WPSD employees via email/employee electronic newsletter and post information on website
- Send ALL STAFF emails/videos with pertinent information only
- Provide short, bulleted FYI emails/messengers to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern.

Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents/community to WPSD (resulting from our perception data)
- Encourage parents to sign up for Messenger (with texts, emails, phone call options) at the beginning of the year and check back mid-year for changes
- Conduct electronic surveys (emails) as pulse checks
- Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input
- Establish informational email account to receive feedback from community: **info@wpsdk12.org**

Publish and/or distribute informational pieces
- Develop collateral pieces (hard copies and on website)
    - Brochures
    - Newsletters
    - Direct Mail Pieces
    - Announcements
    - Promotional videos/TV commercials
    - Fact Sheets
- Conduct electronic surveys (emails) as pulse checks

Partner with our community
Volunteer opportunities
Organization/Club Memberships
Chamber of Commerce
City Officials/Departments

Promote our successes - staffulty - our Purple Cows!
Website
Electronic Sign
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
Media
Board of Education recognition

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Communication Strategies & Best Practices (staff to external audience)

According to an article in *Education Week*, Benjamin Herold reports on a 2016-17 survey by Project Tomorrow and Blackboard, Inc. on the ways families prefer schools to communicate with them. The study of 514,000 K-12 parents, students, and educators found that parents strongly prefer to get school information **pushed** to them versus having to find it online.

In our efforts to **push** out information, keep the following in mind:
- 5 C's of Communication:
  - Concern and Empathy
  - Clarity
  - Control
  - Confidence
  - Competence

- Simplify Communications
  - Use clear, concise, and non-educational language for all general publications
  - Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences

- Stay Brief and to the point to keep receiver's attention
  - Bullet points
  - Highlight message in title
  - Have 2nd & 3rd person proofread/edit

- Foster Relationships with our Community
  - Keep external stakeholders informed through community outreach meetings and external postings.
  - Ask for input on areas of concern through surveys, BOE updates, school emails, and through the WPSD website and social media.
  - Develop key communicators groups and deliver message to them as needed. They will take the message to the community more effectively than district personnel. This includes Chamber of Commerce through their Grapevine newsletter, City Council, etc.
  - Maintain a high level of visibility for the District through participation of key staff in various professional and community activities.

- Communicate Early and Often
  - Fact sheets to all building principals as needed
  - Follow-up memos/updates as necessary
  - Telephone calls if in doubt

- Face-to-Face
  - Difficult situations must be face-to-face
  - Relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate
  - Natural voice on Messenger when possible

- Publish Fact Sheets
  - Available online for quick reference
  - District updates, budget
  - Use template for uniformity so new topics can be addressed quickly

- Emphasize Customer Service
  - "Customer" must leave with an answer to their concern or question
  - Never be dismissive
  - Actively listen to understand the message beyond words

- Train Staff
  - Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors and people in the community has an impact on how WPSD schools are perceived.
  - Use All Staff emails to relay important information. These should be sent to all teachers and staff all school buildings.
  - Engage frontline staff in the conversation and make sure they have access to information immediately. They are the best link to our parents and community.

- Media Relations
  - Pay attention to the type of stories aired, published, posted
  - Develop relationships with editors and education reporters
  - Represent WPSD in all interviews, appearances, etc.
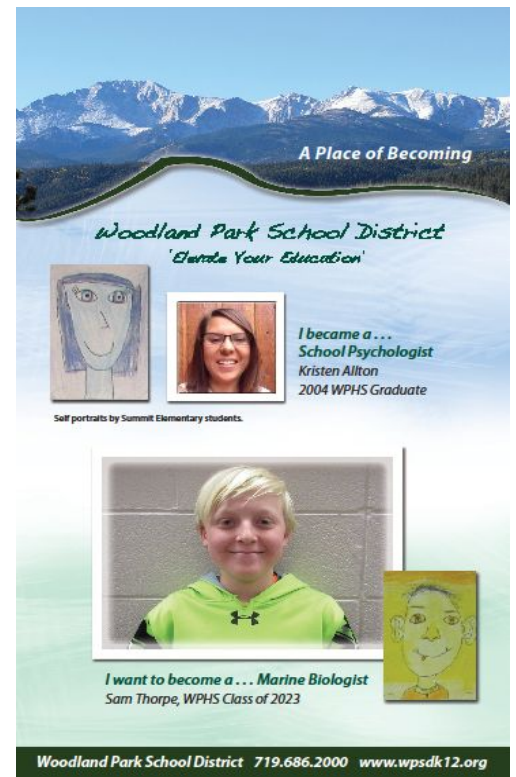
- District Key Messages

  - WPSD is large enough to offer comprehensive programs at all levels yet small enough for the personal attention and comforts of a caring community.

  - WPSD teachers strive to meet individual student needs and inspire all ages to excel

  - WPSD is committed to high academic achievement for every child with a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM)

  - WPSD understands the importance of educating the whole child

  - WPSD places a high priority on ensuring our students have opportunities to develop interests, passions, and strengths in a variety of areas including arts, athletics, leadership, and career pathways

  - WPSD offers ways to earn college credit while attending WPHS

  - WPSD offers FREE, full-day kindergarten

  - WPSD includes Preschool - 12th grade in 3 elementary schools, middle & high school

  - WPSD provides Homeschool Academy as a choice options for grades K-8

Communication Strategies & Best Practices (external audience to staff)

- 5 C's of Communication:
    - Concern and Empathy
    - Clarity
    - Control
    - Confidence
    - Competence

- Keep communications simple and direct

- Preferred method (in order)
    - Face-to-face (schedule a meeting)
    - Email
    - Text
    - Phone call

- Parent-to-Teacher:
    - Start with the classroom teacher - email is best (or other electronic classroom system)
    - Phone call
    - Schedule a meeting
    - If text or email doesn't suffice, then phone call or personal meeting is best
- Why contact the building principal
    - Share good news & gratitude
    - Clarification of school processes, schedules, etc.
    - Resolve misunderstandings & conflict
    - To request a meeting with the parent, staff member and principal
- Parent-to-Principal
    - Principals prefer face-to-face meetings when possible
    - When unable to meet, please email a building principal
    - Phone calls are a suitable follow-up method after meetings and email exchanges
- Why contact the Superintendent
    - Share good news: Community relations
    - Other issues should try to be resolved at the most immediate level first
        - Follow the protocol: Teacher → Principal → Director of Schools → Superintendent (recognized by Board of Education)

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Professional Learning Opportunities & Resources

- Provide continuing training session as part of leadership on how to train teachers and staff to communicate their school's message
- Membership to organizations such as Colorado School Public Relations Association (COSPRA) and relay pertinent ideas and information to administrators/leadership.
- Supply leadership with public relations fact sheets, elevator speeches, bullets, as easy-to-use communications tools as needed when issues arise to all be on the same page.
- Provide communications and media relations training session to site-level staff
- Create quick, web-based form for schools to utilize when reporting an upcoming event and possible stories for media coverage.

District Communications "HUB"

The District website (wpsdk12.org) includes all pertinent information, announcements, and updates, serving as the HUB of WPSD communication.

- District Homepage:
  - Pertinent district-wide information for WPSD parents and community.
  - District-wide events
  - Announcements: safety & security, registration dates, open houses, school start times,
  - Board of Education, WPSD Foundation, Administration, Calendar,
  - Facilities rental information
- Individual School pages:
  - Directories
  - Course descriptions
  - School calendar and announcements
  - Activities & athletics

Social Media Strategy

Postings include the District website (our HUB) and each individual school site; Facebook pages; Twitter accounts; Instagram; etc.

- Keep calendars updated as they contain the themes, topics, and publishing dates for content posted on social media.
- Post regularly and frequently; helping to build our brand. Possibly post the same time each week so audience knows when to expect updates.
- Social Media means SOCIAL - everyone will see it! Expect to respond ASAP to interaction such as comments on your wall, retweets, or mentions of your school in other posts.
- Negative comments posted on public/community pages will not receive a District response via post, although the sender may receive a personal phone call to discuss the specific topic or situation further.

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Tools

We will identify the communication tools that are most widely accepted and preferred by the community through quarterly assessment and adjust accordingly. Our current communication tools include:

Printed Materials

- Brochures
- Fact Sheets
- Newsletters
- Postcards/Direct mail pieces
- Flyers

Electronic Communication

- Infinite Campus
- E-mail
- Class DoJo
- Auto-Dialer
- Newsletters/Woolf Weekly
- Announcements
- Google Classroom

Web Site

- Banner/Slider
- Press Release
- Requests for Proposal
- Financial Transparency
- Advertisements
- Links

Electronic Sign

- Congratulatory messages
- Upcoming events/announcements
- Important Dates

Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram

Face-to-Face

- Conferences
- Word-of-Mouth
- Focus Groups
- Outreach Meetings

Media Relations

- Stories to pitch
- Press Releases

Paid Advertising

- Newspapers
- Publications
- Television
- Radio

Telephone

- Voice calls
- Text Messaging
- Auto-Dialer

Communication Alignment

The Public Relations/Communications Specialist will manage and implement publications, marketing, paid advertising, media relations, community liaisons, and offer leadership on all comprehensive communication services and strategies for WPSD under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

Internal Communications

- Monthly Leadership meetings, weekly Cabinet administration meetings, and principal meetings to discuss new programs, ideas, concerns, policies, procedures, staff development, announcements

- Provide newsletter/video "Woolf Weekly" on a weekly basis highlighting educational and school issues, staff achievement and service, and other employee issues. This will also help HS know about MS; elementary school know what's going on at HS, etc.

- All Staff emails/videos to convey timely information to communicate immediately with principals, teachers, and staff on an as-needed basis. Ie: updates, crisis, heads up on media stories, announcements

- New Staff orientation

- Develop an agenda calendar for long-term planning for recurring projects and deadlines that are addressed each year. Strategic Planning

- Provide student handbooks, WPSD brochures, crisis information to all parent at school registration at the beginning of each school year.

- Continue BOE monthly highlights newsletter

External Communications

- Media Relations
  - Press Releases
  - Photos and detailed captions
  - Monthly WPSD column
  - Pitch stories/interviews
  - Paid advertisements
  - Campaigns: Back to School, CHOICE, special events

- Continue Community Outreach Meetings with Chamber, Senior Citizens, Realtors, Clergy, etc.

- Continue developing, editing, and improving the district website and individual school sites

- Continue providing WPSD information for Chamber of Commerce to distribute in their relocation packets.

- Community Outreach Opportunities: civic memberships, sponsorships (Chamber golf tournament), Panther wear donations for auctions, in-kind donations (Woodland Wind Symphony & Swing Factory)

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Organizational Structure

Location	Types of Pubs	Frequency	Designee
Columbine	Email/Newsletter Website Facebook	Weekly Daily As needed	Principal Media Specialist PR
Gateway	Email/Newsletter Website Facebook	Weekly Daily As needed	Principal Media Specialist PR
Summit	Email/Newsletter Website Facebook	Weekly Daily As needed	Principal Media Specialist PR
WPMS	Email/Newsletter Website Facebook	Weekly Daily As needed	Principal/Admin Media Specialist PR
WPHS	Email/Newsletter Website Facebook	Quarterly Weekly As needed	Principal/Admin Building Secretary Building Secretary
WPSD	Emails Videos Website Facebook	As needed Weekly Weekly As needed	Admin/PR Supt/PR Admin/PR Supt/PR

Assessment & Accountability

Because different measurements work best in various situations, a tracking system will be developed to measure communication effectiveness.

- Strategic Plan Architecture Metrics:
    - 80% of students, staff and parents report that available communication tools meet their needs as stakeholders
    - 80% of parents report that the school shares pertinent information regarding their child in a timely and effective manner

- Surveys/Pulse Checks

- Website Click-throughs: Will be used to monitor feedback from community, both internal and external

- Weekly Facebook Page Update
- Interpersonal Contact: Informal "word-of-mouth" surveys will be conducted to gauge the level of effectiveness

A second pulsecheck survey conducted in February 2018 was distributed to staff, students and parents/guardians at each of the five District schools. Each group was surveyed on availability of necessary communications tools and use of the District website. Staff and parents/guardians were asked to provide feedback regarding sharing of pertinent student information and responsiveness to communication inquiries.

Student Responses:

- When surveyed in February 2018, over 80% of students at four of five District schools indicated that currently available communication tools meet their needs when needing information relating to their classes
- However, responses from all schools illustrate the need for website improvement for it to meet the needs of student users

Staff Responses:

- Staff members overwhelmingly agree that available communications tools meet their needs with the exception of the District website

Parent Responses:
- At three out of five District schools, parents indicate strong agreement with the following statement, "I know how to find school related information to meet my needs."
- However, respondents from just one school indicated a level of satisfaction with the District website that meets the 80% metric regarding available communication tools
- Parents/Guardians at four of five schools strongly agree that the schools share relevant, student information with them and that the schools respond to inquiries on a timely basis

Summary

Initial data collected indicates favorable opinions around availability of communications tools, the sharing of pertinent student information and staff responsiveness.

Survey data also indicates the website is not utilized as often or as efficiently as it could be. However, the District believes that a website redesign and adequate stakeholder training can increase and improve website utilization. The website provides the most logical hub to centralize District information in one location and offers the opportunity to direct information seekers to other avenues when appropriate.

Other Topics

Crisis Communication
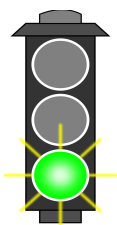
NOTE: Crisis Communication such as a Secure Perimeter, Shelter in Place, Evacuation or Lockdown is detailed in our Emergency Operations Plan. For more information on Crisis Communications, please contact PR.

Branding

Branding is an important identity at any organization. One consistent logo and/or mascot should be used on all letterhead, communication, banners, merchandise, etc. Our current identity includes:

Columbine Elementary

Gateway Elementary

Summit Elementary