



**A Comprehensive
Communications Plan
for Aledo Independent
School District**

**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

December 7, 2015

Aledo Independent School District (Aledo ISD) is a public school district serving Aledo, Texas. Located in southeastern Parker County, the District also extends into western Tarrant County. Other communities served by the District are Annetta and Annetta South as well as portions of Annetta North, Cresson, Hudson Oaks, and Willow Park.



Structure

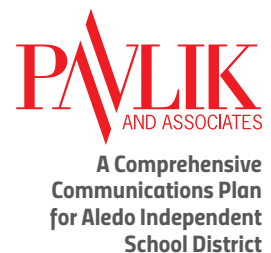
With 5,228 students enrolled for the 2015-2016 school year, Aledo ISD has nine campuses; four elementary schools (grades K-4), McAnally Intermediate School (grades 5-6), Aledo Middle School (grades 7-8), Don R. Daniel Ninth Grade Campus, Aledo High School (grades 10-12), and Aledo Learning Center. Employees total 562, of which 311 are teachers.

Strengths

Aledo ISD was named a Texas Honors Circle Award recipient by the Texas Comptroller's Office in 2013 and 2014. FIRST, which is the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas, rates public and charter school districts in how well they achieve significant academic growth while keeping spending relatively low. Aledo ISD's consistent five-star rating means the District is in the top 20 percent of the state in student academic growth and in the lowest 20 percent of its fiscal peers in terms of core operating expenditures per student.

Academic excellence is validated by how well its students rank in competitions and national testing. For example, Aledo High School was named the 2015 UIL District 8-5A Overall Academic Champion, and 11 students were named Commended Students in the 2015 National Merit Scholarship Program. Aledo High School was ranked among America's Best High Schools by *U.S. News and World Report* in 2014.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings are gaining ground with District students. CTE classes are advancing in content, scope, certifications and continuing-education credits. Program changes this year focus on the career pathways Architecture/Construction and the STEM program. The STEM program encompasses the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. AHS students gain the knowledge and skills necessary for college and career success. Aerospace Design Challenge and STEMscopes programs are raising the bar for science in middle-school and elementary-school classrooms.



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

December 7, 2015



The District also boasts an award-winning array of Fine Arts programs. From All-State Band and Choir awards to its esteemed Visual and Performing Arts, Aleo students are doing well.

In sports, Bearcat Excellence continues. The football team consistently takes championships. That along with two consecutive State Championships in Softball, plus a Baseball State Championship, and individual State Championships in Ladycat Golf and Track & Field make the Bearcats and Ladycats a powerhouse in school athletics.

The Aleo Education Foundation exists to enrich teaching by providing more than \$230,000 to teachers in 2014-2015, and more than \$365,000 since its inception in 2013. The Foundation inspires learning by funding more than 85 Innovative Teaching Grants and Championship Campus Grants.

According to the Strategic Plan Evaluation (2015-2018), among Aleo ISD's greatest strengths are the community's involvement and support; parental involvement; a safe and secure learning environment; current and advanced technologies across the board, and solid student performance.

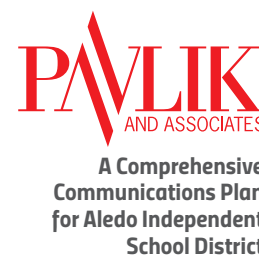
Aleo ISD has garnered the confidence of its citizens. Recognizing the District's needs as evaluated by the Aleo 2025 Committee, consisting of 34 Aleo parents and community members, voters approved a \$53,200,000 bond package in May 2015 that includes a new elementary school, safety and security improvements, technology improvements, existing facility improvements and buses to support instructional and student needs.

Challenges

These improvements are preparing the District to serve the area's growing population. Aleo ISD is on pace for 2015 to be the second straight year with 300-plus new home starts and closings, which, in turn, projects an increase of approximately 1,800 students during the next five years. The total enrollment by 2020/21 is expected to be 7,140 students, and by the 2025/26 school year, that number jumps to more than 10,400 students.

With growth, however, come challenges that demand on-going, pro-active communications. Digital channels of communication not only present limitless opportunities, but also provide for the distortion of facts and rapid-fire assaults from numerous fronts, some of them uniquely unsuspected.

Aleo ISD stands ready to meet these challenges by organizing its communications functions and capabilities so that, as the District grows, all communications programs and activities expand in effectiveness and reach. The District's web provider no longer offers the services that are required; social media is a tool that should be expanded; and traditional communications tactics including public dialogue through community meetings are proving to be more and more important.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

December 7, 2015

Effective strategic communications plans are grounded in research and analysis. The basis for this communications plan is the previously conducted communications audit.

Best Practices

For an extensive review of the “best practices” for public school district communications, see the 2015 communications audit. The best practices for general marketing should also be factored in, including the key principles of branding; application of comprehensive research and analysis to formulate objectives; proven strategies for successful branding campaigns, and criteria for the selection of tactics and methods of execution.

The primary components of success for all brands, both public and private, are:

1. Engaging employees, who, in turn, communicate with the greater community,
2. Selling a set of ideologies and a lifestyle,
3. Building strong emotional connections,
4. Ensuring relevance among pop culture and the digital age,
5. Using social media smartly,
6. Emphasizing visual assets such as photos and videos, and
7. Taking a strategic and holistic approach to providing exceptional customer service.



Communications Goals

An effective component of a strategic communications plan is the careful articulation of the District's overarching goals. Note, "goals" can be so general that they are relatively unachievable.

A good place to start in creating communications goals is to look at the organization's broad goal, or "mission." Aledo ISD's mission, as defined in the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan is "...to provide all students with an educational program developing them intellectually, physically, and socially to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society. Inherent within this mission is the belief that all students can learn and that schools can make a difference in the lives of their students." **In short, Aledo ISD's end goal is to educate students and make a difference so that they are successful, fully contributing members of society.**

As stated in the communications audit, and again in this communications plan, students always perform better when parents and the community are involved.¹ Clear, cohesive communication is imperative to engage parents and the community. Thus, a fully articulated, vetted communications plan is necessary for Aledo ISD to fully achieve its end goal. **The goal of the communications plan must be aligned with the mission of Aledo ISD.**

Through interviews and the 2015 communications audit, Pavlik has identified the following goal for the Aledo ISD communications plan.

The goal of the Aledo ISD strategic communications plan is to actively engage parents, students, and the community in the education of Aledo ISD students. *This plan will incorporate all the talents and resources of the community into the intended outcome of preparing students to be successful, contributing members of society. Aledo ISD communications should support the foundational statement that schools can, in fact, make a difference in the lives of students.*

Although this goal may seem exceedingly broad, and perhaps out-of-reach, it is important to shape all communications moving forward with this outcome in mind. Doing so ensures that Aledo ISD communications support the Aledo ISD mission and position the brand favorably among the most accomplished districts in Texas.

¹ <http://www.nspra.org/cap>

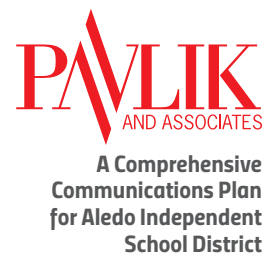


Strategies



Strategies are the steps that are taken to reach the overall goal. They are focused on individual aspects of the communications plan, and when objectives and tactics are developed with strategies at the forefront, the goal is achievable. The District's strategies must include:

- **Educating** and **informing** target audiences about Aledo ISD's brand position as a top-performing school district that provides, "all students with an educational program developing them intellectually, physically, and socially to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society."
- **Reaffirming** the commitment to students shared by everyone involved with Aledo ISD and the community at large.
- **Engaging** community partners to share the excitement and enthusiasm for Aledo ISD's brand by using a myriad of communications tools.
- **Leveraging** statewide and national education-related relationships to spotlight Aledo ISD.
- **Maximizing** the overall communications campaign by re-enforcing key messages through proactive public relations and community relations.
- **Broadening** the use of media tools (both social media and traditional media) to increase the positive conversations about Aledo ISD and the excitement that surrounds it.
- **Exploring** new relationships with persons of influence such as community leaders. Proactively inviting community leaders to engage with Aledo ISD, thereby contributing to its overall success.
- **Looking** to the diversity of Aledo ISD's stakeholders, especially students, and using this diversity to enhance the Aledo ISD brand.
- Encouraging local, regional, and statewide media to write stories, profiles, and in-depth articles about the state of today's public education and Aledo ISD's rise to preeminence.
- **Positioning** highly-acclaimed education expert and Aledo ISD superintendent, Dr. Derek Citty, as the key spokesperson for Aledo ISD.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

December 7, 2015

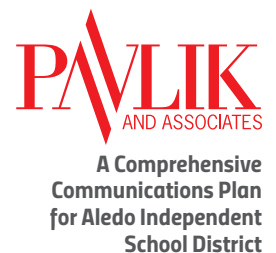
Objectives



Typically, objectives are the measurable action components of a communications plan. They often set out the percentages that are believed to be attainable. An example might be to “Increase time spent by individual users on a website by 20%.” For the purpose of this strategic communications plan, Pavlik recommends a series of objectives that contain actions and deliverables. Exact percentages and measurements should be developed internally at Aledo ISD, especially as goals are set annually. Recommended objectives include:

- Increase the number of positive media stories of Aledo ISD or Aledo ISD employees by __%.
- Increase the positive communications rating on the Teacher Climate Survey by __%.
- Increase the positive communications rating on the Parent Climate Survey by __%.
- Increase the number of ParentLink smartphone application users by __%.
- Increase the number of social media connections (likes on Facebook, followers on Twitter) by __%.
- Increase the daily number of “reaches” on Facebook by __%.
- Reach __ households/individuals by print media annually.
- Increase engagement in District sponsored activities and programs; i.e. brown bag lunches with the superintendent, by __%.

The above list should be refined by the District’s communications team. Percentages and numbers have been left blank, and should be established so that they are realistic and attainable.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

December 7, 2015

One of the most important steps in building a strategic communications plan is the identification of audiences. If there is no clear understanding of the various audiences, then the plan will not be successful to the degree it is intended or expected.



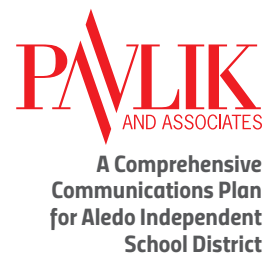
Communications Audience

It should be noted that Aledo ISD does not have one general “audience,” but instead has several audiences—each with distinct identities, interests, and concerns. School districts across the U.S. help to shape the communities in which they are situated. In addition to municipal governments, they are touching the lives of citizens and the performance of businesses. School districts are responsible for helping to mold and educate children so, as adults, they contribute to the community. Thus, they go beyond simply “teaching children.” Their impact is undeniable.

Communication is the act of imparting information, ideas, or news and is important in both the public and the private sectors. Private companies must communicate with employees as well as customers (and potential customers). Similarly, public entities must communicate with employees, constituents, and the community-at-large. There is a tendency to assume that communications tactics of public and private organizations are inherently different because of the distinction between “customers” and “citizens.” This is a generalization and ignores the distinct benefits afforded when public entities incorporate communications efforts that have proven successful in the private sector.

To apply the best practices communications strategies to the public sector, it is important to note the nuances of the audience, i.e. the difference between “citizens” and “customers.” Of course, businesses and public organizations should look at internal audiences similarly—they are the employees of the organization no matter if it is public or private.

External audiences are slightly different in public and private organizations. In the private sector, organizations look to communicate with persons who have purchased (or might purchase) goods or services. In the public sector, the exchange of money does not always flag communication as necessary. Instead, public organizations look to identify groups of stakeholders as the target audiences. These are people who benefit from services or products. Moreover, a stakeholder is someone who is affected in any way by an organization, either positively or negatively.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

December 7, 2015



R. Edward Freeman, professor of business administration and preemptive scholar shaping stakeholder theory, defines stakeholders as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.”² **Pavlik recommends looking at target audiences as “stakeholders” rather than “customers,” therefore broadening communications.** Additionally, Aledo ISD should apply the tenants of private sector communications efforts to this broadened base.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines an “audience” as “the reading, viewing, or listening public.”³ For the purposes of communications and public relations, target audiences must have a stake, or special interest, due to the possibility of desirable outcomes. Largely, Aledo ISD stakeholders are any group or individual who either can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization’s objectives.

Pavlik has identified the following target audiences for both internal and external communications.

Internal

- Top administration
- Campus administrations
- Educators
- Operations staff

Internal and External

- Aledo ISD School Board
- Aledo ISD volunteer committees (such as 2025 Committee, Mission/Values Committee, etc.)
- Students (all age groups)
- Parents (all age groups)
- Daily caregivers (These can include babysitters, grandparents, or siblings. They are caregivers for students enrolled in Aledo ISD but do not make head of household decisions.)

External

- Traditional media (television, radio, print)
- Non-traditional news sources (bloggers, community leaders, social media “personalities”)
- Residential taxpayers
- Commercial taxpayers

² Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts. *The Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 853–886. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uta.edu/stable/259247>

³ Audience. (1989). In *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* (9th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.



External (continued)

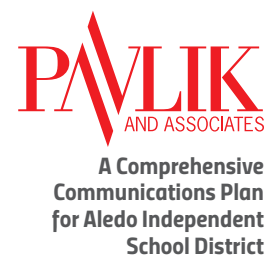
- Potential residential taxpayers
- Potential commercial taxpayers
- Seniors (a subset of taxpayers, with unique interests)
- Local nonprofits and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Potential community partners
- Local municipal governments and administrations
- Adjacent communities
- Other school districts (regional, statewide, and nationwide)

Best practices dictate that communications be tailored to suit each audience individually. For example, Aledo ISD should look to communicate differently with parents than they do with employees.

As discussed in the communications audit, Pavlik finds Aledo ISD to be earnest and committed in its communications at all levels and with all audiences, internally to parents and students and externally to taxpayers and its greater community. **Aledo ISD should not stop here, but instead should look to continue to segment audiences and tailor communications.**

For example, the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) in 2011 conducted a communications survey that resulted in 43,410 responses from 50 districts in 23 states as part of a communications accountability program. According to its findings as published, parents want more (rather than less) information about their child's progress in school on a regular basis and definitely want to know if their child is struggling before it is too late to do something about it. They prefer to have it delivered in electronic/internet based sources like email, e-newsletters, district website, and parent portals.⁴

Pavlik recommends that communications with parents be specific and contain a clear, concise message. The message should have an identifiable purpose and be relevant. Furthermore, it should fit within Aledo ISD's mission and scope of work. This means that Aledo ISD's communications with parents should stay focused on students and education as well as the activities which support that work. For example, the 2015 communications audit found that Aledo ISD's social media is sometimes populated with general weather reports, saying that it was going to be sunny and warm that particular day. This is beyond the District's scope and is irrelevant to a parent's interaction with the District. On the other hand, bad weather that affects Aledo ISD operations might be important.



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

⁴ <http://www.nspr.org/2011capsurvey>



Additionally, **external communications should focus on Aledo ISD's efforts and brand-specific information.** This means identifying key messages (as discussed in this communications plan) and repeating them time and time again in all external and internal communications. **The brand should be central in any piece of communication.** Similar to communications with parents, the information should also stay relevant to the audience at hand. This means that if a mailer about how a new school might affect a residential base is going to businesses in the area, then the piece should concentrate on relevant facts. Similarly, a letter about Aledo ISD's inclement weather policies should not go to a business audience.

While communications should be developed with the audience in mind, **the brand and key messages should stay consistent among audiences.**



**A Comprehensive
Communications Plan
for Aledo Independent
School District**

**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

December 7, 2015

Key Messages

Consistent key messaging is vital to success in both the public and private sectors. **Messaging describes how you communicate who you are and why you exist as an organization.**⁵ In fact, influential business guru Tom Peters says, “In a competitive environment, only those who have a strong unified message, who create and sell quality and value, will survive.”⁶

If school districts are public governmental organizations, then why should they focus on key messaging? Even if an organization is not outwardly engaged in competition for survival as would be a business, it still needs to communicate consistently and effectively. School districts should communicate their successes. **Key messaging works to explain governmental actions such as budgets and policy formation.** They ensure citizen buy-in, which is not only helpful but sometimes mandatory for certain activities. Similarly, local school districts actually “compete” with other school districts, private schools, charter schools, and even home schooling parents for awareness and recognition.

Key messaging encourages action and involvement. Research by NSPRA clearly underscores one straightforward premise: Students simply do better when parents and the community are involved with schools. Test scores climb. Remediation rates dip. Graduation rates improve. Everyone understands and values their roles in the success of the school enterprise.⁷

Key messages must stay true to the Aledo ISD brand. They should be clear, concise, and reflective of not only where Aledo ISD is today, but also where it wants to be in the future. Without key messaging, the overall brand of Aledo ISD is neutralized. Successful organizations always engage in key messaging—research has proven this, time and time again.



⁵ <http://nonprofitanswerguide.org/faq/marketing-communications/how-are-key-messages-developed/>

⁶ <http://comprehension.prsa.org/?p=4426>

⁷ <http://www.nspra.org/cap>



Key messages are overarching points (goals, concepts, values) that Aledo ISD should look to convey in all communications. **They should contain phrases and words (the vocabulary) that Aledo ISD wants to associate with the brand.** It is important to note the prevalence of search engines in today's world (i.e. Google, Bing, Yahoo!, and others) and how these key words, or the vocabulary, will perform in terms of "Search Engine Optimization" or "SEO." **Key messages are "the takeaway, master narrative, elevator pitch; essence of what you want to communicate,"⁸ and absolutely necessary to successfully engage audiences on a regular basis.**

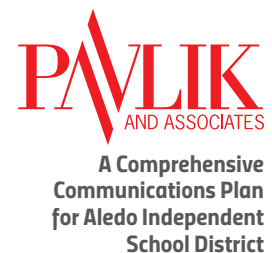
Communications cannot always be controlled, but messages can if they are repeatedly used and reflected in all written and spoken communications. Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) says that key messages should be concise, strategic, relevant, compelling, simple, memorable, real, and tailored.⁹ This means that they should clearly and effortlessly communicate with all Aledo ISD's target audiences.

Pavlik recommends that key messages for the District be developed in the strategic planning process. This means that they should be determined with the mission, values, and goals in mind. At this point, the "implied" key messages that were identified during the 2015 communications audit are a good starting point if Aledo ISD determines that they are consistent with the mission, values, and goals. Several messages that appear in the materials reviewed in the communications audit appear to be appropriate, although they should be evaluated by the District's leadership. Consider these going forward:

- Aledo ISD is situated within a strong past that will carry it forward.
- Aledo ISD will be successful in the future.
- Aledo ISD makes its students central.
- Aledo ISD values excellence.
- Aledo ISD values leadership.
- Aledo ISD values creativity.

Secondary key messages are those that can be tailored to specific audiences. Typically, they are not stated verbatim in most of the communications materials, but are implied. **Once shaped, they should contain the agreed-upon vocabulary, ideas and concepts that Aledo ISD wants stakeholders to associate with the Aledo ISD brand.** Suggestions are:

- Aledo ISD is transparent.
- Aledo ISD is a community partner.
- Aledo ISD serves its students, parents, and the community at large.



⁸ <http://comprehension.prsa.org/?p=4426>

⁹ <http://comprehension.prsa.org/?p=4426>



Pavlik encourages Aledo ISD to remember that key messaging does not ensure a one-way transfer of information. Conversation still characterizes today's communications. **Developing key messages is only the first step in "managing the discussion," as opposed to "managing the message."**

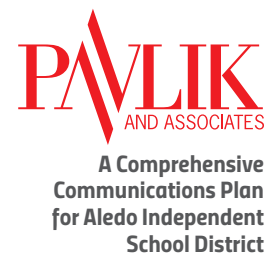
In a networked environment, it is impossible to completely control communications. People receive information via their own networks – not always directly from organizations. Communicators cannot always control what stakeholders hear, but they can make sure they participate in a healthy and constructive dialogue by being consistent. This guards against the possibility of one wrong or "weak" message from "snowballing"—keeping the brand clean of inconsistent messaging.

Aledo ISD should be proactive in shaping key messages for a variety of circumstances, so that they are identified before a situation becomes critical and branding is lost in confusion.

Mission, Vision, Motto

The Aledo ISD mission statement, as it appears on the Aledo ISD website, is "It is the purpose and mission of the Aledo Independent School District to provide all of its students with an educational program which will allow them to develop intellectually, physically, and socially in order to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society. Inherent within this purpose and mission is the belief that all students can learn and that schools can make a difference in the lives of their students."¹⁰

The first part of this mission statement appropriately captures Aledo ISD's values in that it is not only inclusive of all students, but also focuses on the student individually. It looks at how children will develop into responsible individuals while attending Aledo ISD. If Aledo ISD fulfills its mission, students will take these values into their core identity and carry them for life.



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

¹⁰ http://general-information-d.aledo.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/integrated_home.phtml?&gid=2297605&sessionid=4aec5baa0b3672cc90d7f62cf06b3014&t=672319b25c9ba37ec71e8f9d58c837f7



The second sentence is further clarification of the mission that does not necessarily serve a purpose in a formal statement. In future renditions of Aledo ISD’s mission statement, the second sentence should either be refined or omitted. It could be included in a list of values or as a value statement. The Aledo ISD Strategic Plan (2015 - 2018) includes a lengthy list of values that is all encompassing. For example, Aledo ISD believes the following about parents and the community:

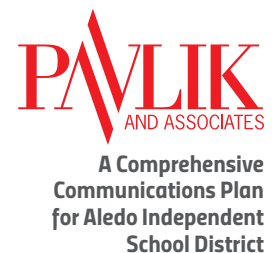
- “Education is a shared responsibility of students, school, home and community.”
- “A high level of parent and community involvement creates a foundation of educational excellence.”
- “Clear and consistent communication between school and home is essential to student success.”¹¹

Concise value statements should be integrated into a variety of communications pieces, such as news releases or marketing brochures.

Discussed above in reference to Aledo ISD’s overall brand, the motto, “A Past to Remember; a Future to Mold,”¹² does not seem to be woven into other defining materials. At no place else in communications materials is the District’s “past” referenced. This seems misaligned with the overall branding efforts of Aledo ISD. What is the past we are remembering? If Aledo ISD’s past is “worth” remembering, then it should be referenced in other places. On the other hand, the future of Aledo ISD is worth showcasing. **Continuing to hold extremely high student, staff, and teacher performance standards while fostering a community in which these goals can be met will, undoubtedly, produce a bright future that is molded today.**

Future discussions should be held about if and how “Bearcat Excellence” is woven into the brand. The District’s Bearcat mascot is a community personality in itself and works well when used with the term “excellence.”

Aledo ISD’s vision as finalized in the strategic plan, “Aledo ISD will work collaboratively with parents and the community to prepare our students to be successful leaders and problem solvers in a diverse world,”¹³ is powerful and forward-thinking. As discussed in the communications audit, the vision statement should be consistent throughout all materials.



¹¹ Aledo ISD strategic plan, revised February 16, 2015

¹² Aledo ISD strategic plan, revised February 16, 2015

¹³ Aledo ISD strategic plan, revised February 16, 2015

As stated earlier, the organization’s values and beliefs are listed in the 2015 – 2018 strategic plan. These values should be incorporated into communications materials, and expressed to the public. As it stands currently, they are not reiterated in District materials. A concise list should be developed, highlighting the inherent value noted in the mission statement and used throughout brand materials.



Recommendations

- Continue to clarify the Aledo ISD mission statement, motto, and values.
- Include components of each of these in all District materials where relevant or appropriate.



**A Comprehensive
Communications Plan
for Aledo Independent
School District**

**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

December 7, 2015

In strategic communications plans, tactics are the tools that should be used and the actions that should be taken to pursue the goal, objectives, and strategies. They are the daily activities in Aledo ISD.

Media Relations

Media relations is an all-encompassing term that aggregates different communication techniques with an overarching goal of garnering and maintaining positive opinions, images, and perceptions among the public at large. The three distinct categories of media that provide the platforms for shaping opinions are (1) owned media; (2) paid media, and (3) earned media. The first is defined as communication channels that the entity controls, such as websites, blogs, emails and, to a great degree, Facebook. Paid media is advertising, which is scheduled, designed and purchased with the purpose of selling products and influencing opinions. The third type of media is that which is “earned,” meaning that stories, photos and commentary are generated primarily by journalists in news outlets as well as word-of-mouth conversations among consumers and others.

Earned media is, for the most part, believed to be less biased and more trustworthy. News coverage and editorial endorsements are perceived by the audience to be independent—not promoted by the product or service being discussed.

News releases continue to be a proven way in which to communicate new developments, facts, and answers to looming questions. They are a way to continue to promote the District’s brand.

Occasional news conferences, and certainly one-on-one interviews, may be appropriate. Pavlik recommends carefully organizing for direct media contact and preparing the District’s spokespersons for questions, especially those which may be based on a lack of understanding of the news value being presented.

Recommendations

- Develop a brand template for all news releases that provides for consistency. Utilize the logo and motto.
- Develop a paragraph about the District which incorporates key facts and values. Put on the bottom of all news releases.
- Always refer to the website for additional information about the District.



PVLIK
AND ASSOCIATES
A Comprehensive
Communications Plan
for Aledo Independent
School District

Part 2
A Communications Plan

December 7, 2015

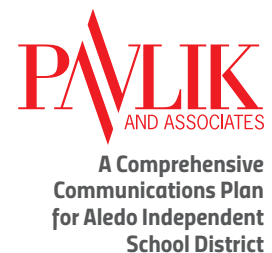


Recommendations (continued)

- Develop and maintain a media database that includes all contact information (name, news outlet, email, phone, physical address, and focus such as reporters, columnist, blogger). Keep this up to date and grow it as opportunities present themselves.
- Organize news release topics into three categories; (1) general information about the school year, calendar highlights, etc., (2) topics of interest such as features about students receiving top honors, curriculum updates, and teacher profiles; and (3) initiatives and opportunities that may be CIP programs, new or one-time student or parent volunteer efforts, and the like.
- Seek to establish the superintendent and other school professionals as leaders in their fields and offer interviews to media for their “expert” opinions on current happenings and trends.
- Be organized and selective. Target news outlets with news releases of interest to their readers.
- Keep the most important information in the top of the news release. Remember to write in the “inverted pyramid” style so the relevance of the release is not lost at the bottom, as the reader may only hastily look at the top paragraphs.
- Use fact sheets with additional data or information should the reporter want to delve deeper into the subject matter.

Crisis (Situation) Management

Currently, there is not a written crisis (situation) communications plan for Aledo ISD although one exists for operations that includes references to external communications. **Crisis Management** is a term that can be misconstrued in discussing when, how and what information should be disseminated. One definition of “crisis” that appears in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is “a situation that has reached a critical phase.”¹⁴ In local government, the lack of information or the presence of inaccurate information results in confusion—and even fear—among stakeholders and the general public.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

¹⁴ Crisis. (1989). In *Merriam-Webster's dictionary* (9th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.



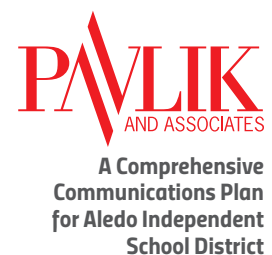
One of the key steps in crisis management is to be prepared before it happens, at least with a plan for how and who, within the organization, deals with an emergency or a situation that is becoming increasingly more troublesome. Aleo ISD has taken one step in this direction with the writing of a letter to all parents titled “Work the Plan”—ALEO ISD EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS. Although there does not appear to have been a reason for its distribution yet, this is an important component of emergency communications. The letter is a valuable tool in combating fear, panic, confusion and misinformation. **This guiding document should be distributed to parents at the appropriate time as well as be made available to parents online and in new parent packets as part of “general information.”**

Recommendations

- Create a written plan that establishes a protocol for addressing all audiences. Stewarding this initiative should be the communications team.
- Break out audiences and organize them to also include the communications tools which are most used by these groups.
- Make certain that all news statements and social media postings contain **accurate information**. Do not hypothesize.
- Assure that all communications are timely; do not let hours and days go by without communicating.
- Keep the brand woven into these communications.
- Plan follow-ups after the main event or situation subsequent to the District’s initial statement/briefings.
- Work with the news media carefully and as appropriate. On-going communications is important. Never avoid the media.

Social Media

No matter the industry, social media is here to stay. Individuals, especially millennials, rely on social media for news, information, communication, and many other daily needs. Social media, for the purpose of this communications plan, are the forms of web-based communications such as websites like Facebook that allow for users to generate content and share ideas, messages, images, and other types of content.¹⁵ It matters not whether you are involved in retail, public service, or corporate America—in order to engage the public, you must maintain a social media presence.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

15. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>

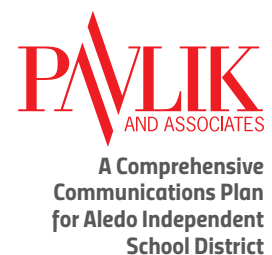


Interestingly, a Pew Research Center report found that 61% of Millennials (young Americans around 18 – 33 years of age) get their news from Facebook during a given week. This is a remarkable contrast to Baby Boomers, 60% of whom get their news from local television. Only 39% of Baby Boomers (between 50 and 70 years old) get news on Facebook. Furthermore, Gen Xers, those individuals between 33 and 50, bridge the gap between Millennials and Babyboomers. About half (51%) of Gen Xers get news on Facebook and the other half (46%) do so on local television.¹⁶ The Global Web Index found that 55% of Internet users age 16 to 64 use Social Media to “stay in touch with what friends are doing.” Furthermore, 41% say they use it to “stay up-to-date with news and current events.”¹⁷

Given these statistics, **Aledo ISD should recognize that, while social media is important to engage Millenials and Gen Xers, it is also important to maintain a presence in traditional media outlets like newspapers, television, and radio.** Social media is important to all organizations, but it must be used in tandem with other resources.

Effective social media is more than posting facts and activities on a Facebook page. It must be fine-tuned in much the same way as traditional communications efforts. **This becomes increasingly complicated because social media is a conversation (a tool for community engagement) rather than a one-way transfer of information.**

An article in *THE Journal*, a publication focused on, “Transforming Education through Technology,” points out that school districts are quick to integrate technology into teaching processes, but are reluctant to do so when it comes to communications. As discussed earlier, Aledo ISD, and all school districts, must be proactive in communications. “If local districts and school boards don’t tell their story, someone else will—and it might not be the story they’d want to be told,” says Mark Willis, assistant executive director for the Georgia School Boards Association, a “leader in promoting web- and cloud-based technology tools to help local school boards make their work more transparent and easier for the public to engage.”¹⁸



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

¹⁶ <http://www.journalism.org/2015/06/01/millennials-political-news/>

¹⁷ <http://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/top-10-reasons-for-using-social-media>

¹⁸ <https://thejournal.com/articles/2012/06/19/how-social-media-creates-connections-for-school-districts.aspx>

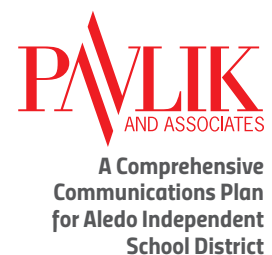


Budgets today continue to undergo stress and strain, and this is especially true in the education sector. Often, when faced with budget constraints, communications departments are the first to be downsized or cut altogether. This is detrimental to the long-term success of a public sector organization because conversations continue no matter the situation, especially in discussions of policy and operations decisions. If citizens are not communicated with effectively and clearly, then it is difficult to avoid conflict, or even to maintain on-going support.

The use of social media is a key communications component for Aledo ISD because it is a cost-effective way to share information and engage community members. Aledo ISD currently connects and engages target audiences through Facebook and Twitter, both of which serve as a straight line of communication to those who are immediately affected by the decisions and actions of the District's leadership.

Similarly, school districts sometimes forgo full exploration of social media because of fears of potential negative outcomes. With the news being inundated by stories of professionals in the field of education misusing social media, this skepticism is understandable. On the other hand, as competition in education grows, public schools (and public school districts) must market themselves in order to compete for government grants, special programming and advocacy that will increase their appeal to citizens and the taxpaying community. Dorie Clark, a marketing strategist who teaches at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, says, "I'm convinced that if schools want to improve their image with taxpayers, they must begin to use social media. The benefits are just too great, and as more of the taxpaying community ties into social media through mobile devices, 'traditional' public schools have to become non-traditional, and join the conversation."¹⁹

Pavlik recommends that, in order to alleviate some of these fears and allow more conversation on social media, Aledo ISD must develop and maintain policy that addresses responsibility, transparency, accuracy, and integrity. This should be distributed to all employees and volunteers who interact with the District, so that everyone is clear on the standards by which Aledo ISD social media operates. Furthermore, Aledo ISD must establish a procedure for social media and be clear on which staff person is responsible for what site or components of sites. If this work is to be done by committee, then procedures become even more important. Social media happens in real time, so procedures must be agreed upon before work is initiated.



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

¹⁹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/dorieclark/2012/08/23/why-public-school-leaders-must-embrace-social-media-now/>

Public educators developed a list of key reasons why schools should use social media at a seminar hosted by the University of Dayton’s Department of Educational Leadership. They include:

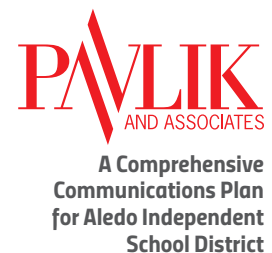


- **Communications** – School districts typically communicate with stakeholders via traditional channels (i.e. print mailers, websites, or phone calls). Social media allows for information dissemination immediately, in real time. Social media can also be used to monitor other organizations’ communications that might contain information (either correct or incorrect) about the schools.
- **Public Relations** – School districts cannot leave the fate of their brand up to other organizations or the community itself. They should be proactive through social media in engaging in a conversation that shapes their brand. Furthermore, social media can be used to assess how the community thinks about Aledo ISD.
- **Branding** – The frequency of the messages on social media increases the District’s positive exposure. Users of social media are engaged many times a day, and so their chances of being in contact with the Aledo ISD brand are much greater than with print media or even a website.²⁰

The status of Aledo ISD’s social media was evaluated in the communications audit. Pavlik discussed a 2014 study by Baylor University²¹ that explains the ways social media can be used in “reputation management,” including:

- predicting potential problems,
- anticipating threats,
- minimizing surprises,
- resolving issues, and
- preventing crises.

Stakeholders interacting with the District through social media can spread the word about their experiences to many audiences much faster than with traditional media.



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

²¹ Neill, M. S., & Moody, M. Who is responsible for what? Examining strategic roles in social media management. Public Relations Review (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.10.014>

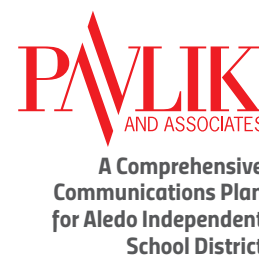


As discussed in the communications audit, one of Aledo ISD's greatest strengths in the communications process is its social media component. The organization is active on Facebook and Twitter, sometimes posting multiple times a day. There is more often than not a call to action, and posts are appropriate lengths. They truly engage the audience, even going so far as to allow other users to comment on Facebook. This is impressive for a public organization. They usually do not use social media as a conversation, but instead a one-way transferal of information, which is not as effective because it diminishes the public perception that the organization values public opinion.

By encouraging the public to comment on Facebook posts, Aledo ISD is inviting the public to actively engage in shaping the brand. Additionally, posts allow Aledo ISD to monitor perceptions of the organization. If the general population feels negatively about something that Aledo ISD has done, it is better to hear about it through social media immediately. Aledo ISD should be proactive in shaping perceptions.

Aledo ISD should look to target its social media sites and tailor them to the viewers. At this point, the information is too varied and Aledo ISD can lose certain audiences as tweets and Facebook posts do not hold the interest of users. The Facebook page is comprehensive, and there is a lot communicated on it (including sports statistics, meetings, successes, and parenting tips). Pavlik suggests that this is, in fact, too much variety in topics. By posting so frequently on so many topics, Aledo ISD risks losing the interest of followers because not every Facebook user wants to hear, for example, about the successes of the high school football team and an elementary school's bus schedule at the same time. Tweets (on Twitter) occur as frequently as Facebook quotes, and take the same risks of overloading users.

Pavlik recommends that Aledo ISD work to further segment their social media population and tailor posts to their interests. For example, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD (CFB ISD) targets expectant mothers on the social media site Pinterest, connecting with them through photos. This effectively segments audiences, and connects with mothers where they are expecting to find tips about parenting and education.²² Another suggestion would be looking to connect with younger alumni on LinkedIn and Facebook. Alumni are a great way to spread the word of Aledo ISD's successes, and engage "brand activists," who will share positive, anecdotal insight about the brand.



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

²² <https://thejournal.com/Articles/2012/06/19/how-social-media-creates-connections-for-school-districts.aspx?Page=3>



Pavlik also recommends that Aleo ISD looks into developing individual Facebook and Twitter pages for posts for age-specific audiences. This can come with individual campus pages, or interest specific pages (an athletics page, a community service page, or a bus schedule page). Aleo ISD should keep the comprehensive page intact, but should post news and comments on it that are truly “district-wide” news. All of these guidelines and terms of service should be outlined in the social media guide and procedures discussed earlier.

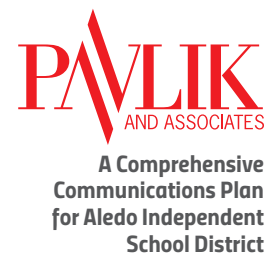
Recommendations

- Develop guidelines for the use of social media that can be distributed to Aleo ISD employees. These should include both rules for individual pages that protect the employees’ privacy as well as guidelines for Aleo ISD pages to protect brand standards.
- Develop branded pages for different target audiences. This includes a list of types of materials that should be covered as well as standards for creating content.
- Target each message so that it complies with brand standards as well as the goals of the specific social media account.

Outreach to Senior Citizens

It is common for school districts to focus only on communications to people with children in the schools. They tell them about meal planning, weather-related dismissals, and changes to school policies. They then wonder why bond and tax measures are not supported. Ann Flynn, director of education and technology and state association services for the National School Boards Association, says, “With the vast majority of school districts that are successful in getting funding from their community, it’s because those districts have done their homework far in advance to build a connection.”²³

CFB ISD expertly engages senior citizens. Its communications efforts focuses heavily on the 70 percent of community residents without children in school, many of whom are older. CFB ISD offers these individuals the opportunity to sign up for one minute prerecorded phone messages that are tailored to their specific interests.²⁴ This is an excellent example of going beyond traditional print media to communicate with senior citizens who most likely are taxpayers and who have grandchildren. It provides them information about the District and builds a relationship with them so when their support is sought in school initiatives, they are informed and most likely to engage in a positive way.



²³ <https://thejournal.com/Articles/2012/06/19/how-social-media-creates-connections-for-school-districts.aspx?Page=3>

²⁴ <https://thejournal.com/Articles/2012/06/19/how-social-media-creates-connections-for-school-districts.aspx?Page=3>



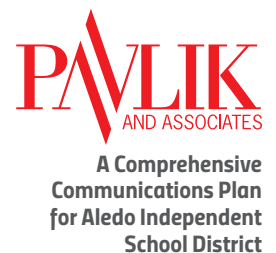
Aledo ISD should continue to print mailings to senior citizens and empty nesters about happenings around the District. Time and time again, it has been proven that print media is still the gold standard when it comes to communicating important information that should stand apart. Senior citizens and empty nesters are comfortable with print media.

Recommendations

- Consider periodic newsletters that are tailored to specific interests of senior citizens in the Aledo ISD area. These might include financial information as well as continuing education opportunities for seniors. These should be offered both in email and traditional mail format.
- Consider allowing senior citizens to “opt in” to weekly automated phone calls that give updates on the District. These can contain information that is similar to that in the newsletter.
- Maintain a presence at community events that cater to senior citizens. This includes sending representatives to special activities where seniors live and gather as well as other points of contact.
- Continue to utilize print materials as budget allows.

Websites

Pavlik recommends a complete rework of the Aledo ISD website. Discussed in depth in the 2015 communications audit, the current site is information-rich but poorly organized. There are broken links and much of the information is outdated.





Aledo ISD, like most other organizations today, relies heavily on digital marketing and communications because this is how it is perceived that its audiences expect to be engaged. The Aledo ISD website (<http://aledo.schoolfusion.us/>) is robust—almost to the point of being overwhelming. Unfortunately, the platform on which it operates, School Fusion, is out of date. This means that there are no available statistics on website usage.

Aledo ISD should monitor all current and future website usage through Google Analytics or another comparable service. This provides guidance for necessary changes to be made in a timely manner that also maximizes utility.

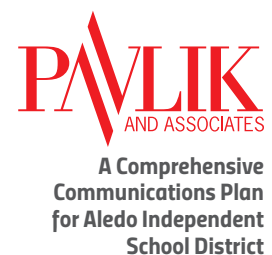
Much should be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of a website. The Web Marketing Association²⁵ created a concise list used in judging website design and functionality that includes:

- **Design** - What does the website look like? Do the colors make sense? Is it an appealing use of visuals and photographs?
- **Innovation** - Does the website look like a template? Is it imaginative? Does it tell the organization's unique story in a compelling manner? Does it enhance the individuality of the brand?
- **Content** - Is the content appropriate, timely, interesting, and useful?
- **Technology** - Does the website "work"? Does it incorporate a logical number of technological advancements? Is the use of technology appropriate to the audience?
- **Interactivity** - Does the website call the user to action? Does it engage the user?
- **Navigability** - Is the website easy to use?

The redesign of the website must take these considerations into account.

It is important to build a site that not only functions as necessary today, but also evolves as the needs of Aledo ISD evolve.

The design of school district websites is in many ways different from web design of businesses, as there are interests and problems that are unique to not only the educational sector but also the public service sector. Parents, a primary audience when considering website design, interact with school district websites to learn more information about what is going on in their students' lives. For example, NSPRA in 2011 conducted a communications survey that resulted in 43,410 responses from 50 districts in 23 states as part of a communications accountability program. According to its findings as published, parents want more (rather than less) information about their child's progress in school on a regular basis and definitely want to know if their



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

²⁵ http://www.webaward.org/judging_process.asp#.ViAXyn6rTcs

child is struggling before it is too late to do something about it. They prefer to have it delivered to them in electronic/internet based sources like email, e-newsletters, district websites, and parent portals.²⁶



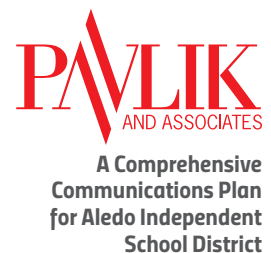
Other considerations that are unique to school districts are the requirements for both security and transparency. The U.S. Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) is a "one-stop" resource for education stakeholders to learn about data privacy, confidentiality, and security practices related to students. According to PTAC's website, www.ptac.ed.gov, **it is important that school districts communicate what student information they collect, why they collect it, how they use it, and to whom they disclose the information.**

School districts are encouraged by the Department to take a proactive approach in communicating with parents, as greater understanding of the district's privacy policies and practices will help alleviate confusion and misunderstanding.

Best practice recommendations for improving transparency in public education data processes may be found in the Appendix of the communications audit. Included are ways to communicate with parents, what should be said, and what should be considered for posting on a school district's website.

The American School Superintendents Association (ASSA) has published a list of 12 important recommendations for building a school district website.²⁷ They are:

- **Your website is the public face of your brand.** The homepage is often the first impression your audience has of your school district. You must present your goals clearly and concisely.
- **Make sure the necessary information is easy to find.** This means visitors should be able to find the information for which they visited the site within three clicks of landing on the homepage. If information is buried, there is potential that the visitor will lose interest.
- **Make sure the information on the homepage is the most relevant, highly sought information.** This means the mission statement, or other static information (while also important), might need to be moved to an "about us" page.
- **Make sure all your visuals are specific to the organization.** Avoid using generic visuals like an apple or mortar board. These "ordinary" visuals do nothing to set you apart from the larger, average organizations and detract from the excellent characteristics that are distinctively you.
- **Keep it simple.**
- **Make sure information is factual and up to date.**
- **Keep fonts uniform, professional, and easy to read.**



Part 2
A Communications Plan

²⁶ <http://www.nspra.org/cap>

²⁷ <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=9640>



- **Avoid busy, distracting backgrounds, textures, and colors.** They do little to add to the overall brand and actually end up frustrating the user.
- **Do not make a page live until it is ready.** You will only disappoint a user if you create a link to a site and then declare it “under construction.” This might mean “hiding” pages until they are ready to be live.
- **Make sure links work.** Broken links detract from a website’s (and organization’s) credibility.
- **Be direct and straight to the point.** Do not focus on flashy animated introductions. If you do have one, include a skip option. Visitors do not want to sit through a three-minute video each time they visit the Aleo ISD website.
- **Test a site several times**, by many different people, on many different computers before it goes live.

Pavlik recommends engaging an experienced online communications team as well as a web programmer. A site should be built from the ground up following the recommendations in this report. It is imperative that mobile compatibility is integrated with other platforms such as social media outlets and smartphone apps like Aleo ISD’s ParentLink.

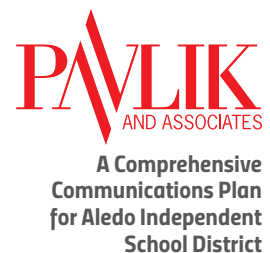
Recommendations

- Develop a website that fits the needs of Aleo ISD today and can be carried into the future.
- Make sure that the website information is up-to-date and factual.
- Develop a website that is mobile-friendly.
- Make sure that all websites associated with the District are consistent with the Aleo ISD brand.

Smartphone Application (ParentLink)

The smartphone application (app) is a good expression of Aleo ISD’s brand. It conveys useful and timely information, and allows parents, students, and other users to manage their settings so that they get only the information pertaining to their specific interests. Assuming that technology stays up-to-date and the app functions as it should, it will continue to be an excellent way to communicate with the community.

Many of the functionalities of the website are included on the app and are much more user-friendly in this format. These include the capability to pay students’ bills, inclement weather notifications, driving directions to different campuses, athletic scores, and others. The difference between the app and a mobile version of Aleo ISD’s website is that the user is interested enough to download it for a smartphone. Although it is free, it takes effort on the part of



Part 2
A Communications Plan

December 7, 2015



the user to go beyond merely searching a webpage. Furthermore, it takes long-term commitment because the user more than likely will store the app in his or her phone.

Recommendations

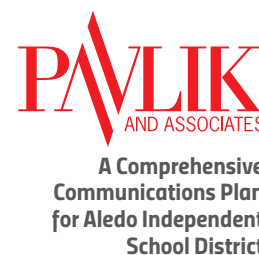
- Maintain the ParentLink application, making sure it stays up-to-date and relevant.

Printed Materials

As noted in the communications audit, Aledo ISD has not notably engaged in print communications in the past few years. Most communication has been digital on the website, social media, and smartphone apps. Pavlik recommends Aledo ISD assess budgetary constraints, and look to engage in print marketing as possible. In the age of increasing use of smartphones, internet, and a general hyper saturation of online marketing, experts are starting to come full circle and emphasize that print media still dominates in terms of effectively communicating messages of great importance.

Branding specialists at Forbes explain that, while digital marketing is considerably less expensive than print marketing and offers a greater exposure potential and overall convenience, “print still maintains its stance as a powerful and necessary component of an ad campaign.”²⁸ In fact, there are six areas in particular where print marketing performs remarkably better than digital marketing, including:

- **Tangibility** – This can also be considered staying power. An advertisement printed in a magazine or newspaper can sit in an office or home for years. A digital advertisement published online disappears in seconds.
- **Credibility** – Greater legitimacy is afforded to printed materials, possibly because they are held; i.e. touched.
- **Branding** – It is easier to develop consistent branding in print advertisements and media.
- **Target marketing** – It is easier to segment audiences with print media than it is to do so online.
- **More engaging** – Experts have proven that consumers engage more with printed material, as opposed to online. Average time spent on a page of a website is about 15 seconds or less.²⁹ This is usually a substantial amount of information to absorb in such a short amount of time. Printed advertisements offer a greater exposure time.
- **Fewer print ads** – As more organizations shift to exclusively marketing online, there are fewer print ads overall. This means that an Aledo ISD print ad can stand out considerably, and be in less competition with outside “noise.”



Part 2
A Communications Plan

²⁸ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/thesba/2012/06/28/print-is-dead-not-so-fast/>

²⁹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/thesba/2012/06/28/print-is-dead-not-so-fast/>



The two samples of print media examined for the 2015 communication audit include an ad for the *East Parker County Newcomers Guide* and a 2015 Bond Election information flyer. Both are examples of materials that could be used to further engage Aledo ISD's brand, as well as examples where print media can be substantially more effective than online media. The bond flyer as printed gives the information legitimacy and shows transparency.

Pavlik recommends that Aledo ISD continue to engage in print marketing as funds allow, especially when it comes to important topics for which the organization needs to stand out from the rest.

Recommendations

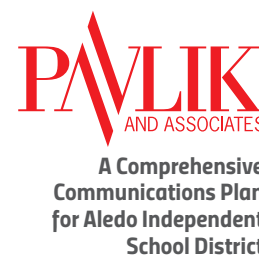
- Continue print advertising in the *East Parker County Newcomers Guide* and other targeted materials.
- Identify new opportunities where print media is affordable and warranted. Create an annual calendar where all of these items can be scheduled out and a budget can be set for a year.
- Develop a list of brand standards for print advertisements that supports and maintains the Aledo ISD brand.

Public and Community Engagement

Currently, Aledo ISD engages the community through a variety of outlets. For example, Pavlik made note of a Community Corner Newsletter in the body of sample news releases that were reviewed in the communications audit. Newsletters are effective ways in which to engage the public, especially if they are distributed on a regular basis and contain timely information.

Some would argue that newsletters are more cost effective and widely read if they are distributed online. In fact, the Pew Center for Research reports that, currently, 84% of American adults use the internet. Traditionally, it has been assumed that only younger individuals, those under the age of 65 use the internet, but this is slowly becoming an invalid argument. The same report states that a clear majority (58%) of seniors use the internet.³⁰ This would seem to support that newsletters should be distributed only online. On the other hand, several industry resources state that print communications is still important and necessary (see section on Printed Materials).

Pavlik recommends that Aledo ISD continue to distribute newsletters both printed and online, as the budget permits. When larger, special edition “newsletters” such as an Annual Report are created, Aledo ISD should continue distributing these in print format, at least to major community partners. This will lend the document additional credence in the eyes of the consumer.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

³⁰ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/06/26/americans-internet-access-2000-2015/>



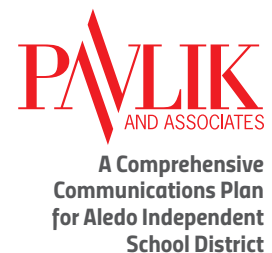
It is imperative that the information and content in these newsletters is reviewed regularly to ensure that it stays relevant and up-to-date. In fact, subsequent newsletters can modify or update information that is proving to be outdated.

Outlets for public engagement include coffees and brown bag lunches with the superintendent. Presentations and handouts distributed at these public events should emphasize Aledo ISD's strong brand. **Boiler plate descriptions, the logo, and other branding items should be included any time information like a flyer, newsletter, or otherwise is distributed to the public.** Activities reaching out to the community include:

- Superintendent Community Night meetings
- Superintendent Brown Bag lunch meetings
- Corresponding notes home via: students, mail, ParentLink messages
- Postings on campus marquees
- Emails
- District website
- Campus newsletters
- Parent Portal (grades and attendance)
- School Fusion (content management system for parents, students, and teachers)
- Remind 101
- Aledo ISD App
- Twitter
- Facebook

Pavlik recommends that **Aledo ISD develop communications standards that contain all the boiler plate information as well as a protocol for the overall brand.** This will ensure that the use of the brand is uniform before collateral materials for public engagement are produced and printed. It is recommended that every specific detail about communications material be agreed upon, including fonts, colors, and key phrases. Other community outreach opportunities where Aledo ISD should distribute branded materials include:

- Daddy Daughter Dances
- Musical performances
- Grandparent's Day
- Movies with Mom
- Theatrical performances
- Book Fairs
- Student artwork displays
- Counselor Coffee Talks
- Parenting Workshops (focused on students with ADHD)
- Connections Mentorship Program



**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

December 7, 2015



Recommendations

- Continue engaging the community through targeted efforts such as those listed above.
- Develop “boiler plate” information about the District and make sure that all materials distributed at these points of contact are consistent with and bolster the Aledo ISD brand.

Relationship Marketing

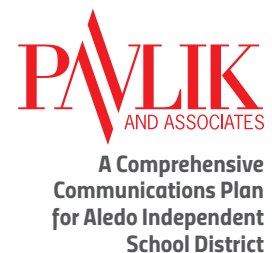
Successful communications can be termed “relationship marketing.” Traditionally, this strategy focuses on long-term customer relationships rather than short-term goals such as increased sales or profitability. In the field of education, relationship marketing can be “reworked” to include developing relationships with specific members or groups the community to work towards a mutual goal. Rather than building relationships with customers, Aledo ISD should build relationships with stakeholders.

One example of this is reaching out to local realtors. CFB ISD has realized that many individuals choose homes based on educational opportunities. Furthermore, many of these individuals’ first impressions of a community come through a real estate agent. CFB ISD has a special page on their website that puts all the positive facts about the District at the real estate agent’s fingertips, ensuring that the people responsible for bringing new residents into the community are well informed about the District.³¹ This tactic can benefit first impressions of Aledo ISD.

Another suggestion is to reach out to Aledo ISD alumni through Facebook and LinkedIn. This is a good way to keep track of alumni successes, and share the information easily and cost-effectively. As today’s youth grow into tomorrow’s community leaders, more and more of their school experiences and opinions are shared online, and should be used to promote Aledo ISD.

Recommendations

- Develop a list of relationships that need to be cultivated and maintained. This should include senior citizens, real estate agents, and alumni.
- Engage in activities that are purely related to the maintenance of these relationships.
- Share outcomes in newsletters, on social media, and in other materials.



Part 2
A Communications Plan

³¹ <https://thejournal.com/Articles/2012/06/19/how-social-media-creates-connections-for-school-districts.aspx?Page=2>

In order for this strategic communications plan to be implemented in a timely and effective manner, it is imperative that Aledo ISD have a clearly defined organizational structure that is equipped to execute such a comprehensive and proactive plan. It will be important that individuals who are a part of the communications team have defined job descriptions so that everyone has a deep understanding of what it means to work towards not only the goal of the communications plan, but also the goals and mission of Aledo ISD.

Pavlik recommends that Aledo ISD develop a job description and advertise for a “Director of Communications” to work directly under the Deputy Superintendent. The Director of Communications should not only be creative and broad-thinking, but also know that all communications efforts should lead to fulfillment of the Aledo ISD mission. Furthermore, he or she should have a strong understanding of the communications process, especially in the public sector. This person must be able to work quickly in crisis situations and diligently to achieve long-term goals. He or she should have extensive communications experience, with a unique ability to work with organizations growing to the next level. Aledo ISD is at a turning point. As it stands, the District is positioned to move from a small, suburban district on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area to a top-performing, destination school district serving thousands of students with unsurpassed excellence. The Director of Communications should understand this watershed moment and stand ready to help carry Aledo ISD forward.

It is also recommended that the Director of Communications maintain at least one assistant dedicated solely to tasks related to communications. In carrying out a new comprehensive strategic communications plan, there will be many “catchup” tasks to be completed in addition to on-going communications efforts such as social media upkeep, news release distribution, and the coordination of print materials. The “communications assistant” should be task- and schedule-oriented. He or she should be able to develop a long-range communications calendar, and then manage its execution.

Aledo ISD should have a team dedicated to communications. As the District grows, it will be important to have in place a group of professionals who are experienced in this vital component of organizational development. A communications team will ensure that Aledo ISD continues to operate exceptionally, and excel in fulfilling its mission and vision.



**A Comprehensive
Communications Plan
for Aledo Independent
School District**

**Part 2
A Communications Plan**

December 7, 2015

It is imperative that any communications plan remain achievable and useful. **Pavlik recommends that Aledo ISD assess the successes and shortcomings of its communications plan, as based on its strategic plan, at least annually.** If improvements are necessary, they should be implemented immediately. Furthermore, if any tactics prove to be particularly successful, then these should be broadened and enhanced. Yearly evaluations are a key to success in communications.

Similarly, **Pavlik recommends that the Aledo ISD communications team meet at least quarterly to discuss past communications efforts and upcoming communications goals and activities.** This allows time to brainstorm future efforts and to assess performance of past efforts. It will be important for the communications team to make sure that their lines of communication are open and effective so that they can then communicate with other internal departments and external audiences.

The typical “shelf life” of a communications plan is three to five years. This plan should be attainable and effective for that length of time if adjustments are made.

