



Communications Strategies

Overarching Goals

- Make information coming from the agency as accessible as possible.
- Create multiple ways for the public to engage with SBE.
- Bolster partnerships with other organizations.
- Find ways to feature stories we have not told that embody our strategic plan and mission, vision, and values in various mediums.

Challenges

- sbe.wa.gov is old.
- The broader community is skeptical and/or uninformed about the government and the education system.
- The SBE communications team is small.
- Audiences are fragmented.

About the audiences:

The education communities (partner organizations, district staff) are our most engaged and largest audiences. They are extremely busy and inundated with email and messaging constantly. Because this audience's perspective is key to developing successful policy, we must be clear, concise, consistent, and brief when we communicate with this audience. This audience is communicated with once per week (on average). [See an example.](#)

Students and families are also busy, and less engaged with government organizations—especially during personal time. Messaging must be relatable, interesting, and representative of many voices. The most successful government organizations in terms of social media reach are seeing engagement in the thousands by creating content that is less formal, yet communicates a message clearly. See an example from the [Washington State Department of Natural Resources](#).

Board members, staff, and the SBE communicators help in all of our communications and community outreach strategies by being approachable and informed brand ambassadors.

Current Strategies

All the reach mentioned below is organic, not paid.

Audience: The Education Community (partner organizations, district staff, educators, counselors)

Direct email

- Regular newsletter (around 2,000 reads each week)
- Basic education compliance (success in reaching all districts!)
- Private schools bulletins
- Mastery-based learning newsletter (nearly 2,000 subscribers)

Social media

- "Education Twitter" (around 9,000 followers)
- Instagram
- sbe.wa.gov (40,000 users visited this in the first quarter of 2023)
 - 83 percent of users had never been to sbe.wa.gov before

Earned media (topic-dependent)

- Board members and staff have been interviewed in the past by the *Seattle Times*, *Crosscut*, KNKX and national media outlets



Audience: Legislators

Direct email

- Regular newsletter (many legislators and their assistants read this message regularly)
- Advocacy and engagement (J. Lee's amazing work, emails)

Meetings

- In-person connections (J. Lee)

Earned media (topic-dependent)

- Board members and staff have been interviewed in the past by the *Seattle Times*, *Crosscut*, and national media outlets

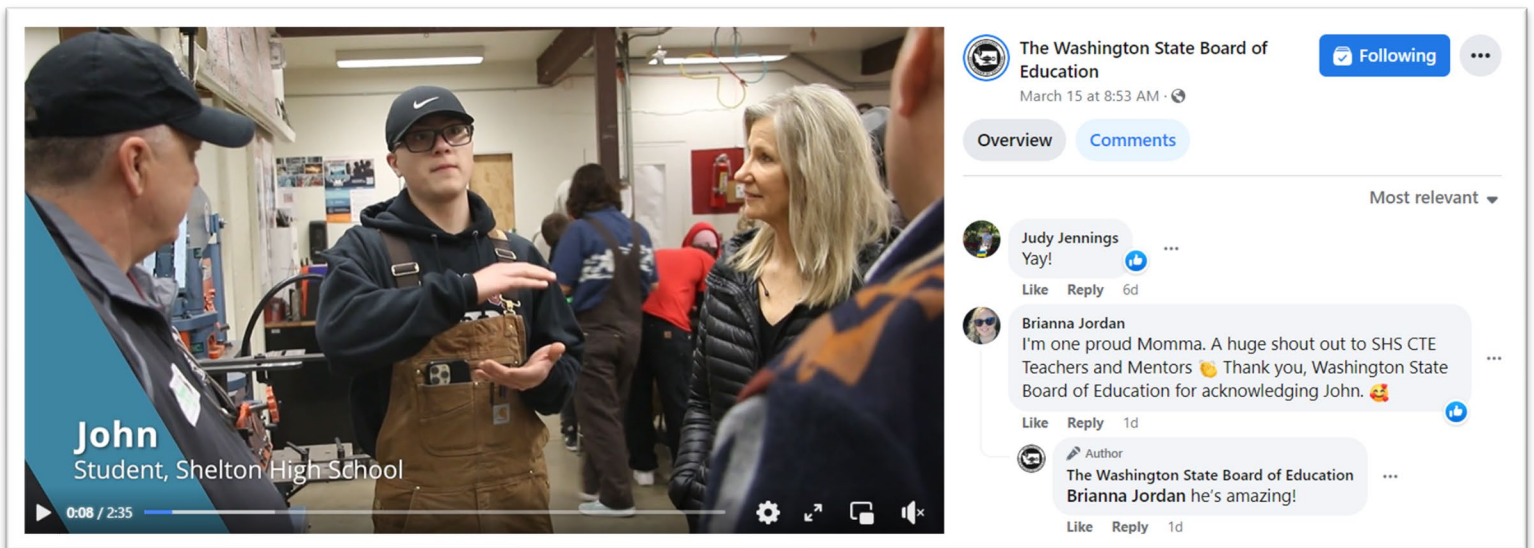
Audience: Students

Social media: Instagram, TikTok

- Partners like the Legislative Youth Advisory Council engage with us
- 2,000 views on Board interview video
- TikTok is 100 percent student-led

Student Communicators (internship program)

- Social media successes
- Stories
- Student Communicators Network



Audience: Families

Social media: Facebook

- Showcasing their kids' successes (comments above)

Direct email

- Webinar registrants have identified themselves as parent over education community member, when surveyed

Meetings/Community engagement: Arielle's amazing work!

- In-person connections, opportunities for public input

Earned media (topic-dependent)

- Board members and staff have been interviewed in the past by the *Seattle Times*, *Crosscut*, and national media outlets

Communications Timing & Strategies

Audience

Strategies (how we reach people)

	Direct email	Social media	In the news	Student Communicators' work	Community engagement/one-on-one meetings
<i>The Education Community (partner organizations, district staff, educators, counselors)</i>	Semi-weekly newsletter	Daily posts	Quarterly	Semi-weekly	Arielle's amazing work!
	Monthly private schools bulletins				
	Quarterly mastery-based learning newsletter				
	Annual basic education compliance				
<i>Legislators</i>	Semi-weekly newsletter		Quarterly		J. Lee's amazing work!
	Frequent topic specific emails during session				
<i>Students</i>		Daily posts		Weekly	Weekly
<i>Families</i>	Semi-weekly newsletter	Daily posts			Arielle's amazing work!



Goals Revisited

Make information coming from the agency as accessible as possible.

Beyond taking steps to ensure all SBE documents are ADA-compliant, making the Board's messaging accessible means spreading clear, concise, easy-to-understand information as widely as possible—and in different languages.

The dream: SBE is in positive new stories or contributes knowledgeable content to Washington's largest media outlets. (Increased earned media presence.) There is more broad understanding of what the Board is and does.

Strategy example: SBE pitches a story to Seattle Times Education Lab once per quarter.

Create multiple ways for the public to engage with SBE.

Everyone consumes media in diverse ways. Students engage with content differently than administrators or parents. This is why we have diversified our content to include TikTok videos crafted thoughtfully by students for students.

The dream: Students in schools across Washington feel informed about how the education system works and are active in contributing their feedback. SBE regularly shares stories of success to inspire all districts and communities.

Strategy example: Work with student communicators to produce ideas and content. Communications "packages" that include content suitable for audiences on TikTok and in the Legislature via direct email.

Bolster partnerships with other organizations.

To spread content widely, we partner with other organizations. Joint statements, cross-posting and sharing content, and tagging each other on social media produces larger audiences.

The dream: All organizations with shared visions and goals use common messaging for campaigns that reach audiences who are not normally represented in feedback on government policy issues.

Strategy example: The student communicators lead a new student communicator network with co-sponsorship from partner organizations. The network considers ways to achieve the Board's communications goals and provides deep insight into policy decisions in action at their schools. Indy's dreams include guest speakers, state-wide events, and monthly opportunities to network—all student led.

Find ways to feature stories we have not told that embody our strategic plan and mission, vision, and values in various mediums.

The strategic planning process begins this summer and will involve a massive amount of community engagement and broad communications. With this in mind, promoting the new plan is an opportunity to feature stories from students, educators, and families impacted by the education system that represent the goals of our new plan.

The dream: A publicly supported strategic plan is created with ample input from different communities all over the state. The public feels represented, informed, and heard.

Strategy example: Increase development of videos from Board members, the public, students, and educators that embody the goals within the strategic plan. Distribution through all SBE channels, including partners, will amplify messaging and further inform the public of who the Board is and does. This strategy aligns with our Pro-Equity, Anti Racism (PEAR) Plan strategies to elevate voices that are often unheard.

Resources/Key Messaging

One-pagers

One-pagers about the Board and hot topics are kept on SBE's meeting site under the ["Documents"](#) tab.

Elevator speeches

The Washington State Board of Education works to personalize education for each and every student in Washington. We make policies designed to help students mold their education to meet their needs. We make sure schools have the tools they need to make pathways that will help students achieve their goals. The Board is made up of sixteen members including two voting student members, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, a private schools representative, educators, higher education professionals, and community members.

(Sixth-grade reading level):

The Washington State Board of Education wants to make school personal for all students in our state. They make rules that help students focus on their needs and help schools get students ready for graduation. They also decide what students need to do to graduate and be successful in their lives. There are 16 people on the Board. WSSDA, which helps school boards in the state, and the Governor pick members.