

Sample Outline for a Strategic Communication Action Plan

The following is an example of an outline for a strategic communication action plan for XXXX County Schools based on the recommendations from an NSPRA Communication Audit Report. The suggested goals were taken from the guiding principles, objectives and action steps detailed in the recommendations in the report. The plan also indicates which of the district's strategic directions (or goals) the communication goals most directly relate to.

Please note that this is an outline and not a complete plan, as there are sections that Communications Office staff and administrators need to address, such as budget, timelines, responsible parties and evaluation measures. Ongoing communication and public relations activities should also be added.

While this represents a substantial start on developing a comprehensive communication plan, it requires the input and direct involvement of XXXX County Schools staff and patrons in order to prepare a final plan.

Strategic Direction: Highest Student Achievement

Suggested Goal: Position XXXX County Schools as “the district of choice” for quality teaching, learning and student achievement.

Objectives

- **Develop clear, consistent messages that are delivered in “one clear voice.”**
Action steps:
 - ◆ Create a theme.
Target audience: Staff; parents; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
 - ◆ Develop key messages for staff, board and key communicators.
Target audience: Staff; board members; key communicators
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
 - ◆ Redesign and repackage basic information/marketing materials to create a “brand” image.
Target audience: Parents; community; students
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Develop marketing materials for Choice Plan that emphasize the district's core values and the unique attributes of each school.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Redesign the *Directory* as a marketing tool for choice.
Target audience: Parents; students
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Create marketing brochures.
Target audience: Parents; students
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Revise and update web site.
Target audience: Parents; students; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Expand cable television offerings.
Target audience: Parents; students; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Provide regular updates for school newsletters.
Target audience: Parents
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

Suggested Goal: Focus the communication efforts on engaging stakeholders to take action on behalf of students.

Objectives

- **Establish regular communication with the non-parent public.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Develop a publication for district residents.
Target audience: District taxpayers; business/community leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Provide news inserts for business/community publications.
Target audience: Business/community leaders and their employees
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Implement a “speakers bureau” for use by community and business organizations.
Target audience: Community/business leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Use Channel 14 to deliver information on a regular basis.
Target audience: General community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Initiate regular communication with local clergy.
Target audience: Faith community leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Improve communication with senior citizens.
Target audience: Senior taxpayers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- **Establish a Key Communicator Network.**
Action steps:
 - ◆ Identify influential parent, community and business leaders, including minority leaders.
Target audience: Administrators; board members; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
 - ◆ Invite identified key communicators to meet with the superintendent/area superintendents several times each year.
Target audience: Influential opinion leaders in the community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Resurrect and redesign *Friends of Education* newsletter to keep key communicators informed between meetings.
Target audience: Identified key communicators
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Investigate the possibility of sending *Friends of Education* electronically.
Target audience: Identified key communicators
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Establish a hotline or direct contact for key communicators to clarify information or head off rumors.
Target audience: Identified key communicators
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Expand district cable television programming.**
Action steps:
 - ◆ Improve distribution of programming schedule to a broader audience.
Target audience: Parents; staff; students; cable customers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

 - ◆ Increase programming related to the Choice Plan.
Target audience: Parents; students
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

 - ◆ Use Leadership Technology equipment to research viewer interest in specific topics.
Target audience: Parents; cable customers; business/community leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

 - ◆ Produce more PSAs and infomercials highlighting students and schools.
Target audience: Parents; students; cable customers; business/community leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Evaluate feasibility of using Channel 14 for staff development and inservice.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Expand and improve the district web site.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Redesign homepage for easier navigation by users.
Target audience: Parents; community; potential employees; web surfers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Update information on a regular basis (weekly or bi-weekly).
Target audience: Parents; community; potential employees; web surfers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Make publications available online in PDF format.
Target audience: Parents; community; potential employees; web surfers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Include marketing components (for schools, recruitment, Choice Plan).
Target audience: Parents; students; potential employees
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Provide a page to respond to rumors and myths circulating in the community and promote the web site as a source of accurate information.
Target audience: Parents; staff; community; key communicators
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Continue to develop a “shared leadership” style across the district.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Close the communication loop on all projects by explaining rationale for actions and result of efforts.
Target audience: Staff; parents; taxpayers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Solicit input and conduct research before making important decisions. Leadership Technology equipment and focus groups can be used.
Target audience: Staff; parents; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Continue to develop public engagement/outreach strategies.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Hold town halls or forums regionally.
Target audience: Parents; community; business leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Hold study circles on “hot topics.”
Target audience: Parents; staff; community; business leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Provide opportunities for public input that don’t require attendance at a meeting.
Target audience: Parents; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Develop collaborative partnerships with county agencies.
Target audience: County service agencies
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Encourage administrative staff involvement in civic and service organizations.
Target audience: Administrators
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Develop outreach programs to distribute information and gain feedback on issues impacting facilities.
Target audience: Parents; minority community members; civic leaders; faith community leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Build partnerships with ethnic agencies.
Target audience: Minority community members; civic leaders; faith community leaders
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Provide visual signs of welcome and appreciation of diversity at schools..
Target audience: Students; parents
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

Strategic Direction: Effective Efficient Operation

Suggested Goal: Create an annual, strategic communication plan.

Objectives

- **Develop communication goals designed to improve and integrate effective communication at all levels and that are tied to the district's strategic directions.**
Action steps:
 - ◆ Involve the Strategic Communications Advisory Committee in defining the communication program and developing specific goals and action steps.
Target audience: Administration; board; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
 - ◆ Determine a plan format based on the four-step public relations process of research, planning and assessment, communication and evaluation.
Target audience: Administration; board; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
 - ◆ Establish a process to review and update the plan on a regular basis.
Target audience: Administration; board; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Create individual communication plans for any major initiatives or changes in district programs or practices.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Assess communication needs and how they relate to the district's strategic directions and the overall strategic communication plan as new efforts arise.
Target audience: Administration; board; staff; Strategic Communications Advisory Committee
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Conduct regular research and evaluation components on communication efforts.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Use the Leadership Technology Group survey equipment to assess staff and community attitudes.
Target audience: Staff; parents; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Continue opinion polling on a regular basis.
Target audience: Taxpayers
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Conduct readership surveys of staff and parent publications.
Target audience: Staff; parents
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

Suggested Goal: Make school building-level communication the major thrust of the communication effort.

Objectives

- **Expand and improve school newsletters.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Develop graphics standards.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Train school staff in use of the district *Stylebook* and how to prepare an effective newsletter.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Conduct readership surveys of school newsletters.
Target audience: Parents
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Prepare brief updates on district news that can be placed in all school newsletters.
Target audience: Parents; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Investigate different ways to distribute school newsletters to a broader audience.
Target audience: Neighborhood residents; local businesses
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- **Develop communication protocols.**
Action steps:
 - ◆ Create a committee of staff and parents to develop guidelines for e-mail and voice mail communications.
Target audience: Parents; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
 - ◆ Evaluate the use of automated answering systems to determine effectiveness and impact on customer service.
Target audience: Parents; community
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

Suggested Goal: Internal communication must be a priority.

Objectives

- **Improve internal communication.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Evaluate effectiveness and readership of *Topics* and revise to make it more timely and useful to staff.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Investigate feasibility of an electronic newsletter for staff.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Ensure all staff receive complete information and receive the same information.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Increase opportunities for face-to-face communication with staff.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Maximize use of voice mail for distributing time sensitive or critical information to staff.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:
- ◆ Develop a standard procedure for reporting the outcome of meetings involving staff.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Develop a *Management Memo* for building communications.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Celebrate staff contributions and efforts.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Emphasize the role of employees as “Ambassadors for Education.”**

Action steps:

- ◆ Develop an ambassador component for new employee orientation, both certified and classified.
Target audience: New employees
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Provide inservice and review ambassador role with all staff on a regular basis.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Recognize employee efforts as ambassadors.
Target audience: Administrators; staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Evaluate the use of internal e-mail.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Create a committee that includes staff who represents the use groups of both e-mail systems (Places and Outlook Express) to assess the problems associated with having two e-mail systems in the district and research possible solutions.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Have the committee develop guidelines for internal use of e-mail.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Assess and address staff access to e-mail.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- **Provide communication inservice training for staff.**

Action steps:

- ◆ Develop a series of employee communication workshops and market them to staff.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures:

- ◆ Provide incentive for staff to attend communication workshops.
Target audience: Staff
Budget:
Timeline:
Responsible persons:
Evaluation measures: