



District Communication Plan 2019

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Winchendon Public Schools

Communication Plan

The purpose of the Winchendon Public Schools Communications 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 Winchendon Public Schools (WPS). The plan primarily addresses two types of school district audiences:

Internal

- Students
- Teachers
- Para-Educators
- Support Staff Employees
- Administrators
- School Committee

External

- Parents
- Business Community
- Senior Citizens Groups
- Faith-based Groups
- Community Groups
- Electronic Media—Website, Email, Facebook, Twitter, television, etc.
- Print Media—newsletters, newspapers, flyers, etc.
- Residents of the District
- Educational Institutes (i.e. MWCC, Winchendon School, FSU, Franklin Pierce, etc.)
- Parent-Teacher Organizations
- Elected Officials
- Social workers/fire/police/first responders
- Neighboring School Districts
- Prospective residents of the District

Objective

Our objective is to improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open, two-way communication between the School Committee, administration, faculty, staff, students, parents and the Winchendon Community.

1. Clarify district flow of information

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

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

- a. Provide continuing training sessions as part of Principals' meetings on how to train teachers and staff to communicate their school's message
- b. Supply administrators with fact sheets and other easy-to-use communications tools as needed when issues arise
- c. Provide communications training sessions to site-level staff

3. Provide regular information on district-wide issues

- a. Distribute information from meetings on need-to-know basis
- b. Distribute all external publications and news releases to all employees via postings on website
- c. Issue short, bulleted FYI sheets to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern
- d. Utilize Winchendon's TV station to deliver messages to the community, both internal and external

4. **Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents/community to the district**
 - a. Encourage community members to sign up for district-wide email notices on Winchendon website
 - b. Conduct parent surveys to obtain feedback on flow of information
 - c. Offer community meeting opportunities to receive input.
 - e. Expand use of the Parent Portal to facilitate communication between parents and schools
5. **Publish and distribute informational pieces (via website)**
 - a. District/School Informational Brochures
 - b. Superintendent newsletter to be published monthly
 - c. Budget documents, brochures, etc.
 - d. Press releases, as needed
 - e. Informational items, i.e. job listings, events, etc.
6. **Communicate with civic, community and religious groups**
 - a. Include groups in mailings
 - b. Attend community meetings, as needed, to provide information
 - c. Provide district communications materials to key leaders
 - d. Develop partnerships with groups
 - e. Develop program for touring district that includes tours of schools and facilities. Participants could include senior citizen groups, community members, civic leaders, prospective employees, etc. Tours will be conducted by appropriate staff members, and will vary depending on needs.
7. **Be visible in the community**
 - a. Attend community organization meetings
 - b. Encourage participation in local service clubs
 - c. Host WPS “town hall” meetings or forums when appropriate

- d. Encourage staff to speak positively about WPS schools to friends, neighbors and community acquaintances
- e. Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups
- f. Encourage staff attendance at athletic and extracurricular events
- g. Participate in community events such as job fairs, parades, “Back to School” events, Relay for Life, etc.
- h. Develop partnerships with faith-based community

8. Highlight Faculty/Staff Accomplishments

- a. “I Am Winchendon Public Schools” Ads to run in daily paper monthly
- b. “Blue Devil Cool” award to faculty/staff; promoting accomplishments and/or exceptional service, through internal monthly newsletter
- c. Present “Teaching Highlight” at School Committee meetings on monthly basis
- d. Recognize faculty/staff accomplishments at School Committee meetings
- e. Highlight staff with articles in local newspaper and on local television stations

Strategies

1) Keep Communications Simple

- Use clear, concise and non-educational style for all publications
- Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences
- Translate communication pieces when appropriate for various language groups

2) Provide Timely Information

- Provide information sheets on key WPS topics of interest such as the district’s budget, Back to School, School Cancellations, etc. Update as needed
- Have key information available online for quick reference

3) Communicate Early and Often

- Provide information when appropriate to send out to principals, department heads, curriculum leaders, teachers and other employees 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
- Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate

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

- Develop Customer Service guidelines for all WPS employees
- Provide Customer Service training for all employee groups
- Reward exceptional customer service with the "BLUE DEVIL COOL" Award and "kudo" messages from supervisors

7) Train Staff

- Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors, and people in the community has a direct impact on how Winchendon Public Schools are perceived
- Engage staff in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately, as they are the best link to parents and the community.

8) Develop Relationships with our Community

- Develop key communicator groups and deliver message to them as needed. They will take the message to the community more effectively than district personnel
- Maintain a high level of visibility for the district through participation of key staff in various professional and community activities
- Ask for input on areas of concern

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. Don’t use education lingo when preparing messages.
- Prepare stories in formats that match those used by the local media

Methods

We will identify the communication tools that are most widely accepted and preferred by the community. Our current communications methods include, but are not limited to:

1) Publications Posted Online

The district can save money and time by continuing to provide the majority of our printed materials on our district's website, thus moving away from paper communications. On-line examples include payroll schedules, pay scales, and WPS budget.

- Winchendon Public Schools Reports
- Winchendon Courier
- "BLUE DEVIL COOL" Ads
- WPS Information Brochure
- Strategic Plan Booklet
- Inclement Weather Brochure
- Budget Booklet

2) Direct E-mail Communication

WPS uses e-mail communications to connect with both internal and external audiences.

- Weekly memos from the Superintendent to the School Committee

3) Website

The district's website should be utilized as the key marketing tool. It should be kept up-to-date and include pertinent information for both internal and external publics, i.e. Budget information, Back to School information, School Cancellations, events, etc.

Prospective employees will be able to apply online for positions within Winchendon Public Schools.

4) Cable Television

School Committee meetings will continue to be aired live on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. on public access channel 8.

Future possibilities:

- Live broadcasts and replays of graduation, football games, events, etc.
- School Committee streamed live via the Web.

Assessment and Accountability

Being that 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.
- **Focus groups** - will be conducted in groups of six to ten people to collect qualitative information as needed.
- **Surveys** - electronic surveys will be used to ascertain people's opinion and to collect quantitative information.
- **Website** - will be used to monitor feedback from community, both internal and external
- **Interpersonal Contact** - Informal "word-of-mouth" surveys will be conducted to gauge the level of effectiveness of the Communications Plan.

The Communications Plan will be reviewed and updated as deemed necessary by the administration, Superintendent and/or School Committee.