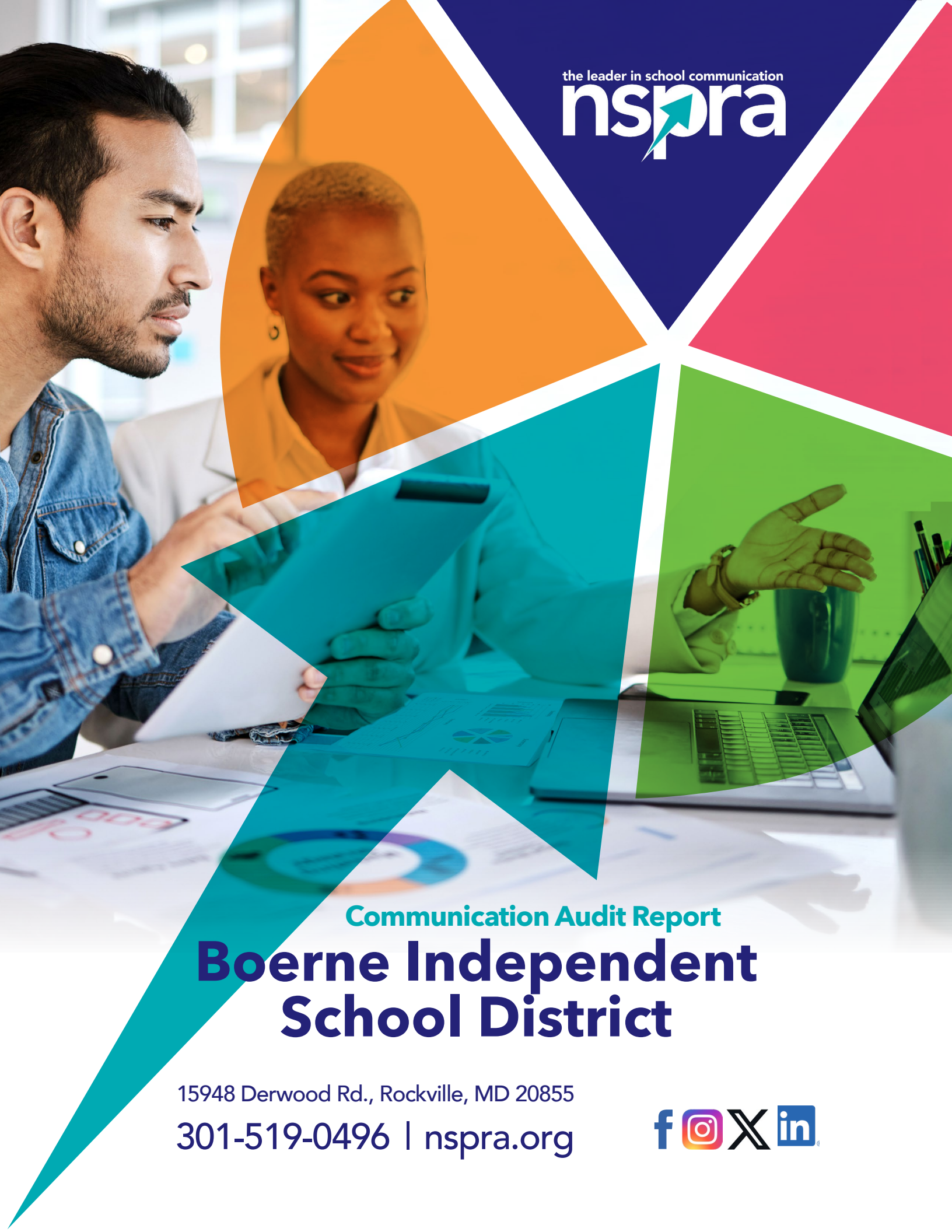


the leader in school communication



Communication Audit Report

Boerne Independent School District

15948 Derwood Rd., Rockville, MD 20855

301-519-0496 | nspra.org





surveys



materials



focus groups



interviews



results

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Executive Summary

About the NSPRA Communication Audit

The Boerne Independent School District (BISD) has contracted with the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) for an in-depth, independent review of the school district's overall communication program. The NSPRA Communication Audit process helps to identify the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement in a school communication program through an extensive process that includes:

- A review of print and digital communication materials, tools and tactics;
- Quantitative research through the surveying of district staff (instructional, support, administrative, etc.), parents/families and community members; and
- Qualitative research through focus groups with these same audiences and through interviews with staff who perform formal communication functions for the district.

Details of this process can be found in the [Introduction](#) of this report.

The results of this process are shared in four main sections of the report:

- The [Key Findings](#) section provides details about what was learned through the review of materials and the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.
- A [SWOT Analysis](#) distills these findings into the district's primary internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats related to its communication goals.

- The [Benchmarking of Results](#) section reflects how the district's communication program compares to other districts on nationally benchmarked SCOPE Survey questions and national standards of excellence in school public relations, as outlined in NSPRA's [Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures](#).
- The [Recommendations](#) section details suggested strategies and tactics for addressing identified communication gaps and for enhancing effective strategies already in place.

Report Synopsis

Following is an overview of this report. As with all school systems, Boerne ISD has areas of communication in which it excels as well as areas where improvements can be made. For a full understanding of what was learned, the rationale behind the resulting recommendations and what will be required to implement those steps, it is recommended that the report be read in its entirety.

Key Strengths of the Current Communication Program

- The Communications Department manages a comprehensive district communications program that uses tactics such as regular social media updates, video content, and print materials. Overall, BISD staff and community members in audit focus groups were aware of the department's role in the district and spoke positively about its numerous outreach activities.
- According to parents, communication between campuses and families is effective and appreciated. Principal newsletters and teacher-to-home communication were identified as the most reliable sources of information from school to home.

- Based on feedback from focus groups and the SCOPE Survey, the district is successful in keeping employees well-informed and ensuring they have the necessary information.
- The superintendent of schools demonstrates strong support for effective communications by holding regular meetings with the communications team and commissioning an NSPRA Communications Audit.
- Efforts to keep the community informed appear effective on a larger scale, as BISD does not face the level of criticism and resistance to change that many other districts in Texas experience. Additionally, BISD successfully passed a \$165 million bond proposition in May 2022.
- BISD and the City of Boerne enjoy a strong reputation beyond the community. Both are known for having a small-town, family-oriented atmosphere where teachers and neighbors know each other. However, the county's population growth—and, by extension, enrollment growth—will continue to challenge efforts to maintain that "small-town" feel.
- As BISD grows, the district will continue to become more diverse. This diversity often presents communication challenges, particularly in reaching families for whom English is not the primary language.

Key Challenges of the Current Communication Program

- The Communications Department produces a wide range of communications, but would benefit from more clearly defining their priorities, measuring effectiveness, and clarifying team members' roles and responsibilities.
- The district and its schools use a variety of tools to stay connected with parents. Parents often rely on teacher-to-home communication, but the systems in place can vary by grade level and classroom. This inconsistency makes it difficult to measure the effectiveness of these systems and suggests that exploring the possibility of consolidating teacher-to-parent communication could improve the experience for both teachers and families.
- While the department has invested time and resources into various marketing initiatives in recent years, a more focused effort to promote a unified brand and message will be necessary to ensure consistency in future marketing efforts.

Recommendations

Based on analysis of the research, the auditor recommends the following strategies and their related action steps for enhancing BISD's overall communication program.

1. Reorganize the Communications Department's structure, job descriptions and staff responsibilities.
2. Draft a strategic communication plan for BISD aligned with district goals and objectives.
3. Develop a public engagement strategy to connect with families, share the BISD story, and build a deeper understanding of the schools.
4. Incorporate marketing strategies into the communication plan.
5. Develop an internal communications program to maintain trust, enhance employee satisfaction and boost teacher retention.
6. Expand Board of Trustees outreach and communications.
7. Standardize communication processes to reach all parents.

8. Enhance existing crisis response plans with a strategic crisis communication plan.
9. Create more opportunities to engage older alumni and retirees.
10. Increase community engagement with BISD social media and on the website.

Implementing these recommendations should be considered a long-term process that involves everyone responsible for communicating in BISD, not just the Communications Department.

It is generally not feasible to address more than two to three recommendations each year. However, while some recommendations may require major investments of time, this report also offers opportunities to rethink existing practices or to make quick improvements without a significant investment of resources.

Introduction

The Environmental Setting for Communications

When assessing the communication program of an organization, it is important to first have an understanding of the organization itself as well as the environment in which it operates. That background is provided here.

About the District

Boerne ISD is located in Kendall County, Texas, approximately 32 miles northwest of San Antonio. The school district primarily serves students in the City of Boerne and surrounding areas as well as a small portion of Bexar County, which includes the growing residential development of Fair Oaks Ranch.

BISD's 11,000 students are served by two high schools, three middle schools, and eight elementary schools. The district also operates a choice academy and an alternative education campus.

According to a report by [Population and Survey Analysts TX \(PASA\)](#), the district has experienced steady growth over the past decade, though the rate of growth has slowed in recent years. BISD's enrollment grew by 300 students in 2024 and is projected to reach approximately 17,800 students by 2033. Boerne's proximity to San Antonio, its small-town appeal, and new housing developments are expected to spur continued enrollment growth within the district's boundaries.

The demographic profile of BISD shows student ethnicity at approximately 61 percent white, 32 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian, 1 percent Black/African American, 2.8 percent more than one race, and less than 1 percent American Indian and Pacific Islander. The percentage of students identified as



economically disadvantaged is 16.9 percent, and 6.2 percent have limited English proficiency.

BISD has a reputation for high student academic achievement, success in numerous extracurricular programs, and strong parent and community support. District achievements include being named to the U.S. College Board's AP District Honor Roll and receiving the NAMM Foundation's Best Communities for Music Education designation. This past year, three elementary schools were named Capturing Kids' Hearts National Showcase Schools, both high schools were named among the top schools in the San Antonio area by U.S. News & World Report, Champion High School was a National AP School Honor Roll Silver Recipient, and BISD was named a 2024 Innovative District by The Center for Model Schools.

BISD taxpayers approved a \$165.2 million bond proposition in May 2022, which included funding for new schools, an aquatics center, expansions and renovations to existing campuses, and technology upgrades for students and teachers.

The Boerne Education Foundation (BEF), established in 1997 as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit, also plays a crucial role in supporting BISD. As a "Robinhood" district, BISD faces the challenge of the redistribution of millions of local taxpayer dollars to property-poor districts across the state. BEF serves as the primary source of funding outside the district's regular budget, helping to bridge this financial gap and ensure BISD schools and teachers have the resources necessary to provide a superior education to all students.

The district is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees and the superintendent of schools, Dr. Kristin Craft, who began her tenure in January 2024.

The district and its communication program are guided by the following mission, vision, and core values:

- **Mission:** The Boerne Independent School District *engages*, inspires, and enriches our community through innovative learning experiences.
- **Vision:** Our community will *engage* students and adults in a challenging educational environment that inspires creativity and enriches lives for today's realities and tomorrow's possibilities.
- **Core Values:**
 - Every Child, Every Day: Committed to ensuring every student is *engaged*, enriched, and inspired.
 - Respectful Relationships: Building a culture of trust and compassion by *actively listening* to and learning from others.
 - Excellence Through Integrity: Holding ourselves and others to high standards.
 - Commitment to Service: Dedicated to leading, serving, and enriching our community.

The BISD Communications Department

The BISD Communications Department manages the district's news media coverage, print and digital communications, and social media, and coordinates community engagement activities.

The department is currently staffed by three full-time positions: a director of communications, a communications specialist, and a communications secretary. Additionally,

the department is supported by a part-time coordinator of community partnerships position shared with and partially funded by the BEF.

The director of communications position is responsible for planning district marketing and communications, advising leadership on public relations issues, managing crisis communications, and overseeing departmental operations and initiatives such as publications, video and social media, the website, and recognition programs.

The communications specialist serves as the district videographer, covering school events, recording Board of Trustee meetings, and producing and editing several key video segments such as the [Boerne Beat](#), the [Boerne Insider Podcast](#), the [BEF Wow Moment](#), [What's Up Doc? with Dr. Craft](#), and [Core Values in Action](#) videos. The position also works on special projects with AV students from Boerne High School and Champion High School.

In addition to office administrative responsibilities, the communications secretary produces graphics and publications for the department, coordinates Board of Trustees recognition and presentations, oversees the Teacher of the Year and Support Staff of the Year programs, helps coordinate major district and foundation events, and photographs or shoots videos at school events for the department.

The Communications Department oversees the "Communications PR Squad" across the district and supports these campus staff members, who are assigned to assist with school-level social media pages, school webpages, and campus newsletters.

The NSPRA Communication Audit Process

[NSPRA's mission](#) is to develop professionals to communicate strategically, build trust and foster positive relationships in support of their school communities. As the leader in school

communication™ since 1935, NSPRA provides school communication training, services and national awards programs to school districts, departments of education, regional service agencies and state and national associations throughout the United States and Canada. Among those services is the NSPRA Communication Audit, which provides:

- An important foundation for developing and implementing an effective strategic communication plan.
- A benchmark for continuing to measure progress in the future.

The development of any effective communication program begins with research. Therefore, the first step of the process is to seek data, opinion, and perceptions. The process for this research is detailed in the following section, and the results of this research can be found in the [Key Findings](#) section.

Based on the research findings, the auditor identifies common themes and makes general observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the communication program. The auditor then uses this information to develop [Recommendations](#) designed to help the district address communication challenges and enhance areas of strength. Each of these customized recommendations are accompanied by practical action steps grounded in today's public relations and communications best practices, as reflected within NSPRA's 2023 edition of the [Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures](#) benchmarking publication.

The recommendations in this report are also grounded in Boerne ISD's [mission, vision, core values, and strategic goals](#). Each recommendation aims to support the district in advancing its stated mission. Additionally, each recommendation aligns with BISD's strategic plan goals, which emphasize student success, talent development, fiscal responsibility, and community engagement.

The result is a report that will provide BISD with a launching point for enhancing communication efforts for years to come.

Research Components

The NSPRA Communication Audit process incorporates three methods of research to capture both qualitative and quantitative data.

Materials Review

In preparation for the NSPRA Communication Audit, the BISD Communications Department provided a variety of materials used to reach both internal and external audiences. These included demographic reports, bond campaign materials, news releases, and communications policies. The auditor thoroughly reviewed these materials, as well as the district and school websites and social media pages.

The review evaluated the effectiveness, readability, visual appeal, and user-friendliness of both digital and print materials. Analysis of the district's websites and social media also examined stakeholders' engagement with online content. Of note, the district was transitioning to a new website provider and design during the audit period. The audit also involved reviewing district demographic data, communications planning processes, media coverage, and digital communication analytics.

SCOPE Survey™

As part of this communication audit, NSPRA conducted its proprietary School Communications Performance Evaluation (SCOPE) Survey™ to gather insights from the BISD community. The online survey collected feedback from three key stakeholder groups: parents and families, employees (including instructional and support staff), and community members. The nationally benchmarked survey was open for all BISD groups from August 21 through September 4, 2024. The survey included questions regarding:

- How people currently get information and how they prefer to receive it.
- How informed they are in key areas such as leader decisions, district plans, and district finances.
- Perceptions about what opportunities exist to seek information, provide input, and become involved.
- To what degree stakeholders perceive communications to be understandable, timely, accurate, transparent, and trustworthy.

The survey also allowed participants to provide open-ended comments on any aspect of district, school, or department communications.

Responses to the SCOPE Survey resulted in the following margins of error for each audience, based on the total audience populations reported by the school.

Parent Survey:

- 1,196 surveys completed
- 6.8 percent margin of error

Faculty/Staff Survey:

- 206 surveys completed
- 2.8 percent margin of error

Community survey:

- 40 surveys completed
- 15.5 percent margin of error
- Due to low participation among community members, no significant recommendations are included in this report based solely on SCOPE Survey responses by community members.

This same survey has been administered to more than 130 school districts across the United States, and the [Benchmarking of Results](#) section includes the SCOPE Scorecard, which

compares BISD's survey results with those of other districts who have conducted the survey.

The platform used to host NSPRA's SCOPE Survey is provided by K12 Insight.

Focus Groups and Interviews

The core of the communication audit involves focus groups, where the auditor gathers insights from district stakeholders. The auditor held sessions with 11 focus groups and conducted interviews with school board members, the superintendent, and communications department staff. Additionally, the director of communications participated in a phone interview prior to the onsite visit.

District officials selected and invited focus group participants who could represent a range of perspectives and ideas. Focus group attendance by BISD community members, staff, and administration was strong, and their names were not recorded by the auditor to maintain their anonymity. Each group session lasted one hour, with discussions guided by a similar set of questions on various communication issues (see the [Appendix](#) for the list of questions).

Stakeholder types represented in the focus group sessions and the interviews included:

- Executive leadership team
- District department leaders
- Elementary principals
- Secondary principals
- Administrative assistants
- 2023-24 Teachers of the Year
- PTO presidents, parent organization representatives
- Parents
- City of Boerne representatives
- Business leaders, civic leaders, and elected officials

- Board of Trustees members
- Superintendent of schools
- Director of communications
- Communications Department staff
- Coordinator of community partnerships

The development and maintenance of an effective communication program should include opinion research through methods such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Although anecdotal, this type of research can be valuable for measuring progress and assessing the effectiveness of communications.

NSPRA's research process aims to capture diverse stakeholder perspectives, providing a comprehensive view. While these public sentiments are often based on a smaller sample of the school community, the opinions shared remain valuable.

Public sentiment should not be the sole factor in a district's decision-making process, but it is an important component. In NSPRA's audit reports, these opinions are integrated with the auditor's expert evaluations.

Your NSPRA Research Team

The NSPRA research team who delivered these communication audit services includes:

- Auditor Tim Carroll, APR
- Communication Research Manager Alyssa Teribury
- Communication Research Specialist Jessica Scheckton, APR, PMP
- Associate Director Mellissa Braham, APR

The team's vitae are included in the [Appendix](#) of this report.

The NSPRA Communication Audit Report

This report highlights the commitment of district leaders, including the BISD Board of Education, Dr. Craft, and the Communications Department staff, to address communication challenges and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders. It aims to build on the district's positive activities and accomplishments by offering suggestions and considerations for enhancing the overall communication program.

Adhering to public relations standards is crucial for effective school communication strategies. Thus, an effective strategy in one school district may be applicable in another. **As a trusted leader in school communication, NSPRA advocates for established industry best practices in school public relations.** While our communication audit findings are unique to each school system and our recommendations are tailored to those findings, industry best practices are applicable to and may be recommended across multiple school districts.

With that in mind, the recommendations included in this report are those the auditor believes are best suited to taking BISD's communication program to the next level.

When reviewing the report, it is important to acknowledge that:

- **The report is intended to build on the many positive activities and accomplishments of the district and its communications team** by suggesting options for strengthening the overall communication program.
- **NSPRA's communication audit process involves a holistic assessment** of a district's overall communication program, meaning it goes beyond any one department or individual to assess communication efforts throughout the district and its schools.

- **Whenever opinions are solicited about an institution and its work, there is a tendency to dwell on perceived problem areas.** This is natural and, indeed, is one of the objectives of an audit. Improvement is impossible unless there is information on what may need to be changed. It is therefore assumed that BISD would not have entered into this audit unless it was comfortable with viewing the school district and its communication practices through the perceptions of others.
- **Perceptions are just that.** Whether or not stakeholders' perceptions are accurate, they reflect beliefs held by focus group participants and provide strong indicators of the communication gaps that may exist.
- **This report is a snapshot of the district at the time of the auditor's analysis,** and some situations may have changed or been addressed by the time the report is issued.

Next Steps

The recommendations in this report address immediate communication needs as well as those that are ongoing or that should receive future consideration as part of long-range planning. Implementation of the recommendations should be approached strategically, using this report as a road map and taking the following into consideration:

Implementing the Recommendations

- **It is generally not feasible to implement more than two to three major recommendations each year** while maintaining all current communication programs and services.
- **The recommendations are listed in a suggested order of priority,** but school leaders may choose to implement

different recommendations at different times.

- **Recommendations may go beyond the purview of the BISD Communications Department.** NSPRA views communication as a function that occurs across every level of a school district. While some recommendations may apply only to communications staff, others may apply to additional departments or all staff.

- **Look for opportunities for immediate improvement and to rethink existing practices.** Action steps that can be taken immediately with minimal effort from



the district or the communications team and still pay quick dividends are noted as "quick wins" with the symbol shown to the right. There also are action steps that may offer opportunities to "rethink" a task



or process that could be eliminated or reassigned based on stakeholders' feedback and the auditor's analysis. These are noted

with the symbol at left.

- **Some recommendations may require additional staff capacity or financial resources** to undertake while maintaining existing communication activities.

Sharing the Report

Participants were generous in sharing their thoughts and ideas during the focus group sessions. They were also interested in finding out the results of the communication audit. NSPRA recommends that BISD share with focus group participants the outcome of the audit process and its plans for moving forward, given the importance of closing the communication loop to build trust and credibility.

Be sure to also share this information with key stakeholders such as employees and parents/families. This transparency will demonstrate that district leaders prioritize two-way communication with stakeholders.

NSPRA's staff research team can provide suggestions and examples for how this report can be effectively shared with various constituencies as well as the public.

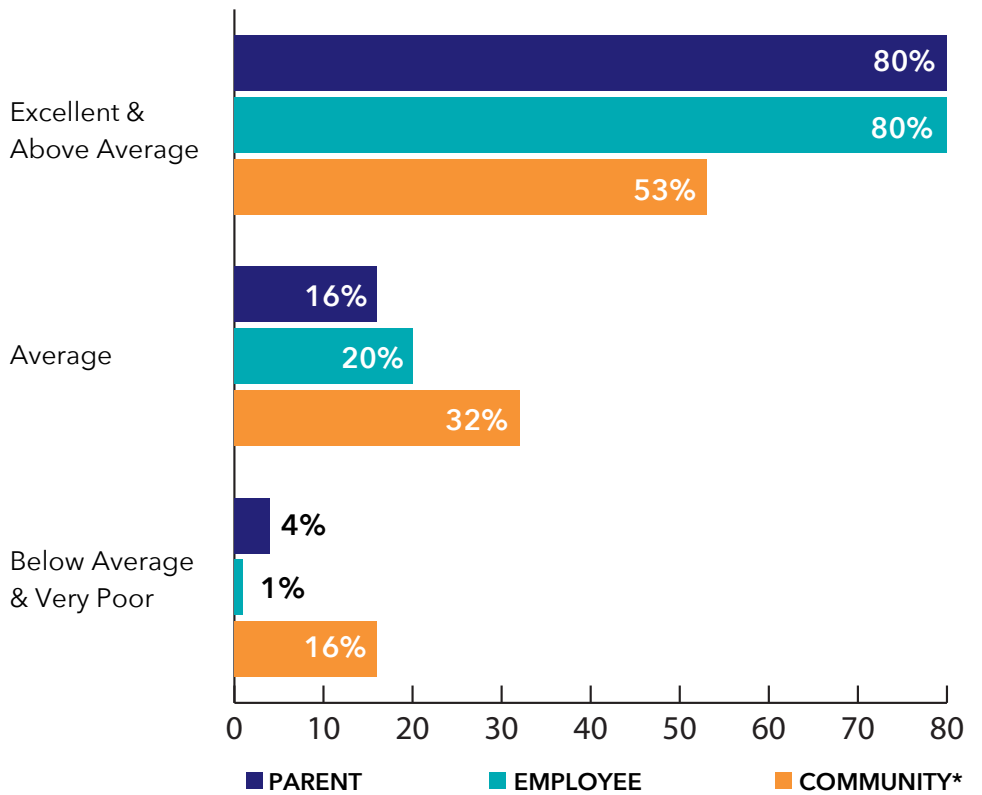
Key Findings

Key findings reflect common themes that emerged from the SCOPE Survey, focus group discussions, interviews with district leaders and the review of district materials. This section of the report begins with key findings on stakeholder perceptions of the district’s image because communication from a district influences how it is perceived by stakeholders. When reviewing survey data charts, please note that percentages sometimes may not total 100 due to rounding or respondents’ ability to select more than one response to a question.

District Image/ Brand

- Eighty percent of parents/caregivers and employees who participated in the SCOPE Survey rated their perception of BISD as excellent or above average, while 67 percent of community members shared the same view.
- Many focus group participants emphasized that BISD’s reputation has made it a destination school district, with families moving to the area specifically for the schools. One of BISD’s strengths is seen as its commitment to building new schools to accommodate growth and renovating existing facilities to ensure equity across campuses.
- Staff and parents commonly cite the small-town feel, sense of community, and quality of teachers as defining traits of BISD. The term “Boerne Bubble” was mentioned several times across different focus groups. This term appears to reflect a

Overall Rating for Perception of District



desire to maintain Boerne as it once was—a small Hill Country town. For some, this phrase embodies Boerne’s unique image positively, while for others, it signifies resistance to the growth and changes emerging from the San Antonio area.

- BISD students and teachers are known for achieving success in many areas. Public data on high student academic performance and graduation rates

* Due to low [community participation](#) in the SCOPE Survey, this report does not include significant recommendations based solely on community members’ survey results.

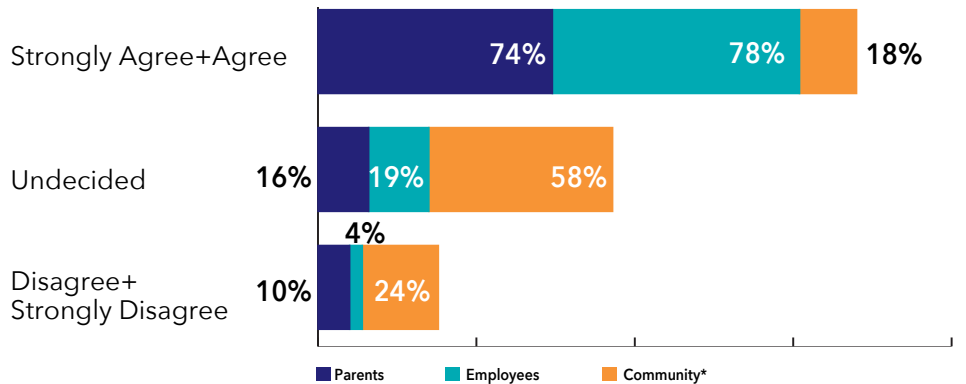
reinforce BISD’s reputation as one of the top school districts in the San Antonio area. The district is among the approximately 22 percent of Region 20 traditional public school districts that earned an [overall A score](#) in Texas’ 2022 accountability system.

- Independent ratings maintain BISD’s image as a high-performing, destination district. BISD currently holds an A/Above Average rating from the school-rating websites commonly used by real estate agents, [Niche](#) and [GreatSchools](#).
- The Board of Trustees supports open communication and is respected by parents and staff, as noted in focus group comments. Board agendas, meeting summaries, and video recordings of prior meetings are readily available on the BISD website, and board members frequently attend school and community events.
- Superintendent Dr. Kristin Craft was recognized in several staff and parent focus groups for her communication efforts and campus visibility. Mentions of her back-to-school letter and the Superintendent’s Letter described these communications as “sincere and supportive.”
- The majority of parents (74 percent) and employees (78 percent) who responded to the SCOPE Survey agree or strongly agree that BISD

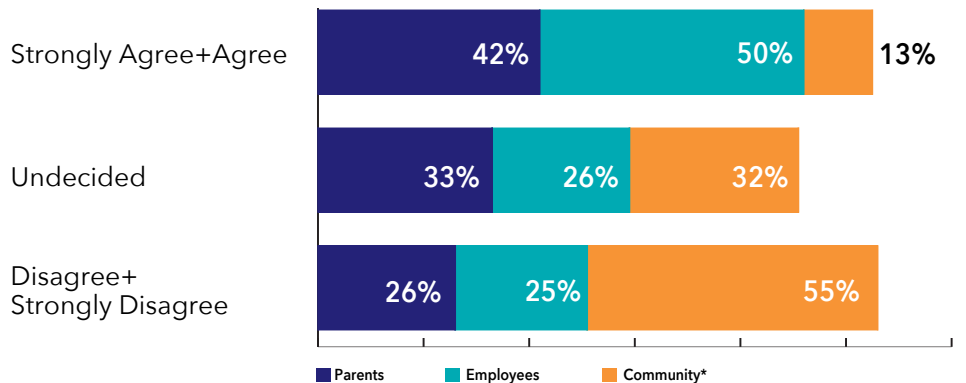
communications are open and transparent, but the majority of community members (58 percent) are undecided.

- The majority of responding parents (70 percent) and employees (77 percent) agree or strongly agree that they trust the communications they receive from BISD, but the majority of community members (59 percent) are undecided.
- Among both parents and employees, more survey respondents agree or strongly agree that their involvement is welcome and valued (59 percent and 63 percent respectively) than that their input and opinions are welcome and valued (42 percent and 50 percent respectively).

**Quality of Information:
Communication is open and transparent**

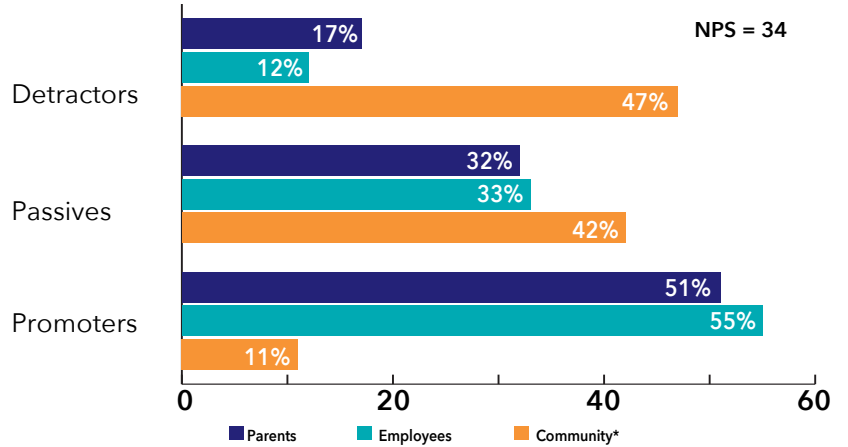


**Sense of Connection:
My input and opinion are welcomed and valued**



- Among community members who responded to the survey, 55 percent disagree or strongly disagree that their input and opinion are welcome and valued. Many seem uncertain about whether their involvement is welcome and valued, with 39 percent undecided on that question.
- The SCOPE Survey asked respondents how likely they were to recommend BISD to a friend. Their responses were used to calculate a Net Promoter Score (NPS), which measures satisfaction with and loyalty to the district brand. BISD's score of 34 (see chart at right) indicates a positive and moderate level of community support, where a score of 50 or above is excellent.
- As shown on the [SCOPE Scorecard](#) (see page 33), parent and staff satisfaction with BISD communications is higher compared to districts nationwide. Parent satisfaction scored 3.8 out of 5, aligning with the national average of 3.8. Staff satisfaction was higher, at 4.1 out of 5, surpassing the national average of 3.8. However, community satisfaction scored lower, at 2.7, compared to the national average of 3.2.
- Most parents (70 percent), employees (80 percent), and community members (53 percent) agree or strongly agree that they see people who look like them in district communication images.
- Overall, focus group and survey comments indicated that the Communications Department is seen as effectively promoting BISD's success stories. While there were some suggestions for improvement, no respondents felt the department was unsupportive or unhelpful. Leadership from local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), expressed appreciation for the support

Likelihood to Recommend a BISD School



they received from the department.

Communication Challenges

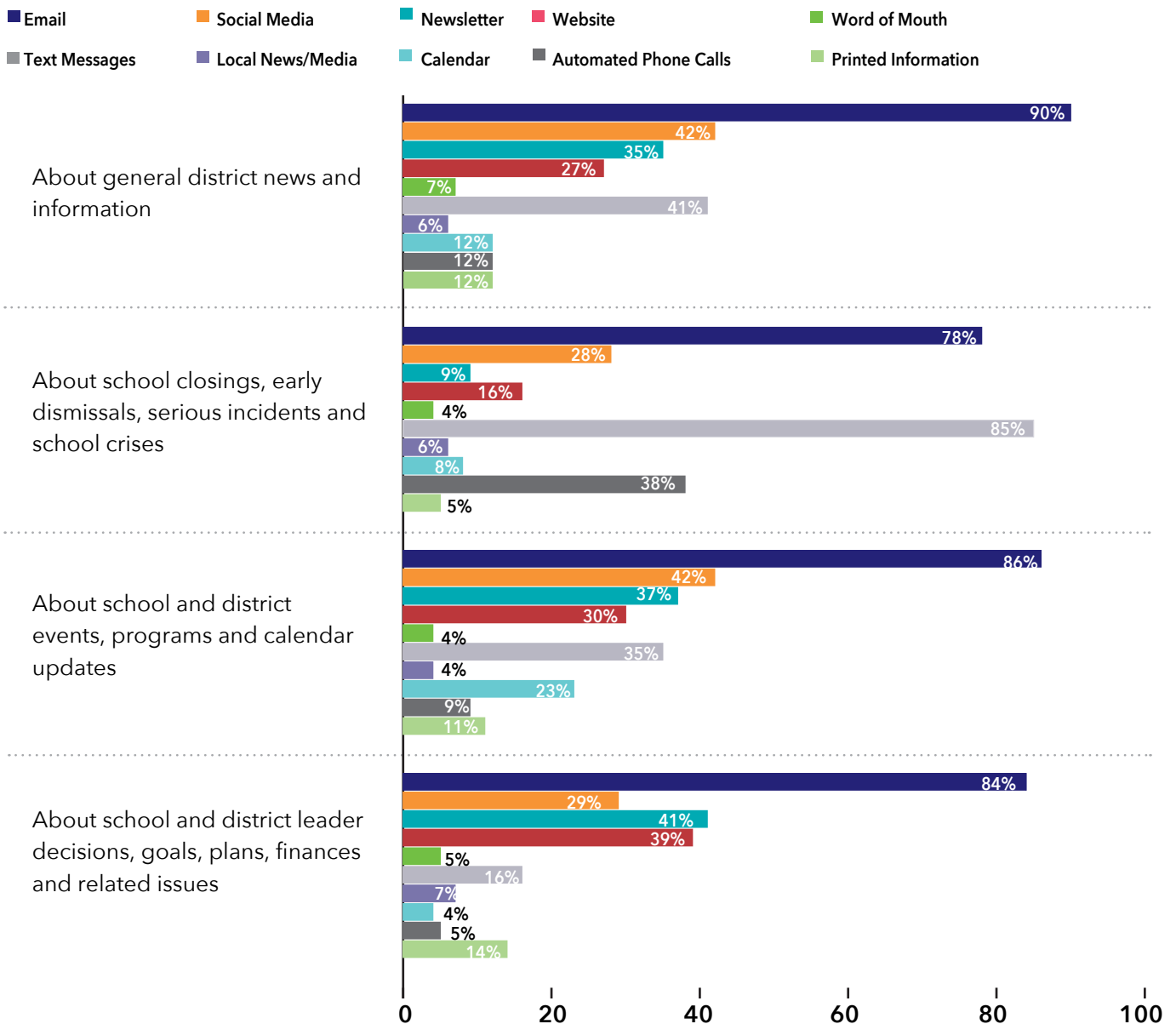
- While parents gave the district high marks for keeping them informed, some expressed frustration with the number of applications needed to stay in touch with the schools. Six different teacher-parent communication apps were mentioned in one parent focus group, including Google Classroom, Class Dojo, Cut-It, Remind, SeeSaw, and PaySchools, in addition to the district-wide Skyward app.
- Open-ended comments from parents and staff highlighted a desire for more information about issues and incidents occurring in the schools, as illustrated in this comment: "I feel like the district only wants to highlight accomplishments and not problems. Parents are not informed of issues going on in the school and district, to which we have a right to know."
- The inability to post comments on the district's social media platforms was frequently mentioned by parents and staff in SCOPE Survey comments and focus groups, with a general feeling that it lacks transparency and restricts interactivity.

- Several focus group parents indicated that emails to their child’s teachers sometimes go to spam or trash folders, even later in the school year. This has been identified as a problem by district staff in the past, according to the parents.
- In SCOPE Survey comments, parent frustrations related to enrollment growth were also common. Parents cited concerns with class sizes, drop-off lines, and transportation issues, noting a desire for more proactive communication from the district on these matters rather than reactive responses to concerns.
- The BISD community has fewer families living below poverty level and speaking English “less than very well” in comparison to state and national averages, according to [U.S. Census Bureau data](#), but the district’s growth projections suggest it will like be serving an increasingly diverse student population. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or homes where English is not the primary language often encounter unique barriers to communications and engagement with their schools that the district will have to work to overcome.
- Despite BISD’s positive reputation, exterior factors such as the rising cost of new and existing homes in the area may make attracting new employees more difficult. For example, recruitment campaign messaging must factor in that median home values are increasing faster than median incomes, as reported in a recent [demographic study](#) for BISD.
- Another unique challenge to communications in a district experiencing enrollment growth is that new residents who move into the area often do not have long-standing connections to the local schools. Concerted efforts will be necessary to build trust and support with these new residents. Managing this and other new initiatives would likely be challenging within the current staffing structure for the Communications Department.
- Each role within the Communications Department has its own general duties, but the auditor observed some uncertainty about how day-to-day tasks are divided among the team in areas with overlapping responsibilities such as event coverage and content production. There is not a specific process for task delegation.
- The Board Report provides an informative and easy-to-read summary of regular Board of Trustee meetings, but a delay of several days between the board’s actions and the release of the report means some board information isn’t immediately accessible the day after a meeting.

Communication Sources and Preferences

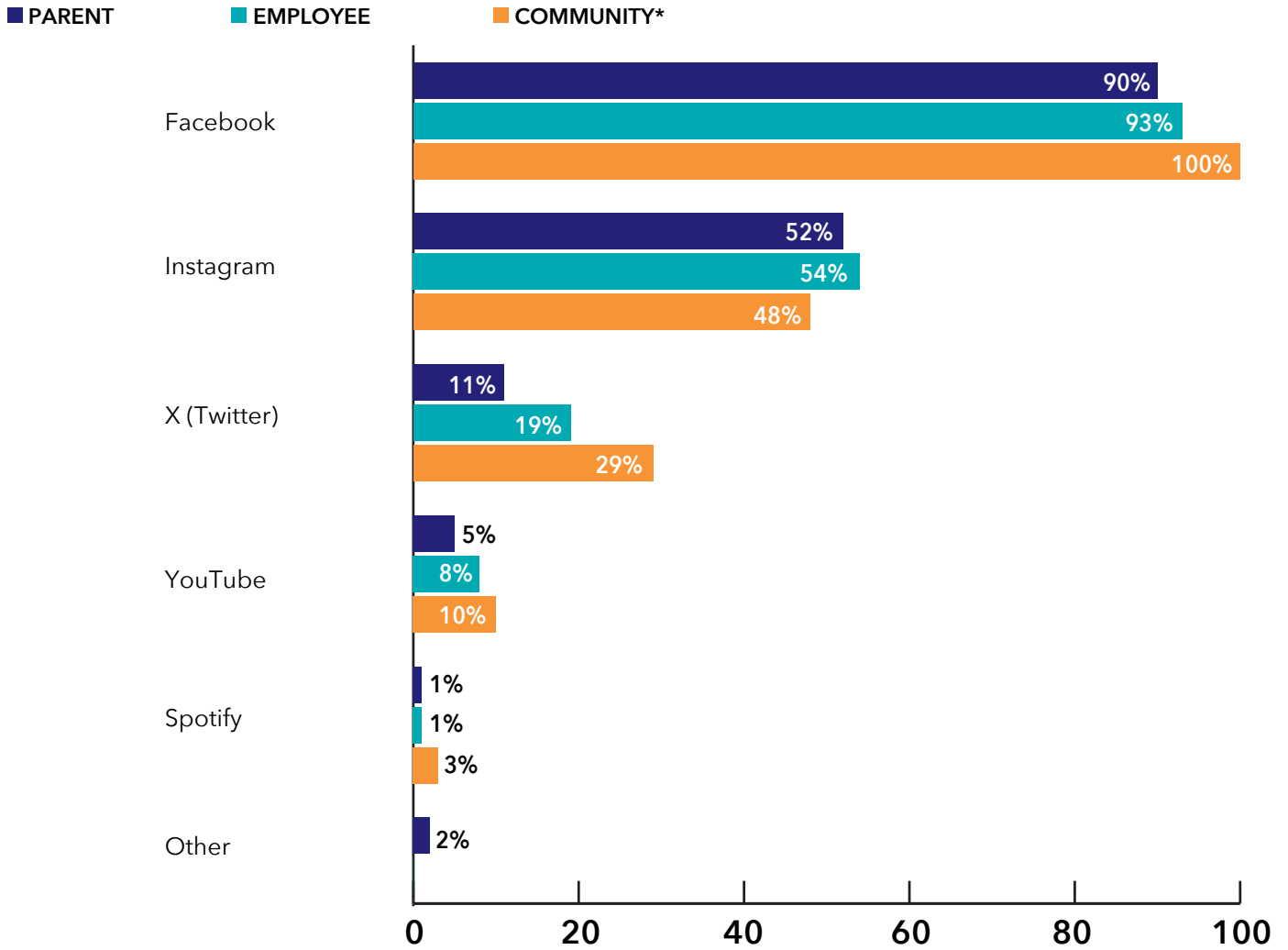
- Parents and staff in focus groups indicated that they appreciated the district’s use of various communication channels, including email, text messages, social media, and newsletters.
- Email consistently ranks as the preferred source of information among BISD stakeholders across all categories as shown in the chart on [page 18](#).
 - Text messages are valued for time-sensitive updates, such as school closings or emergencies, while social media and newsletters serve as supplementary sources for general information and event updates.
 - Printed information and automated phone calls received minimal preference across topics.

Preferred Methods of Communication for Different Types of Information

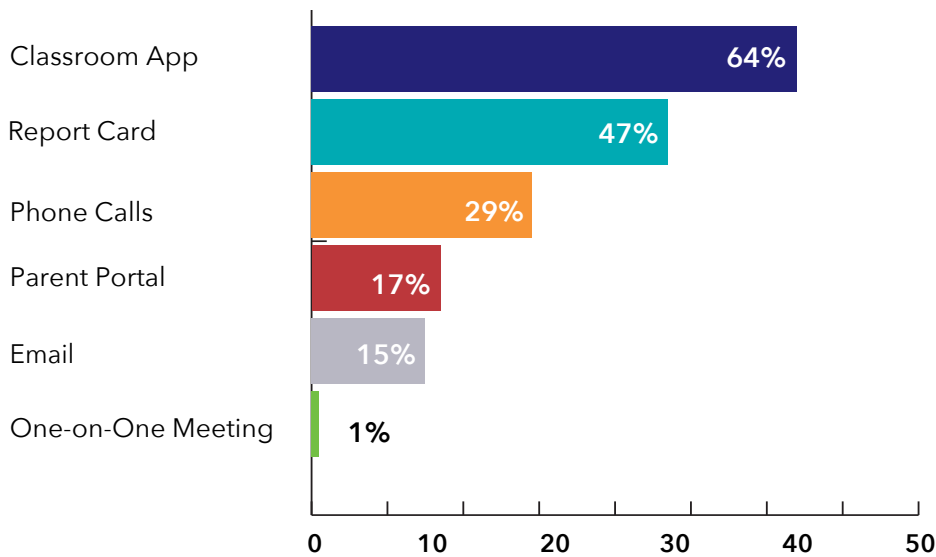


- In focus groups, Spanish-speaking families and several other stakeholders mentioned that text messages are appreciated for timely updates.
- Survey responses for BISD indicate that Facebook is the social media platform most widely used for school-related information, as shown in the chart on [page 19](#). Aligning with [national data](#), Facebook usage significantly outpaces Instagram and X/ Twitter in the BISD school community.
- When parents were asked how they prefer to receive information about their student’s progress and how to best support their learning, classroom apps are rated the most highly, followed by report cards and phone calls (see chart on [page 19](#)).
- Staff identified email, by far, as their preferred method for receiving information to help them perform their duties and support student learning (see chart on [page 20](#)).

Social Media Platforms Used for School-Related Information

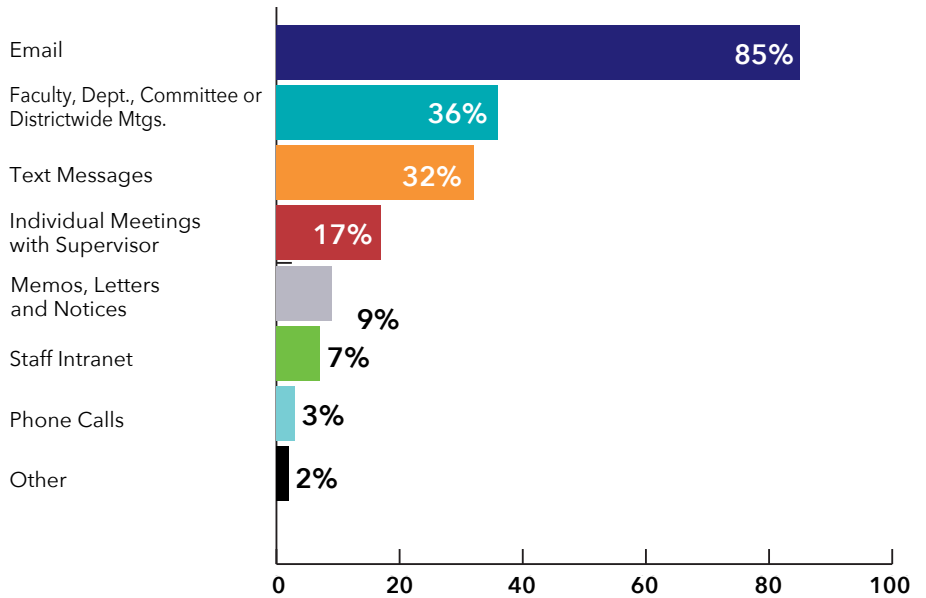


Preferred method for communication about child's progress - *Parents*

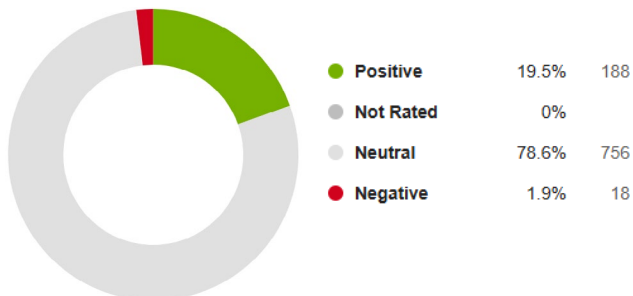


- When rating the value of various informational sources in learning about the district on a five-star scale, more survey respondents highly valued at 4 or 5 stars emails from the district (81 percent) than the district’s email newsletters (76 percent), website (61 percent), and Facebook page (52 percent) or “what people tell me” (40 percent).
- Local news and media was among the least preferred source for information about the district for all stakeholders (see [page 18](#)).

Preferred method for communication about employee duties and supporting student learning - *Employees*



- NSPRA used its Meltwater media monitoring service to analyze coverage of BISD from September 10, 2023, - September 10, 2024 and found that:
 - More than 960 news stories mentioned BISD when looking at English-language news in the United States and excluding coverage for school sports games, scores, schedules, etc.
 - News stories were 78.6 percent neutral, 19.5 percent positive and 1.9 percent negative, as shown in the chart below. (Note: Meltwater’s sentiment analysis algorithm classifies articles as neutral if they appear to be reported accurately and objectively, as identified through keywords linked to emotions.)

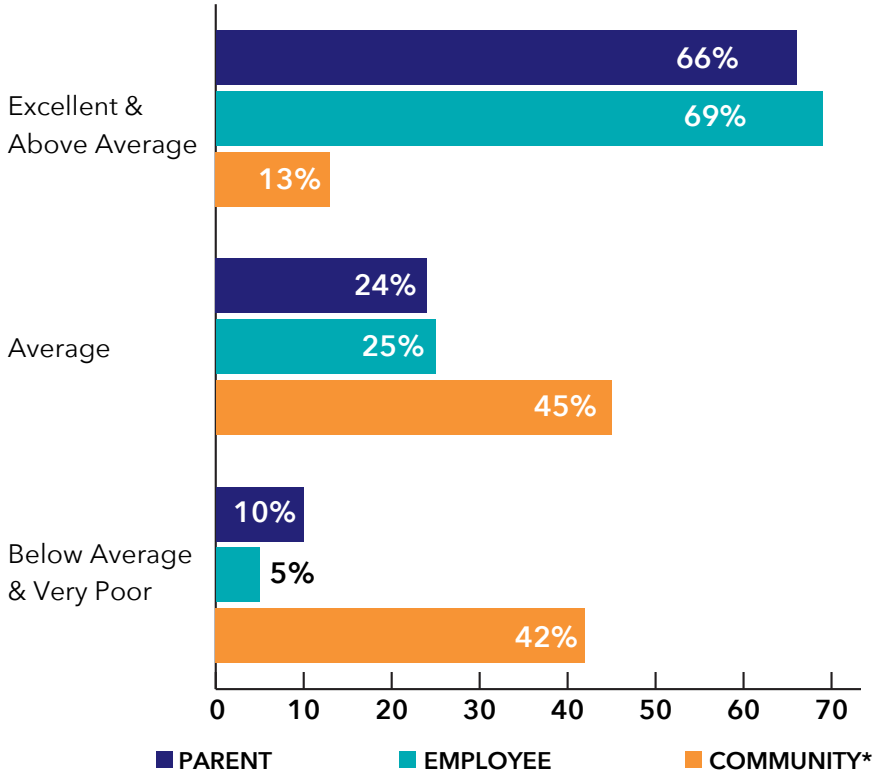


- Positive articles focused primarily on district collaborations with community development groups and students’ academic, extracurricular, athletic and volunteer achievements.
- There were large spikes in news coverage in November 2023 about BISD selecting SparkCognition to advance campus safety, in March 2024 about a Leader in Excellence award for BISD from Skyward, in April 2024 about BISD’s purchase of entry-resistant window film technology, and in August 2024 about BISD collaborations and the Incubator.edu program.
- The local media outlets that most frequently covered BISD included KABB Fox News 29, KENS CBS News 5, KSAT ABC News 12, MySanAntonio.com (MySA), WOAI NBC News Channel 4, *San Antonio Report*, *San Antonio Business Journal*, *San Antonio Express-News: Hill Country*, and *The Boerne Star*.

Communication Satisfaction, Effectiveness and Quality

- The sentiment toward BISD communication varies notably across stakeholder groups. Parents and employees have a generally positive view, with 66 percent and 69 percent, respectively, rating communication as “Excellent” or “Above Average.” In contrast, only 13 percent of community members rate it that high, suggesting a possible satisfaction gap in that group worth further exploration.
- Several focus group participants noted that messages directly from the superintendent are well-received, as they feel authentic, aligned with the district’s values, and focused on the needs of the school community. An illustrative comment is that, “I appreciate the new superintendent’s emails to the staff. They are genuine and written in her voice.”
- Some focus group participants felt that past efforts to engage the community—particularly through public-facing communications—were less genuine and more focused on visibility. They expressed a desire for communications that feel authentic and reflective of the district’s values and voice, with an emphasis on transparency and sincerity.
- While focus group participants were overall very supportive of BISD communications, several expressed a desire to see more focus on academics and teaching with less emphasis on

Overall Satisfaction With Communication From District

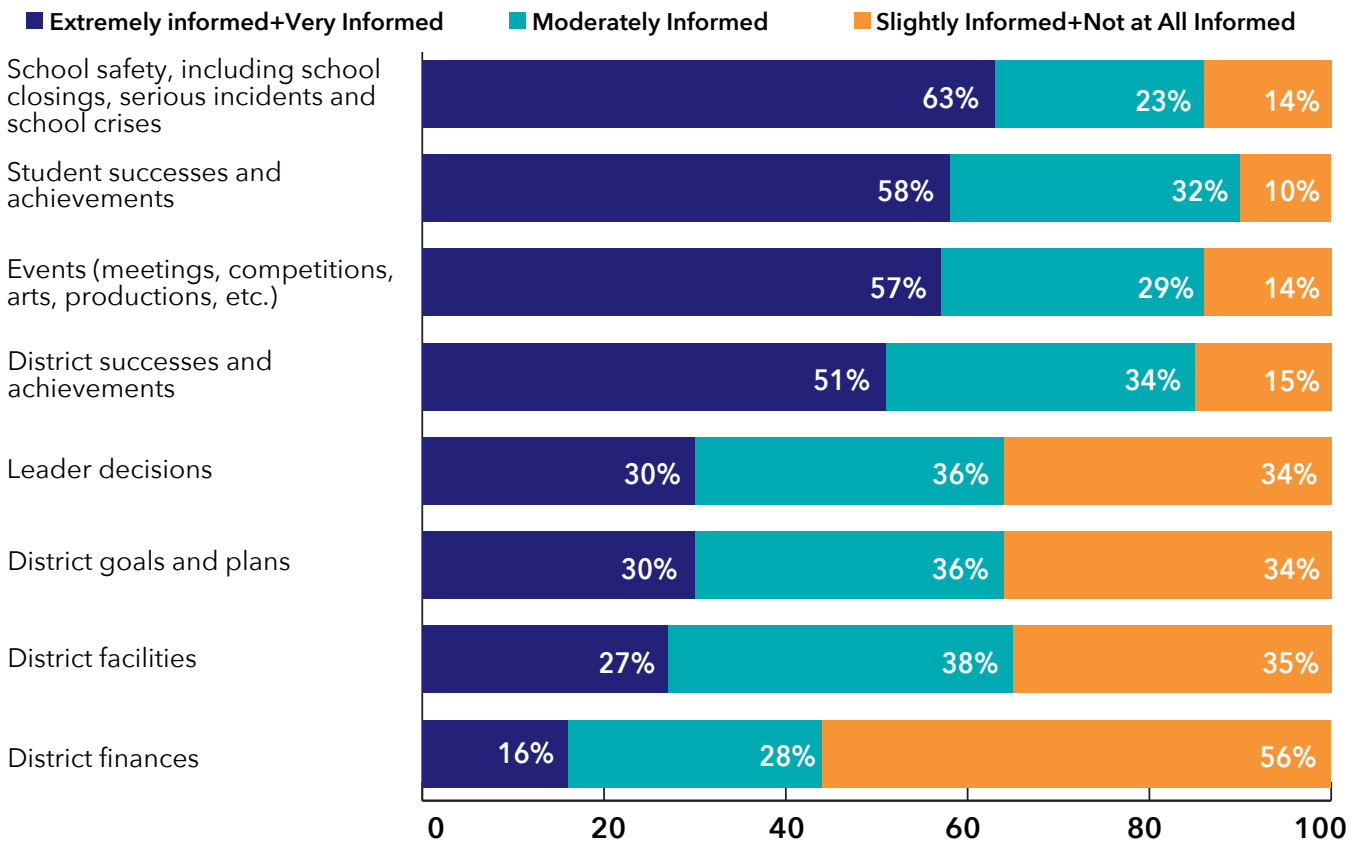


awards and accomplishments. An illustrative comment is that, “I hear about the big awards but I really don’t know what’s going on in the schools. As an elementary parent, I like to know what to expect when my child gets older.”

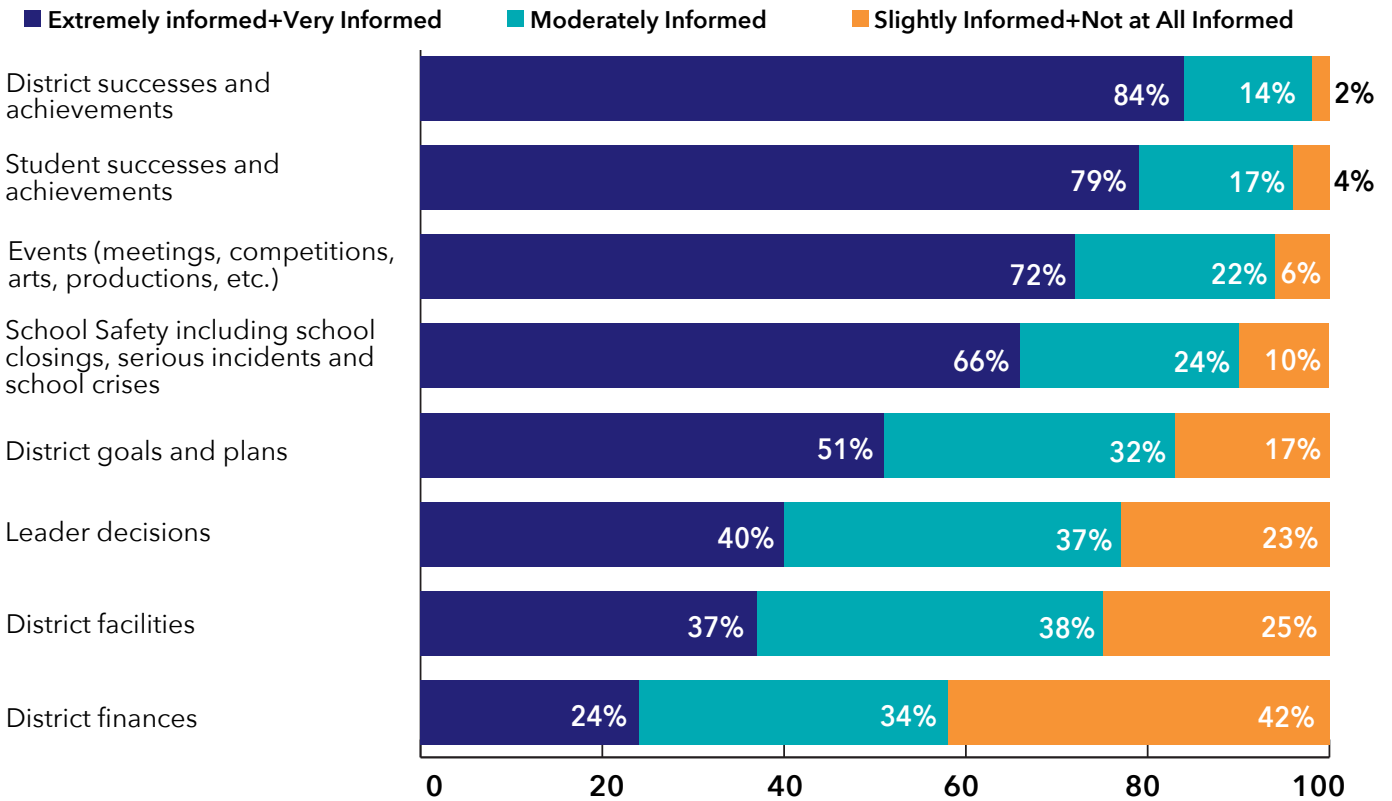
- In focus groups, parents and staff noted that social media is used for celebrations, recognitions, and updates, but that some campuses’ social media pages are less active or have outdated posts.
- Parents and staff in focus groups indicated that PTO/teacher newsletters are widely used at the campus level for event updates and announcements but could be more concise and organized.

- As shown in the charts below and on [page 23](#), SCOPE Survey respondents rated how informed they are in eight topical areas related to the district.
 - Parents feel the most informed about school safety (school closings, serious incidents, school crises) and news about student successes and achievement, with 63 and 58 percent respectively saying they felt extremely or very informed about these topics.
 - Employees feel the most informed about district and student successes and achievements, with 84 and 79 percent saying they felt extremely or very informed about these topics.
 - Community members had significantly lower levels of feeling extremely or very informed in every area, but the majority were at least moderately informed about district and student successes and achievements, events, and school safety.
 - All three groups rated district facilities and district finances as the areas in which they feel least informed.
- As shown in the charts on [pages 24-25](#), SCOPE Survey respondents rated their level of agreement with statements related to the quality of communication in BISD.
 - The majority of parents and employees agreed or strongly agreed with all six statements, but rated the statement “Communications are easy for me to understand” most highly.
 - Among community members, the statement they agreed or strongly agreed with most was, “I know where and how I can direct a question, concern or complaint” (50 percent). A majority of parents (55 percent) and staff (66 percent) feel the same.

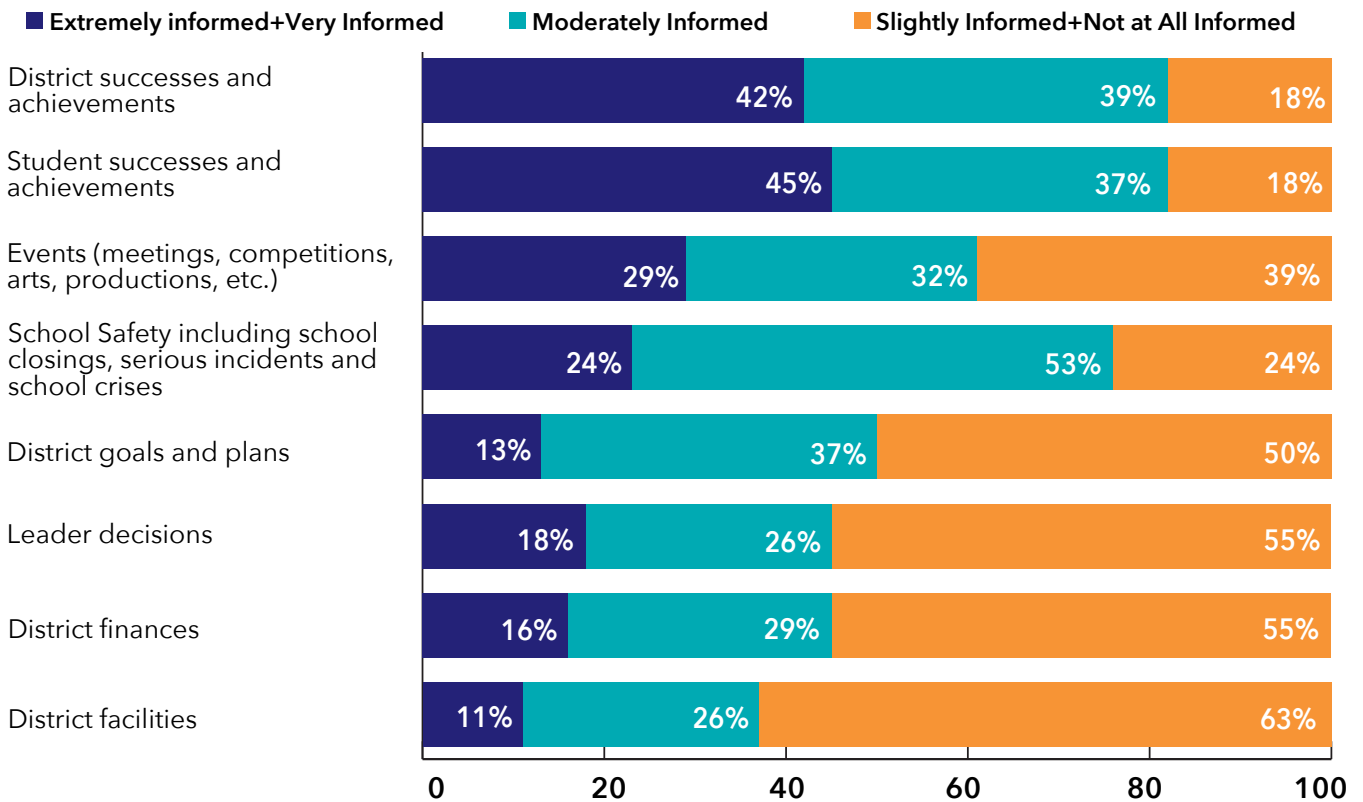
How Informed in Eight Topical Areas Related to District - *Parents*



How Informed in Eight Topical Areas Related to District - *Employees*

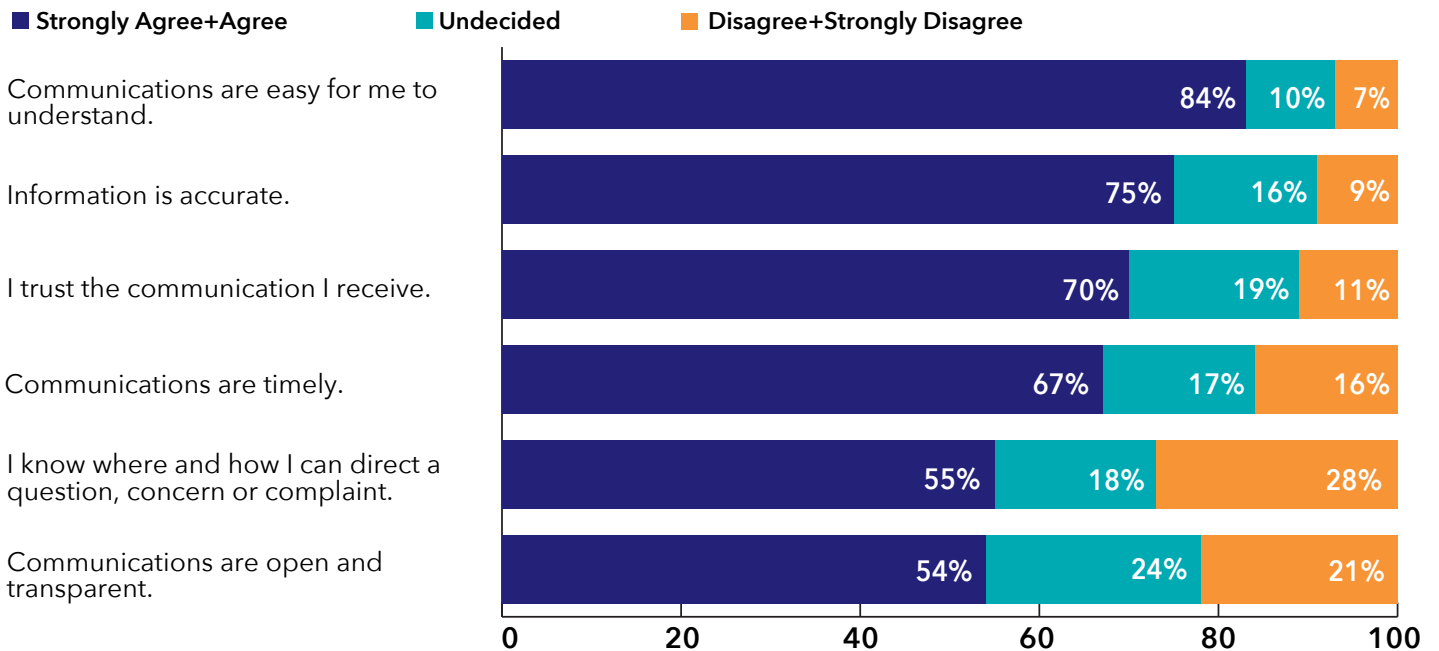


How Informed in Eight Topical Areas Related to District - *Community**

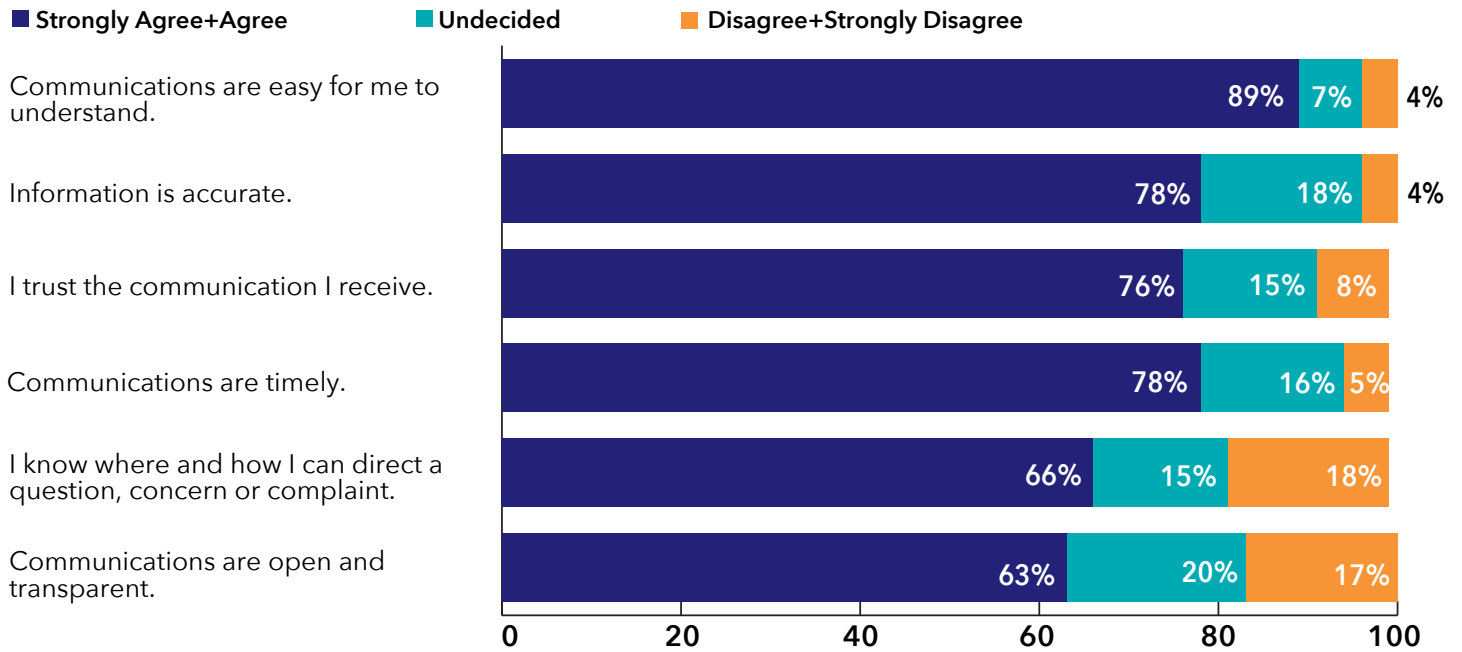


- Most employees who responded to the SCOPE Survey feel they receive the right amount of information from the district (77 percent) and their department or supervisor (82 percent).
- In focus groups, employees commented positively about on-campus visits by the superintendent. An illustrative comment is that, "The superintendent gets out to the schools and acknowledges us." Some felt it would be good for other central office administrators to visit campuses similarly "in a non-evaluative manner."
- Some teachers and administrators felt that BISD could do more to recognize certified and non-certified employees. There is currently no program recognizing retirees, for example. An illustrative comment is that, "The Board often recognizes the district administrators for academic success but the teachers who are responsible for those scores are not acknowledged."
- In focus groups and on surveys, teachers and secretaries commented on what they felt was a lack of background information related to decisions that impact them. Example decisions included the hiring process for a new high school principal, the roll out of a new school lunch payment system, and the bus route process in August. Following are illustrative comments:
 - "They ask our opinion on surveys and committees but there is no follow up when a decision is made."
 - "The district will change something... and then we get calls from parents. We had no advance information. It makes us look bad."
 - "A lot of time we as teachers are at the front lines of many questions... Our questions to the central office have not been answered in the past, and our worries seemed to be brushed off as being bothersome."

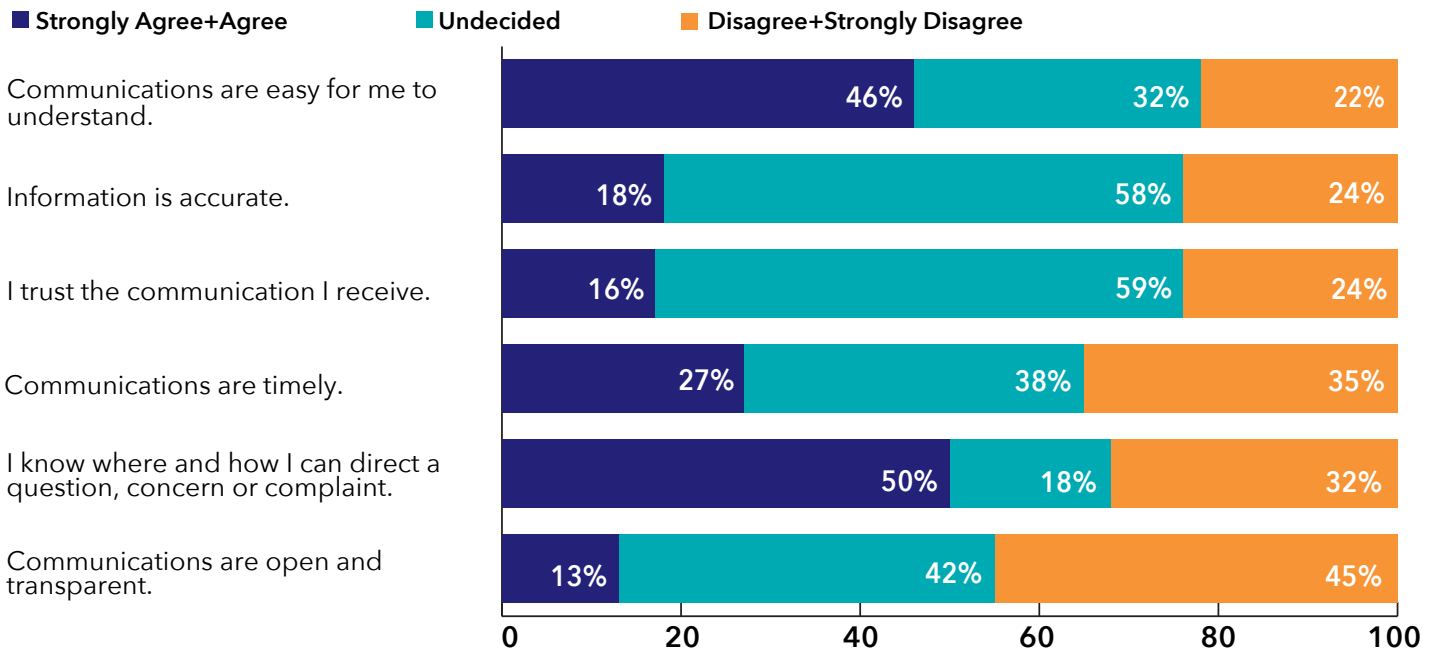
Level of Agreement With Statements About District Communications - *Parents*



Level of Agreement With Statements About District Communications - *Employees*



Level of Agreement With Statements About District Communications - *Community**



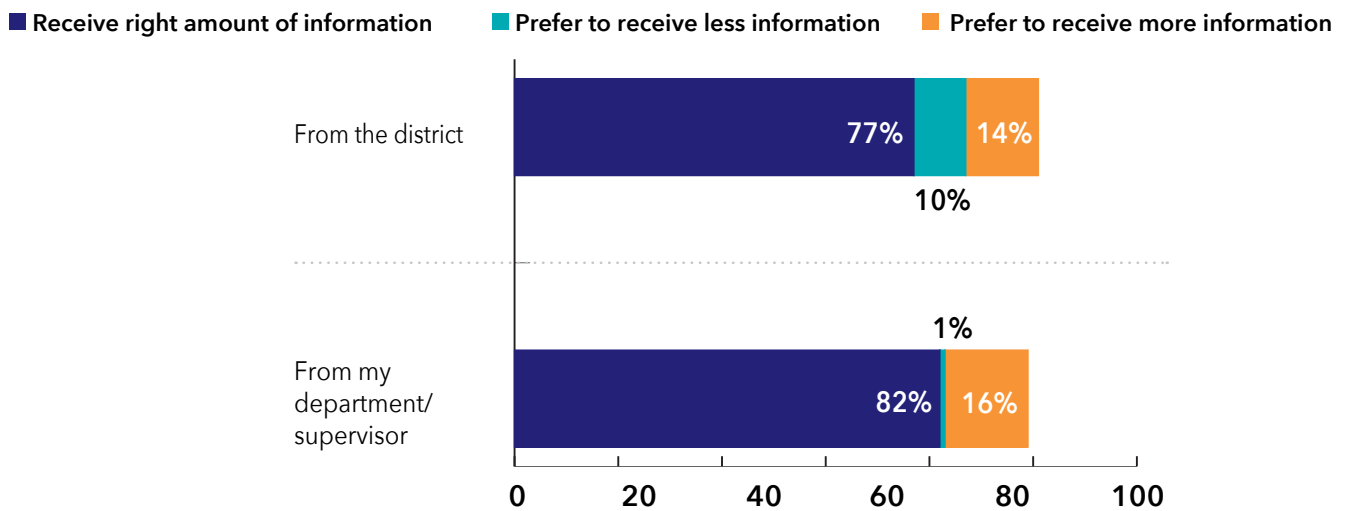
- Campus and department secretaries expressed the need for more support in working with non-English or limited English-speaking families and better translation services. An illustrative comment is that, “We are left on our own to help these [non-English speaking] families, and each campus does things differently. Everyone is trying hard, but we don’t have a system.”
- Multiple open-ended comments on the SCOPE Survey indicated that changes in the size and personnel at the central office have made communications more difficult.
- A communication challenge identified by principals was sharing and following through on information provided at principals’ meetings in a timely manner. An illustrative comment is that, “Sometimes, important information we get at the full-day principals’ meetings must be shared or acted upon the following morning. We don’t always have time to prepare our staff within that timeline.”

Digital Communication Tools

District Websites

- Blackboard Web Community Manager provides the current district website at www.boerneisd.net/ (homepage pictured on page 27), but BISD will transition to Finalsite as its new website provider in January 2025. The redesign process is underway, so the following findings focus on current areas to improve with the structure and design of the new website.
 - While some parents and staff find the current website a “good source of information,” others report that they struggle with the navigation, have difficulty searching for information, and feel “the website has too much going on.” An illustrative comment was that, “If I search for something on the website, I get information going back for years and not what I’m looking for.”

Quantity of Information - *Employees*

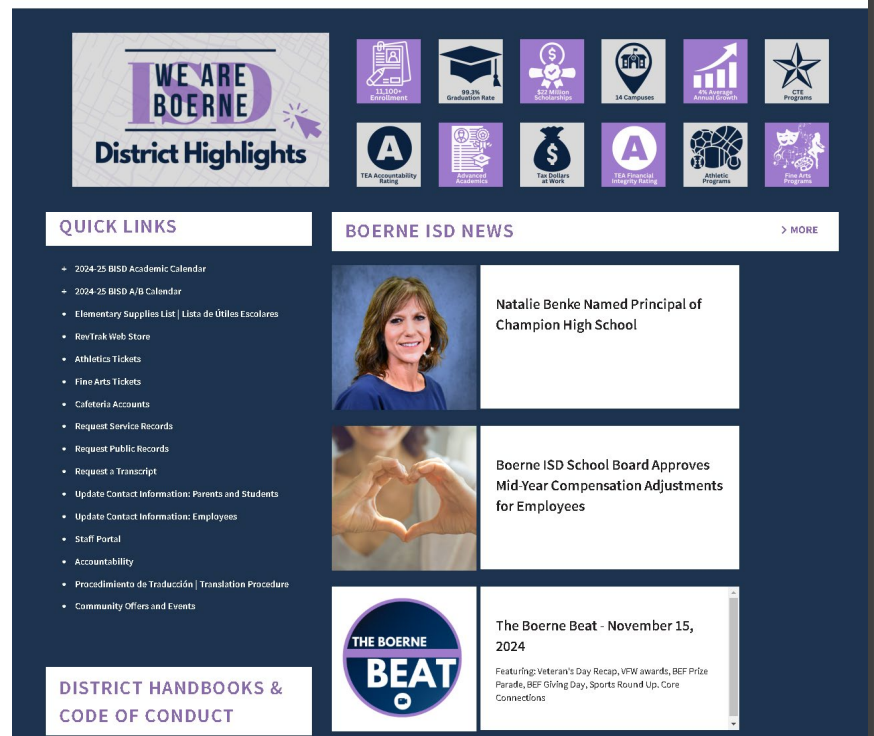


- The auditor observed that the amount of information on the current homepage (pictured at right) can make it difficult to find district-specific data such as enrollments, test scores, and ratings, but campus contact information and map locations are easy to find. The Board of Trustees page is difficult to locate, and the news section is not categorized, making it harder to navigate topics like academics, events, or achievements.

- While the structure of BISD's school-level homepages follows the district template, each page maintains its own unique brand elements and some school names are hard to read in the headers. There is little to no evidence of a district brand identity on school-level pages.

- There is a Google translate link at the top of all homepages for English language learner families to translate much of the page content, but the feature does not work for the rotating hero images with embedded text.

- Some campus websites are up to date, but eight campuses only post the weekly principal's newsletter and do not feature any other current news on their homepage.



- Responsibility for overseeing the district's web pages has been shared by the district's communications director and a secretary. The secretary also creates web graphics and monitors campus

pages throughout the year, while campus administrators assign webmasters to manage their respective school websites. As part of the website redesign process, consider whether the current arrangement meets the needs for website content creation, updates, and maintenance, and for the training and support of school webmasters.

District Video Channels

- The district has two YouTube channels:
 - [BISDtv](#) has more than 950 subscribers and 72 videos. It is linked in the footer on the BISD website homepage, but the most recently posted video there is two years old.
 - [BoerneISD TV](#) has about 380 subscribers and nearly 550 videos. It is not linked on the district homepage, but it is used weekly to host district videos linked in posts on other social media platforms.
- Videos appear to be primarily released on other social media platforms, as YouTube links or as native file uploads (see [page 29](#)), with posts often several times a week. Video content is strategically repurposed for social media posts and larger, long-term projects, including initiatives by the Board and Boerne Education Foundation.
- Parents and staff in focus groups shared that video content is effective for showcasing success and communicating updates. The weekly “Boerne Beat” e-newsletter and video news segment was mentioned in many focus groups as an example of good communications from the district. At approximately three minutes per segment, the videos summarize events and success stories in BISD. Several positive comments were made regarding changes in August 2024,

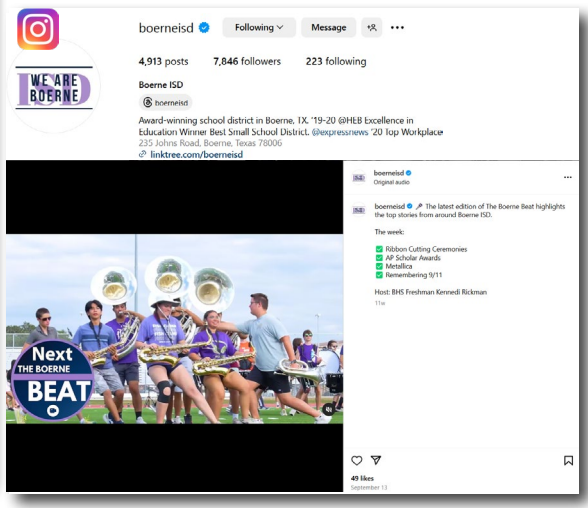
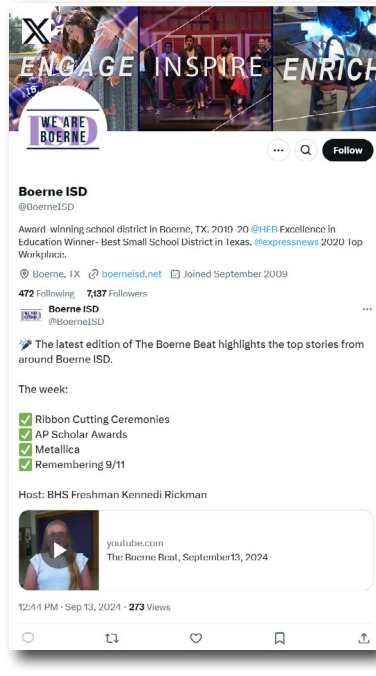
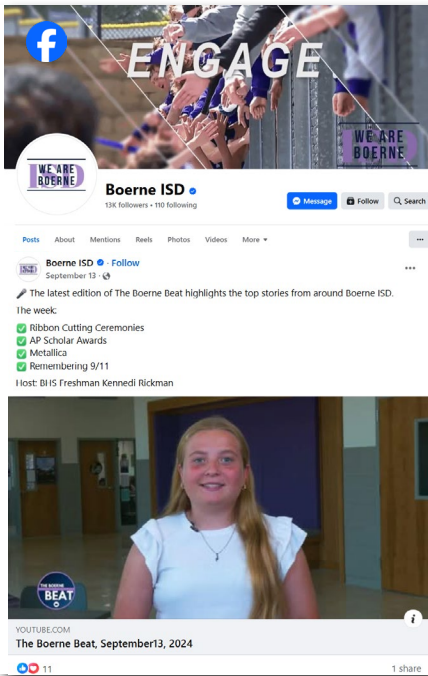
when high school students began hosting the weekly show, such as:

- “I enjoy watching to see if I recognize students and teachers.”
 - “I like the new shows this year that have students as hosts for the Boerne Beat.”
- Producing the weekly Boerne Beat requires a significant time commitment from the communications specialist, taking up parts of four days each week. The specialist also produces three other regular video features, creates video content for various departments and schools, produces a foundation podcast, and records all Board of Trustee meetings. Each segment is of excellent quality, created with a specific purpose in mind to offer a glimpse into various aspects of the district, highlight its core values, and strengthen the connection between the superintendent and the school community.

District Social Media

- BISD’s social media presence includes pages on [Facebook](#) (13,000+ followers), [Instagram](#) (7,800+ followers), [X/Twitter](#) (1,270 followers), and [LinkedIn](#) (3,000 followers). All but LinkedIn are linked in the district homepage footer. BISD’s Facebook page has a following about midway between those of nearby school districts like Alamo Heights (6,900), Medina Valley (8,700), Judson (17,000), and Comal (25,000).
- The district allows reactions and shares but not comments on its Facebook page. Similar restrictions are in place on its Instagram, X/Twitter, and LinkedIn pages.
- The auditor analyzed BISD’s social media pages for frequency of posts and engagement over a two-week period from September 16-29, 2024, and found the following:

- Facebook:** The district posts approximately 1-2 times per day with an average engagement rate of 0.63 percent for its posts. For the education industry, Hootsuite reports an average engagement rate per post of 1.45 percent in 2024.
- X/Twitter:** Based on a two-week sampling, the district posts about once per day with an average engagement rate of 0.11 percent. For the education industry, Hootsuite reports an average engagement rate per post of 0.05 percent in 2024.
- Instagram:** Based on a two-week sampling, the district posts about once per day with an average engagement rate of 3.57 percent. For the education industry, Hootsuite reports an average engagement rate per post of 2.21 percent in 2024.
- LinkedIn:** Based on a two-week sampling, the district posts about once per day with an average engagement rate of 0.37 percent. Across industries, Social Insider reports an average engagement rate per post of 3.85 percent in 2024.
- Profile and cover photos are branded and appropriately sized, but the Facebook “about” section lacks a brief overview of the district and there are no social media guidelines for users on any of the platforms, perhaps because of the comments restriction.
- Posts use concise text, often with emojis or icons, high-quality photos, short videos, and/or graphics with embedded text.
- Posts are current but feature identical or nearly identical content across platforms. Content primarily highlights awards, accomplishments, and announcements, with a limited focus on classroom instruction and student learning.
- There does not appear to be a clear process for receiving and approving stakeholder-submitted (aka, user generated) content or a scheduling tool/guide for those managing social media pages.



Word that Best Describes BISD:



SWOT Analysis

The auditor has identified the following items as specific internal strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) and external opportunities (O) and threats (T)—known as a SWOT analysis—affecting the ability of the Boerne Independent School District to achieve its communication goals. Each item is addressed, either as something to build on or try to mitigate, in the recommendations of this report.

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled communications staff with experience in education, media, and association work • Board and superintendent support for effective communication practices • Past support for school bond proposals and investments in schools • Collaborative relationship between BISD and the city • Smaller city setting allows for school leaders to be visible and accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited current staff capacity to expand communications and public engagement initiatives • Lack of a unique brand message defining what the district wants to be known for, and inconsistent branding • Inconsistent communication practices across schools, departments, classrooms
EXTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong community pride and ownership of schools, reputation in the community as a high-performing district in academics and extracurriculars • Large, well-educated senior population that understands the need for quality schools • Influx of new families attracted by the district’s reputation and geographic location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State funding that does not align with district growth and perception that the community’s affluence means BISD doesn’t need additional funds • Continued population growth and shifting demographics in the community may require changes or investments in BISD schools that could be perceived negatively by some stakeholders • Some community members resistant to change, holding on to the “Boerne Bubble” mentality • Rising costs for local housing, as well as other necessities, may impact the competitiveness of BISD job offers and employee recruitment efforts

Benchmarking of Results

National Benchmark: SCOPE Survey Scores

As part of this communication audit, NSPRA conducted its proprietary, online School Communication Performance Evaluation (SCOPE) Survey to collect feedback from three stakeholder groups: parents and families, employees (instructional, support and administrative staff) and community members. The auditor used this data to identify strengths and weaknesses of BISD 's communication program, many of which are included in the [Key Findings](#) section of this report.

An additional value the SCOPE Survey brings is the ability to compare the district's survey results on issues that matter most in school communication with the results of surveys conducted by school districts, large and small, across the United States. A sampling of BISD's results compared to the 130+ districts that have participated in the SCOPE Survey since its inception is presented in the SCOPE Scorecard on the next page.

The rating numbers provided for each question, on a 1-5 scale, correlate to the following descriptions as applicable for the type of question to which participants were responding:

1. When participants were asked to rate how informed they feel on specific topics, they responded using the following scale:

- 5 = Extremely informed
- 4 = Very informed
- 3 = Moderately Informed
- 2 = Slightly informed
- 1 = Not at all informed

2. When participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with specific statements, they responded using the following scale:

- 5 = Strongly agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Undecided
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly disagree

3. When participants were asked to provide ratings about their perceptions of the district and their overall satisfaction with communications, they responded using the following scale:

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Above average
- 3 = Average
- 2 = Below average
- 1 = Very poor

In reviewing the SCOPE Scorecard, keep in mind that BISD had a much smaller [margin of error](#) for parent and employee responses to the SCOPE Survey and therefore there is a higher level of confidence in those results. BISD had a significantly larger margin of error for community responses, and due to their lower levels of participation, there is a lower level of confidence in the community results.

SCOPE Scorecard		Boerne	NATIONAL		
			Avg.	Low	High
PARENTS/FAMILIES	General Perceptions				
	Overall perception of the district	4.1	3.8	2.6	4.3
	Overall satisfaction with communication	3.8	3.8	3.1	4.2
	Level of feeling informed:				
	About school and district events, programs and calendar updates	3.5	3.3	2.5	4.1
	About school safety, including closings, serious incidents & school crises	3.7	3.5	2.8	4.1
	About my student’s progress in school	3.4	3.7	3.1	4.4
	About how I can support my student’s learning	3.2	3.4	2.4	4.1
	Agreement with statements about communication:				
	Trustworthiness of communication from my child’s school	3.9	4.1	3.4	4.5
Trustworthiness of communication from the district	3.8	3.8	3.1	4.4	
STAFF	General Perceptions				
	Overall perception of the district	4.1	3.6	2.3	4.2
	Overall satisfaction with communication	4.0	3.6	2.6	4.2
	Level of feeling informed:				
	About school safety, including closings, serious incidents & school crises	4.0	3.5	2.8	4.1
	About how I can support student achievement	4.1	3.7	3.0	4.4
	About how I can best represent the school/district as an ambassador	3.8	3.2	2.4	3.8
	About topics that make me feel valued as an employee	3.9	3.2	2.3	4.0
	Agreement with statements about communication:				
	Trustworthiness of communication from the district	4.0	3.7	2.7	4.3
Trustworthiness of communication from my school/department	4.2	4.0	3.3	4.5	
COMMUNITY	General perceptions:				
	Overall perception of the district	3.4	3.4	2.1	4.5
	Overall satisfaction with communication	2.7	3.2	2.0	4.1
	Level of feeling informed:				
	About student success/achievements	3.2	3.0	2.0	4.2
	About district finances and related issues	2.1	2.5	1.7	3.6
	About school safety, including closings, serious incidents & school crises	2.8	2.9	1.7	4.3
	Agreement with statements about communication:				
Trustworthiness of communication from the district	2.8	3.4	2.2	4.3	

National Benchmark: *Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures*

In 2011, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) embarked on a major undertaking to create a benchmarking framework for school public relations practice that members can use to assess their programs. To accomplish this, NSPRA sought to identify the characteristics that define a district's communication program as "emerging," "established" or "exemplary" in seven critical function areas.

As of June 2023, rubrics have been completed for the following critical function areas:

- Comprehensive Professional Communication Program
- Internal communications
- Parent/Family Communications
- Marketing/Branding Communications
- Crisis Communication
- Bond/Finance Election Plans and Campaigns
- Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Communications

Benchmarking against the [*Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures*© - Fifth Edition](#) differs from other parts of the communication audit process in that it is not measuring and making recommendations based on survey results, what an auditor heard in focus groups and interviews, or discovered in district materials. Instead, it addresses how BISD's communication program compares to national, benchmarked standards of excellence in school public relations.

Benchmarked Areas

CFA 1: Comprehensive Professional

Communication Program is the basis for all communications deployed from a school district and is rooted in the communications function residing at the executive management level. Communications are systematic, transparent, two-way and comprehensive. They align with and support the district's goals and objectives. Ultimately, they foster dialogue, collaboration, understanding, engagement and trust to support student achievement.

CFA 2: Internal Communications recognizes the invaluable role of all personnel as representatives of the district. It includes having a proactive program for providing staff with the skills, information and resources they need to effectively serve as ambassadors.

CFA 3: Parent/Family Communications recognizes the relationship between family involvement/engagement and student success. It includes a proactive communications program to keep parents/families informed about and involved in their children's education with the ultimate goal of building collaboration and trust to support student learning.

CFA 4: Marketing/Branding Communications acknowledges that increased competition, declining resources, changing demographics, news media scrutiny and the importance of public perceptions are just a few of the reasons districts need an effective marketing program. Having a well-defined and authentically experienced brand promise as part of the marketing strategy helps position a district in the community and supports the district vision.

CFA 5: Crisis Communication demonstrates that no better opportunity exists for districts to show the effectiveness of their leadership and communication than during a crisis. All eyes attention are focused on how a district handles and responds to crises at hand.

CFA 6: Bond-Finance Election Plans and Campaigns addresses specific instances in which districts must receive voter approval before spending the district's existing funds

and/or levying a tax to raise funds for specific purposes. Before residents vote, there are foundational steps for building informed consent through communications on a district's operating budget, capital project proposal, millage increase or other bond/finance election campaign.

CFA 7: Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Communications recognizes that implementing effective, equitable communications and engagement strategies—for daily communication efforts as well as for formal diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives—creates a respectful, inclusive culture that encourages individuals to share their thoughts and experiences without fear of backlash.

Benchmarking Scale

As noted previously, each benchmarked area is assessed on a progressive scale:

- **Emerging.** The program is in the early stages of development and largely responsive to immediate needs or problems, with minimal proactive planning. Goals, if articulated, are loosely defined with minimal alignment with district goals and objectives.
- **Established.** The program includes a series of defined approaches based on some research. Strategies, tactics and goals are defined. The program aligns with district goals and objectives. Some evaluation may occur.
- **Exemplary.** The program is conducted according to an articulated plan following the four-step strategic public relations planning process, a model of communications known by the acronym RPIE (Research, Plan, Implement, Evaluate). The program is aligned with and integrated into district strategic plans. It is supported through policy, training and resources. Ongoing evaluation to improve progress is embedded into operations.

BISD and the *Rubrics of Practice*

When evaluating the BISD communication program using the benchmarking scale and the key components outlined in the *Rubrics of Practice*, the auditor rated the district as follows:

- **Exemplary** in CFA 3 and CFA 6
- **Established** in CFA 1, CFA 2, and CFA 4
- **Emerging** in CFA 5 and CFA 7

The [Recommendations](#) in this report provide insight and advice that will help BISD's communication program continue to enhance efforts in each benchmarked area. However, the Communications Department can regularly use the *Rubrics of Practice* to make comparisons against national benchmarks. That might involve including the department's self-assessment via the rubrics as an evaluation measure in its strategic communication plan, for example.

If the district would like to compare its program in greater detail, the 2023 edition of the *Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures* is available in the NSPRA Online Store at <https://www.nspr.org/PR-Resources/Books-and-Publications-Online-Store/Product-Info/productcd/RUBRICS-2023>.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are listed in a suggested order of priority and are accompanied by action steps that provide tactical ideas for how these recommended strategies might be accomplished. However, the district may choose to address these recommendations through tactics and in an order other than those outlined here.

Some of these recommendations can be implemented immediately, and others may take several years. A district should not try to address more than two to three recommendations each school year, while also continuing to deliver existing programs and services. This is a long-term effort, and new communication components will need to be introduced as budget, resources and staff capacity allow.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Reorganize the Communications Department's structure, job descriptions and staff responsibilities.
2. Draft a strategic communication plan for BISD aligned with district goals and objectives.
3. Develop a public engagement strategy to connect with families, share the BISD story, and build a deeper understanding of the schools.
4. Incorporate marketing strategies into the communication plan.
5. Develop an internal communications program to build trust, enhance employee satisfaction and boost teacher retention.
6. Expand Board of Trustees' outreach and communications.
7. Standardize communication processes to reach all parents.
8. Enhance existing crisis response plans with a strategic crisis communication plan.
9. Create more opportunities to engage older alumni and retirees.
10. Increase community engagement with BISD social media and on the website.

Recommendation 1:

Reorganize the Communications Department's structure, job descriptions and staff responsibilities.

School communications continue to evolve, with once-traditional print tactics replaced today in favor of two-way digital communication tools, increasingly niche social media spaces, interactive apps, and other methods that foster two-way communications and engagement. As a result, professional communicators must adapt constantly and be prepared to operate in new, more dynamic ways.

To manage this changing environment, many school districts are reorganizing their communication functions to ensure that district communications are strategic, transparent, consistent, accessible, culturally sensitive, and delivered across a wide range of channels used by families, staff, and community members.

Feedback gathered during this audit also indicates that BISD staff, parents, and community members desire more two-way communication from the schools. They want to have a voice in what is happening in their schools and feel that trust is built through conversations, not just web postings and emails.

In NSPRA's [2022 Membership Profile Survey](#), communication professionals identified their top position responsibilities as:

- Crisis communications - 58%
- External communications - 52%
- Social media - 48%
- Community relations/public engagement - 44%
- Media relations - 43%

- Website management - 39%
- Internal communications - 36%
- Strategic communication planning - 31%
- Writing/editing - 24%
- Marketing - 23%

Many of these responsibilities—excluding community partnerships and marketing initiatives—fell under the purview of a single staff position in BISD at the time of the auditor's review. While there is no one-size-fits-all template for communications department staffing, as each district has different needs, BISD has effectively utilized video as a communication tool by hiring a professional videographer for the communications team, a decision based on district priorities.

As BISD has grown in recent years, new responsibilities and expectations have been added to the Communications Department. However, few projects or responsibilities have been reassigned or scaled back in other departments, which has left the department focused primarily on immediate and reactive needs. As a result, long-term and proactive planning has received less attention, and little time is allocated for strategic work.

The auditor recommends that district administration review the job descriptions for all positions within the [Communications Department](#) to better organize and prepare the department for the evolving communications landscape.

Action Step 1.1

Use time tracking to improve task management and strategic alignment.

Before making changes, the auditor recommends that communications department staff assess and evaluate their current structure

and tasks. Tracking time on tasks can provide valuable data and need only be done for a brief period of time, maybe a few weeks to a month, to be helpful. Establishing a system for tracking tasks will greatly enhance the department's ability to prioritize limited staff time and meet its communication goals.

All communications team members should track the time spent on tasks and services they perform. The specific method or platform used for tracking matters less than having the ability to capture details about typical activities throughout the day—even those that pull them away from their planned tasks. This time-tracking will allow the team to better evaluate the return on their investment of staff time; in other words, how much time a particular activity takes versus how much it supports the district's strategic plan, in comparison to other activities.

From the resulting list of tasks and services handled by communications staff, assess how well each one aligns with the district's strategic plan by asking questions such as:

- What strategic plan goal does the task or service support?
- Does this task effectively reach our target audience(s)?
- How critical is the program, task, or service to meeting a strategic plan goal?
- If eliminated, how would district strategic goals be impacted, and how much staff time or resources would be freed up?

Once time resources and strategic alignment have been evaluated, a productive discussion can take place about the value of each program. Tasks can be categorized as "high priority" (do first), "low priority" (do next), "save for later" (when staff time allows), or "eliminate."

#1

Reorganize the Communications Department's structure, job descriptions and staff responsibilities.

Action Step 1.2

Restructure roles and responsibilities within the Communications Department.



The current structure of the Communications Department includes a full-time director who reports to the superintendent; a communications specialist, who primarily serves as the district videographer; and a communications secretary, who performs duties similar to a communications specialist for print, digital media, and special events. The specialist and secretary report to the director.

For reference, the current responsibilities for these positions in their district job descriptions are outlined on [page 39](#).

Much like with a good superintendent, the responsibilities of highly effective communications director require a broad understanding of every department and school as well as of the current and potential challenges or successes the district faces overall. The head of a communications department should have technical expertise and the ability to supervise staff in those areas, but should also possess management skills to

BISD Staff Position	Current Job Responsibilities
<p>Director of Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans, develops, and implements the district’s marketing/communication program, including publications, television programming, website development and maintenance, community relations, media relations, recognition programs, and building the district’s image. • Advises leadership on the public relations implications of district decisions. • Assists in developing proactive and anticipatory crisis management plans for the district and campus leadership. • Leads communication efforts in crisis situations for campuses and departments. • Interprets public opinion concerning the school district and its programs. • Develops applicable budgetary packages based on budgetary guidelines and needs identified in department improvement plans for submission to the Superintendent or designee during the budget development process.
<p>Communications Specialist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates and edits all videos and audio (e.g., Boerne Beat, Board videos, BEF Boerne Insider Podcast). • Serves as the primary videographer, attending various district and campus events as needed. • Creates graphics for the communications department, BEF, and other requestors. • Edits and uploads Board meeting recordings. • Takes photos at Board meetings and other events. • Operates drones for video production. • Orders video and photography equipment for the department. • Handles production elements such as set-up, camera operation, lighting, and audio pre- and post-production. • Writes scripts for selected videos. • Works with BHS/CHS A/V students on certain projects. • Maintains all studio and video/audio equipment.
<p>Communications Secretary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates graphics, flyers, displays, handouts, templates, etc., for the communications department, BEF, and other requestors throughout the district. • Oversees the department budget, including all purchase orders and paperwork with the business office (e.g., mileage reimbursements, hotel receipts). • Manages Board commendations, certificates, presentation slides, and coordinates the corresponding portion of Board meetings. • Oversees the Teacher/Support Staff of the Year process. • Manages the District Christmas Card and Board appreciation calendar project. • Takes photographs and video at district events as needed. • Co-coordinates events for the district and BEF.

effectively assist the superintendent and Board of Trustees. Such skills might include:

- Communications management
- Crisis management
- Issues management
- Relationship management
- Reputation management
- Resource management
- Risk management
- Strategic management

Many of these skills are outlined in the director of communications job description, but interviews with staff indicate that the day-to-day responsibilities have been more technical than strategic. Discussions with the superintendent and Board of Trustees revealed a desire for more public engagement and community outreach.

Later in this report, the auditor introduces additional recommended responsibilities for the communications team. If and as the district decides to implement these recommendations, the current team will need to modify existing responsibilities to fully integrate them or district leaders may need to adjust staffing to ensure effective implementation. There is no one right size for a communications department, but NSPRA's most recent member survey found that among respondents in a district with enrollment of 10,000 - 24,999 students, the majority (61 percent) had 2-4 staff in their communications office and 20 percent had 5-7 staff members.

Given district leaders' future expectations for the department and the audit findings and recommendations, consider the following structural adjustments and the related sample organizational chart on page 40:

- **Elevate to an executive level the responsibilities and expectations for the director position:** The position should

offer expertise in communications management, crisis communications and issues management, relationship building, reputation management, resource and risk management, and strategic planning. This replaces the current director of communications position with a broader strategic management focus.

- **Create a public relations coordinator position:** This role should oversee BISD's daily print and digital communications, collaborate with campus and department leadership on communications projects, and work closely with the communications specialist to coordinate video and social media outreach. It also should take on some of the old responsibilities of the director of communications and communications secretary positions.
- **Continue the communications specialist position:** This position has played a key role in the department's outreach efforts. Along with responsibilities in video production, news gathering, and campus AV support, it could also take on additional website management tasks currently handled by the Administrative Services Department.
- **Continue the communications secretary position:** Allow this position to focus on administrative assistant duties and special event support.
- **Continue to collaborate with the community partnerships position:** While not formally part of the Communications Department, collaborating with this position is important to cultivating partnerships for the district and community outreach.

Additionally, the department should consider enhancing its professional capabilities and visibility by having its team actively participate in professional organizations, including NSPRA and its state chapter [Texas School Public](#)

Restructured Organizational Chart Sample: Communications Department



Relations Association (TSPRA), by attending and presenting at conferences or serving in volunteer leadership roles. The San Antonio region of TSPRA, known as SASPRA, also offers valuable networking and support opportunities for the department.

Action Step 1.3

Conduct goal-focused performance evaluations for communications staff.

The evaluation process can be a valuable tool for staff growth when oriented around individual performance goals and overarching departmental goals such as those outlined in a strategic communication plan (see [Recommendation 2](#)).

Management philosophies on best evaluation tools and practices differ, but there is general consensus today that expectations should be

clear and collaborative, and that concerns should be discussed periodically and not come as a surprise at the end of a year.

The superintendent currently evaluates the director’s position and holds regular meetings with department staff. A plan for the director to evaluate other communications staff positions should be implemented, too. The evaluation process should have elements that benchmark and measure performance, acknowledge achievements, and highlight areas for growth or development.

Find resources for communications staff evaluations in NSPRA’s members-only Samples and Resource (Gold Mine) section on “[Staffing and Supporting Communications](#)” at <https://www.nspr.org/PR-Resources/Samples-and-Resources-Gold-Mine> and in the members-only [NSPRA Connect](#) online community at <https://connect.nspr.org/home>.

Recommendation 2:

Draft a strategic communication plan for BISD aligned with district goals and objectives.

School communication practitioners often find their workday consumed by the unexpected but daily communication demands of a district. This leaves little time for evaluating the success of current tactics and proactive communication planning. In fact, only about a third of NSPRA members reported in 2022 that strategic communications planning was among their top five job responsibilities. Within a fast-paced and high-volume work environment, communications staff are often in a react-and-respond mode that diverts attention from delivering key district messages and engaging stakeholders proactively.

The danger of this is that communication programs without a clear strategic vision and accountability to measurable objectives simply generate more information and are overwhelmed regularly by low-impact communication requests and (sometimes preventable) communication crises.

This recommendation does not mean that BISD staff don't engage in planning or that meaningful communication activities aren't currently underway. Rather, it highlights the need for a road map that aligns communication efforts with BISD's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan and 2024 Core Values (see [page 8](#)). During the audit, it became clear that while the Communications Department is appreciated for its efforts, a structured, consistent approach is needed to support the long-term effectiveness, impact and sustainability of its work.

Currently, without a defined planning framework, there's a risk that leadership, board members, staff, and families may question or misinterpret the strategies, resources, and

priorities within the department. A strategic communication plan can address this by clearly articulating the "why" behind chosen strategies (grounded in research and specific objectives), the "what" involved in each effort, and the criteria for evaluating whether these strategies are effectively achieving their goals. This framework helps the communications team move from being reactive to proactive, focusing resources on high-impact initiatives and promoting authentic, two-way engagement with stakeholders.

A formal strategic communication plan would document BISD's approach to communications, aligning all communication activities with the district's broader objectives. This alignment ensures that every action meaningfully contributes to BISD's goals while providing stakeholders with relevant, timely information.

The following action steps are designed to support the Communications Department in working as a highly effective team in ways that can be shown to advance BISD's goals and objectives.

Action Step 2.1

Begin with team building and solidifying roles and responsibilities.

The BISD Communications Department has been operating without a comprehensive communication plan. To set the stage for a such a plan, the department must first clarify individual roles and responsibilities. Establishing clear roles is essential to ensure all team members understand their unique contributions, which is critical for building a proactive and strategic approach to communications.

By investing time in team-building activities focused on roles and responsibilities, the department can ensure all members are aligned

on key tasks, expectations, and dynamics. This shared understanding is essential for fostering trust and collaboration, and it lays a foundation for progressing toward goals efficiently.

The auditor recommends that the department take a dedicated day away from the office to focus on team development. This focused time should provide the opportunity to:

- **Identify individual and team working styles:** Discuss each member's working style and identify how these varied approaches can contribute to the department's success. Consider using, for example, the DiSC assessment of workplace personalities, which is used by the NSPRA Executive Board and staff.
- **Define and align responsibilities:** Examine current duties and clarify roles to ensure that every team member knows their specific responsibilities. This may involve adjusting duties for greater efficiency and coverage.
- **Establish oversight methods:** Develop oversight processes for communication generated outside the department, such as school social media channels or department newsletters.
- **Evaluate time allocation in relation to strategic goals:** Reflect on the time-tracking results (see [Action Step 1.1](#)) and discuss how well current tactics support the district's strategic plan by considering which strategic goal each program, activity, or service supports, the potential impact of modifying or eliminating certain efforts, and whether streamlining specific tasks could allow for a stronger focus on high-impact activities.

These team-building conversations will set the foundation for developing a comprehensive communication plan that aligns with the district's strategic priorities. By clarifying roles

#2

Draft a strategic communication plan for BISD aligned with district goals and objectives.

and responsibilities first, the department can approach the plan with a shared sense of direction, purpose, and efficiency.

This process could be tied into discussions of the possible reorganization of the department introduced in [Recommendation 1](#).

Action Step 2.2

Follow the RPIE four-step strategic planning process.

For public relations professionals, the RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) framework is a best practice, widely recognized for effectively connecting communication efforts with organizational goals. This model is foundational to strategic communications and is required for PR accreditations and NSPRA awards. By focusing on clear goals, measurable objectives, and ongoing evaluation, BISD can establish a road map that supports both informing and engaging the community. This plan should outline action steps, target audiences, key messages, timelines, roles, outcomes, and specific evaluation criteria for each initiative, helping BISD maximize the impact of its communications.

Research

In this step, research the situations facing the district, including stakeholders' needs and wants as identified through this report. When writing the plan, summarize any findings from that research that are relevant to or could be impacted by the district's communications in a few paragraphs at the beginning. This NSPRA Communication Audit of BISD, including the SCOPE Survey data, will be an excellent starting point and provide a deeper understanding of communication sources, preferences, and perceptions than the district had before.

The following are additional data types worth researching when creating a strategic communication plan:

- **Reports specific to the school system:** Enrollment, student poverty, tax base growth/decline, school climate survey results, analytics for current communication tools, state school report cards, school ratings by news media and specialized websites, etc.
- **Local community demographics:** Available through the National Center for Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov/>), the U.S. Census Bureau (<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>) and local county/city/town websites.
- **National public opinion on schools:** PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools (<https://pdkpoll.org/>) and Gallup polls on education (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1612/education.aspx>).
- **Global communication trends:** Pew Research Center (<https://www.pewresearch.org/>) and Gallup Workplace Insights (<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/insights.aspx>).

Be sure to also identify all communication, public relations, marketing, and engagement activities currently taking place in BISD. This

should encompass ongoing communication tasks and strategies, such as managing website content, community newsletters, building newsletters, social media posts, parent and staff emergency notifications, news releases, and more. This compilation will provide a more accurate picture of how communication is currently integrated into district and school operations. It will also provide a realistic look at the scope of responsibilities and tasks related to the communications function. Much of this research and data collection was recently completed for the NSPRA audit.

Plan

Planning is the second and probably most important stage of the RPIE process. Following the steps outlined here will yield significant benefits for the district.

- **Develop measurable objectives:** In the planning phase, start by articulating clear long-term communication goals and shorter-term, measurable objectives based on desired changes in awareness, knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and behaviors of key audiences. Think of objectives as desired outcomes, stated in a way that can be measured later, which builds trust by establishing accountability. These objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). For example, a measurable objective for BISD might be:
 - **Objective:** *By the end of the 2025- 26 school year, at least 60 percent of all stakeholder groups will say they are moderately to extremely informed about the district's finances.*
- **Identify stakeholder groups:** Stakeholder groups, or target audiences, are the individuals who are interested in and/or impacted by the district and its initiatives. A strategic communication plan often has a unique set of objectives, strategies,

tactics, and key messages for each stakeholder group. Common stakeholder groups for schools include:

- Parents broken down by grade levels (e.g., elementary, middle and high school) or by another identifier (e.g., non-English-speaking)
 - Employees sub-grouped into teachers, principals, administrators, support staff and paraprofessionals
 - Business and community partners such as civic and faith community leaders, vendors, scholarship providers, real estate agents and others active in the schools and community
 - Elected officials, including city and county officials and state and federal legislators
 - Non-parents, including empty nesters, retirees and community members without children in our schools
 - Media representatives from radio and television stations and local newspapers and magazines
- **Create key messages:** For each target audience, determine what that stakeholder group should come away knowing or doing because of the communications, and use that information to build targeted key messages. People's attention spans and time are limited, so messages that are short, focused, repeated consistently, and trigger a positive emotion have a better chance of being absorbed.
 - **Determine strategies.** Strategies describe how you will achieve your objectives, while tactics specify the particular elements (e.g., tools, activities, timing) that will be used to implement each strategy. Distinguishing between strategies and tactics and organizing them under measurable objectives will make the plan easier to implement and evaluate for effectiveness. An example strategy for the objective on the previous page might be:
 - **Strategy:** *Make easy-to-understand financial information available via digital communication channels.*
 - **Establish Tactics and Tools:** For each strategy and stakeholder group, identify the most effective tactics and tools for deploying communications. For example, for the strategy mentioned in the previous bullet, one tactic might be to design an infographic that illustrates the budget story and prominently post it on the website, social media and in an animated video. As you consider tactics and tools, ensure that strategies are focused on achieving the desired stakeholder behaviors and outcomes, rather than simply delivering more information. Additionally, identify any resources that may need to be acquired or budgetary funds that may need to be allocated, such as for equipment and software, materials and supplies, printing and duplicating, advertising (digital and print), consulting services, or subscriptions.
 - **Set Timelines:** To ensure the effective and efficient delivery of information, create timelines that include start dates for actions, dates for reaching objectives, and dates for conducting evaluations. Formal evaluation will come at the end of the implementation process, but also identify key times for interim assessments so tactics can be modified as needed to increase the impact of strategies.
 - **Assign Responsibility:** For each tactic, determine who will be responsible for its execution. Part of this step involves clarifying roles and responsibilities (see [Action Step 1.2](#)), which is crucial for making appropriate assignments in the strategic communication plan.

Implement

Implementation is often the easier part of the process because the research and planning phases will have already identified what needs to be done, when, by whom, and with what tools and resources, along with a clear timeline. If the Communications Department has a clear understanding of each team member's roles and responsibilities, charting out the implementation process should be straightforward. Be sure to include regular check-in points as a team, where staff can review their roles in executing the plan.

Evaluate

When creating the strategic communication plan, identify evaluative measures that can be used later to determine success in achieving the stated objectives. These measures could include survey responses, participation

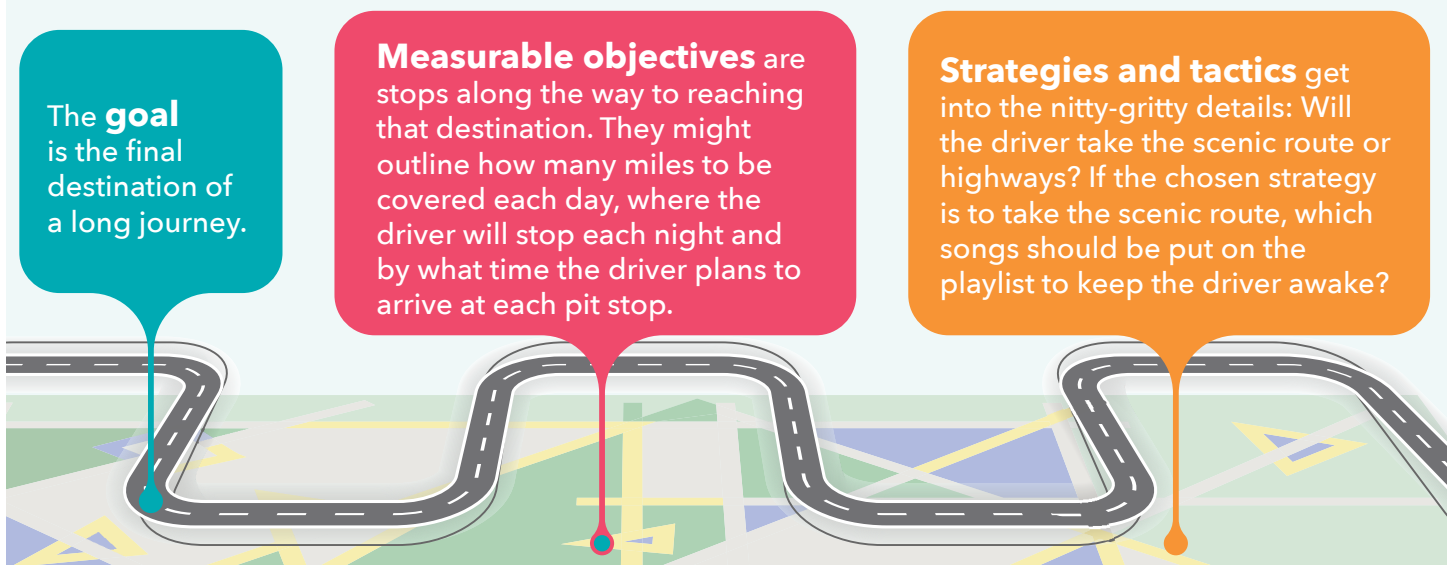
numbers, election results, user analytics, and more. The data can also serve as the basis for research findings that inform future updates to the strategic communication plan.

To ensure continuous improvement and accountability throughout the year, use Communications Department meetings, cabinet meetings, staff meetings, and other leadership development sessions to review progress toward achieving the measurable objectives of the plan. These discussions will reinforce good communications as a shared responsibility.

Review the new strategic communication plan with administrators so they understand their responsibilities as communicators in their leadership roles. Then at the end of each school year, prepare a comprehensive report on the plan for BISD leaders to demonstrate outcomes and highlight achievements.

Get on the Road to Achieving Communication Goals

It can be challenging to distinguish between goals, objectives, strategies and tactics in part because some industries use the words interchangeably. For their use within the field of school communications, an analogy that can be helpful is to think of the terms in the context of traveling to a desired destination.



Action Step 2.3

Consult NSPRA member resources and sample communication plans for inspiration.



NSPRA offers a variety of training resources on developing strategic communication plans. First, watch the NSPRA PR Power Hour webinar, “Simple Steps to Transform Your Communication To-Dos Into a Strategic Communication Plan,” available in the members-only Samples and Resources (Gold Mine) section on Strategic Communication Plans at <https://www.nspira.org/PR-Resources/Samples-and-Resources-Gold-Mine>. This section also features communication plan templates, including one designed for use with a communication audit report. Additionally, for reference and inspiration, review the [2022-23 OPS Comprehensive Communication plan from Omaha Public Schools](#), which was awarded the NSPRA Gold Medallion Award.

To further explore exemplary communication plans, review the 2024 NSPRA Gold Medallion Award and Golden Achievement Award winners at <https://www.nspira.org/Awards/Award-Winners>. Some of the award-winning communication plans on the NSPRA website come from larger school districts with bigger communication teams than BISD, so don't feel the BISD communication plan must fully match their depth or detail.

Action Step 2.5

Incorporate communications planning into the daily work of department staff.

Beyond the multi-year plan for strategic communications, the Communications Department should have a modified communication plan template ready for use whenever topic-specific issues need to be addressed or initiatives need to be implemented. These mini plans need not be as elaborate as the overall communication plan, but they should still be set up to encourage thoughtful communication planning.

Below are specific topics for which a mini communication plan may benefit BISD and address the school community's information needs and preferences:

- Bond and tax ratification elections
- School boundary changes
- Major BISD anniversaries
- Significant changes that require major communications and community feedback

Recommendation 3:

Develop a public engagement strategy to connect with families, share BISD story and build a deeper understanding of the schools.

BISD is a successful school district with strong community support, and its achievements are well-publicized and familiar to residents. However, despite these successes, it cannot be assumed that parents and community members fully understand how the district operates, its goals, or the changing needs it anticipates as it continues to grow.

This point was highlighted in the SCOPE Survey, where staff and parents reported feeling well-informed about district successes but indicated they were less informed about key areas such as district finances, goals, leadership decisions, and school facilities. Additionally, some open-ended comments raised concerns that the district may withhold information on important issues to maintain a favorable image. Whether this perception is accurate or not, and rare or widespread, it still should be addressed proactively to maintain public trust.

To foster meaningful connections with the BISD community, it is recommended that more opportunities for public involvement be integrated into existing events and channels. Public engagement strategies can help connect the community's support for student achievements with a deeper understanding of important district topics, like state funding and facility needs. BISD already has great initiatives like the [Leadership Academy](#), which fosters this type of engagement by providing the community with valuable insights into district operations, and building more two-way communication will strengthen the district's relationship with its stakeholders.

The following action steps outline tactics for district communicators, leaders, and spokespeople to strengthen stakeholder relationships through more engaging communication practices. These include developing core engagement principles that guide day-to-day communications, focusing on transparency, accessibility, and active feedback loops. Additionally, the tactics emphasize creating opportunities for engagement through both planned events and informal interactions.

Action Step 3.1

Embed a public engagement mindset.



To deliver meaningful engagement across all communication and decision-making processes, Boerne ISD should embed a public engagement mindset into everyday communication practices. Such a mindset focuses on fostering open dialogue, building trust, and ensuring transparency through a commitment to the following:

- **Engage early, not just when decisions are made.** Begin engaging the community early in the decision-making process, not when decisions are close to being finalized.
- **Clearly define the engagement purpose and goals:** Determine whether the aim is to build long-term trust with the community or gather short-term input for a specific decision. Is the goal to inform, consult, or empower stakeholders? Be clear about how feedback will be collected, used, and shared. This will help guide the selection of different engagement strategies.
- **Choose the right level of engagement:** Recognize that not all decisions require the same level of engagement. Some decisions may need broad community

input, while others may only need feedback from specific stakeholders.

- **Understand your audience:** Consider factors like level of familiarity with the district’s schools, access to communication channels, and physical barriers (such as language or transportation) when planning engagement activities.
- **Communicate fully and transparently:** Share the full context of a situation and avoid glossing over or withholding challenging details. The BISD community is sensitive to information gaps.
- **Follow through:** After collecting input, always report back to the community. Thank them for their contributions and explain how their feedback influenced decisions or actions.

By adopting this mindset, BISD can build trust and create a culture of ongoing, proactive engagement that becomes a natural part of how the district communicates and makes decisions. These principles can be reinforced through additional resources that will support the district in its public engagement efforts.

The following webinars, book, and articles available on the NSPRA website provide valuable perspectives, strategies, and tools to guide BISD’s ongoing engagement efforts:

- Available in the members-only Samples and Resources (Gold Mine) section on [Community Engagement](#) under Webinar/Learning Opps.:
 - “Meeting Families Where They’re At: Innovative Ways to Reimagine Your Engagement” presented by San Juan (Calif.) Unified School District
 - “Building Trust From the Inside Out” presented by Highline Public Schools, Burien, Wash.
- Available in the NSPRA Online Store is [The Politics of Authentic Engagement](#).

#3

Develop a public engagement strategy to connect with families, share BISD story and build a deeper understanding of the schools.

Perspectives, Strategies and Tools for Student Success by Kathy Leslie, APR, with Judy Taccogna.

- Available in past member newsletters:
 - [“Optimizing Online Strategies to Energize Public Engagement”](#) by Dulce Carrillo and Andrew Robinson, Arlington (Va.) Public Schools
 - [“Engaging Non-English Speaking Stakeholders of School Communities”](#) by Joseph Ortiz, Tolleson (Ariz.) Union High School District

Action Step 3.2

Plan a quarterly series of superintendent roadshows.

Based on focus groups and survey feedback, the superintendent is seen as sincere and respected for leadership visibility. Therefore, it is an opportune time to develop an engaging event series for stakeholders to connect face to face, in person or virtually, with the superintendent for discussions on areas other than bond initiatives that matter to parents and community members such as academics, college readiness, school safety, and school finance issues.

While the roadshows would be led and delivered by the superintendent, their success

from the planning stage through the marketing and production stage would benefit from the support of the Communications Department.

NSPRA member Krista Stockman, APR, presented a session called “Bring Your Own Coffee, It’s the Superintendent Roadshow” at the NSPRA 2023 National Seminar that would be good to watch for inspiration and lessons learned. Find it under Video Presentations in the Samples and Resources (Gold Mine) section on Superintendent Transitions at <https://www.nspr.org/PR-Resources/Samples-and-Resources-Gold-Mine/Superintendent-Transitions-New-Leadership>.

Additionally, the communications team and superintendent could develop a presentation on the BISD story, with engaging components, for sharing by the superintendent at meetings of local business, civic, service, and faith groups upon their invitation.

Action Step 3.3

Host outreach activities for real estate agents.

With the district’s growing enrollment, it’s wise to engage real estate agents. They are among the first points of contact for potential BISD families and are in a position to influence initial impressions of local schools.

Real estate agents are subject to the Fair Housing Act when sharing information about a school district with prospective homebuyers. This federal law protects people from discrimination because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status during housing-related activities. It means agents can’t tell parents one neighborhood has better schools than another or that one home is in a more desirable district.

Agents can, however, provide families with third-party tools that empower them to decide on their own whether a home and its

schools are a good fit. See how the Barnegat (N.J.) Township School District did this in its “Reaching Realtors for Positive Perceptions” campaign, which can be found at <https://bit.ly/3P7DkOE>. It earned a 2023 NSPRA Golden Achievement Award.

Here are some other ideas to help build relationships with this key group:

- Invite local agents to an annual informational meeting with refreshments and a bus tour of the district or select schools to highlight specific programs.
- Provide agents with information packets, a checklist of information available on the district website and a link to a special district webpage set up just for prospective families.
- Contact area real estate associations to see if the superintendent could speak during a monthly meeting.
- Invite a couple of well-known local real estate agents from different companies to participate in a live virtual discussion with the superintendent on housing and enrollment trends in the community.

Action Step 3.4

Evaluate, refine and expand on engagement events and campaigns.



Having a variety of campaigns and community outreach initiatives helps to emphasize transparency and accessibility while building more personal connections with the district among community members. At the same time, initiatives that yield low participation or that can’t maintain relevancy for a changing demographic are not worth the staff time and effort to organize. Make time as part of the communication planning process

(see [Recommendation 2](#)) to identify all annual engagement efforts organized at the district level and to analyze and compare the level of their positive impact.

Events and campaigns that have yielded low levels of in-person/online engagement should be strategically abandoned to free up staff time to try new, potentially more impactful initiatives. For inspiration, following are some engagement efforts to consider:

- **Integrated storytelling campaigns:** Launch a social media series called “From Their Perspective” featuring short video clips of students sharing what they love about BISD, its programs, or specific experiences. Highlight the district’s strengths, amplify student voice, and showcase the value of BISD from those who experience it firsthand.
- **“Thank a Teacher” campaign:** Invite selfie video testimonials from parents, students, and community members about teachers who have made a positive impact. Feature the videos in the district’s monthly newsletter and on social media.
- **“Why I Love Working with Kids” campaign:** Collaborate with school principals to identify exemplary teachers and classified staff who are willing to share “Why I Love Working with Kids” quotes and videos on their own or district social media.
- **Seeing Is Believing Tours:** Offer short, informative school tours for community members, particularly senior citizens, where they can see teachers in action and observe students engaged in learning.
- **Executive Networking Events:** Have the superintendent, board president and a series of principals host a lunch/breakfast networking event at schools for a rotating group of chief officers of the district’s largest taxpayers and employers. Many of these economic leaders may not

have a direct reason to engage with the district unless invited, so this creates an opportunity for meaningful conversation and relationship-building between BISD leaders and local business leaders.

- **Volunteerism Day:** Flip the “Volunteer at Boerne ISD” messaging once a year and expand on “Senior Service Day” with a “Boerne ISD Volunteers” day where district administrative staff, instructional and support staff at schools, and high school students team up to work on public service projects identified by local community groups.
- **Supporters appreciation event:** Host an annual lunch/dinner event for parent volunteers, local business/civic leaders, and other community supporters to acknowledge their collaboration, support, and vital role as key communicators in amplifying district stories.

Action Step 3.5

Implement a digital feedback system.

Establish a straightforward method for staff, parents, and the community to submit comments, ideas, and concerns. Customer service platforms like K12 Insight’s [Let’s Talk](#) or community conversation platforms like [ThoughtExchange](#) offer a convenient way for stakeholders to submit feedback.

These tools allow responses to be categorized and routed to the appropriate administrators for a timely and relevant reply. In addition, this approach provides a clear avenue for families and staff to voice their concerns or ideas. The real benefit of these tools is that they allow district leadership to analyze trends in feedback over time, helping to identify issues early and adapt communication strategies as needed.

Recommendation 4:

Incorporate marketing strategies into the communication plan.

The terms “communications” and “marketing” are sometimes used interchangeably, but they serve distinct though complementary functions. They have different goals, approaches, and target outcomes but can both benefit a school district. Understanding the distinction is essential to developing a cohesive BISD communications and marketing strategy.

Public relations and communication involve the management of relationships, focusing on building trust, transparency, and engagement with stakeholders through two-way communications. Highly effective communication efforts emphasize two-way dialogue, listening to stakeholders, and ensuring consistent, clear messaging that fosters trust and preserves a reputation.

Marketing, on the other hand, is about promoting the district’s value proposition, attracting new families and employees by showcasing what sets the district and its schools apart. Marketing focuses on creating a favorable perception of the district through campaigns and brand promotion. Marketing aims to generate interest and “sell” the district’s strengths, achievements, and unique offerings to prospective audiences.

This recommendation for a marketing plan can be incorporated into the development of a more comprehensive strategic communication and marketing plan (see [Recommendation 2](#)).

Action Step 4.1

Clarify the value proposition and develop a distinctive brand for BISD.

To strengthen its marketing efforts, BISD must have a clear brand identity that reflects the district’s unique strengths and aspirations. While BISD enjoys a positive reputation with a history of success, focus group feedback reveals a lack of clarity in how the district is perceived. Responses such as “we have quality teachers” or “we have great community support” are positive but vague and common to other high performing school systems, highlighting the need for a more distinctive brand.

A strong brand identity encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, including the district’s history, values, personality, and visual identity. According to the *Branding Journal*, this identity shapes how a district is perceived and sets it apart from others. An intentional branding effort will help BISD convey what makes it unique, ensuring consistency across all communications and marketing materials.

To solidify this brand, BISD must first establish its value proposition—a clear statement that articulates the district’s promise to students, families, and employees. This proposition highlights what sets BISD apart from other districts and should be distilled into a concise tagline that resonates with its audience. For example, the tagline “305 Grows Greatness” from [Salina Public Schools](#) effectively communicates a focused promise about the district’s commitment to student growth.

BISD should evaluate its current tagline, “We are BISD,” to determine whether it clearly conveys the district’s value and sets it apart from other institutions. Does it reflect BISD’s strengths and unique identity?

For a deeper understanding of the branding process, watch the webinar “Defining Your

District Brand” presented by the Park Hill and Belton school districts, and located in the members-only Samples and Resources (Gold Mine) section on Marketing/Branding under Webinars/Learning Opps. at <https://www.nspr.org/PR-Resources/Samples-and-Resources-Gold-Mine/Marketing-Branding>.

Communications staff can also reference *The Ed Branding Book: How to Build Educational Leadership with Social Influence* by NSPRA members Renae Bryant, Ed.D., and Lynette White. This book offers insights into how educational organizations can build and maintain a strong, authentic brand that resonates with their community. It also provides practical strategies and case studies for crafting a compelling brand and value proposition.

Action Step 4.2

Create consistency in branding across regular communications through a BISD brand guide.

Brand identity elements are crucial for effectively communicating an organization’s values and creating a lasting, positive impression. These elements—such as visuals and sometimes audio—help convey the organization’s unique character and set it apart from others. They are most impactful when consistently applied across all communications, with minor adjustments made as needed for different campaigns and media formats.

Currently, BISD lacks a cohesive image across its digital and print materials. For example, the website features the “We Are BISD” slogan, while the district’s main communication, The Boerne Beat, uses different graphics and logos. The “We Are BISD” logo is also modified and used by various departments. For instance, the Portrait of a Learner document features the logo alongside additional artwork. (See examples at right.) While all uses are appropriate and

#4

Incorporate marketing strategies into the communication plan.

tasteful, they don’t contribute to a clear and consistent district brand. As part of a marketing campaign, it is recommended that staff review existing print and digital communications representing BISD to determine how a more consistent brand identity can be incorporated.

Review the current brand identity elements and their use across print and digital communication materials to assess how well they align with the desired brand, defined through Action Step 4.1. Consistency is crucial for reinforcing the brand identity. Integrate BISD’s brand identity into all communication tools to present a clear and distinctive image of the district. Find examples of award-winning rebranding campaigns from other school districts in NSPRA’s members-only [Samples and Resources](#) (Gold Mine) section under Marketing/Branding.

Once the brand identity elements are aligned and consistent, it’s recommended to create a brand guide. A brand guide, also known as



a style guide, sets the standards for how the district's brand is represented online and in print. It provides staff, sports teams, volunteers, and others affiliated with the district with the resources and expectations for maintaining the school system's brand.

After establishing the brand guide, clearly communicate the district's standards, and expectations to staff, volunteers, families, and outside vendors. This will help ensure that all materials produced by BISD-affiliated groups align with the district's brand identity.

This process can be challenging in a school district where no brand guide has previously existed. It may be necessary to explain the rationale behind the branding effort to gain more buy-in from departments and organizations. Additionally, consider whether a new logo design would be beneficial as part of the branding process.

Linked below are two award-winning examples of effective district brand guides:

- Brand Identity Guide webpage, Saginaw Intermediate School District, Mich. - [Saginaw ISD Brand Guide](#)
- Brand Guidelines: Identity and Style Manual, Highline Public Schools, Wash. - [Highline Brand Guide](#)

Action Step 4.3

Identify "points of pride" stories that reinforce the district's brand.

The BISD Communications Department does an excellent job of highlighting students' awards and accomplishments. When identifying storytelling opportunities, also look for points of pride for BISD schools that go beyond the standard recognitions and illustrate the district's brand. Prioritize such stories and find ways

to subtly demonstrate how they illustrate the district's value proposition in action.

Action Step 4.4

Regularly review third-party school rating sites.



Independent school rating websites give top ratings to BISD schools, as noted in the [Key Findings](#). This is a great finding because many real estate agents send families to third-party school rating websites to get impartial information on local schools.

These sites typically rate schools and districts based on state test data and other factors such as student progress, college readiness, equity, safety, teacher quality, etc. Self-submitted, anonymous reviews of a school from parents, teachers, students, and community members appear below the rating details. These sites often have a system for an official representative of a school to claim its online profile.

Communications staff should regularly review BISD's ratings on these sites as well as individual campus ratings. Teach principals how to "claim" their school and add general information that will help demonstrate what makes their school special. Ask them to encourage parent-teacher organization leaders to add their own positive school reviews.

Recommendation 5:

Develop an internal communications program to build trust, enhance employee satisfaction and boost teacher retention.

Compared to benchmarked school districts, BISD does a good job of communicating with employees and keeping them informed. Satisfaction with district communications and trust in those communications were both higher than the national average on the [SCOPE Scorecard](#). NSPRA auditors have found these to frequently be areas of concern in other districts.

However, BISD staff members' comments still indicated a desire for more input into decision-making and more information about decisions that affect them, as noted in the [Key Findings](#). SCOPE survey comments also requested more opportunities to share opinions and see results from committee work and surveys. Although employee comments covered a variety of topics, many addressed these themes.

In almost every organization, it is common for employees to feel excluded from administrative decisions. When employees feel they are "out of the loop" and have no voice in decisions that impact their jobs and schools, morale can suffer. This appears to be a concern for at least some BISD staff, and solving it will require better coordination across the organization to ensure everyone who needs information receives it.

While the listening done during a communication audit is not intended to verify the accuracy of individual staff comments, the presence alone of a negative perception can hinder effective communication. For this reason, it is important to take steps to ensure highly effective communication between teachers, support staff, and school administration.

Action Step 5.1

Establish internal communication expectations for district and campus administrators.



Staff in focus groups and on the SCOPE Survey expressed that they want to receive information earlier and in more detail than what is shared with parents and the broader community. Staff members often get questions from parents or community members and find it challenging when they lack a complete understanding of the topic. An illustrative comment from a staff member noted that, "I know there are many community members that are 'in the know' and post about events as they hear them, but it is troubling when something appears on social media before employees or families are informed."

A clear process for message dissemination can prevent bottlenecks when administrators are unsure about when, how, and what to communicate, or who is responsible for ensuring messages reach the intended audience. To help all administrators understand their roles in communicating key information to employees, set clear expectations for how leaders will communicate with staff. Expectations might be for them to include:

- The rationale behind decisions.
- Explanations of how initiatives or decisions align with the district's mission, core values, and strategic direction.
- Summaries of important meetings.
- Operational details and district policies that affect staff responsibilities.

To underscore the district's commitment to effective communication, consider including a

communications component in the evaluation criteria for administrators if it is not already part of the process.

Action Step 5.2

Share audit findings with employees.



The SCOPE Survey results indicate that employees have more confidence and trust in communications from their principals than from the district. One way to build trust is to share the findings from the survey and focus groups with participants. When BISD conducts a staff survey, the district should communicate the feedback received and explain how employee input was used. If a decision is made that does not align with employee preferences, an explanation of the rationale behind the decision should be provided to the staff.

Action Step 5.3

Gather employee input on decisions that will affect their jobs.

BISD leadership should solicit employee input in advance when decisions may directly impact staff members and schools. This can often be achieved through staff meetings and personal interactions as well as through surveys, polls, and virtual meetings. This request was highlighted in multiple staff focus groups during the audit. Setting up a procedure for gathering input on all major decisions that impact staff will strengthen trust and transparency throughout the district.

Follow these best practices when considering whether and how to gather employee input:

- **Do not seek input if a decision is already made:** When districts have already chosen

#5

Develop an internal communications program to build trust, enhance employee satisfaction and boost teacher retention.

a general direction but still ask for input, staff feel their feedback is undervalued. Avoid requesting input when the outcome is predetermined.

- **Give appropriate consideration to staff input:** In some cases, district leaders may have a clear sense of the needed decision but choose to gather staff feedback before finalizing it. While input doesn't require leaders to adopt every suggestion, it should be genuinely considered. If certain input is not actionable, explain why and provide the rationale for the final decision.
- **Clarify where decision-making authority lies:** Often, the Board of Trustees or administrators seek input to make an informed decision, not to delegate decision-making authority. Misunderstandings may arise if those giving input believe they hold decision-making power. To prevent confusion, clarify why input is being gathered, how it will be used, and who holds the authority to make the final decision.

Action Step 5.4

Enhance the value of opportunities for face-to-face communications.

Maintaining high levels of trust and morale requires two-way communication, but it's important to improve communication efficiency while reducing unnecessary information overload for BISD staff. SCOPE Survey results found that about a third of employees place "faculty, department, committee or districtwide meetings" among their two preferred methods for receiving information to help them perform their duties and support student learning. Administrators and supervisors who plan and lead meetings can make them more engaging and build trust by creating more opportunities for discussion and interaction.

- Review the Staff Advisory Council format and process.** The BISD Staff Advisory Council has remained in place across several BISD administrations, serving as a valuable venue for informal dialogue between administration and staff. However, the council's format and processes might benefit from review—potentially by the council itself. Are there ways it can be improved to encourage more open conversation? Is there an effective feedback loop so attendees can relay information to their colleagues?
- Go beyond the classroom in faculty meetings.** In addition to school-specific topics, campus administrators should cover key district updates and messages in faculty meetings since teachers are often the primary source of information for students and parents. When possible, include support staff in these meetings. Consider sharing relevant information at the beginning of the meeting so support staff can be released when instructional topics are discussed.
- Facilitate interaction for Central Office employees with leadership.** NSPRA auditors have found that central office, non-administrative staff are often left out of the communication chain, and feedback of a similar nature was heard among BISD administrative assistants. Holding an "all hands" central office meeting quarterly, perhaps with coffee and donuts, would allow face time with the superintendent and executive team, giving central office staff the chance to hear about major initiatives in schools and ask questions.

Action Step 5.5

Incorporate BISD history, culture and communications into the new employee orientation program.

New employee orientation programs do not generally fall under the auspices of the Communications Department, but they can have a positive impact on the internal communication effort.

The BISD orientation is coordinated by the Teaching and Learning Department. In addition to the necessary training and information sessions, consider expanding its scope to include a session on district communications. Use part of the orientation program to familiarize new employees—including support staff and teachers—with the Communications Department, as well as Boerne's community culture and history. (Perhaps the Champion High School alumni could prepare a BISD schools history presentation with help from the Boerne Historical Society.) New employees who are also new to Boerne would benefit from details on local culture and history.

Further, expand on any existing new hire orientation packages with the following communications-oriented components:

- A copy of BISD’s core values, the 2024-25 Strategic Plan, and key initiatives.
- A list of all official communication vehicles (e.g., publications, website, intranet, social media), their purpose, and when updates are published or posted. Review guidelines and expectations for media relations and social media so that staff understand protocols.
- Tips on being an ambassador for the schools and the importance of effective communication to BISD’s success.

Action Step 5.6

Keep staff better informed with a targeted employee newsletter.



Currently, the district distributes the Boerne Beat, which provides an overview of events and recognitions, to both the community and staff. Additionally, “nuts and bolts” information for employees is communicated through emails from the Human Resources or Teaching and Learning departments. However, survey feedback suggests that these communications do not fully address staff members’ desire for more details about decisions that impact them.

A monthly e-newsletter aimed at sharing district information that impacts all or many employees is recommended. Using input from the executive staff and the Staff Advisory Committee, this e-newsletter could be brief yet informative. Considerations for such an internal newsletter include asking:

- **Does the information help employees perform their jobs?** The newsletter should be easy to open and quickly scan to find relevant content.
- **Does the information shine a light on**

great instruction and customer service?

The school business of “teachers teaching and students learning” is sometimes overshadowed by newsletters focused on announcements and recognitions. Find ways to highlight staff members who may not always receive recognition, especially those in less visible roles.

- **What is the best day of the week to distribute the e-newsletter?** Recent national data suggests that Tuesdays and Mondays are the best day to send marketing emails, but BISD could review internal data on staff email open rates to determine its own best send day. Planning distribution for after principals’ meetings could be helpful for gathering news. Use the Staff Advisory Council to generate content ideas, too.
- **What is the ideal frequency, in the context of all regular district e-newsletters?** Plan the newsletter schedule to fit the frequency of valuable content; don’t create filler content to fit a release schedule. If filler content is being added regularly to meet a bi-weekly or weekly schedule, switch to a monthly newsletter.

Action Step 5.7

Organize an advisory council of administrative assistants.



QUICK WIN

Office administrative assistants/secretaries play a key role in district and campus-level communications due to their frequent contact with staff, families, and visitors. Organizing an advisory council from this support staff group would provide more regular opportunities for their two-way communications with district administrators and give both leaders and communications staff an early warning about emerging issues and concerns at the schools.

These meetings could be agenda-driven, featuring brief presentations on new programs or upcoming events such as campus renovations, new lunch payment systems, or calendar changes. Participants could also be invited to share observations and suggestions related to communications and customer service at the campus level.

Action Step 5.8

Continue to celebrate employee contributions and successes.

One area that appears to be lacking, based on focus group feedback, is employee recognition. The district currently participates in the Teacher of the Year program, and some campuses host an Employee of the Month program. However, there appears to be no group recognition for BISD retirees at this time.

An end-of-year employee recognition program is recommended, including retirees, Teachers of the Year, and other award winners. An early morning breakfast hosted by the superintendent may be more convenient for employees' schedules and less expensive than an evening dinner.

Additionally, consider expanding BISD's employee recognition to include award categories that don't single out one employee. Here are three suggestions to acknowledge multiple employees at a time:

- **Rookie of the Year** - Recognize first-year teachers who embrace BISD culture and perform exceptionally well for their school.
- Overall, aim to develop recognition initiatives that highlight staff achievements across various communication platforms. This will help foster a culture of appreciation and motivation, encouraging staff to feel recognized, even in small ways.
- **Bright Idea Awards** - Recognize employees who propose ideas or programs that improve academic achievement or save the district money.
 - **Bell Ringer Awards** - Recognize employees who go above and beyond their normal responsibilities for the benefit of students or the district.

Recommendation 6: Expand Board of Trustees' outreach and communications.

School board members occupy a unique position, as they represent both the schools in the community and the voting residents of the community as elected officials. This dual responsibility may place the board between competing interests, such as a debate over attendance zones. To maintain community understanding and support, ongoing communication about board decisions and initiatives is essential.

BISD's five-year strategic plan, adopted in 2023, includes a commitment to increasing engagement and customer satisfaction between the district and the community. It states:

- **Strategic Goal #4** – By 2028, 100% of BISD family and community stakeholders will be part of a culture of trust where they feel engaged and valued.

The inclusion of community engagement, trust, and customer service among the strategic goals, along with the BISD Core Values, demonstrates that the Board of Trustees is committed to supporting and improving district communications. Further evidence is shown by meeting agendas, summaries, recordings, and images of the "board in action" being readily available on the BISD website. Staff members and parents are aware of the board's support for communications, as noted in the [Key Findings](#).

With this recommendation, the auditor offers a few more ideas for the Board of Trustees to further engage its community.

Action Step 6.1

Review district communication policies.

BISD's Board Policy (Community) includes guidelines on public information requests, media inquiries, and parent organizations, among others. While these policies provide valuable direction on district communications and public relations, they primarily focus on one-way communication to stakeholders. Given the interest expressed by the board and its stakeholders in enhancing two-way communication, it is recommended that the Board consider an addition to Section G: Community and Governmental Relations.

Consider adding a statement of purpose for communications, followed by clear expectations for both the board and staff. This statement could establish broad principles, create clear guidelines, and outline the district's approach to communication that stakeholders can expect.

A sample policy statement from the Missouri School Boards Association is provided below:

I. Purpose

Effective communications and public relations are essential for the success of [District] as a public entity. The purpose of this policy is to ensure effective, results-oriented, two-way communication with a goal of increasing awareness, understanding, and support for the students, staff, programs, and goals of the district.

II. General Statement Of Policy

The board is committed to providing factual, honest, accurate, and timely information and engaging stakeholders in the mission of the district. All school and district communication will be guided by our commitments:

- Engaging students in research-based programs in a technology-rich environment.

- Embracing open, honest two-way communication.
- Promoting continuous improvement through data-driven decision-making.
- Sustaining positive relationships among students, staff, families, and community members.
- Ensuring a rigorous and relevant learning experience that leads to success for each student.
- Partnering with students in identifying and achieving their learning goals.
- Continuing a safe and caring environment.

The board directs the administration to implement a communications and public engagement program with the goal of stimulating understanding of the goals, needs, and accomplishments of the organization in fulfilling its mission for students.

The board understands the district's communication program can only be effective if everyone in the organization accepts responsibility for communicating effectively, building relationships, marketing the organization, and serving as ambassadors of the district as they meet and greet people during their daily work.

III. Roles And Responsibilities

- The board is responsible for ensuring a planned and effective two-way communications and public relations program. The board authorizes the expenditure of public funds to support communication goals.
- The board delegates to the superintendent the development and coordination of a public relations and communications program in accordance with board policies.

#6

Expand Board of Trustees' outreach and communications.

- The responsibility for effective building-level or department-level communications lies with the principal or department supervisor.
- All school employees serve as representatives of the schools during their daily work. Employees have a responsibility to communicate accurately and effectively about their school, the district, or issues within the realm and scope of their professional responsibility and knowledge. District employees should make appropriate efforts to be knowledgeable about the district, its programs, services, accomplishments, challenges, plans, and priorities.

IV. Guiding Principles

The school district's public relations and communications efforts will:

- Encourage formal and informal communications;
- Be a planned, systematic flow of information among school employees, parents, and community members;
- Provide clear channels for individual and public inquiry, input, feedback, and resolution when ideas, questions, or problems arise among students, staff, parents, and community members;
- Be guided by the pursuit of truth, accuracy, and fairness. Incorrect

information shall never intentionally be released. Unintentional release of incorrect information shall be rectified immediately upon discovery;

- Protect and respect the privacy of students, families, and employees. Students and staff private data shall not be released, except as provided by law or other board policy;
- Use positive, inclusive language and personalized communication;
- Leverage appropriate communication technologies to efficiently and effectively communicate across generations and engage stakeholders;
- Strive for openness in decision-making, provide appropriate access to public information, and respect the First Amendment, the ideal of free inquiry, and the opinions of others;
- Ensure all major change initiatives or new programs have a written communication plan, which anticipates constituent issues, needs, and expectations in addition to district needs.

Action Step 6.2

Welcome visitors to Board of Trustees meetings.

Consider producing and putting out at all public meetings a one-page welcome brochure that introduces the board members, explains the protocol for addressing the board at public meetings, and lists upcoming meetings and workshops open to the public. The content for this brochure can largely be drawn from the existing BISD Board of Trustees web pages.

While this information is available online, a printed brochure would be helpful for first-time visitors to board meetings, who may have an issue to present but are unsure of the process.

Action Step 6.3

Streamline and expedite the release of board meeting communications.

As mentioned in the Key Findings, the [Board Report](#) is an effective summary of board meetings, but explore ways to release the Board Report on the following day after the meeting or even on the same evening. That might be achieved by streamlining the current Board Report process to:

- Summarize only key actions, reports, and recognitions, as the entire meeting is still documented in the official minutes.
- Prepare a draft of the report ahead of the meeting, adjusting content as necessary based on the board's actions. Reports and recognition details are often available in advance and can be written ahead of time.

Topical items can still be included in the Boerne Beat newsletter/video if appropriate, but patrons looking for information on a specific agenda item would likely prefer a concise summary of the actions taken at the meeting.

Action Step 6.4

Continue to provide opportunities for dialogue between board members and the public.

Strategic Goal #4 commits the board and district to building a culture of trust where families and community members feel engaged and valued. Board members regularly attend school and community events, and they can also have less formal interactions with the community by attending civic and business group meetings throughout the year. Two more public engagement ideas the board might consider include:

- **School Board Listening Sessions:** Another option is to add a “Listening Session” to the regular board meeting agenda several times a year. While the Open Session section of the regular meeting agenda allows the public to complete a public input form and speak on non-agenda items, time is limited to keep business meetings at a reasonable length. Some boards are using listening sessions before the start of a regular meeting to be more inviting and open to public comments. These sessions could be structured more like a study session, allowing board members to ask questions and respond as appropriate. The district will need to check with legal counsel to ensure that open meeting law guidelines are followed, but this may be an option worth investigating.
- **Write to the Board:** Currently, citizens who wish to contact the Board of Trustees can email the “team of eight,” which includes all seven board members and the superintendent. This system works well for giving citizens access to board members while ensuring that the administration follows up on questions and concerns. However, one recommendation is to clarify the “Team of Eight” process on the district’s website. It’s important to explain that communications are sent to all eight members, rather than to individual members. Providing more transparency could help prevent misunderstandings and build trust with the public.

Action Step 6.5

Develop a school board academy for potential board candidates.

Regardless of what candidates file to run for the Board of Trustees each year, it is in the district’s best interest to build relationships with them. A half-day school board academy

scheduled for the start of the election filing period can accomplish several goals for the district. The academy can:

- Educate candidates about election laws and filing timelines.
- Provide factual school information as candidates begin campaigning.
- Build a positive relationship with candidates or citizens thinking about a future school board run.
- Help potential candidates better understand the time and work expectations of the position.

The academy might be only a few hours and can include brief presentations by the board president, superintendent, key cabinet members, and the district elections officer. The event should be hosted by the board president, but administrative cabinet members would present most of the information. One board member can outline the duties and time commitment of serving. Binders with the presentations and all election information can be prepared in advance. Time should be allotted for questions and answers.

Action Step 6.4

Make financial proposals and plans for BISD clear and easily accessible.

As a tax-supported agency, it is expected that community members can find out how their tax dollars are being spent in local schools. Unfortunately, school financial information can be complex, lengthy, and difficult to communicate. BISD focus group participants mentioned that they would like information about district finances and capital expenditures, but district finances and school facilities ranked low for awareness on the SCOPE Survey.

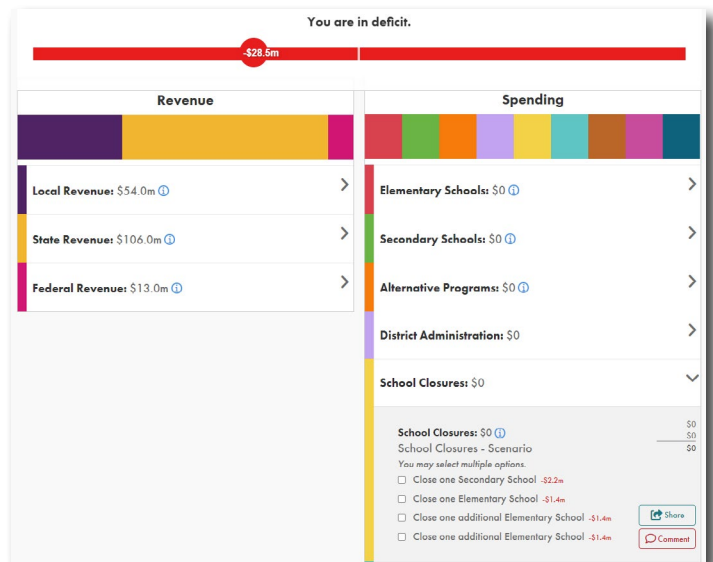
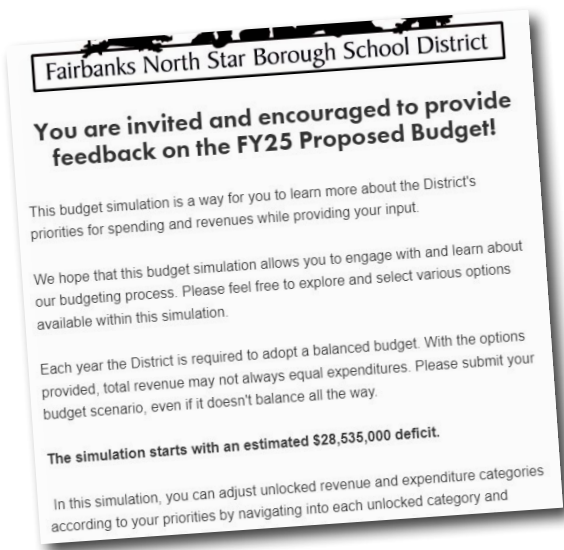
The district does a good job of providing financial information for those who seek it. However, getting citizens to the next level of understanding with financial data should be a goal for board members and administrators. This is especially important at a time when diminishing school funding that affects BISD is tied to legislative battles in Austin.

The district must be creative in how it shares this critical information. It must also simplify finance concepts and facts into easily digestible pieces and share them through a variety of channels over time. Possibilities for this include:

- Providing board members with a sheet of talking points and quick facts so they are prepared to answer questions about finances accurately and consistently.
- Submitting an op-ed from the board president and superintendent or chief financial officer to the *Boerne Star* highlighting key facts about the budget and how the district prioritizes students in its financial decisions.
- Creating infographics to explain school finance concepts in a simple, colorful format, and brief videos to explain potential financial challenges, how they

may impact schools and residents, and where to go for more information. Find examples in the members-only Samples and Resources (Gold Mine) section on Bond/Finance Campaigns and Elections at <https://www.nspr.org/PR-Resources/Samples-and-Resources-Gold-Mine/Bond-Finance-Campaigns-and-Elections>.

- Sharing financial information from the board and superintendent in bite-sized pieces over time—through text, graphics, and videos—in e-newsletters and on social media. For an example, scroll down to view the “Finance Friday” feature story in Deer Valley (Ariz.) Unified School District’s weekly staff newsletter at <https://secure.smore.com/7mxsd>.
- Reimagining the Business and Finance Department webpage during the website redesign to include inviting graphics, easy-to-understand displays of budget information, financial FAQs, a process for asking questions, and interactive components, like the Balancing Act budget game (pictured below) that Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in Alaska used with the community during its FY2025 budget development.



Recommendation 7:

Standardize communication processes to reach all parents.

A frustrating aspect of school communication for BISD parents, as reported in the [Key Findings](#), is the inconsistency and/or volume of communication methods used by their children’s principals, teachers, and coaches. In the focus groups, parents mentioned ClassDojo, SeeSaw, Remind, Google Classroom, PaySchools, and Skyward, as well as the Blackboard calling system, email, text messages, and weekly newsletters from teachers, principals, and the school district.

NSPRA has found that parents being overwhelmed by different communication methods is a common concern in focus groups across the country. Parents want to stay informed about and support their children’s education, but they also want school communications to be brief, tailored to their unique needs and interests, and easy to access and digest. While some parent expectations may be unrealistic, the theme of streamlining communications deserves attention.

Addressing these issues often begins with standardizing parent communication processes throughout a school system by:

- Establishing a framework for school communications based on best practices.
- Implementing the framework over time through guidance, templates, and regular training.
- Ensuring consistent application of the framework as families move through the K-12 experience.

If parents know what communications to expect and when, and if they feel confident that the communications will apply to them

personally, they will be much more likely to engage with the communications they receive. For a school district, that translates into more well-informed and engaged families.

Action Step 7.1

Evaluate the tools currently used to communicate with parents and determine which tools to use in various circumstances.



Organize a small group of teachers, parents, school-level administrators, technology staff and communications staff to review the communication tools currently in use across the district: websites, apps, text messaging systems, e-newsletters, print newsletters, flyers, virtual backpacks, parent portals, social media, etc.

For each tool, identify and consider what it is, what it is used for, who uses it, who receives it, how often it is used, how easy it is to use, whether training is provided on its use and any available data on readership, open rates, distribution schedules, etc.

Action Step 7.2

Establish a common framework for parent communications.

After reviewing the parent communication tools, develop a guidance document that outlines which tools are preferred for each building/grade level, how frequently (or infrequently) they should be used, which situations are appropriate for their use, and where to seek assistance or training. Develop and share these guidelines to be used throughout the district for determining what communication tools are to be used for various types of communications.

Keep in mind that while parents may have different preferences for accessing information, no parent wants to receive the same message through multiple channels on the same day. A thoughtful, consistent use of a select set of tools will be more effective in ensuring messages are received. One of the most common issues NSPRA auditors hear about from parents is a lack of timeliness of messages and staff responses to inquiries, so include recommended release and response times.

Individual teachers may be understandably reluctant to replace familiar communication tools, so take time to build their understanding of the need for change and to provide support for those who struggle with it.

Action Step 7.3

Make text messaging from BISD a familiar, helpful tool for parents.

BISD parents, like those in other districts, generally prefer text messages over emails for urgent updates. While they recognize that email is often the most efficient way to share information, many parents may not check their inboxes for days, whereas a text message is more likely to be seen within minutes.

To ensure parents receive timely updates, try sending a text message directing parents to their email for more detailed, time-sensitive information. This approach will keep parents informed without overwhelming them with multiple communications.

During focus groups, parents confirmed their preference for text messages, but several challenges need to be addressed. The Blackboard notification system is effective for urgent messages, such as school closings, but parents have expressed frustration with receiving multiple messages. For example, during a weather-related closure, parents

#7

Standardize communication processes to reach all parents.

report getting an email, text, and call from the district office, plus an email and text from each campus. This leads to overcommunication.

To address this, the district should work with Blackboard to reduce redundant messages, ensuring parents can select to receive only their preferred communication type (e.g., text, call, or email) for the same event. Additionally, campuses and the district communications staff should coordinate to avoid sending similar messages at the same time.

Lastly, parents may not realize they need to opt in to receive text messages. The district should provide clear instructions at least twice a year on how to opt in for texts.

Action Step 7.4

Enhance and expand translation services for English learner families.

Campus and central office administrative assistants have expressed a need for more translated messages and forms, as well as quicker access to interpreters in the schools. The auditor also noticed that use of graphics with embedded text on the district website limits the usefulness of its Google translate button. The auditor recommends that BISD review all forms, print and digital notifications, publications, and letters to ensure important information is available in Spanish.

Some school districts use cell phones, Skype, or Google Hangouts to quickly connect parents with interpreters at any school or office. Additionally, contracting with third-party translation services, such as LanguageLine, Albion Languages, or Alboum Translation Services can increase the district's live and materials translation capacity.

Building principals play a vital role in fostering effective communication with parents. Each school has its own unique culture, and no one is better equipped to provide insight into that culture than the school principal. Consider creating a special communications subcommittee with the participation of principals to study how families with language barriers access information and explore ways to better support employees who assist those families.

While it may not be feasible to translate all materials into every language spoken in the district, adding the phrase "This document is important. Please have someone translate it for you" in bright, bold text to school documents would alert non-English-speaking parents to seek assistance with the information.

Action Step 7.6

Evaluate the level of customer service in communications from all district facilities.

To further ensure consistency in all families' experiences with schools and departments, it would be beneficial to at least annually assess their customer service experiences via phone, email, and in person. Online customer service tracking apps (see [Action Step 3.5](#)) can help with this evaluation, but perhaps the simplest method is to reflect on answers to the following questions for individual schools and departments:

- How long is the wait before a visitor's presence is acknowledged by office staff?
- Are phones and voicemails answered with a warm and friendly greeting?
- Do calls bounce from department to department, or does every staff member own the caller's question even if it doesn't fall under their area of responsibility?
- Do staff use voicemail to avoid the public?
- How long does it take from an initial request for information to get an answer?
- Are calls for information logged to ensure there are follow-ups?
- Are consistent answers being given to the same questions, even if stakeholders call different departments?

Recommendation 8:

Enhance existing crisis response plans with a strategic crisis communication plan.

In the event of a natural disaster or a violent incident on school property, both local and potentially national media will focus on the schools. Timely and accurate communication is essential to keep staff and the community informed and to prevent additional issues in the absence of clear information.

BISD has a district crisis plan that coordinates with the City of Boerne and Kendall County emergency agencies. The plan outlines the responsibilities of key administrators, including the director of communications. However, there is no specific crisis communication plan for the Communications Department, whose staff must be ready to manage communications while other administrators and emergency responders manage the crisis and its aftermath.

Given the ongoing safety challenges facing schools nationwide, it would be beneficial to have a more detailed plan in place for the department. The following action steps will help the team create a crisis communication plan that complements the district's crisis plan.

Action Step 8.1

Assign crisis communication responsibilities.

The Communications Department has multiple staff to help gather and disseminate critical information during a crisis. To avoid additional stress and confusion during a crisis event, it is essential to designate team members to handle specific communication responsibilities in the event of a major crisis. These roles would likely include:

- Leadership advisement
- Internal communication
- External communication
- News media relations
- Communication command center operations
- Digital communications (website, social media posts and monitoring)
- Rapid communication system notifications - Blackboard (voice and text)
- Research and media monitoring
- Communications about donations, special memorial events, and volunteers

Although the roles of communications staff will vary based on the event, understanding how each member should generally respond will help ensure a swift and coordinated response. The sample planning sheet that follows, illustrates how a four-person communications team (director, coordinator, specialist, and administrative assistant) might respond to a crisis, based on the BISD staffing structure at the time of the audit.

1) NOTIFICATION OF INCIDENT

- ✓ The Communications Department is notified of the incident by the superintendent or executive staff.
- ✓ The director works with the superintendent and staff to gather and verify information.
- ✓ The communications specialist travels to the incident site and/or command center, as approved by emergency responders.
- ✓ The administrative assistant handles incoming phone calls.

- ✓ The community engagement coordinator monitors news media and social media for mentions of the incident.

2) PREPARATION OF INFORMATION FOR NEWS RELEASE

- ✓ The director collaborates with the superintendent, staff, and public information officers from the emergency responders to create a press release and talking points, and to determine the spokesperson(s) for media inquiries.
- ✓ The communications specialist relays relevant on-site information to the director and prepares the media staging area, in collaboration with public information officers from the emergency responders.

3) RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND MEDIA

- ✓ The director sends the finalized press release to the administrative assistant and superintendent.
- ✓ The administrative assistant sends the finalized press release to the superintendent's office and publishes it on the website and social media.
- ✓ The administrative assistant handles incoming media calls and directs them to appropriate press briefing resources.
- ✓ The communications specialist distributes the press release to media on-site.
- ✓ The designated spokesperson handles on-camera interviews with assistance from the community engagement coordinator.
- ✓ The director sends talking points to appropriate administration and campus receptionists.

#8

Enhance existing crisis response plans with a strategic crisis communication plan.

4) ONGOING SITUATION MONITORING

- ✓ The director continues gathering information from sources.
- ✓ The communications specialist sends any new information to the director if updates occur on-site.
- ✓ The administrative assistant updates the website and social media as needed.
- ✓ The director sends new updates to the superintendent's office and updates talking points for receptionists.

5) POST-INCIDENT DEBRIEFING

- ✓ The director debriefs with the crisis team and executive staff at the Administration Building (or established command center).
- ✓ Media posts are reviewed by the community engagement coordinator, and corrections are requested by contacting reporters as necessary.
- ✓ The response is evaluated, and decisions are made regarding whether additional communication is needed (e.g., procedures for the school the next day).

To further refine this process, consider getting [*The Complete Revised Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools*](#) available in the NSPRA Online Store.

Action Step 8.2

Provide crisis communication training for all administrators.

School staff members face unusual demands and are often overwhelmed by the extent and magnitude of an incident and the response of parents and community members. Being truly prepared for a crisis requires advanced planning and training. Knowing what to do can be the difference between an effective and a harmful response.

That is why staff members who hold responsibility for handling various components of crisis management, at the school or district level, should be knowledgeable about the overall crisis communication plan.

Components of crisis communications training provided to all administrators should include the following.

- **A first-response checklist.** The first hour of a crisis is when the public will form its perception about an organization's ability to respond effectively. A first-response checklist could include:
 - A reminder to assess the basic facts of a situation: who, what, when, where, why and how
 - An outline of who is responsible for doing what, as detailed in the BISD crisis management plan
 - Who should be contacted first
 - A basic outline for providing responses in terms of actions and statements.
- **A list of key stakeholders/target audiences and the best way to communicate with each group.** Having a list of audiences and the most effective channels to reach them means not having to brainstorm when a crisis occurs.
- **News media protocols.** If reporters cannot get the information from the school, they may (and likely will) report information from whatever sources they can find: students, parents or teachers who text or post; relatives getting those text messages and posts; or the random person on the street. Administrators must understand what roles they may have, directly or indirectly, in responding to media requests so that accurate information can be provided. News media protocols should include the following:
 - When interviews will be given
 - Who is authorized to give interviews
 - Who is authorized to approve the release of information
 - Where the interviews will be held
 - Whether reporters and photographers will be allowed on school grounds
 - Under what circumstances can students be photographed
- **Statements for receptionists and secretaries.** Parents will be concerned about their children even if the crisis occurs in another school. Building staff should be aware of their responsibility to respond to these inquiries and should have a statement available that has been approved by the applicable principal and reviewed by communications staff.
- **Expectations for employee communication during and after a crisis.** Staff members can be important information ambassadors during a crisis. Employees should be updated and, if possible, they should hear what is happening before messages are sent to parents and the community.

Action Step 8.3

Communicate procedures before a crisis occurs.

The best time to inform staff, students, families, and community members about what to expect during a crisis is before one occurs. Outlining how BISD will communicate in the event of a crisis ahead of time will set clear expectations and reduce confusion during an actual emergency. This approach ultimately enhances the effectiveness of crisis communications and fosters greater trust and preparedness among families.

To ensure parents are informed and prepared, include detailed information about crisis communications in student and staff handbooks and on the district website. Communicate these procedures at the beginning of each school year and provide reminders after significant crises. Clearly outline where updates will be provided during a crisis and emphasize that the district's primary concern is the safety and welfare of students and staff. By setting clear expectations, you can help alleviate the worry and uncertainty that naturally accompany a crisis in a school setting.

Action Step 8.4

Use social media when appropriate during a crisis.

Facing a crisis, experts in school safety and crisis management suggest the following approach to preparing for effective communication:

- **Before the crisis... engage and anticipate.** Social media is a valuable tool for building ongoing communication with parents and stakeholders. By doing so early (before a crisis) schools can establish a network of followers who know where to go for updates. When a crisis occurs,

this established familiarity can help direct parents to trusted sources for information, much like how they would seek updates during a school closure.

- **During the crisis... communicate frequently.** Social media offers a quick way to disseminate information. The priority during some urgent situations should be less about delivering the perfect message and more about ensuring actions are aligned with effective communication. Designating one staff member to monitor social media posts during a crisis will help ensure that accurate information is shared.
- **After the crisis... communicate.** Re-engaging with the community on social media provides an opportunity to continue to build trust and support.

A note about social media during a crisis.

Social media is not always the best channel for delivering critical information.

While it can be useful for general updates, it may not be ideal for urgent or sensitive messages. For instance, if the district needs to delay dismissal by 10 minutes due to a snow squall, it is better to use direct communication methods like texts and emails than posting on Facebook.

When a situation requires a personal touch or more time to gather facts and develop a strategy, social media should take a back seat.

Recommendation 9:

Create more opportunities to engage older alumni and retirees.

According to U.S. Census data, nearly 1 in 5 residents of Boerne and the wider Kendall County are aged 65 or older, while about 1 in 4 residents are under the age of 18. Boerne's quality of life and location appear to make it an attractive destination for retirees, and participants in focus groups reported that a growing number of "empty nesters" choose to remain in Boerne after their children graduate from BISD schools. As such, engaging the many older residents in the BISD community, as a way to build their support and trust year round, should be a consideration in ongoing district communication efforts.

When asked about BISD's strengths or selling points, many focus group participants highlighted a sense of community, a small-town feel, and community pride. BISD can amplify this positive perception by also involving its older alumni and long-time residents in storytelling opportunities about its schools.

The backgrounds, income levels, and diversity of retirees in BISD can be as varied as those of the student population. As such, traditional programs like school activity discount cards and Grandparents' Days may not be enough to fully engage these groups. Look to expand on current efforts to engage these groups and build a broad base of support for BISD.

Action Step 9.1

Create a shared history project for BISD.

Sharing a happy memory with others can reduce stress levels and blood pressure while building a greater sense of connection. BISD can help its alumni take advantage of these

physiological and psychological benefits of memory sharing by inviting them to share in the creation of a comprehensive video history of the district and its schools with the Communications Department and possibly the Boerne Education Foundation.

The project might lead to videos, a webpage, a brochure, slides, etc. that could be used for:

- District and school websites and social media
- Alumni events, homecoming, convocations, and anniversary events
- Community presentations, including at civic clubs and senior centers
- Integration into the fourth-grade curriculum for community and school history units

Below are several ideas from the NSPRA archives for gathering and celebrating education history at the district and campus levels:

- Produce an oral history of the district by interviewing long-time residents. This could be a meaningful project for high school students to narrate, under the supervision of the district's communications specialist.
- Collect and digitize historical school photos from the community and vintage yearbook pages, and promote social media interaction by sharing photos online. Post photos for "Throwback Thursday" or "This Day in BISD History" micro-campaigns.
- Leverage the success of Boerne's high school athletic and fine arts programs by organizing "mini-histories" for those areas. Athlete and fine arts alumni interviews and vintage photos are popular and fun to display at current events, sparking nostalgia and community pride.

For more inspiration, check out the NSPRA award-winning "Unified for 50" alumni stories

that Barrington Community Unit School District 220 featured along with a district history, photos, videos, and more at <https://www.barrington220.org/our-district/about-barrington-220/unified-for-50>.

Action Step 9.2

Continue inviting volunteer support from “empty nesters” and other retirees.

As mentioned earlier, there is a growing population of adults who no longer have direct connections to the schools but still pay taxes and may follow school news. This group can often be tapped for a variety of roles, such as volunteers, tutors, and mentors. They can also have a positive impact on the district as voters. BISD should explore ways to engage this population while also offering them opportunities to work directly with students.

BISD has a robust [volunteer program](#), but following are some additional ideas from NSPRA members across the country:

- **Recruit “parent mentors”**—former active parents whose children are now grown—to assist new parents in navigating the school system and guide them on how to collaborate effectively with teachers and schools. This would be particularly helpful for parents of English learners.
- **Include “empty-nester” representatives on advisory councils and committees** to broaden the perspectives and involvement of this group.
- **Encourage high schools to create student organizations affiliated with civic groups** like Kiwanis (Key Club) and Rotary (Interact). Many members of these groups are senior citizens, providing excellent opportunities for collaboration between students and seniors.

#9

Create more opportunities to engage older alumni and retirees.

- **Host annual presentations at senior and community centers** highlighting innovative educational programs, featuring students from different grade levels in the presentations

Garland Independent School District in Texas earned a 2020 NSPRA Gold Medallion Award for a strategic communication plan to promote its Senior Citizen VIP Pass. Consider reviewing the entry at <https://www.nspira.org/Awards/Award-Winners/2020-Gold-Medallion-Award-Winners> for more inspiration on how to strategically communicate with retired community members.

Action Step 9.3

Facilitate meaningful engagement with Boerne’s senior population.

Through conversations with administrators, it’s clear that connecting with BISD’s senior citizens is a district priority. By tapping into the wisdom, experience, and enthusiasm of the senior community, BISD leaders know they can strengthen intergenerational bonds, and make schools inclusive and welcoming for all ages.

The following tactics, used successfully in other districts, provide ways for Boerne ISD to continue to facilitate meaningful connections with seniors year round.

- **Start cross-generational book clubs:** Create book clubs where seniors citizens and high school seniors read and discuss shared texts, perhaps by local authors.
- **Offer senior tech tutor sessions:** Have high school students offer tech skills sessions on smartphones, social media, AI, etc. for senior citizens in one-on-one or small-group settings.
- **Host a Senior Café:** Create an informal, recurring coffee gathering where seniors can meet civic-minded high school students, fostering casual conversation and connection over refreshments.
- **Hold free senior meals with entertainment:** Offer quarterly and/or holiday-oriented meals for seniors at schools with musical entertainment by students, fostering their sense of belonging in the school community.
- **Send a consolidated print newsletter to seniors:** Many district communications are digital, but consider creating a semi-regular print mailer sent exclusively to senior citizen communities and senior centers to keep them informed about school events and district news.
- **Give seniors free/discounted access to performing arts events:** Provide free or discounted tickets to dress rehearsals or performances of student plays, concerts, or recitals, offering seniors cultural engagement and school connection.

Recommendation 10:

Increase community engagement with BISD social media and on the website.

In the communications toolbox, social media has the potential to be one of the most useful and impactful tools today for engaging target audiences with an organization. That engagement most often happens online when audiences react to, share, comment on, and otherwise interact with posted content.

Pew Research Center [reports](#) that the majority of U.S. adults use YouTube (83 percent) and Facebook (68 percent), and almost half use Instagram (47 percent). It is perhaps unsurprising then that among school communicators who are members of NSPRA, nearly half of them (48 percent) reported social media as among the top five responsibilities in their position in a 2022 member survey.

BISD has a professional and consistent presence on social media, and a solid engagement rate on Instagram, but engagement rates on its Facebook and LinkedIn pages are well below industry averages, as noted in the [Key Findings](#). The district's posts generally include high-quality photos and videos paired with concise text, so the auditor suspects that the practice of posting identical or nearly identical content across all social media pages and of restricting comments on all platforms are more likely the causes of the lower engagement rates.

Across BISD's digital presence, there are multiple opportunities to improve user experience, streamline content delivery, and increase interactivity for users. This recommendation outlines tactics to strengthen BISD's ability to effectively connect with and engage the online community.

Action Step 10.1

Enable two-way communication and more interaction on social media.

Education news coverage and discussions among professional school communicators suggest that school districts that restrict comments on their social media pages often do so out of leaders' concern about users who may post harassing comments towards students and employees or inaccurate and inflammatory information about schools. These concerns are understandable, and school communicators have wrangled with the topic for years in NSPRA's [online member community](#).

However, the practice of restricting all comments turns social media platforms—online spaces designed for conversation and sharing—into one-way microphones rather than two-way listening and engagement tools. This perception was apparent in feedback heard during focus group discussions in BISD.

It is recommended that communications staff and district leaders revisit this topic and give serious consideration to enabling comments but with clear, enforced social media posting guidelines. Find example guidelines linked in the intro/bio for all [NSPRA social media](#) and on the communications page for another Texas district at <https://nbisd.org/departments/communications/>.

Actively encourage and moderate comments to create a space for inclusive, respectful conversations. Instead of limiting comments, ensuring that comments are enabled and responding to questions or feedback on school activities will show the community that their voices are valued.

Expanding content variety would also foster more engagement. Following are some additional tactics to increase interaction-worthy content and promote community dialogue.

- **Showcase core values and educational impact:** While BISD currently shares event updates and awards, a shift toward content that highlights the district's core values and educational priorities may build greater trust and invite more interaction with the community. Be sure to regularly feature stories that focus on teaching and learning, student success, and the district's mission such as efforts to improve literacy or innovative student-centered learning activities.
- **Invite user-generated content:** Encourage the school community to share their stories by featuring content like "Throwback Prom Photos," alumni selfies, dedicated hashtag campaigns for employees, etc. Check out the TINT marketing platform's most recent report on UGC, [The State of Community Powered Marketing 2024](#), for more inspiration.
- **Post interactive content:** Focus on content types that invite community interaction, such as polls, quizzes, "Did you know?" facts, and posts that encourage comments. For example, sharing fun facts, like the number of meals served in the cafeteria, can prompt users to share these surprising stats with their own networks, driving further engagement.

Action Step 10.2

Develop post content for each platform strategically.

To ensure that BISD's social media content is both impactful and engaging, it's essential to develop a strategic editorial approach to planning post content. Each platform has features that appeal more to a particular audience, and content tailored to fit the specific needs of the platform will see greater engagement. (Learn more about the demographics common to each platform in the

#10

Increase community engagement with BISD social media and on the website.

Pew Research Center's January 2024 report on [American's Social Media Use.](#))

Posting the same content across all of a district's social media platforms is common when the district's communication staffing levels do not allow enough time for strategic planning of social media. However, given the lower levels of engagement for BISD, it is important to craft platform-specific posts, even when sharing the same story across multiple platforms.

Following are some tips for better tailoring district content to match the expectations of the primary audience for each social media platform and the priorities of its algorithm.

- **Facebook:** Industry analysts are finding today that social media apps, including Facebook, elevate content that keeps people within the platform. Since there is more post length space available, aim to post all pertinent information rather than linking out when possible.
- **X/Twitter:** Use concise, headline-style posts to provide quick updates and brief announcements.
- **Instagram:** Reels and posts with visually compelling images and short, impactful captions can showcase daily school life. Highlight behind-the-scenes moments, such as a science experiment in action.

- **LinkedIn:** Focus on professional content that showcases employees and the BISD work experience. Highlight staff excellence, service, and accomplishments as well as community partnerships.

Action Step 10.3

Continue to use video to tell the BISD story.

Video is already an integral part of the BISD communications toolkit. Among the projects the communications specialist is currently producing are the weekly news summary Boerne Beat, the What's Up Doc series with the superintendent, and the Core Values in Action series. The specialist also works on special projects for administration and campus leaders and regularly collaborates with TV/AV classes at both high schools to create BoerneISDTV.

As BISD seeks to expand its community outreach efforts (see [Action Step 3.4](#) and [Action Step 6.4](#)), video can be a valuable addition to presentations. Topics such as finance and curriculum can be enhanced with video that illustrates how they impact students in the classroom. Here are additional ways the district can use video to communicate key messages:

- **Highlight employees in short customer service or community service segments:** Identify instances where employees provide exceptional customer service and create short videos to showcase them. Highlighting employees who volunteer in the community is also a great way to feature their contributions.
- **Feature academic success stories and day-to-day learning:** BISD can invest in creating videos that highlight student achievements, teacher stories, and successful programs across the district. These stories should focus on showing what makes BISD unique—whether it's a

spotlight on a specific program, such as a STEM initiative, or a teacher's innovative approach to student engagement.

- **Leverage existing video series:** Expand on current video projects such as Boerne Beat and What's Up Doc by showcasing the educational achievements within BISD as well as community outreach initiatives, student and staff accomplishments, and district-wide initiatives.
- **Look to other districts for inspiration:** Review the winning videos in NSPRA's 2024 Publications and Digital Media Excellence Awards contest, available at <https://www.nspr.org/Awards/Award-Winners/Publications-and-Digital-Media-Excellence-Winners-2024#videoseriesth>. Additionally, following are a few video projects ideas from other districts:
 - Superintendent's video annual report
 - Marketing videos for teacher and support staff recruitment
 - Video tours of new construction or renovation projects
 - Welcome videos for English learner and military families
 - Strategic plan updates presented to business/civic groups
 - Orientation videos for new students/families and for the transitions between grade-level buildings
 - Customer service staff training videos

Action Step 10.4

Incorporate user feedback in the new BISD website.

BISD's website serves as a central hub for all district-related information, and optimizing it for user experience and engagement is essential. During the audit, BISD was in the process

of transitioning from the Web Community Manager (Blackboard) platform to Final Site. A draft of the new website was nearly complete at the time of the audit, and the site is scheduled to go live in January 2025.

SCOPE Survey responses indicate that the current BISD website is a preferred source of information about the district for only about a third of parents/caregivers, employees, and community members, as shown in the [Key Findings](#), but more than half (61 percent) of respondents rated its value as an informational source at 4-5 stars out of 5 stars.

To ensure the website is an engaging and vital resource for district information, below are suggestions for improvements to be incorporated into the new website:

- **Simplify and organize content** by reducing clutter on the homepage and organizing content in a more streamlined way that emphasizes a user’s desired tasks and key information, such as news, events, and district achievements.
- **Make information more accessible** with fewer non-translatable graphics with text and logical groupings of information (preferably informed by navigation research with users) that make it easy to find what users need with minimal clicks.
- **Create a more consistent structure across campus landing pages**, ensuring that the campus name is clear and easy to find on each page, particularly for new visitors, and that the district’s brand identity is present. For a great example of unique school branding that still evokes a district brand across all school websites, check out the “Schools” menu of affiliated school-level websites for Montville Township Public Schools in New Jersey at <https://www.montville.net/>.
- **Establish a regular schedule for updating prominent homepage content**, including school events and district news. It may be helpful to delegate more oversight to the Communications Department, giving them responsibility for website management, content strategy, and user experience to ensure alignment with district goals and best practices.
- **Move away from using PDF files for important announcements** since they can be difficult to open and view on mobile devices and often cannot be translated or read aloud by screen readers.

Appendix

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Focus Group Discussion Questions

All Participants

1. What do you consider to be BISD's greatest strengths or selling points? What are some areas you feel could use improvement?
 2. What is the current image of your school system in the community? How would you describe the school system to someone new to your community?
 3. What does BISD do well when it comes to communicating on important issues that affect schools such as education funding, legislation and curriculum or operational changes?
 4. How might the school system improve on those communications? Are there any areas where you would like to get more information?
 5. What does the school system do well when it comes to communicating during a serious incident or crisis (e.g., bomb threat, student misbehavior, employee misconduct)? How might the school system improve on that?
 6. When school system leaders make important decisions that will affect you, do you feel that they truly listen to your input when appropriate and consider it before decisions are made? What makes you feel that way? If not, how would you like to provide your input?
 7. From your perspective, what is the greatest communication challenge facing the school system now or in the future?
 8. What is your best source of news and information about BISD and campuses?
- For example, newsletters, website, email, local media, word of mouth...
9. What does the school district do well when it comes to communicating with you? In what ways can it improve to better meet your needs?
 - a. Is information delivered in a timely manner?
 - b. What is the best way to communicate with you about school news?
 10. Do you read the Boerne Beat newsletter?
 - a. Is the information provided helpful and informative?
 - b. Is there additional information you would like to receive?
 11. Are the district's social media accounts helpful sources of information?
 - a. Facebook - Twitter - Instagram
 - b. Which do you use most often?
 12. Are there any other comments or additions?

Additional Questions: Staff

1. As an employee, is the information you need accessible and communicated to you in a timely manner so that you can be effective in your job and as an ambassador for the schools?
2. What additional information would you like to receive that you don't get now?
3. How can district leaders be more proactive in communicating with you?
4. What is the message that BISD wants people to come away with - is there one "thing" that the school district is known for?

Additional Questions: Administrators

1. As an administrator, is the information you need communicated to you in a timely manner so that you can be effective in your job?
2. What are your greatest communication challenges in your role?
3. How can the Communications Department better assist you with your school/department communications?

What Is NSPRA?

Since 1935, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) has been providing school communication training and services to school leaders throughout the United States, Canada and the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools worldwide. NSPRA's mission is to develop professionals to communicate strategically, build trust and foster positive relationships in support of their school communities. That mission is accomplished by developing and providing a variety of diverse products, services and professional development activities to association members as well as to other education leaders interested in improving their communication efforts.

NSPRA members:

- **Connect and Grow:** This unique professional community includes the NSPRA Connect online forum, Mentor Match, APR Learning Cohort, and national leadership and service opportunities.
- **Expand and Elevate:** Through digital e-newsletters and alerts, free PR Power Hour webinars on tactics, free Leaders Learn webinars on strategies, on-demand learning and National Seminar scholarships, members expand their knowledge and elevate their work.
- **Share and Learn:** Members have access to best practices at www.nsprapro.org, which offers the online NSPRA Gold Mine; resources on topics such as crises, budget/finance, communication training, strategic communications plans, etc.; salary and career surveys; and more.

With more than 80 years of experience, NSPRA is known for providing proven, practical approaches to solving school district and

education agency communication problems. The association offers useful communication products and programs as well as an annual [NSPRA National Seminar](#), the most comprehensive school communication conference in North America. NSPRA also offers a [National School Communication Awards](#) program, which recognizes individuals, districts and education agencies for excellence in communication.

In keeping with its mission, NSPRA also provides school public relations/communications counsel and assistance to school districts, state departments of education, regional service agencies and state and national associations. For many of these organizations, NSPRA has completed comprehensive [communication audits](#) to analyze the effectiveness of their overall communication programs and to recommend strategies for improving and enhancing their efforts.

NSPRA has [more than 30 chapters](#) across the United States that provide local professional development and networking opportunities. NSPRA is a member of the Learning First Alliance and the Universal Accreditation Board. The association also maintains collaborative working relationships with other national education associations and corporate communication professionals.

The Flag of Learning and Liberty is a national education symbol developed by NSPRA during its 50th Anniversary Year. On July 4, 1985, the Flag of Learning and Liberty flew over the state houses of all 50 states to symbolize America's commitment to education and a democratic, free society.

Join NSPRA

To join this vibrant, national association and reap the benefits of being an NSPRA member, visit www.nsprapro.org/membership.

Audit Team Vitae

Tim Carroll, APR Consultant Auditor

Tim Carroll, APR, currently teaches public relations and writing at Texas Christian University. He served as the chief information officer and director of public information for the Allen Independent School District in Allen, Texas from 1995 until retirement in 2020. He previously served for 14 years in a similar position with the Penn-Harris-Madison Schools near South Bend, Indiana, for a total of 39 years in school communications and four years teaching public relations.



In addition to his school PR responsibilities, he served as the Allen ISD community services director overseeing community education, after school and preschool programs for 25 years.

Carroll has been an active member of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) since 1981, receiving the association's prestigious Barry Gaskins Mentor Award in 2011 for service to the profession. He is also past president of the 500+ member NSPRA state chapter in Texas (TSPRA) and received that association's Professional Achievement Award in 2006. He is a former executive director and past president of the Indiana School Public Relations Association (InSPRA) and was named to the Rowan University Public Relations Hall of Fame in 2021. In 1993, he received a Ball State University Department of Journalism Special Citation for service to Indiana public schools.

He received his accreditation in public relations (APR) in 1985 and worked with the NSPRA Accreditation Committee for 11 years. Since 1985, he has also served on state and national PR committees and presented over 90 workshops and conference sessions.

Carroll has written numerous articles for NSPRA and contributed chapters to *The School and Community Relations* textbook. He is a journalism education graduate of Murray State University in Kentucky and earned a master's degree in educational public relations from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University) in New Jersey. He has previously served as an adjunct faculty member at Texas A&M University-Commerce in the public relations department and at the Indiana University-South Bend campus.

He wrote a weekly newspaper column called *The Flipside* for eight years and produced a weekly music radio show for seven years in the Dallas area.

Mellissa Braham, APR NSPRA Associate Director



Mellissa Braham, APR, has more than 25 years of experience in public relations, working primarily in the education and healthcare sectors. As NSPRA associate director since 2018, she is responsible for coordinating NSPRA's research services, managing staff, coordinating programming for the NSPRA National Seminar, overseeing chapter relations, contributing to member resources and developing association products. She is an accredited public relations professional (APR).

Learn more about Mellissa at <https://www.nspira.org/About-Us/Contact-and-Staff/Associate-Director>.

Alyssa Teribury NSPRA Communication Research Manager



As communications research specialist, Alyssa plays a key role in NSPRA's research efforts such as developing communication audits, data

reports and whitepapers. She joined NSPRA in 2023 after serving as a school public relations professional for 10 years—an award-winning career that included being named to NSPRA’s 2022-23 Class of 35 Under 35.

Learn more about Alyssa at <https://www.nspira.org/About-Us/Contact-and-Staff/Communication-Research-Manager>.

Jessica Scheckton, APR
*NSPRA Communication
Research Specialist*



Jessica Scheckton, APR, serves as NSPRA’s communication research specialist and plays a key role in developing NSPRA communication audits, data reports, and whitepapers. Prior to joining the association staff in October 2024, Jessica served as an audit consultant with NSPRA after a 25-year career in school communications with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service in New York.

Jessica holds accreditation in public relations (APR) and is a two-time NSPRA Gold Medallion Award winner and past NSPRA Front-Runner.

Learn more about Jessica at <https://www.nspira.org/About-Us/Contact-and-Staff/Communication-Research-Specialist>.

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301-519-0496 | nspra.org

