

# **NSPRA Communication Audit Report**

*Cleveland City Schools  
January 2023*



National School Public Relations Association  
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# Communication Audit Team

- **Communication auditor:**

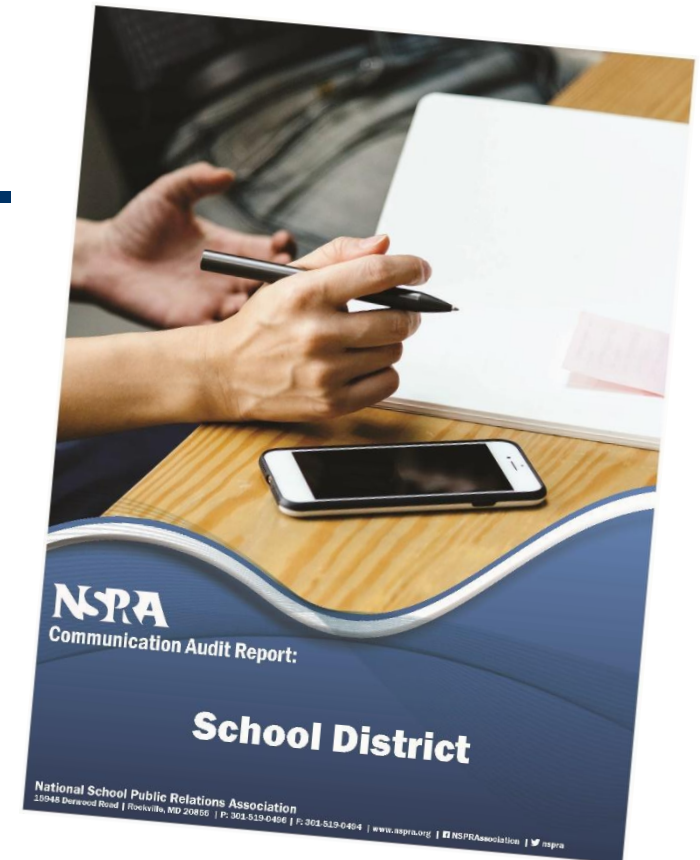
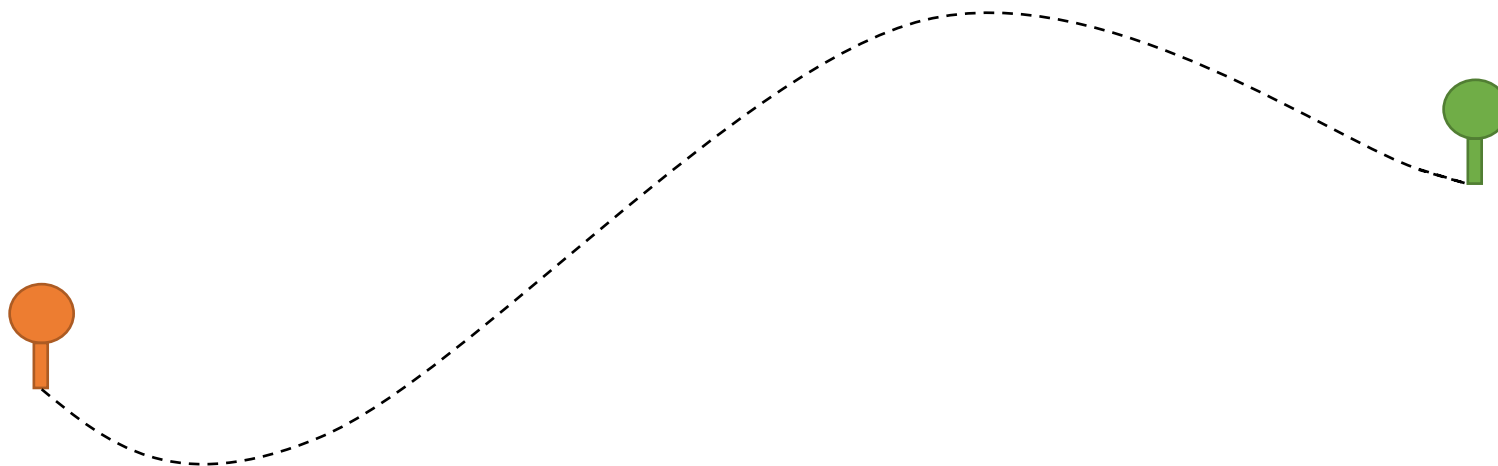
- Elise Shelton  
Lead Auditor

- **NSPRA executive staff:**

- Barbara Hunter, APR  
Executive Director
- Mellissa Braham, APR  
Associate Director

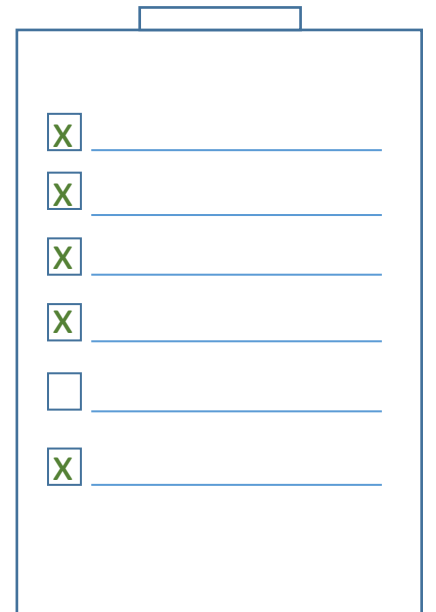
# What is an NSPRA Communication Audit?

**An NSPRA Communication Audit  
is your communication program GPS.**



# What is an NSPRA Communication Audit?

- **A comprehensive assessment** of current communication efforts and the effectiveness of the overall program.
- **A snapshot of current perceptions** about your schools, district and leadership.
- **A tool that provides baseline research** to evaluate progress and a framework for developing your communication plan.



A graphic of a clipboard with a checklist. The clipboard has a white sheet of paper with a blue border. At the top, there is a small blue tab. The checklist consists of six horizontal lines, each preceded by a small square box. The first four boxes contain a green 'X', the fifth box is empty, and the sixth box contains a green 'X'.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____

# Communication Audit in CCS

## • Review of district materials:

- Digital publications
- Policies, goals, reports, etc.
- Programs
- Media coverage
- Websites
- Social media
- ... and more!



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### Media Guidelines



## City schools recognized for CTE programs

From STAFF REPORTS  
Posted 8/2/22

Cleveland City Schools recently was recognized for its Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs during the CTE

Cleveland City Schools Action Plan - Goal Four	
YEAR: 2020-2025	
Finalized: May	
Board Goal:	COMMUNICATIONS: Cleveland City Schools will communicate with all stakeholders and the media through effective and efficient mediums.
Rationale:	Establish a brand identity that builds upon the established image of Cleveland City Schools.
	Codify and establish protocols around using the logos and marks of Cleveland City Schools while establishing guidelines for communicating on behalf of the school system.
	Be more intentional and purposeful with Cleveland City School's communication with internal and external stakeholders.
	Ensure that Cleveland City Schools complies with federal mandates by communicating with NELB families that will encourage participation and understanding of their student's educational and emotional needs.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Rollout of new logo and website. 100% update of branding in all places (e.g., letterhead, signs, email communication, business cards, etc.)
2. Publication of a communications playbook that encompasses branding and communications guidelines.
3. Effective consolidation of social media accounts.
4. Increased budget and staffing for NELB families.
5. Installation of digital signage at every school and 100% training on usage to schools.
6. Establishment of a weekly newsletter to all staff.



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### VISUAL STYLE GUIDE

# Communication Audit in CCS

## •SCoPE Survey

- Aug. 22 – Sept. 6, 2022
- Faculty/staff, parent/families, community

Stakeholder Group	Total Questions*	Total Population	# Surveys Completed	Margin of Error** Achieved	Margin of Error** Target
Faculty/Staff	49	845	359	$\pm 4\%$	$\pm 5\%$
Parent/Family	55	5,962	639	$\pm 3.7\%$	$\pm 5\%$
Community	40	47,955	45	$\pm 14.9\%$	$\pm 10\%$

\*Questions on a 1-5 Likert scale

\*\*Using industry standard equation for reliability



# Communication Audit in CCS

- **Interviews:** Individually with director of schools, chief of staff, communications coordinator, 7 board members
- **Focus groups with key stakeholders**
  - September 2022
  - 10 focus groups:
    - ☐ Parents   ☐ Teachers   ☐ Supervisors/Assistant Principals
    - ☐ Students   ☐ Community members   ☐ Non-teaching staff
    - ☐ Central Office administrators   ☐ Principals
    - ☐ Secretaries/Administrative assistants   ☐ Students

# **Key Findings:**

## **Stakeholders' Perceptions of CCS**

- **Students are placed front and center.**
- **Strong academic options are offered.**
- **There is program variety for diverse student body.**
- **Diversity of student body is seen as a strength.**
- **There is a lack of information about financial priorities.**



# **Key Findings:**

## **Stakeholders' Perceptions of CCS**

- **There are frustrations with last-minute notifications on time-sensitive announcements.**
- **Multiple tools and apps can be confusing for parents.**
- **The website and app are seen as unhelpful.**
- **There are communication challenges with non-English speaking parents.**

# **Key Findings:**

## **Stakeholders' Perceptions of CCS**

- **Employees appreciate family atmosphere and collaboration among peers.**
- **Employees expressed concerns regarding internal communication, specifically:**
  - Volume/Redundancy
  - Clarity
  - Consistency
  - Delivery method
- **Board decisions/actions are a challenge to find.**

# **Observations:**

## **Auditor's Observations of CCS**

- High quality of teaching and learning opportunities for student success.**
- Strong feeling of community spirit.**
- Positive support for student diversity.**
- Newly hired communications coordinator making strides in sharing communications.**

# **Observations:**

## **Auditor's Observations of CCS**

- There currently is no comprehensive strategic communication plan and brand identity is missing.**
- Employees want more involvement/communication around decisions affecting their work.**
- Website improvements are needed.**
- There are opportunities for improvement in crisis communication.**

# **Observations:**

## **Auditor's Observations of CCS**

- Finding more effective ways to communicate with non-English speakers is a high priority.**
- The timing and tools used to deliver messages to parents and staff has been confusing.**
- Based on feedback and analytics, social media isn't stakeholders' "go-to" for information.**

# Recommendation #1

- **Develop a strategic communication plan.**
  - Action Step 1.1 – Use four-step model for plan.
  - Action Step 1.2 – Identify strategies for engagement.
  - Action Step 1.3 – Include proactive issues management.
  - Action Step 1.4 – Define, identify and market CCS brand.

# Recommendation #2

- **Develop and implement strategies to keep staff members informed and engaged.**
  - Action Step 2.1 – Inform staff first, whenever possible.
  - Action Step 2.2 – Create opportunities to give input.
  - Action Step 2.3 – Gather and use input.
  - Action Step 2.4 – See support staff as frontline communicators.
  - Action Step 2.5 – Establish communication protocols.



# Recommendation #3

- **Update and improve navigation on the district website.**

- Action Step 3.1 – Identify website needs.
- Action Step 3.2 – Test user experience.
- Action Step 3.3 – Use website to market CCS.
- Action Step 3.4 – Ensure accessibility for all users.
- Action Step 3.5 – Create a website task force.
- Action Step 3.6 – Enhance the mobile appl.

# Recommendation #4

- **Develop a robust crisis communication plan.**
  - Action Step 4.1 – Specify team responsibilities.
  - Action Step 4.2 – Prepare and train.
  - Action Step 4.3 – Increase transparency and outreach.
  - Action Step 4.4 – Integrate social media.
  - Action Step 4.5 – Involve community agencies.

# Recommendation #5

- **Increase methods for effectively reaching non-English speakers**
  - Action Step 5.1 – Create key communicators network.
  - Action Step 5.2 – Increase bilingual versions of materials.
  - Action Step 5.3 – Expand media partnerships.

# Recommendation #6

- **Expand and enhance Board of Education communications.**
  - Action Step 6.1 – Update policy on communication.
  - Action Step 6.2 – Report meeting summaries promptly.
  - Action Step 6.3 – Enhance website presence.
  - Action Step 6.4 – Create public dialogue opportunities.

# Recommendation #7

- **Expand opportunities for community engagement**
  - Action Step 7.1 – Start key communicator network.
  - Action Step 7.2 – Open avenues for input.
  - Action Step 7.3 – Create and implement visibility plan.
  - Action Step 7.4 – Roll out CCS leadership program.

# Recommendation #8

- **Continue to refine the district's social media presence and engage more stakeholders.**
  - Action Step 8.1 – Tailor platform to audience.
  - Action Step 8.2 – Continue to engage with content.
  - Action Step 8.3 – Encourage stakeholder engagement.
  - Action Step 8.4 – Set protocols for social media response.
  - Action Step 8.5 – Increase the use of video.

# Benchmarking Against Communication Best Practices Nationwide

- **Measures how district is doing compared to standards of excellence in school public relations**, as outlined in NSPRA's *Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures*

Critical Function Area	Rating Based on <i>Rubrics</i>
Comprehensive Professional Communication Program	Emerging
Internal Communications	Emerging/Established
Parent/Family Communications	Emerging/Established
Branding/Marketing Communications	Emerging
Crisis Communications	Emerging/Established
Bond/Finance Communications	Emerging

Possible Ratings: Emerging, Established, Exemplary



# Considerations for Implementation

- **Team effort:**

- Recommendations go beyond what can be achieved by communications staff alone.

- **Long-term effort:**

- Introduce new components when budget, resources, staff capacity allow.
- While maintaining existing programs, may not be feasible to undertake more than 2-3 major recommendations in a year.



# Questions?

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