

CHARTIERS VALLEY

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Inspiring excellence.



Chartiers Valley School District Communication Plan

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Chartiers Valley Mission

The mission of Chartiers Valley School District, a community dedicated to shared leadership, is to graduate students who achieve personal success by providing an exceptional academic foundation in a safe, nurturing environment that inspires creativity and innovation while embracing diversity.

Communication Vision

In order to build and maintain trust among key stakeholders, the Chartiers Valley School District will always be honest and transparent in all forms of communication with the public.

The Chartiers Valley School District will utilize a multi-layered communication approach in order to engage and inform all stakeholders.

Representatives of the Chartiers Valley School District – administrators, faculty, staff and school board members – will be available and willing to engage in dialogue with all stakeholders.

The Chartiers Valley School District will continue to improve its communication efforts by regularly measuring progress as well as requesting and utilizing feedback from district stakeholders.

Guiding Principles for the Chartiers Valley Communication Effort

Communication Audit

1. Communication efforts must be tied to the Strategic Plan objectives and strategies.

To be effective, communication efforts must be designed to support CVSD's overall mission, objectives and strategies as laid out in the Strategic Plan. Communication should focus on teaching and learning and inform the public of progress toward student achievement goals. It should involve a structured, ongoing process to engage the public and promote an open dialogue on educational issues and goals. To be most effective, this should be a collaborative effort that seeks out the resources and expertise of citizens and community organizations to take action in support of student achievement. At all levels, it is imperative that communication occur consistently and information be presented with clarity. In order to accomplish this effectively and efficiently, processes and procedures should be established to incorporate a communication component into planning for all district initiatives, programs and activities.

2. Key messaging should position CVSD as a collaborative, "community-centered" school district that is committed to providing an exceptional education for all students.

The identity and image of every school district and school should be directly related to its core beliefs and values. There is a strong commitment to the success of CVSD schools from those who live and work in the community. The district has a solid reputation for providing students with an excellent and varied educational program and now needs to begin positioning itself as a leading school system in the Pittsburgh area. This focus should be incorporated into all key communication efforts and publications and be designed to build support and advocacy efforts on behalf of the schools.

3. Improving the use of communication technology must be a priority if CVSD is to successfully improve and strengthen its image.

While CVSD has implemented a variety of educational technologies in classrooms (such as the One-to-One Laptop Initiative in grades 9-12) and prides itself on the use of technology across the district, it currently lags behind in using its available technology to communicate effectively with key audiences.

E-mail, the AlertNow system, websites, employee intranets, and parent portals can all be used advantageously to improve and expand the district's communication infrastructure. While the district has invested in a number of technology tools, there is still much to be done in order to maximize their value in the area of communication. It is important to note that although technology can greatly expand CVSD's communication "reach," it does not totally replace traditional print communications or valuable face-to-face interactions. Communication must be multi-layered to be most effective. However, if CVSD truly aspires to being an innovative education leader, technology is an integral component that the district must use effectively.

4. Internal communication must be a priority.

No communication effort will be successful unless employees become ambassadors for teaching, learning, student achievement, and their schools. Staff members have the ability to

make or break the image of their schools and the district. Timely and consistent internal communication creates knowledgeable, articulate employees who are able to respond confidently to questions and requests from parents and the public. Employees can become true “ambassadors for achievement” when they receive regular updates on key district issues and are provided with the tools and training needed to support them in their communication roles.

5. School building-level communication should be a major component of the communication effort.

Research in school communication shows that the local school is usually seen as the public opinion barometer of how well schools or school districts are doing. It’s a natural hub for communication with parents and others and should become a central focus of the communication plan. Providing communication training and support for administrators and staff at the building-level will be critical to their success as communicators and ambassadors.

6. Effective stakeholder engagement requires interpersonal connections.

People are persuaded to action by others whom they respect or perceive as knowledgeable. When interpersonal connections are made by credible opinion leaders and spokespersons, people are more likely to be persuaded to action. Influential peers, such as respected staff members or parent and community leaders, are often the most effective advocates for education. Effective engagement efforts will help to improve the credibility of CVSD leaders and inspire confidence in the district.

7. Becoming a “listening” organization requires a commitment at all levels.

Effective communication efforts involve listening in equal proportion, or more, to disseminating information. Today’s education stakeholders are not content to let school district leaders make unquestioned decisions that impact students and staff. Active, informed members of the public expect to have a voice in decision-making. A strategic communication program recognizes this and incorporates opportunities for stakeholders to engage in dialogue with district leaders – from the Board and central office administrators to the school principals – on a variety of issues.

8. Strategic communication requires research and evaluation to be woven throughout the communication effort.

No plan will be successful without research and evaluation components. Communication efforts should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to maximize the value of CVSD’s communication dollar. While this Communication Audit Report provides a starting point, additional research (such as reader surveys and focus groups) should be conducted on a regular basis. In addition, once a strategic communication plan has been developed, major components, including internal communications, marketing, and engagement efforts, should be evaluated each year. The research component of the plan should capture baseline data that can be used to mark progress in selected areas of the communication effort. Communication also should be a component of the annual evaluations of district administrators and school principals.

Communication Objectives & Strategies

All communication will be strategic and proactive at the district, building and individual level.

- Develop a communication plan for the district.
- Develop a communication plan for each school.
- Establish communication guidelines and expectations for administrators, faculty and staff.
- Communicate the rationale behind important decisions.
- Communicate key messages internally first.
- Conduct regular research on communication and marketing efforts.
- Identify and frame issues to ensure clear, consistent messaging.
- Create a fact sheet that contains important information for the district and each school.

Improve internal communication systems to reach 85% staff approval.

- Provide regular opportunities for face-to-face communication.
- Improve message timeliness and consistency.
- Give the Chartiers Valley Strategic Plan a high profile.
- Continue to develop electronic communication with employees.
- Provide regular updates regarding facilities, programs, staffing, etc to keep everybody informed.
- Focus COLT Teams on the Strategic Plan and clearly define project parameters.
- Express appreciation for staff efforts.

Expand communication with parents and the community by creating at least five new communication vehicles and revising at least three current communication vehicles.

- Provide regular opportunities for face-to-face communication.
- Emphasize direct communication with stakeholders.

New Communication Vehicles

- Create a monthly district eNewsletter.
- Create a Twitter channel.
- Create a District Flickr page to organize and display school photos.
- Create a YouTube page to show parents what's happening at the district (feature events and videos regarding our educational initiatives) and incorporate more video as a communication vehicle.
- Create a web tool for showcasing the accomplishments of our alumni.
- Create a cable television channel for the district that reaches all four communities.

- Create a plan for sending letters home to parents that involves the Director of Communication and Strategic Partnerships and the Building Principals.
- Hold more parent focus groups and create more parent advisory committees.

Revised Communication Vehicles

- Maximize the use of AlertNow technology for communication.
- Expand communication with community members who are not parents.
- Restructure School Board meetings so once a month to be informative Town Hall style meetings for the Board members and community.
- Revise the website, selecting a new provider, to meet the needs of the students, parents, teachers and community.

Develop at least five new methods for expanding public engagement/outreach strategies.

- At least one School Board meeting per month will be “workshop” style and offer presentations and information to both board members and the community about what’s happening at Chartiers Valley.
- Increase the accessibility of School Board members at meetings.
- Provide opportunities for the public to have input that do not require attendance at meetings. Ex: print and electronic surveys, phone calls, emails, etc.
- Expand opportunities for parents to get involved by creating community advisory committees and focus groups.
- Expand connections with the families that are new to the district by having staff available to meet with them and show them around the school buildings.
- Use the electronic sign (outside) and info screen (inside) at the HS/MS complex.
- Engage alumni and build relationships with them. Create a CVSD alumni program.

Provide communication-related training for administrators and staff every year.

- Offer training for teachers regarding website design and best practices.
- Add a communication component to staff orientation/in-service.
- Offer training for principals on improving school to home communication.
- Provide staff training and support for customer service efforts.
- Offer teacher in-service training on effective parent-teacher conferences and open house presentations.
- Offer staff training in preparing effective school newsletters.

Keep website content fresh by adding an average of five new stories/updates per week.

- Keep content fresh, interesting and relevant.
- Emphasize the school district's mission.

- Incorporate marketing materials on the website.
- Use more interactive, dynamic content along with multi-media to engage users as the website develops.
- Create separate parent and staff resource sections on the website.
- Continue to develop and support individual school websites.
- Keep staff apprised of website updates and enhancements and provide training as needed.

Develop a branding/marketing program to establish Chartiers Valley as a quality school system.

- Develop a stronger web presence.
- Update the district logo to reflect academics and education as opposed to athletics.
- Develop guidelines for offering school tours.
- Offer information for real estate agents.
- Develop an exit survey for families leaving the district.
- Develop information/marketing materials for multiple purposes.

Chartiers Valley Timeline

From September 2011 – December 2011, the following strategies should be implemented:

Objective	Progress
Develop a communication plan for the district.	Complete – implementation ongoing.
Establish communication guidelines and expectations for administrators, faculty and staff.	In progress, not yet completed.
Communicate the rationale behind important decisions.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Communicate key messages internally first.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Conduct regular research on communication and marketing efforts.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Identify and frame issues to ensure clear, consistent messaging.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Provide regular opportunities for face-to-face communication.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Improve message timeliness and consistency. Give the Chartiers Valley Strategic Plan a high profile.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Continue to develop electronic communication with employees.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Provide regular updates regarding facilities, programs, staffing, etc to keep everybody informed.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Focus COLT Teams on the Strategic Plan and clearly define project parameters.	In place. Implementation ongoing.

Express appreciation for staff efforts.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Provide regular opportunities for face-to-face communication.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Emphasize direct communication with stakeholders.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Create a District Flickr page to organize and display school photos.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Create a plan for sending letters home to parents that involves the Director of Communication and Strategic Partnerships and the Building Principals.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Hold more parent focus groups and create more parent advisory committees.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Continue with School Board workshop meetings to inform the board and the community of what's happening at Chartiers Valley.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Increase the accessibility of School Board members at meetings.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Provide opportunities for the public to have input that do not require attendance at meetings.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Emphasize the school district's mission in all communication pieces.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Incorporate marketing materials on the website.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Create separate parent and staff resource sections on the website.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Continue to develop and support individual school websites.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Keep staff apprised of website updates and enhancements and provide training as needed.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Develop a stronger web presence.	In place. Implementation ongoing.

From January 2012 – April 2012, the following strategies should be implemented:

Objective	Progress
Develop a communication plan for each school.	In progress, not yet complete.
Create a monthly district eNewsletter.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Create a YouTube page to show parents what's happening at the district (feature events and videos regarding our educational initiatives) and incorporate more video as a communication vehicle.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Maximize the use of AlertNow technology for communication.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Expand opportunities for parents to get involved.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Expand connections with the families that are new to the district.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Use the electronic sign (outside) and info screen (inside) at the HS/MS complex.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Engage alumni and build relationships with them.	In place. Implementation ongoing.

Create a CVSD alumni program.	
Offer training for teachers regarding website design and best practices.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Offer teacher inservice training on effective parent-teacher conferences and open house presentations.	In progress, will be available to staff for the 2012-2013 school year.
Keep web content fresh, interesting and relevant.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Use more interactive, dynamic content along with multi-media to engage users as the website develops.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Update the district logo to reflect academics and education as opposed to athletics.	In place. Implementation ongoing.

From May 2012 – August 2012, the following strategies should be implemented:

Objective	Progress
Create a fact sheet that contains important information for the district and each school.	In progress, not yet complete.
Create a Twitter channel.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Create a web tool for showcasing the accomplishments of our alumni.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Expand communication with community members who are not parents.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Add a communication component to staff orientation/inservice.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Offer training for principals on improving school to home communication.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Provide staff training and support for customer service efforts.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Offer teacher inservice training on effective parent-teacher conferences and open house presentations.	In progress, will be available to staff for the 2012-2013 school year.
Offer admin staff training in preparing effective school newsletters.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Develop an exit survey for families leaving the district.	In place. Implementation ongoing.
Develop information/marketing materials for multiple purposes.	In progress.

From September 2012 – December 2012, the following strategies should be implemented:

Objective	Progress
Create a cable television channel for the district that reaches all four communities.	Planning phase now.

Develop guidelines for offering school tours.	Not yet completed.
Offer information for real estate agents in the district.	In progress
Create parent advisory groups for two new programs	In progress.
Continue to develop and improve all ongoing strategies	In progress...

The vast majority of our communication strategies are ongoing. Once we get them in place, they require time and attention to maintain. Thus, this year we're adding significantly fewer new strategies to our timeline, so time can be spent continuing to develop and improve what's already been done. It's important that we don't lose the effectiveness of a communication initiative we implement, simply because we don't put in the time or effort to maintain it and revise as necessary.