

Orange Unified School District Communications Plan



“What’s Best for our Students Comes First”



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TOP TEN CORE VALUES

This we believe above all else that...

- 1. All students will learn.**
- 2. All available resources will be utilized to ensure student success.**
- 3. Everyone needs to model servant leadership.**
- 4. Creating a shared vision will empower others.**
- 5. Communicating our shared vision requires honesty and consistency.**
- 6. All people should be treated with respect and dignity.**
- 7. We demonstrate trustworthiness by all we say and do.**
- 8. We need to listen empathically and respectfully to understand the message beyond the words.**
- 9. Everyone is our customer and, therefore, we will always follow-up and follow-through.**
- 10. What's best for our students comes first and foremost.**



Orange Unified School District Communications Plan

The purpose of the Orange Unified School District (OUSD) Communications Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our school community. The plan primarily addresses two types of school district audiences: **internal** (students, teachers, staff, administration and Board of Education) and **external** (parents, businesses, civic groups, religious groups, and other members of the OUSD community).

NOTE: Crisis Communications such as earthquakes and brush fires are handled by the Student and Community Services (SCS), and detailed in the “OUSD Emergency Operations Plan.” For more information on crisis communications, please contact SCS at 714-628-5424.

Staff support for and involvement in this plan is vital – particularly, teachers and office staff who are highly influential sources of information for the public. The OUSD staff carries the message of the school district to their families and friends who in turn form opinions about the schools. We must have as a top priority the goal of clearly communicating our unified message at all times.

The Community Development Department will implement and manage community relations, publications, marketing, and offer leadership on all comprehensive communication services and strategies for the district under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

Two driving questions for every program or activity will be:

1. How does this benefit our students?
2. How do we communicate it to our stakeholders?



Mission

The Orange Unified School District, being committed to planning for continual improvement, will offer a learning environment of excellence, with high expectations, to provide each student with the opportunity to be able to compete in the global economy.



Vision

OUSD personnel will use the communications plan to communicate the goals and objectives of our district with students, staff, parents and other members of the community as a means to maximize student achievement and success through public support for our schools.

Target Audiences

Internal

1. Students
2. Staff
 - A. District Level
 - i. Classified
 - ii. Certificated
 - iii. Leadership
 - B. Site Level
 - i. Classified
 - ii. Certificated
 - iii. Leadership
3. Board of Education

External

1. Parents
2. Parent Organizations
3. Key Communicators
4. Business Community
5. Elected City Officials
6. Elected State and Federal Legislators
7. Civic Groups
8. Senior Citizens Groups
9. Religious Groups
10. Community Groups
11. Education —school districts and local colleges and universities
12. Private Schools
13. Electronic Media—Web site, email, pod cast, listserv, etc.
14. Print Media—newsletters, newspapers, flyers, etc.



Objective

Our objective is to improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open, two-way communication between the Board of Education, administration, staff, students, parents and the OUSD communities.

1. Clarify district flow of information

- 1.1 Distribute organizational charts to all staff showing decision-making process, reporting, and accountability structure.
- 1.2 Charts will include individual areas of staff responsibility for communication.

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

- 2.1 Provide continuing training sessions as part of principal's meetings on how to train teachers and staff to communicate their school's message.
- 2.2 Subscribe to school communication publications (National School Public Relations Association and California School Public Relations Association) and relay pertinent ideas and information to administrators.
- 2.3 Supply administrators with public relations fact sheets and other easy-to-use communications tools as needed when issues arise.
- 2.4 Provide communications training sessions to site-level staff.
- 2.5 Create quick, web-based form for schools to utilize when reporting an upcoming event to the Superintendent's office.

3. Provide regular information on district-wide issues

- 3.1 Distribute information from meetings on need-to-know basis.
- 3.2 Distribute all *external* publications and news releases to all employees via email and post on website.
- 3.3 Issue short, bulleted FYI sheets to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern.
- 3.4 Formalize a policy for district communication with teachers and site staff.
- 3.5 Establish a “State of the Schools” report delivered by the Superintendent to be aired on public access channels twice a year in November and March.

4. Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents/ community to the district

- 4.1 Encourage parents and community members to sign up for district-wide and school-wide Internet listservs (automatic mailing lists from the internet).
- 4.2 Conduct electronic surveys (email) at district and site levels to provide feedback on flow of information.
- 4.3 Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.
- 4.4 Establish informational email account to receive feedback from community.
- 4.5 Expand use of the Parent Portal to facilitate communication between parents and schools.

5. Publish and distribute informational pieces

- 5.1 Develop Collateral Pieces.
 - 5.1.a District/School Informational Brochures.
 - 5.1.b Newsletters – to be emailed via the listserv.
 - 5.1.c Press releases as needed.
- 5.2 Provide each site with a copy of the OUSD video, which is currently in production by the Audio Visual Department
- 5.3 Post information on district website.

6. Communicate with civic, community and religious groups

- 6.1 Include groups in mailings and provide opportunities for them to sign up for our community listserv.
- 6.2 Attend community meetings as needed to provide information.
- 6.3 Provide district communications materials to key leaders.
- 6.4 Develop partnerships with groups.
- 6.5 Develop program for touring District that includes bus tours of schools and facilities. Participants could include senior citizen groups, community members, civic leaders, etc. Tours will be narrated by appropriate staff members, and will vary depending on needs.

7. Be visible in the community

- 7.1 Attend community organization meetings.
- 7.2 Encourage participation in local service clubs.
- 7.3 Host OUSD “town hall” meetings or forums when appropriate.
- 7.4 Encourage school staff to talk positively about OUSD schools to friends, neighbors and community acquaintances.
- 7.5 Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups.

8. Promote the successes of OUSD personnel

- 8.1 Produce a monthly video series called “Ring the Bell” focusing on a student, staff member, program, school, department, etc. Video to be shown on cable channel and/or at Board meetings.
- 8.2 Highlight staff with articles in district communications pieces, outside media, and through recognition at events.



Strategies

1. Keep Communications Simple

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

2. Create Information Sheets

- ◇ Create information sheets on four or five topics such as district and state budgets, school safety, accountability, etc.; update them bi-annually or as needed.
- ◇ Have sheets available on-line for quick reference.
- ◇ Use template for uniformity so that new topics can be addressed rapidly.

3. Communicate Early and Often

- ◇ Prepare information sheets when appropriate to send out to principals, office managers, and other staff as needed.
- ◇ Follow-up with memos or communications to all staff if necessary.
- ◇ Make telephone calls if in doubt.

4. Communicate Face-to-Face

- ◇ The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face.
- ◇ Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate.

5. Keep Communications Brief and to the Point

- ◇ In order to keep a person’s attention, be brief and to the point.
- ◇ Use bullet points when appropriate.
- ◇ Highlight message in the title.
- ◇ Proofread all documents for errors.

6. Emphasize Customer Service

- ◇ Customer must leave with an answer to their concern or question.
- ◇ Never be dismissive.
- ◇ Actively listen to understand the message beyond the words.

7. Train Staff

- ◇ Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors, and people in the community has an impact on how OUSD schools are perceived.
- ◇ Engage frontline staff in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately. They are the best link to the parents and community.

8. Develop Relationships with our Community

- ◇ Develop relationships with merchants by keeping them informed of minimum days, late starts, etc.
- ◇ Ask for input on areas of concern.

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

9. Study the Media

- ◇ Pay attention to the type of stories aired or published.
- ◇ Note who is generally used as a source of information.
- ◇ Develop relationships with editors and education reporters.

10. Prepare our Messages

- ◇ Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with information sheets.
- ◇ Develop responses that represent our school or district message.
- ◇ Avoid technical jargon by keeping it simple and using quotable “sound bites,” when appropriate.
- ◇ Prepare stories in formats that match those used by the local media.
- ◇ Don’t use education lingo when preparing messages.



Methods

We will identify the communication tools that are most widely accepted and preferred by the community through quarterly assessment and adjust accordingly. Our current communications methods are:

1. Printed Materials

- ◇ “Community Bulletin Board”—front and back flyer with ads for community non-profits that benefit students.
- ◇ “School News Roll Call”—district newspaper containing articles about each school delivered every two months.
- ◇ “*OUSD Insights*”—newsletter-two-page glossy newsletter mailed to all employees, parents, and key-communicators five times a year.
- ◇ Brochures– as needed to highlight district programs or provide general district information.
- ◇ Memos from the Superintendent—as needed.

2. **E-mail Communication** - OUSD has a community listserv that individuals can sign up for on OUSD web site. This gives us the ability to send periodic notices including links to OUSD’s latest:

- ◇ Publications
- ◇ Board minutes, agendas and notes
- ◇ Press releases
- ◇ Talking points memos

* All schools should send out a monthly email communication and encourage parents to sign up for the listserv. Paper communication could be greatly reduced over time.

3. **Publications Posted Online** - We can save money and time by continuing to provide the majority of our printed materials on our district’s web site and begin to move away from paper communications. Our on-line archives include:

- ◇ Top 10 Core Values
- ◇ Strategic Plan
- ◇ Goals and Objectives
- ◇ Board agenda/notes/minutes
- ◇ “About OUSD Page”
- ◇ Press Releases dating back to January 2004
- ◇ Community Bulletin Board
- ◇ Student and Master Events Calendars
- ◇ Link to “School News Roll Call” site
- ◇ OUSD “Insights”
- ◇ School News Roll Call Newspapers

4. **Online Message Board** - Establish a message board on our website to be used for district-level communication and crisis situations.
5. **Cable Television** - All board meetings will continue to be shown on the Orange, Villa Park public access channels. Additional video packages will be shown at the discretion of the communications department with the direction of the Superintendent.

Current Board meeting airtimes:

Orange—Ch. 95 @ 3pm and 8pm Friday, Saturday, and Sunday following each meeting.

Villa Park—Ch. 3 @ 8pm Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday following each meeting.



Assessment and Accountability

Because different measurements work best in different situations, a tracking system will be developed to measure communication effectiveness.

- ◇ **Benchmarking** - will be used to ascertain what communication strategies are being implemented in other school districts.
- ◇ **Focus groups** - will be conducted in groups of six to ten people to collect qualitative information as needed.
- ◇ **Surveys** - electronic surveys will be used to ascertain people's opinion and to collect quantitative information.
- ◇ **Email** receipt requests - counters will be used on the website to measure the number of hits for each story.
- ◇ **Interpersonal Contact** - Informal word-of-mouth surveys will be conducted to gauge the level of effectiveness of Communications Plan.

The Communications Plan will be reviewed and updated twice a year, or as deemed necessary by the Superintendent, Board of Education and/or Communications Department.

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OUSD Communications Matrix

	School News		Insights	Website	Supts.		E-mail listserv	Memos	Board Notes	Speaking Engagements	School Site Visits	Brochures	Television Feed	Personal Contact	Informational Meetings	Strategic Plan Update
					Forum	Roundtable										
Parents	✓		✓	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	○	✓	✗
Staff	✓		✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	○	✓	✓
Students	✓		✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✓	✗
Parent Groups	✓		✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	○	✓	✗
City Halls	✗		✓	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	○	✓	○	✗	✗
Residents	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✗	✗
Board Members	✓		✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	○	✗	✓
Legislators	✗		○	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	○	✓	○	✗	✗
OUSD Unions	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	○	✓	○	✗	✗
Key Communicators	✗		✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	○	○	✓
Business Community	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	○	✗
Realtors	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✗	✗
Civic Groups	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✗	✗
Community Groups	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✗	✗
Churches	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✗	✗
Sr. Citizens Groups	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	○	✗	✗
Other School Districts	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	○	✓	○	✗	✗
Local Colleges	✗		✗	✓	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	○	✓	○	✗	✗
Website	✓		✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

Current	✓
No Need	✗
Need to Add	○