



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

SAN CARLOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

OUR PHILOSOPHY

"It is our purpose at the San Carlos School District to create within our students a sense of self, family, and community to prepare them for their role in our world.

As an extension of the community, this school district seeks to nurture a well-rounded individual who is aware of his/her value to self and others."



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In an emergency situation such as a fire or a flood, communication with the school community will need to be done quickly, clearly and efficiently. An Emergency Plan is available for this purpose and is contained in a separate document.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

SAN CARLOS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PURPOSE

The purpose of the San Carlos Unified School District (SCUSD) Communications Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for future communications with our school community. Our goal is to inspire confidence in our school district by raising awareness of our activities, our plans for continual improvement, and our dedication to student achievement. The plan primarily addresses two types of school district audiences: **internal** (students, teachers, staff, administration, and the governing board) and **external** (parents, community members, and the media).

Communication is a team effort; we all have opportunities to make others aware of what we are doing here at SCUSD to ensure that our students are successful. In our roles as community members and leaders, we are able to shape the image of the school district and ensure that the community is informed about our activities.

The Community Relations Officer/Communications Officer will implement and manage community relations and publications and offer leadership on all communication services and strategies under the direct supervision of the Superintendent. The Communications Officer will be available to staff as well as to the broader community, open to new ideas and suggestions for future projects, and will act as a liaison between SCUSD and the community.

RESULTS OF COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

In order to create communication goals and objectives for the San Carlos Unified School District, we conducted a district-wide communications audit. The audit's purpose was to gauge our communication strengths and weaknesses and determine what our communication priorities should be. The audit consisted of a survey containing the following questions:

1. How do you feel the SCUSD is viewed by the community of San Carlos?
2. Do you feel that you know what is going on at your school?
3. Do you feel that you know what is going on at other schools in the district?
4. How often do you hear about activities going on at your school?
5. How often do you hear about activities going on at other schools in the district?
6. How often do you read positive stories about SCUSD in the newspaper?
7. Are there enough stories about SCUSD or its schools in the newspapers?
8. Are you aware of who the SCUSD Communications Officer is and where she is located?
9. Are you aware of what the communications plan is in case of an emergency (fire or flood)?
10. How often do you use the school website as a source for school information?
11. How often do you use Channel 11 as a source for school information?
12. Are you aware of SCUSD's ALERT NOW system?
13. What do you feel are our greatest communication needs, and how can we meet them?

These questions were to be answered using a 1-5 rating scale with 5 being high and were designed for the following purposes:

- to gauge the perception of SCUSD among staff as well as the community
- to gauge whether our communication priorities are aligned with those of SCUSD's staff and the community
- to gauge awareness and effectiveness of our various media tools
- to gauge intra-district communication as well as our communication with the community

We received the following responses:

Overall perception of SCUSD:

On the 1-5 rating scale, 65% of respondents gave the community's view of SCUSD a rating of 3 and 35% gave a rating of 2.

Awareness of activities:

Respondents felt like they knew some of what was going on at their school, with 35% giving a rating of 3, 30% giving a rating of 4 or 5 and 35% giving a rating of 1 or 2. Asked how often they hear about activities going on at their school, 59% gave a rating of 1 or 2.

Respondents generally did not feel like they knew what was going on at other schools, with 47% giving a rating of 1 and 100% giving a rating of 3 or below. Asked how often they hear about activities going on at other schools in the district, 59% gave a rating of 1 and 100% gave a rating of 3 or below.

Media coverage:

Asked how often they read positive stories about SCUSD in the area newspapers, 59% of respondents gave a rating of 2, with 35% giving a rating of 3 or 4. The majority of respondents would like to read more about SCUSD in the newspapers with 76% of respondents giving a rating of 3 or below when asked if there were enough stories.

Additionally, comments from teachers indicated an interest in increasing academic coverage relative to the coverage of sports.

Communication tools:

The majority of respondents, 65%, indicated that they were aware of who the District Communications Officer is and where she is located. The majority of respondents, 88%, were unaware of the communications plan in the case of an emergency.

89% of respondents indicated that they do not use the school website as a source of school-related information. 65% of respondents indicated that they do not use Channel 11 on public access television as a source of school-related information. 88% of respondents indicated that they were not familiar with SCUSD's AlertNow system.

Other comments:

Respondents were also asked to provide their own comments about these issues. The majority of teacher comments indicated that they would like to see more communication between teachers and administrators, between schools and the district office, and between schools and families. Suggestions included:

- ensuring that all intra-district communication is written and not verbal
- sending out weekly bulletins from administrators with activities and reminders
- a duty schedule for staff

Many respondents indicated communication to parents as an area to target. Suggestions included:

- weekly newsletters home
- sending AIMS statistics home to parents
- providing students and parents with advice for secondary student transition after graduation

It is with these perceptions and suggestions in mind that we created our communications objectives, found on page 6.

TARGET AUDIENCES

The audiences we are targeting with our Communications Plan are:

Internal:

Students

Staff

- teachers

- classified staff

- administrative staff

Governing Board

External:

Parents

Media

- newspapers (Copper Country News, The Mocassin)

Tribal Governance

General Public

OBJECTIVES

Our communications objectives were designed after analyzing the results of our communications audit (see page 3). Based on this audit, we identified the following as communication objectives for the San Carlos Unified School District:

1. Increase positive visibility of SCUSD

Community Relations Officer will:

- Increase newspaper coverage of school events and academics while maintaining coverage of sports
- Include more photos with event postings

Staff will:

- Inform Community Relations Officer of events or items of interest

2. Increase awareness of SCUSD's activities within the district

Community Relations Officer will:

- Attend board meetings and publish minutes and agendas
- Publish information about each school in a central location that is easy for staff members to access (website)
- Attend school site council meetings and post information in a central location that is easy for staff members to access

Staff will:

- Notify the Community Relations Officer of relevant meetings

3. Increase awareness of SCUSD's activities in the community

Community Relations Officer will:

- Publicize parent resource center
- Publish more news releases
- Add community members to SCUSD emails and notifications, when appropriate

Staff will:

- Inform parents about District activities when appropriate and convenient
- Provide input regarding which community members may like to be informed about District activities via email

4. Increase website traffic

Community Relations Officer will:

- Keep information up-to-date
- Direct listserv recipients to website when appropriate
- Rotate photos and news items often
- Notify staff via email when a major event or important information is posted

Staff will:

- Provide input and ideas for website content
- Check frequently and encourage parents and community members to visit

5. Increase awareness of AlertNow

Community Relations Officer will:

- Distribute district-wide memo or email of explanation

6. Increase occurrence of information dissemination using memos or email instead of word of mouth

All will:

- Encourage other staff members to email when sharing information
- When information is shared verbally, encourage staff members to follow up with an email

STRATEGIES

Our strategies for meeting the objectives listed above are:

1. Stay visible

- communicate often
- rotate posted information in a timely manner
- encourage participation of staff in community activities

2. Communicate early

- post information ahead of time
- use memos or email as well as verbal communication for more efficient information dissemination
- plan ahead when getting information for events or meetings

3. Communicate clearly

- use simple language in a visual layout
- translate to Apache, as needed
- ensure content is grammatically correct and error-free

4. Centralize and simplify

- post information at a predictable, central, and accessible location(s) (eg: front office desk, bulletin boards, and/or website)
- create fact sheets when appropriate, using templates to familiarize the message
- use bullets and condense dense writing, if appropriate

5. Be proactive

- have information sheets prepared for various issues
- actively seek out information about school events and issues
- attend meetings and community events

METHODS/TOOLS

We have numerous methods and tools available to us as we work to meet these objectives. As new opportunities for communication arise, we will adjust these methods accordingly.

1. Printed materials

- School newsletter – a quarterly newsletter mailed to parents and community members providing news and events
- Newspapers – The Silver Belt, the Moccasin and the Copper Country News all publish news releases from SCUSD, and the Silver Belt's monthly school supplement provides news about schools in the area
- Posters – placed on bulletin boards in the District Office, Curriculum Center and individual schools
- Memos – distributed to and within schools

2. Email

- SCUSD email could be expanded to include community members and the media

3. School website

- currently contains links for teachers, parents and students, information about the district, links to individual departments and school lunch menus, board agendas and minutes, and a calendar of events. It could also be used to post press releases, and up-to-date activity information

4. Cable television

- currently airs event information and calendars of events on public access Channel 11

ASSESSMENT/ACCOUNTABILITY

We will rely on a number of different methods for measuring success in meeting our objectives.

1. Continual research

–research on successful communication strategies in other districts will be part of an ongoing effort to improve

2. Surveys

–an initial survey was sent out as part of the communications audit. More surveys will be sent out periodically to gauge our progress.

3. Informal interviews

–informal feedback will be considered in gauging our progress

The Communications Plan will be reviewed and updated when deemed appropriate by the Superintendent and the Communications Officer.