



**Johnston Community School District  
Communications Plan  
Fall 2014**

## **MISSION**

We commit all district resources to guide the learning of each student, to graduate as confident learners with character, knowledge and the skills to excel in any endeavor they pursue.

## **VISION**

Creating a culture of excellence where students come first.

## **BELIEFS**

We believe in...

Relationships.

- the uniqueness of all and the value of diversity
- fostering the district's pillars of good character and citizenship
- a collaborative process involving all stakeholders

The environment.

- a teaching and learning environment that is safe, supportive and respectful
- a stimulating learning environment that meets individual student needs
- a culture of excellence within a professional community

Teaching and learning.

- our responsibility to ensure that every child will learn
- excellence as the hallmark of our district and our measure of accountability
- rigorous and relevant academic experiences with high expectations for student achievement
- the use of research-based, effective models of instruction
- student needs being frequently assessed and actions taken based on that assessment
- skillful use of modern technology as an essential tool for learning
- a continuous improvement process where schools regularly use data to guide change and improvement

Leadership.

- Board of Education and administration focused on adopting policies to support best teaching practices and achievement
- professional learning to enhance the skills and knowledge of people in the organization
- fiscal responsibility and always seeking more effective and efficient uses of their resources

Community.

- broad-based business and stakeholder support
- partnerships and community involvement
- responsive to the needs of parents and families

## **DISTRICT FOCUS AREAS**

### Curriculum---Instruction---Assessment

We will refine and continue to put into practice a system of curriculum, instruction and assessment that enables each student to be engaged in challenging academic experiences that are grounded in clearly defined standards.

### College and Career Readiness in the 21st Century

We will provide students with experience and opportunities to enable them to be successful in college and/or their chosen career path.

### Highly Qualified and Effective Staff

We will recruit, select, train and retain competent and inspiring professional staff who hold high expectations for students and are accountable for achieving clear and aligned system---wide performance goals.

### Communications

We will provide a proactive communication system to ensure all district stakeholders are well informed.

## **DISTRICT GOALS**

Each student will demonstrate academic growth that meets or exceeds Johnston Community School District's standards.

Each student will receive appropriate curriculum and learning experience that foster academic achievement and character development.

Achievement data will reflect annual growth that eliminates the gaps in performance amongst all subgroups of students.

## *Goals of the Communications Plan*

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A district communications plan serves as road map for the research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of key goals related to improving internal and external communication processes.

The three goals of the 2014 communications plan are:

- Provide outstanding communication services to district audiences (internal and external audiences)
- Build an effective employee communications system (internal audiences)
- Foster community and parent engagement in the district and its goals for student achievement (external audiences)

## *Adhering to the Profession*

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Within the field of communications and public relations, there are guiding principles for creating sound communication plans. The Johnston Community School District communications plan strives to abide by these principles.

The following structure is used to identify the goals of a communications plan and the work required to get there.

### **RESEARCH**

Qualitative and quantitative research will be based on direct involvement with stakeholders to determine their knowledge, perceptions, desires, interests and opinions related to the goal at hand.

### **ANALYZE/PLAN**

With research completed, analysis is done to assess a situation and its potential impact on the organization.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Tactics/activities — or the best manner, time, message and messenger to engage identified stakeholders — are determined. A work plan template for this step is included in this document. Engagement is then implemented according to the plan.

### **EVALUATION**

Formal and informal research is then conducted to determine if communication efforts were successful based on stakeholder satisfaction and if desired attitudes or behaviors were achieved. Evaluation will also assist in determining if a practice or project should be modified, created or discontinued. This plan will lead the communication efforts for the district as a whole. In addition, the comprehensive plan will be used as a basis for the Communication Office's accountability and a framework for resource and budgetary considerations. The plan is a dynamic document. It should be continually evaluated and revised to address changing circumstances in the district and to best achieve the district's goals.

You will also see the following terms used throughout the plan to define specific ideas, actions, and desired, measurable outcomes.

### **GOALS**

Goals are long-term, broad, global statements of being. Goals should make your organization unique in the mind of your targeted audiences.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Objectives focus on the shorter term to define what behavior/action/attitude/opinion you want to achieve from specific audience, by how much, and by when. Objectives are specific, measurable, attainable, audience-specific, relevant, results-oriented, and time specific.

### **STRATEGIES**

Strategies serve as the road map and overall game plan for how you will reach your goal. It describes how to reach your objectives, but does not indicate specific actions. Multiple strategies are encouraged for each objective.

### **TACTICS**

Tactics are specific elements of a strategy, the “how-to” of a plan. Tactics, or action items, detail actual methods that will be used to implement the strategies and reach the goal. Tactics can overlap for strategies.

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>Provide outstanding communication services to district audiences</b>
<b>AUDIENCES DEFINED</b>	Internal (JCSD employees) and External (parents, community members, businesses, media)
<b>OBJECTIVE #1</b>	To increase the number of communicated messages to district audiences by 10 percent over the next 16 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize new technology, such as text messaging, mobile applications, QSR codes, and optimized websites (school and district), to increase messages and deliverability to audiences</li> <li>• Maintain traditional communication methods, such as mail, to reach entire district population</li> <li>• Allow subscription options to ensure consumers receive the type of information they want in the format they prefer</li> <li>• Optimize district website for streamlined communication of messages</li> <li>• Identify ELL audiences and their preferred communication methods</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Invest in mobile application development through the Blackboard Connect system to create an easy-to-use tool/resource for internal and external audiences</li> <li>○ Offer community members (non-parent) ability to self-subscribe to bi-weekly E-Connection newsletter, delivered via email service, such as Constant Contact</li> <li>○ Utilize direct mail for reaching all households within the district with important messages, such as those for levies/votes</li> <li>○ Grow Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube presence for extended reach in audiences and their preferred method of receiving news</li> <li>○ Create new, responsive school and district websites that are user-friendly and easy to navigate when finding news and information</li> <li>○ Translate key messages into other languages for ELL families; ensure delivery through mail or ELL teachers.</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	A count of the messages sent by the district and schools within the last 16 months will be done (Blackboard messages, newsletters, web postings, any other internal/external communication) and another count will be done in 16 months, with a check point every four months to track progress.
<b>OBJECTIVE #2</b>	To enhance the methods by which the district communicates news to district audiences within the next 16 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure communication methods are timely, well-placed among audience</li> <li>• Understand the various channels that are most wanted/used by audiences</li> <li>• Ensure all methods work properly in their environment</li> <li>• Create consistent communication tools between schools (i.e. website format and content, newsletters, mobile apps, parent emails)</li> <li>• Promote user-friendly resources/training for using district communication methods</li> <li>• Prepare district administrators for speaking and media engagements with external audiences</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Invest in popular new communication tools such as a mobile application, text messaging, and QSR codes</li> <li>○ Ensure resources (i.e. time and attention, manpower, technical support) are available to deliver timely, consistent, and helpful messages</li> <li>○ Create a resource manual (online) with helpful communication tool information and how to use the various district communication tools</li> <li>○ Provide media relations training to Board members and administrators</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Build school and district websites that are responsive to users, easy to navigate, and consistent from building to building</li> <li>○ Create training and templates for schools, building leaders, and committees to use for communication purposes</li> <li>○ Optimize recording and playback features of recorded events, such as board meetings, to enhance viewer experience</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Metrics will be gathered from website/messaging analytics and feedback will be gathered to assess whether the district has accomplished enhancing communication tools within the next 16 months. Discussion forums may also be held to assess district communications.
<b>OBJECTIVE #3</b>	To increase engagement and feedback in the communication process by district audiences by 15 percent within the next 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use audience feedback to enhance communication and district messaging</li> <li>● Gain new ideas for communication ventures through feedback</li> <li>● Commit to transparency in communication methods and planning</li> <li>● Increase visibility of communications within the district</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Form an advisory group of internal and external audience members to meet on a bi-annual basis to talk about messaging, new ideas, and suggestions.</li> <li>○ Use online feedback forms and informal online surveys for internal/external audiences to check point communications</li> <li>○ Provide more regular updates to the board, cabinet, educator associations, and individual schools on communication-related matters</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Baseline survey data from 2011 and 2013 measuring external and internal engagement will be used as a starting point, and another survey will be deployed within 12 months to measure the same factors.

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>Build an effective employee communications system</b>
<b>AUDIENCES DEFINED</b>	Internal (JCSD employees)
<b>OBJECTIVE #1</b>	To enhance the communication tools available to JCSD employees within the next 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intuitive to their work styles, schedule, needs</li> <li>• Resources and internal information/communication are readily available</li> <li>• Utilize building leaders to emphasize importance of internal communication and district-provided communication tools</li> <li>• Ensure adequate communications staffing is available to meet needs of tool development, training, and implementation</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New employee orientations will include a segment on internal communication resources, tools, and contact information</li> <li>○ Develop a staff intranet that is easy to navigate and responsive to user needs</li> <li>○ Commit to frequent updates via the staff intranet, training staff to check the site for news and information</li> <li>○ Provide training to employees on available parent communication resources, including best practices for communicating with this audience</li> <li>○ Create templates for teachers to use for parent communication matters</li> <li>○ Ensure resources (i.e. time and attention, manpower) are available to deliver timely, consistent, and helpful messages</li> <li>○ Attend workshops focused on this topic to increase strategies of reaching this goal</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Use baseline data from an internal communications survey (2013) to compare to data 12 months from now on communication tools for internal communication purposes.
<b>OBJECTIVE #2</b>	To increase the internal audience's understanding of the district strategic plan by 10 percent within the next 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed strategic items into professional development</li> <li>• Increase communication about the strategic plan</li> <li>• Demonstrate progress of strategic plan items to show importance, value to staff</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide a breakdown of strategic plan items/ideas for better understanding by employees; cross-post on intranet and in staff newsletter</li> <li>○ Create planned strategic plan updates in the employee newsletter at least once a month; cross-post on staff intranet</li> <li>○ Encourage building leaders and ILTs to emphasize strategic plan items as part of professional development and Teacher Leadership opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Building leaders (July 2014) indicated that staff had very little knowledge or interest in the district's strategic plan. Using this feedback, assess staff understanding within 12 months.
<b>OBJECTIVE #3</b>	To improve district crisis communications manual/training understanding by employees by 15 percent over the next 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate importance of knowing crisis/safety protocols and procedures</li> <li>• Utilize district's safety officer position to increase visibility, awareness of safety plans among employees</li> <li>• Stay current with new practices in school safety, providing news to staff members</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase frequency of informational sessions on school safety led by SROs as part of Professional Development days</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluate and update current crisis manual; ensure guidelines are practical for staff teaching environments; provide updates through internal communication</li> <li>○ Familiarize staff with safety officer position through internal communication</li> <li>○ Execute more drills and table top exercises for staff during the school year</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	A pre/post assessment of their knowledge and confidence now and again in 12 months.
<b>GOAL</b>	<b>Foster community and parent engagement in the district and its goals for student achievement</b>
<b>AUDIENCES DEFINED</b>	External (parents, community)
<b>OBJECTIVE #1</b>	Increase external stakeholder understanding of district’s goals by 10 percent within 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Share the district’s strategic plan with external audiences in an understandable format</li> <li>● Provide transparency on the Teacher Leadership and Compensation grant</li> <li>● Demonstrate importance of individual School Improvement Plans</li> <li>● Share methods of increasing student proficiency in relation to No Child Left Behind</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Write stories/articles specifically focused on progress of student proficiency as related to NCLB goals. Stories can focus on student learning and/or teacher professional development</li> <li>○ Schools should communicate the basics of their School Improvement Plans and how it affects students and classrooms to parents through school newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, etc.</li> <li>○ Create a regular TLC grant newsletter for parents, posted online and highlighted in other external communication, including school newsletters. Copy would be created at the district level for consistency from building to building</li> <li>○ A monthly strategic plan update would be given in an E-Connection to demonstrate progress and a focus on completing goals</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	A survey should be conducted shortly after plan approval to measure audience understanding of district goals and again in 12 months to see if movement in understanding has occurred.
<b>OBJECTIVE #2</b>	Build trust and confidence in JCSD external communications by 10 percent within 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build a key group of district stakeholders</li> <li>● Strive for 100 percent transparency and consistency in district and school communication</li> <li>● Grow reputation within metro-area school districts</li> <li>● Foster relationships with local media</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Form an advisory group of external audience members to meet on a quarterly basis to learn of public perception, concerns with district communication</li> <li>○ Create content (stories, videos, letters) that tell the complete story, especially on sensitive subjects, leaving no room for questions or misinterpretation</li> <li>○ Reach out to local media on every news piece and invite them to our district for on-camera interviews or news stories. Utilize them as a partner, not an accessory</li> <li>○ Ensure communications staff is equipped to handle fact-checking and dissemination of accurate information to external audiences</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Conduct a baseline survey now and again in 12 months to assess trust and confidence levels. Use the stakeholder group meetings as quarterly check points.

<b>OBJECTIVE #3</b>	Build an open network of two-way communication between the district and external stakeholders within the next 12 months
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate importance of stakeholder feedback in district decisions</li> <li>• Utilize new technologies to enhance communications process</li> <li>• Promote responsiveness at all levels (board, admin, building leader, teacher) with consistent response protocol</li> <li>• Embrace creative ways to have two-way communication</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Utilize online forms to get constituent feedback on any given district issue (boundaries, transportation, etc). Respond to submitted questions within 24 hours</li> <li>○ Create a hotline or text messaging account for people to send in suggestions, observations, or questions. This could also be tied to the mobile application</li> <li>○ Create consistent guidelines for responding to constituent concerns at the board, district, school levels</li> <li>○ Create a Facebook or Twitter account or devote an entire day for people to post positive observations or comments regarding teachers, students, groups, etc. Example: Facebook page “Drake Compliments”</li> <li>○ Host district forums or listening sessions to encourage external stakeholder feedback. This could also tie in with “State of the District” presentations, tours, or updates</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Currently, there are limited ways for external audiences to contact the district on given issues, submit suggestions, or offer observations. A simple count of these ways could be done now and again in 12 months to evaluate if more methods had been created and their interest/usage levels.