



COVID COMMUNICATIONS: SCHOOL DISTRICT BEST PRACTICES

Tips for Communicating with the Public

1 DON'T BURY THE LEDE.

Identify at the top of the letter, the front page of the plan, the first sentence of the video what your school plan is. *For example, Sunrise School District will be operating a Hybrid schedule starting August 6, 2020. The Hybrid schedule will look like. . .* **The number one thing parents want to know is what school will look like.** They will be frustrated if they have to dig for that information. After you identify the type of plan then you can discuss how you came to that conclusion, who was on your committee, what survey results revealed, how families and districts need to work together, etc.

2 PIN IT.

Pin your plan to the top of your Facebook page or other social media accounts. Parents and families shouldn't have to scroll through your feed to figure out what schools will look like.

3 CREATE A COVID-19 PAGE.

Create a COVID-19 page on your homepage. Make it easy to find and house ALL your COVID information and resources in one centralized place. Again, parents should not have to hop around your website to find all of this information. **Then share, share, share everywhere!** This should be the most visited page on your site over the next few months.

4 POST AN FAQ.

We know your offices are getting bombarded with questions. Creating and posting a comprehensive FAQ can help reduce those calls as well as serve as a cheat sheet for your staff to answer those calls. It will also make sure your district has thought through as many scenarios as possible because this year is going to be like no other! We recommend creating an internal FAQ for teachers and staff, too. They also have lots of concerns and questions about how they are to operate; it's best to have them all answered in one place.

5 PUT A DATE ON IT.

Plans are changing quickly! To help families know they are reading the most up-to-date materials/correspondence, put dates on everything to show how recent the version is.



COVID COMMUNICATIONS: SCHOOL DISTRICT BEST PRACTICES Tips to Assist with Your Internal Operations

1 MAKE MATERIALS EASY TO UPDATE.

Create communications materials that are easy to update. One thing we have learned about operating during a pandemic is how agile we have to be. Schools might have to change their plan weekly or daily depending on COVID infection rates and guidelines. When possible, create your plans in a format that allows for easy updating and modifications. For example, some Mississippi schools are releasing their plans using Google Docs. This allows administrators to create a living document that can be updated daily. **Make sure you lock editing to the public!**

2 HIRE A COVID COMMUNICATOR.

If you have unallocated money, a temporary COVID Communicator is a good use. Your current staff is likely already working at maximum capacity, and now you will need to post online daily, create new resources, send out more e-mails, produce posters for school buildings, etc. Someone who is completely focused on COVID can help you manage these tasks. Depending on the size of your district, you might need more than one!

3 HAVE BOTH.

Have a school plan AND a communications plan. If schools have communications plans in writing for each month of this school year, it will save you a lot of time in the future. August should be focused on communicating how schools will operate for students and families and on communicating expectations to teachers and staff. Districts need to understand what each audience needs to know, the best way to reach them (social, texting, e-mail, video, mailings, etc.), and who should be the messenger. **Helpful Hint:** *The messenger might be different depending on the audience. In a pandemic, the Superintendent and Re-Opening Task Force might not be the best messenger for all audiences. Teachers make great messengers when communicating with parents and students.*

For more resources, visit
www.mississippifirst.org/home/covid-19.

