

Past CommunicationPlus articles

Celebrate seniors: Tips for social media and local recognition

Graduation is a rite of passage for students. It is cause for immense celebration and should be marked with an appropriate level of fanfare. Here are tips for maximizing your district's graduation events.

Refresher for in-person graduation events: Sample scripts

Some schools haven't had an in-person graduation ceremony since 2019. This outline provides a helpful refresher for setting up and facilitating this important event.

Responding to requests for public records

Transparency in public school operations is not just a goal but a legal requirement. Parents and community members have the right to access certain district records, but excessive or complicated requests can be a burden to fulfill. Read tips for responding to these requests in a timely and efficient manner.

Tips for planning your district's next event

Well-planned events can leave attendees with a sense of connection and confidence, but the extra work to schedule, coordinate and host an event can overwhelm already busy staff. Here are tips to help you cover the basics and plan a successful event.

Insights for Parents: Help students get ready for finals week

Final exams can be stressful, even for younger students. Help your child minimize and manage stress related to finals with these test preparation tips.

2022-23 key dates for school calendars

The annual list of key dates for the school year includes interesting and important events to help plan the school calendar for 2022-23.

Follow your vision, mission and goals

Strategic planning shouldn't be just an exercise in reviewing and revising district goals. It should yield a useful road map and be a team-building opportunity. A key outcome could be a vision statement that can summarize your district's priorities and be a source of pride for staff members

The value of in-person communication

Digital communication is modern, fast and easy. It has a wide reach and is an efficient way to reach a large group, but it can be impersonal. Sometimes you need to reach people face to face to build and nurture connections. Here are some tips to connect with people in person.

When to market and when to engage

Marketing and public relations are similar but not the same. Public relations is an ongoing effort to engage and communicate with specific audiences. Marketing is an attempt to reach an audience and influence them to take a specific action. Many school district staff members fill both functions. This refresher clarifies the differences between these roles.

Insights for Parents: Are your kids respectful at school?

It's been a tough few years for kids, parents and educators. Kids have reported feeling anxious and depressed, which is unhealthy for them and can manifest in difficult behavior at school. Family therapists recommend a simple but effective solution: family dinners.

An informed staff is essential to crisis communication

Staff should be at the top of the list when a district shares information, but they often are overlooked during crises. Be sure your district's internal and crisis communications plans include all staff —

licensed, administrative and support. It is important that everyone understands who is included, what the decisions are and why they have been made.

Apology-writing tips and how to make the most of a mistake

Mistakes are inevitable, but good leaders demonstrate high-quality leadership with thoughtful, sincere responses to errors. Be sure to acknowledge what went wrong and what changes may be implemented to avoid repeating the mistake in the future. Include your team in the planning process.

Developing empathy as a board member

The pandemic has created stress, anxiety and disruption, and schools have become a flashpoint of emotions for staff, students and parents. A Washington state board chair shares a reflection on the challenges she's heard of and seen during this time.

Understanding the budget process

Budget reports are among the most important documents in a district, but they can be hard to understand. Read these tips to help simplify the budget process and report to ensure that your community can participate in the process and support district efforts.

Why email still is an effective way to reach people

Does email seem like an old-fashioned communication tool? This tried-and-true method of reaching people should still have a place in your communication plan. Read tips and best practices to use email effectively for your goals.

Insights for Parents: Recognize and stop virtual bullies

Bullying has long been a problem that continues to threaten students' well-being, even during virtual instruction. Parents should watch for changes in children's behavior and routines. Tips are included to minimize risks that your child will be bullied or be a bully.

Increasing visibility to improve trust

Is your district's brand recognizable and trustworthy? Increasing familiarity with the good work of schools will improve both. Districts can maintain or improve brand recognition and trust with consistency. Here are some tips to increase visibility and build a positive brand.

Inviting people into schools

Schools and districts need good relationships with community members. Relationship building results in good partnerships for student opportunities and goodwill during crises. To build these meaningful connections with your community members, invite them into schools. Plan now for ways to show them your programs and operations.

Resources for new and reelected school board members

School board service can be challenging. This important job is complex, but there are resources to help ensure a collaborative and productive experience. Here is a list of training recommendations and expert sources that may help new or reelected board members start strong or maximize continuing service.

Schools boards: Understanding your role is critical in a crisis

School board service is an important job with a clear advisory role. This elected body hires district leaders, sets priorities and adopts policy. The superintendent, meanwhile, is charged with implementation and management. A clear understanding of these roles is critical. Read about the roles of elected officials and district leaders to ensure smooth school operations.

Tips for building a social media presence

By now, most people and organizations have a basic social media presence. Here is a primer to expand or improve your district's social media strategy.

Insights for Parents: Kids need mental health help

The pandemic is yielding data on the effects of the illness, isolation and social changes. Further studies are finding patterns about the health of children and teens. So far, it is not encouraging. Doctors say mental health among young people is suffering. Here are tips for parents and children to alleviate the mental health toll on younger generations.

Accreditation in public relations: What it is and why it matters

An Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) is a valuable certification that will demonstrate professionalism, high-level skills and credibility. It is a recognized industry credential, and it offers professional development that will help improve your practice. Read more about how it can help you and how to get started earning your APR.

Keep families engaged with an easy-to-use website

It's a good idea to review your website periodically to ensure that it is a functional tool for engaging and updating families about important programs and decisions. Check your navigation, internal links, design responsiveness and accessibility to be sure your website is serving the needs of your users.

What is your professional development plan?

Professional development opportunities are a requirement of most jobs. They also are an important benefit in helping staff grow professionally, which enhances confidence in work skills. Staff should be encouraged to think about what they want and need from additional training, and then build a plan to achieve it.

What should you put in your newsletters?

Newsletters are a tried-and-true way to share information. This traditional communication tool is still a relevant part of a good communications plan that provides targeted, regular, easy-to-access information. Read a list of essential information and ideas to keep your newsletters fresh.