



RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNICATION PLAN

Board Approved: November 25, 2019

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the River Valley School District Communication Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our school community. The plan addresses two types of school community audiences: internal (students, teachers, support staff, administration and Board of Education) and external (parents, community members, businesses, community organizations and other members of the River Valley school community).

Strategic Plan Summary 2018 - 2023

Mission Statement

Provide a quality education to all students.

Vision Statement

All River Valley Students will demonstrate Mustang PRIDE.

Belief Statements

We believe...

*Do Our Best
Care For Others
Love Our School*

*Preparation
Respect
Integrity
Dependability
Effort*

Strategic Plan Focus Areas

- Academics/Programs
- Learning Environment/Culture
- Personnel/Leadership
- Operations
- Communications/Community Engagement

OBJECTIVE

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

1. Clarify the District flow of information

Distribute the chain of command chart and procedures to the community showing who should be contacted to address a specific issue. This is distributed in the August District newsletter. Provide a quick reference guide to staff indicating who should be contacted regarding a specific issue. This is distributed to staff prior to the start of the school year.

2. Promote the flow of relevant information regarding District matters to all District staff.

Provide information in a timely manner to all employees regarding District meetings, security/safety issues, press releases and other relevant information. Methods of communication will be by email, School Messenger, memorandums and face-to-face meetings.

3. **Promote the flow of timely and relevant District information from the District to the community.**

Provide information in a timely manner to all community members regarding District activities and events, and other relevant and pertinent information. Methods of communication will be by community calendar, District newsletter, electronic signs, building newsletters, District website, School Messenger and face-to-face community meetings.

4. **Promote the flow of information and feedback from the community to the District.**

Provide opportunities for community members to provide ideas and suggestions regarding District operations. Encourage parents to actively participate on district-wide committees. Conduct electronic surveys at the district and building levels.

5. **Promote the successes of students and staff to the community.**

Highlight the accomplishments of students and staff to the community by utilizing the various methods of communication employed by the District, such as District and Building newsletters and social media.

6. **Promote the visibility of staff in the community and at community events.**

Encourage staff to participate in community events and otherwise be visible in the community. District media publications will highlight the participation of staff and students in community events.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

River Valley School District utilizes a variety of methods to communicate with staff and the school community. Depending upon the topic, multiple methods can be utilized concurrently.

District Website: The District website provides a variety of information and resources including news and updates, staff directories, job postings, calendars, bylaws and policies, reports and forms, and other pertinent resources.

District Calendar: The District calendar is published in August and mailed out to all postal patrons in our District. Community businesses and organizations have the opportunity to place an ad in the calendar. The calendar includes District and community events, staff directory and other information.

Social Media: The District and Athletics Facebook pages are maintained by the building administrators. The administrators work together to post timely and relevant Information, reminders and celebrations about our students, staff and district. Building administrators will monitor comments from the Facebook community, and will promptly remove negative comments. (See Attachment A)

District/Building Newsletters: The District newsletter is published four times a year in August, November, February and May. The newsletter is mailed out to all postal patrons and also posted on our District website. Building newsletters are emailed through a listserv on a weekly basis. The newsletters include a variety of information including informational updates, calendar of events, highlights and student celebrations.

School Messenger: School Messenger is the mass notification system utilized by the District. This system is used to notify staff and parents of school closings due to weather, lockdown notifications and general announcements.

Email: This is the most common form of communication used to communicate internally among district staff. This communication is also often used to communicate between staff and parents. Staff are requested to respond to emails within a 24-hour period, and to keep the email communication short. Any communication beyond a paragraph should be communicated either by phone or in person. Summaries of District meetings are communicated to all staff by email.

Telephone: Telephone communication among district staff, and between staff and parents is encouraged when the topic is time and/or subject sensitive. Staff are requested to respond to voicemails within a 24-hour period. Instructional staff are asked to maintain a telephone log of any communication with parents.

Face-to-Face: In person communication is encouraged whenever the topic is sensitive or difficult. This type of communication has the ability to yield more comprehensive outcomes than can be achieved through email or telephone communication.

Text Messages and Messenger: Text messaging and messenger is a common form of communication in today's 'technology rich' environment among students, parents and staff. However, staff are discouraged from using this form of communication with parents in regard to school business. Additionally, staff should never use this type of communication with students. Text and Messenger communication that pertain to school business are subject to FOIA and FERPA regulations, and must be produced by the individual when requested. This pertains to communication that occurs with personal devices as well as District-owned equipment.

STRATEGIES

- **Keep communications simple.** Use clear, concise and non-educational jargon when communicating with diverse audiences. Translate communication when appropriate for various language groups. Review social media posts to ensure that all diverse audiences clearly understand the message.
- **Keep communication brief and to the point.** To maintain the attention of the audience, be brief and to the point. Use bullet points to emphasize important points.
- **Communicate early and often.** When an issue arises, it is best practice to initiate communication early and to provide relevant updates until the issue is resolved.
- **Communicate face-to-face.** The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate in person. It is critical that staff does not 'hide' behind email communication during difficult situations.
- **Emphasize customer service.** It is important for staff to be responsive to the needs of our school community. It is critical for our school community to feel that they had an opportunity to express their concerns and that they have been listened to. It is important that staff are never dismissive, and that they don't make promises that cannot be delivered.
- **Look ahead to potential issues.** Whenever possible, try to anticipate potential issues that may develop and work on possible solutions when feasible.

REVIEW

This communication plan will be reviewed and revised by appropriate staff on an annual basis.

Attachment A

Board Policy 7544 (Use of Social Media) addresses the use of social media by District employees and includes the following:

- “The District recognizes that employees may use social media for personal, as well as professional reasons. The District neither encourages nor discourages employees’ use of social media for personal purposes. The District regulates employees’ use of social media for purposes related to their District assignment to the same extent as it regulates any other form of employee communication in that regard.”
- “Employees who access District-approved social media platforms are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner. Students, parents, and members of the general public who access District-approved social media platforms are similarly expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous, and civil manner.”
- “The District is committed to protecting the privacy rights of students, parents/guardians, staff, volunteers, Board members, and other individuals on District-approved social media sites. District employees are prohibited from posting or releasing confidential information about students, employees, volunteers, or District operations through social media, without appropriate consent (i.e. express written consent from the parent of a student, the affected employee or volunteer, or the Superintendent concerning District operations).”
- “Employees are prohibited from posting or engaging in communication that violates State or Federal law, Board policies, or administrative procedures. If an employee/volunteer’s communication interferes with his/her ability to effectively perform his/her job, or violates State or Federal law, Board policies, or administrative procedures, the District may impose disciplinary action and/or refer the matter to appropriate law enforcement authorities.”

Administrative Guideline 7544 (Use of Social Media) addresses the recommended practices for District employees’ personal use of social media, and includes the following:

- “Staff members serve as role models in this community and are responsible for modeling and teaching high standards of decency and civic values. As such, they are expected to display model character both on and off the worksite; this includes any material they post on personal websites and other social media networks, such as Facebook and Instagram.”
- “Employees who use social media for personal purposes are responsible for the content on their personal pages, including content added by the employee, the employee’s friends, or members of the public who can access and/or contribute to the employee’s page. Employees are further responsible for website links on their pages. Employees are cautioned to maintain privacy settings that are appropriate to the content and intended audience.”
- “If a staff member posts messages or pictures that diminish the employee’s professionalism or discredits the employee’s capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents, the employee’s ability to effectively perform his/her job may be impaired.”
- “Employees should avoid posting text, images, photos, or videos that involve hate speech, nudity, obscenity, or that encourages or depicts bullying, discrimination, sexually explicit or violent conduct, or other illegal conduct/activity, including the inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs. They should also refrain from engaging in communication or conduct that is harassing, threatening, libelous, or defamatory.”
- “An employee whose personal use of social media interferes with the employee’s ability to effectively perform his/her jobs may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.”