



Building Bright Futures

2007- 2010
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

PREPARED BY COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

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JEFFCO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This communications plan will serve as a guide for Jeffco Public Schools communications strategies from 2007 through 2010. It will ensure the communications efforts align with the district's Strategic Plan goals and meets the mandates of District Policy KD (Public Engagement and Communications Program) and Ends Policy 10 (ensure effective communication with employees and community members). It will guide the district as it communicates key messages effectively to all its audiences.

Situation

In November 2006, The Jefferson County Board of Education contracted with Schoolhouse Communications and the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) to conduct a comprehensive audit of the effectiveness of the district's internal and external communications efforts. The audit pointed to both strengths and weaknesses in communications and made recommendations for improvements. The audit called for a strategic communications plan to guide the district in the future.

MISSION

Jeffco Public Schools Communications Services exists to help the district and the Board of Education communicate with internal and external stakeholders. It is committed to helping the district achieve the goal of providing a quality education that prepares all children for a successful future. Our mission is to establish positive relationships and credibility between Jeffco Public Schools and its stakeholders through the timely and accurate dissemination of information. The department also serves as a crucial link between the media and the district in both proactive and reactive news situations.

VISION

It is the vision of Communications Services to develop a high level of support from the community for Jeffco Public Schools.

Through efficient and productive communications with all stakeholders, the district will be known for providing a quality 21st century education for all students and for being a good steward of taxpayer money. The district will actively pursue two-way communications by listening to its staff and community to continuously improve and evaluate communications efforts. Communications Services efforts will help Jeffco students be known for their educational excellence and for their community leadership.

Communications Services will help our employees be knowledgeable ambassadors for the district, communicating key messages to the community.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Internal

All Jeffco Public School Employees

External

Parents

Students

Businesses, partners

The Community

Media

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Goal #1: Establish an effective community relations program to build collaborative relationships and strengthen support for and confidence in Jeffco Public Schools.

Strategy #1: Cultivate and strengthen relationships with the district's key communicators to engage them in the district's vision and to help them understand and engage in that vision.

Tactics:

-Assess the current Key Communicator list.

-Expand the list to include more realtors, pre-schools, faith-based organizations, seniors, and other strategic audiences.

-Identify the community's largest corporations, key businesses, foundations, not-for-profit, philanthropic leaders, college and university presidents and their professional organizations and affiliations. Develop a plan to establish routine communication protocol with these groups and to assess their opinion of Jeffco.

-Develop communication protocol for established parent organizations (PTA)

-Launch a community relations advisory group and establish routine meetings.

-Maintain regular contact with student leadership organization.

-Establish a yearly assessment system of the quality, quantity, and effectiveness of all existing forms of communication with various stakeholders:

- Board
- Parents (including parents of preschoolers)
- Employees
- Minority community leaders
- Policy makers
- Students, student leaders
- Community leaders
- Business leaders

-Establish routine meetings and communications with employee associations and employee groups.

Strategy #2: Determine public attitudes toward the district and increase awareness and support for the district.

Tactics:

-Create a list of strategically selected community organizations.

-Develop a methodology to evaluate groups for their strategic relationship to the educational process and the district.

-Attend meetings and establish routine communication protocols with these groups.

-Assess and identify meetings that board members may want to consider attending.

Strategy #3: Leverage external communications through existing community and civic publications such as neighborhood newsletters, chamber newsletters, e-mail listservs, and other targeted community publications.

Tactics:

-Create a list of possible publications.

-Assess which publications would strategically promote the district's key messages.

-Information will be sent for inclusion in those publications.

-Develop an editorial calendar for the 07-08 school year (and subsequent years) to pitch articles on a regular basis to targeted publications.

-Develop a distribution list for district publications such as the Annual Report, Enrollment Brochure, Construction Report to include: medical offices, schools, local government agencies, community centers, and other central places.

Strategy #4: Explore the development of a district-wide school volunteer program through a needs analysis.

Tactics:

-Assess the current volunteer programs available in the county to determine if a school-based volunteer program is viable.

-Create an online survey to seek input about a possible district-wide volunteer program.

Strategy #5: Maintain and improve superintendent's outreach programs.

Tactics:

-Assess and recommend speaking engagements for the superintendent at strategically selected community and civic organizations.

-Establish a routine communication protocol for the superintendent with community leaders to assure that strategically targeted leaders receive communications.

-Add an evaluation form to superintendent's breakfasts to solicit feedback about district issues and to improve upon the event.

Goal # 2: Establish an effective media relations program that enhances the district's image in the community.

Strategy #1: Develop a strategic media communications program that is proactive and reactive.

Tactics:

-Conduct bi-annual editorial visits with key media outlets to develop relationships with editorial staff and discuss in-depth district issues.

-Write and distribute quarterly Op-ed pieces about district and educational issues to the media.

-Provide the media with proactive stories about Jeffco Public Schools.

-Meet regularly with reporters who cover education stories for newspapers, television and radio.

-Redesign comprehensive media crisis communications plan.

-Develop a district-wide experts list who can provide interviews and background information to the media about important education related topics.

Goal #3: Establish an effective employee communications program that improves knowledge about, and support for, the district.

Strategy #1: Strengthen the content and design of key communication tools for employees.

Tactics:

- Redesign format of *The Messenger* to make it more reader-friendly (using data collected from communications audit.) Launch the new *Messenger* in August 2007.
- Include summary of Board of Education actions in *The Messenger*.
- Include summary of weekly news stories about Jeffco.
- Identify employees who don't have access to *The Messenger* online and implement a distribution program for those employees.
- Create targeted e-mail messages to employees about important district issues.
- Launch an education campaign to help employees learn about ways to access district information such as *The Messenger*, online news releases and other important information.
- Work with IT and Instructional Technology to begin development of an employee Web portal.

Goal #4: Establish a strong, positive connection between individual schools and their communities.

Strategy #1: Develop tools and resources to help principals become more effective in their roles as communicators for the district.

Tactics:

- Conduct a marketing analysis of schools as requested.
- Evaluate the community and student enrollment base for each school.
- Provide media training that will help principals understand how to work with the media and develop skills to communicate appropriate messages for their schools.
- Write and distribute articles for school newsletters on important topics.
- Review schools' current communications methods and tools.
- Develop a marketing brochure template so that schools can publish a professionally designed
- Review school Web sites and make suggestions for improvements.
- Consider school Web templates or at least a common district section on each school Web site.

- Consider Key Communicator program for individual schools.
- Assess the feasibility of community and civic clubs holding a meeting once a year at schools.
- Invite Key Communicators to school open-houses.
- Coordinate efforts to inform, recruit, and promote parental, business and community involvement.

Strategy #2: Develop targeted communications for parents of Jeffco pre-schoolers .

Tactics:

- Create an online Web forum for preschool parents to share information and concerns.
- Enhance preschool and kindergarten Web sites.
- Create a detailed list of Jeffco preschools (public and private).
- Develop communication targeted to parents of preschoolers and distribute to strategic sites.
- Add preschool information to online school profiles.

Goal #5: Establish a long-term, ongoing plan for community engagement for the Board of Education.

Strategy #1: Research and develop a strategy for effective community engagement for the Board of Education in order to advance district initiatives.

Tactics:

- Investigate best practices for Board of Education community engagement.
- Identify key community groups with which to meet.
- Develop key messaging for Board of Education.
- Develop and promote a yearly calendar for community engagements.

Goal #6: Create key messaging that will tell the district's story more effectively.

Strategy #1: Write three main message/position statements that represent the district's vision and goals and clearly tell our stakeholders what we stand for. Include those statements in all communications from the district.

Tactics:

- Evaluate the district’s Strategic Plan to determine messaging points.
- Talk to district leadership to determine messaging.
- Write statements.
- Create a video piece that reinforces the key message points.
- Include statements in all communications including news releases, employee newsletters, community and school newsletters.
- Test draft messages and talking points with key audiences and further refine as needed.

Goal #7: Improve the public’s access to online district information and provide online tools that empower the public to interact with Jeffco Public Schools.

Strategy #1: Develop a Web site for our public stakeholders – parents, students, potential employees, businesses and the general public - that best facilitates the flow of information and provides an efficient and clear delivery of district services.

Tactics:

- Create a Web governance structure and organizational policies that define responsibilities, relationships, and rules involved in managing the district’s Web site.
- Gather data and analyze the needs of our stakeholders/Web users in order to develop an appropriate Web structure and content.
- Conduct an online survey from the district’s existing home page to identify who are the district’s Web users and for what information they are searching.
- Determine an appropriate software platform or system for delivering Web content to users.
- Create a uniform look and feel and “brand” for the Web site. The look and feel specification will enable each Web page to be clearly identified as belonging to the district and ensures that each page has the required navigational and other design elements to facilitate ease of use.
- Develop initial Web design and content and test with stakeholder/Web users.
- Launch new Web site.

EVALUATION & MEASUREMENT

The following resources will be utilized to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of this communications plan.

- Principal/leadership survey
- Employee survey
- Community survey
- Key Communicator survey
- Messenger survey
- Media hits – proactive
- Community feedback
- Focus groups
- Web site usage
- School-based survey (adding questions to existing survey)
- Superintendent's Breakfast feedback form
- Media survey (e-mail)