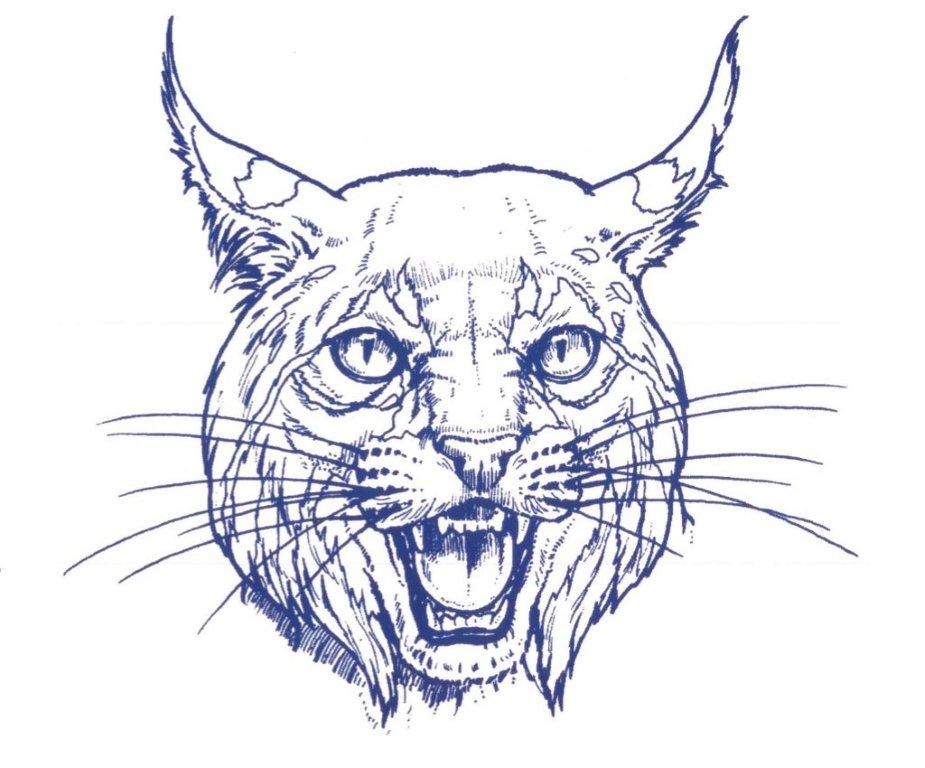
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GALLATIN COUNTY SCHOOLS

Communication Plan 2012-2013

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**Gallatin County School District Communication Plan**

The purpose of the Gallatin County School District Communication Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our school community. This plan will provide public understanding and awareness of the learning opportunities provided for students and learners of all ages in the Gallatin County School District. The plan primarily addresses two types of school district audiences: ***internal*** (students, teachers, staff, administration, and Board of Education) and ***external*** (parents, businesses, civic groups, religious groups, and other members of the Gallatin County community).

**Target Audiences**

**Internal**

**1. Students**

**2. Staff**

**A. District Level**

**i. Classified**

**ii. Certificated**

**iii. Leadership**

**B. Site Level**

**i. Classified**

**ii. Certificated**

**iii. Leadership**

**3. Board of Education**

**External**

**1. Parents**

**2. Parent Organizations**

**3. Key Communicators**

**4. Business Community**

**5. Elected City Officials**

**6. Elected State and Federal Legislators**

**7. Civic Groups**

**8. Senior Citizens Groups**

**9. Religious Groups**

**10. Community Groups**

**11. Education —school districts, local colleges, and libraries**

**13. Electronic Media—Web site, email, podcast, etc.**

**14. Print Media—newsletters, newspapers, flyers, etc.**

**15. Non-Profit Organizations**

**16. Gallatin Co. Citizens**

**17. Social Media**

**Objectives**

Our objective is to improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open, two-way communication between the Board of Education, administration, staff, students, parents and the Gallatin County community.

**1. Clarify district flow of information**

Distribute organizational charts to all staff showing decision-making process, reporting, and accountability structure.

Charts will include individual areas of staff responsibility for communication. See the Quick Reference System Checklist.

**2. Provide ongoing training and support for administrators in effective communication with staff and the public**

Provide continuing training sessions as part of principal’s meetings on how to train teachers and staff to communicate their school’s message.

Supply administrators with public relations fact sheets and other easy-to-use communications tools as needed when issues arise and must be pre-approved by Superintendent.

Provide communications training sessions to site-level staff.

Schools will manage upcoming events through the online school calendar posted on school/district website. Schools will be held accountable for maintaining upcoming events.

**3. Provide regular information on district-wide issues**

Distribute information from meetings on need-to-know basis.

Distribute *external* publications and news releases to all employees via email, website, newsletters, postings, and through school phone notification system.

Issue short, bulleted FYI sheets to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern.

Formalize a policy for district communication with teachers and site staff.

Establish a “State of the Schools” report delivered by the Superintendent and post on the District website.

**4. Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents and community to the district**

Encourage parents and community members to sign up for electronic notifications (automatic mailing lists from the internet, Open Houses, orientations, academic/athletic events, and email logs at each school campus).

Conduct electronic surveys (email) at district and site levels to provide feedback on flow of information through Phone Notification System, Survey Monkey or similar programs.

Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.

Establish electronic suggestion box to receive feedback from community.

Encourage use of the Parent Portal to facilitate communication between parents and schools by placing an icon on district website and advertise through Phone Notification System and newspaper.

**5. Publish and distribute informational pieces**

Develop Collateral Pieces.

* District/School Informational Brochure
* Newsletters – to be emailed.
* Press releases as needed.

**6. Communicate with civic, community and religious groups**

Include groups in mailings and provide opportunities for them to sign up for our regular emails.

Attend community meetings as needed to provide information.

Provide district communications materials to key leaders. A representative will attend Chamber of Commerce meetings and present current updates.

Develop partnerships with groups.

**7. Be visible in the community**

Attend community organization meetings.

Encourage participation in local service clubs.

Host local meetings or forums when appropriate.

Encourage school staff to talk positively about Gallatin County schools to friends, neighbors and community acquaintances.

Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups.

**8. Promote the successes of the Gallatin County School District**

Produce a monthly newsletter or presentation focusing on a student, staff member, program, school, department, etc. This is to be shown on District website, newspaper, and/or at Board meetings.

Highlight staff with articles in district communications pieces, outside media, and through recognition at events.

**Strategies**

**1. Keep Communications Simple**

◊ Use clear, concise and non-educational style for all general publications.

◊ Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences.

◊ Translate communication pieces when appropriate for various language groups.

**2. Create Information Sheets**

◊ Create information sheets on four or five topics such as district and state budgets, school safety, accountability, etc.; update them bi-annually or as needed.

◊ Have current sheets available on-line for quick reference.

◊ Use template for uniformity so that new topics can be addressed rapidly.

**3. Communicate Early and Often**

◊ Prepare information sheets when appropriate to send out to principals, office managers, and other staff as needed.

◊ Follow-up with memos or communications to all staff if necessary.

◊ Make telephone calls if in doubt.

**4. Communicate Face-to-Face**

◊ The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face (try to avoid email when dealing with tough situations, tone and focus are sometimes misread).

◊ Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate.

◊ When possible use natural voice to record messages on Phone Notification System.

**5. Keep Communications Brief and to the Point**

◊ In order to keep a person’s attention, be brief and to the point.

◊ Use bullet points when appropriate.

◊ Highlight message in the title.

◊ Proofread all documents for errors.

**6. Emphasize Customer Service**

◊ Customer must leave with an answer to their concern or question.

◊ Never be dismissive.

◊ Actively listen to understand the message beyond the words.

**7. Train Staff**

◊ Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors, and people in the community has an impact on how Gallatin County schools are perceived.

◊ Use Friday Notes to relay important information. These should be given/emailed to all schools including, principals, teachers, and secretaries.

◊ Engage frontline staff in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately. They are the best link to the parents and community.

**8. Develop Relationships with our Community**

◊ Develop relationships with merchants by keeping them informed

◊ Ask for input on areas of concern through surveys, Board email address, school email addresses, and through the District website.

◊ Develop focus groups and deliver message to them as needed. They will take the message to the community more effectively than district personnel. This includes Gallatin County Chamber of Commerce, Gallatin County Fiscal Court members, and Warsaw City Council.

◊ Maintain a high level of visibility for the District through participation of key staff in various professional and community activities.

**9. Study the Media**

◊ Pay attention to the type of stories aired or published.

◊ Note who is generally used as a source of information.

◊ Develop relationships with editors and education reporters.

**10. Prepare our Messages**

◊ Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with information sheets.

◊ Develop responses that represent our school or district message.

◊ Avoid technical jargon by keeping it simple and using quotable “sound bites,” when appropriate.

◊ Prepare stories in formats that match those used by the local media.

◊ Don’t use education lingo when preparing messages.

**Methods**

Our current communications methods are:

1. **Printed Materials**

* The local newspaper will receive school/district information weekly
* Memos from the Superintendent—as needed.
* Press releases
* Talking Points

2. **E-mail Communication –** Gallatin County School District has a community listserv that individuals can sign up for on the District web site. This gives us the ability to send periodic notices including links to the latest information:

* Publications
* *Electronic Newsletters*—sent to employees, parents, business and media contacts
* Board minutes, agendas and notes
* Press releases
* Surprises and delights

\* All schools should send out a weekly email communication and encourage parents to sign up for the email deliveries. Paper communication could be greatly reduced over time.

3. **Publications Posted Online -** We can save money and time by continuing to provide the majority of our printed materials on our district’s web site and begin to move away from paper

communications. Our on-line archives include:

◊ Board agenda/notes/minutes

◊ Student and Master Events Calendars

◊ Video Taped Board Meetings

◊ Link to School and District Websites

◊ School Newsletters

◊ Friday Notes from the Superintendent

4. **District Website -** will be used as necessary for district-level communication and crisis situations.

5. **Radio Announcements –**

◊ Emergency Situations

◊ Inclement Weather

**Assessment and**

**Accountability**

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

◊ **Benchmarking -** will be used to ascertain what communication strategies are being implemented in other school districts.

◊ **Schools**  - will collect and evaluate communication methods and adjust to be effective.

◊ **Surveys -** electronic surveys will be used to ascertain people’s opinion and to collect quantitative information.

◊ **The Communications Plan** - will be reviewed annually or as deemed necessary by the Superintendent, Board of Education and/or Communications Committee.

**Internal Communication:**

Bi-weekly Instructional Leadership meetings and Principal Meetings will be held to communicate new programs, ideas, concerns, policies, procedures, staff development,

and announcements.

Encourage the use of e-mail to convey information and to communicate with principals,

teachers, and staff on an “as-needed” basis.

Continue to hold new staff members’ orientation.

Provide information and opportunity for training on effective communication.

Develop a board agenda calendar for long-term planning for recurring projects and

deadlines that are addressed each year.

Provide student handbooks to all parents at the beginning of the school year.

Use of weekly *Friday Notes* to inform internal stakeholders of relevant information.

**External Communication:**

Use newspaper articles to promote the district’s mission and events.

Promote media coverage regarding the district’s mission and events.

Honor volunteers and community partnerships at the district level.

Continue the development of the district web site and individual school sites.

Develop and distribute packets of school information upon request to parents and businesses.

Communicate significant dates such as the opening of school, student orientations, National Education Week, National School Nurses’ Week, Red Ribbon Week, through local newspapers and announcements.

Provide the public with the opportunity to provide written or oral concerns or statements

to the board through the electronic suggestion box.

Encourage central office staff and school staff to become involved in civic opportunities.

**Possible Communication Tools:**

District newsletter to parents and the community that identifies student achievements,

school activities, and program information.

Online (current) All-School calendar of activities and events

Superintendent’s “Friday Notes”

Video Board Meetings

Video Superintendent’s Focus Group Meetings

Special event/activity brochures

District website (all items listed will be on district website)

Electronic signage where available

Building Level newsletters

Principals Newsletters

Phone Notification System

Emails to businesses and parents

Student Generated Newsletters

Gallatin County News “Back to School” issue

Superintendent’s Blog

Social Media

Gallatin County School District:

Outgoing Correspondence and Publications

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Types of Publications** | **Sent Out** | **Person Responsible** |
| **Central Office** | Local Newspaper  District Website  District Newsletter  Phone Notification System  Emails  Friday Notes  Social Media | As Needed  Updated Weekly  Bi-weekly  Sent out as needed  Sent out as needed  Weekly  As Needed | Supt/Designee  Asst Supt  Supt/Designee  Asst. Supt  Central Office Staff  Supt/Designee  Asst. Supt/Designee |
| **Gallatin County High School** | Marque  Newsletters  Month in Review Newsletter  Scripts for all events  Phone Notification System  Emails  School Website | Updated every Monday  Sent out weekly  Monthly  As needed  As needed  As needed  Updated every Monday | TBA |
| **Gallatin County Middle School** | Digital Sign  Phone Notification System  Emails  School Website  Newsletter | Updated every Monday  As needed  As needed  Updated every Monday  As Needed | TBA |
| **Gallatin County Upper Elementary School** | Newsletter  School Website  Digital Sign | Sent out Weekly  Updated every Monday  Updated every Monday | TBA |
| **Gallatin County Lower Elementary School** | Newsletter  Facebook  School Website  Exterior Sign | Sent out Weekly  Updated weekly  Updated every Monday  Updated weekly | TBA |