

# Comprehensive Communications Plan 2020-2021



Department of Communications  
3120 Lemay Ferry Road  
St. Louis, MO 63125  
314-467-5150  
messenger@msdr9.org  
mehlvilleschooldistrict.com



## MISSION

The Mehlville School District mission is to build a high-performing school system rooted in the community's desire to build a culture of improvement for staff and students.

## VISION

The Mehlville School District, a district striving for excellence, focused on each student's challenge to engage in their future.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

**Student Preparation:** Every student will demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to perform at the next level. We'll achieve this through:

- Student Engagement
- Continuous Improvement
- Innovation

**Teacher Support:** The district systems work to assist teachers in their work to build a rigorous engaged culture for each of their students.

**Effective and Efficient:** A balanced use of district resources will support the learning of every student.

## PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

Mehlville School District believes that all of our graduates should be creative and critical thinkers, self-aware, persistent, communicators, and ethical and global. We call this our Portrait of a Graduate, and it guides our work with students from preschool through their senior year.



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# **Comprehensive Communications Plan Background**

Mehlville School District is committed to transparency – open honest and ongoing communication with our stakeholders. We understand that maintaining a two-way conversation with stakeholders is essential for building trust and productive relationships. These relationships are the foundation for a strong school system.

This communications plan was designed to establish a comprehensive and integrated communications process for effective communication with all stakeholders. It aligns with the district's mission, vision, strategic plan and board policies.

This plan is a working document that is regularly reviewed and updated by the Director of Communications under the advisement of the Communications Advisory Committee. In all communications, the Board of Education and Mehlville Administrators strive to share accurate and timely information about district policies, programs, procedures, achievements, decisions and critical issues. We strive to eliminate rumors and misinformation, observe confidentiality and other restrictions imposed by law and board policy, and promote a climate of trust between the school district and its patrons.

## **Communications Department Mission**

The mission of the department of communications is to support Mehlville School District's mission, vision and strategic goals by promoting transparent and strategic communication; by building trust and productive relationships with parents, the community and other stakeholders; and by celebrating the district's progress.

## **Beliefs**

We believe we have the responsibility to communicate effectively with our constituents. We believe effective communication:

- Is a two-way process involving both internal and external stakeholders.
- Is the responsibility of every employee in the district.
- Supports teaching and learning.
- Helps increase student achievement.

## **Intent**

The Comprehensive Communications Plan is intended to do the following:

1. Implement a communications program that directly helps the district achieve its strategic goals.
2. Foster strong relationships with district stakeholders.

3. Provide focus and direction for messages and communications methods in support of the district's goals.
4. Enable the district to present itself accurately and consistently to audiences.

## **Guiding Documents**

The following documents guide the strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Communications Plan.

- Mehlville School District Strategic Plan
- Mehlville School District Portrait of a Graduate
- Previous board-approved communications plans
- Board Policies KB, KBD, KC, KH, KI, KIAA and KKB

# Key Audiences and Desired Outcomes

Mehlville School District is committed to ongoing communication within our schools and with the community.

## Internal Audiences

- Board of Education
- Administration/District Leadership
- Certified staff (teachers, counselors, librarians)
- Support and classified staff
- Special School District staff
- School Resource Officers

## Parents and Students

- Students
- Parents/Guardians
- Parent Organizations
- Student Organizations

## External Audiences

- Residents without children attending Mehlville School District
  - Senior Citizens
  - Private and parochial school parents (about 24 percent of families with school-aged children)
  - New residents
- Business leaders
- Community leaders
- Real estate agents
- Faith communities
- Retired Mehlville School District educators
- Chambers of Commerce
- Media
- Alumni and Alumni Association
- Foundation
- Government officials
- Law enforcement agencies
- Civic groups
- Prospective residents
- St. Louis County school districts

Through the implementation of this plan, the following desired behaviors and attitudes are the focus:

### **Internal Audiences**

- Take pride and ownership in Mehlville School District. Act as a valued member of the Mehlville School District team.
- Keep informed on key issues and be empowered to share accurate information and dispel rumors.
- Work as a high-performing organization with a growth mindset. That means valuing and acting on constructive feedback from stakeholders.
- Exhibit and celebrate Portrait of a Graduate traits, including being:
  - Creative and critical thinkers
  - Self-Aware
  - Persistent
  - Communicators
  - Ethical and Global

### **External Audiences**

- Exhibit pride and trust in Mehlville School District and member schools.
- Be involved and engaged in public schools.
- Choose to enroll children in Mehlville School District because of its academic rigor, dedication to student engagement, continuous improvement and innovation.
- Provide general support to Mehlville School District.

## Communication Channels

The district has a variety of channels for distributing information to stakeholders. A multi-faceted approach to overall communications helps ensure greater impact of messaging. These are the internal and external communication channels available to Mehlville School District along with the primary demographics for each.

Communication Channel	Primary Demographics		
	Internal	Parents/Students	External
<b>Electronic Communications</b>			
All Hands Recaps/Staff Notes email	X		
e-Messenger (monthly email newsletter)	X	X	X
Facebook (Mehlville School District)	X	X	X
Google Calendars	X	X	X
Google Classroom	X	X	
Google Forms	X	X	X
Instagram (@MehlvilleSD)	X	X	X
LinkedIn	X		X
Mobile app	X	X	X
Parent Portal/Tyler SIS		X	
PeachJar eflyer distribution	X	X	
School newsletters		X	
School/teacher social media pages		X	
SchoolMessenger Notifications	X	X	
Survey Monkey	X	X	
ThoughtExchange	X	X	X
Twitter (@MehlvilleSD)	X	X	X
Website feedback forms			X
Website (mehlvilleschooldistrict.com)	X	X	X
Websites - Schools		X	X
YouTube	X	X	X
<b>Print Communications</b>			
Mehlville Messenger	X	X	X
Direct Mail Materials		X	X
At a Glance Factsheet			X



<b>Media</b>	<b>Internal</b>	<b>Parents/Students</b>	<b>External</b>
The Call Newspaper		X	X
St. Louis Post-Dispatch		X	X
Broadcast stations (KTVI, KMOV, KSDK, KWMU, KMOX, etc.)		X	X
St. Louis magazines			X
Other news and community websites			X
Community organization newsletters			X
<b>Interpersonal Communications</b>	<b>Internal</b>	<b>Parents/Students</b>	<b>External</b>
Board of Education Meetings	X	X	X
Board Listening Sessions	X	X	X
Leadership team meetings	X		
All Hands meetings	X		
Instructional leadership meetings	X		
Faculty meetings	X		
60+ events			X
Staff recognition night	X		
President's Council meetings		X	
Chamber of Commerce and community organization meetings			X

**Communications Goal 1:** Develop and maintain positive, collaborative relationships with all stakeholders to strengthen support for Mehlville School District.

**District Alignment:** Portrait of a Graduate: Communicators, Communications Plan 1.0: Goal 1

**Strategic Objectives:**

- Increase parent and community knowledge of Mehlville School District's mission, vision, goals, objectives, financial status, programs and resource needs.
- Increase opportunities for two-way communication.

Tactic	Audience	Person Responsible	Timeline
Communicate key messages using a variety of media, including but not limited to district and school websites, social media, e-mail, e-newsletters, news releases, print media and direct mail.	Parents Staff Students Community	Communications department	Ongoing
Target messaging around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic opportunities, student achievement, and continuous improvement</li> <li>• Student engagement, particularly around Portrait of a Graduate traits</li> <li>• Information related to ballot measures</li> <li>• Stewardship of district facilities and resources</li> <li>• Staff expertise related to instruction and support of students</li> </ul>	Parents Staff Students Community	Communications department	Ongoing
Ensure district representatives are present at key community stakeholder group events, included but not limited to Kiwanis, Lemay Chamber of Commerce, South County Chamber of Commerce, and other civic and community organizations.	Community	Superintendent's Cabinet members	Ongoing
Create media relations campaigns that include releases, tip sheets, emergency alerts on topics of interest to reporters.	News Media, Community (primary)	Communications department	Ongoing

	Staff, students, parents (secondary)		
Create media relations guidelines for staff and reporters	News media, staff	Communications Department	April 2020
Gather community feedback via community phone survey every two years. Share survey results with community.	Community	Communications Department	Fall 2020
Gather feedback via annual parent survey using Thought Exchange, Survey Monkey or Panorama; and via one-on-one conversations at school events.	Parents	Communications Department, principals, Superintendent's Cabinet	November 2020 and ongoing
Provide specific opportunities for district residents without children in our schools to engage with Mehlville School District via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded 60+ events</li> <li>Community performances</li> <li>Community Enrichment</li> <li>Use of facilities where feasible.</li> <li>Business partnerships</li> <li>Alumni events and recognition</li> </ul>	Community	Communications department, principals, Superintendent's Cabinet	Ongoing

### Measuring Progress

Performance Indicator	Baseline	Goal
Frequent Voter Survey Question: Keeping the public informed about important school district issues and policies	Very Satisfied = 44% Satisfied = 47% Dissatisfied = 7% Very Dissatisfied = 2%	Very Satisfied > 46%  Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied < 9%
Open rates of community email newsletters	August-December 2019 30.23% open rate	August-December 2020 34% open rate
Participation in Thought Exchanges/Survey Monkey	August-December 2019 average district response rate (response/email subscribers): 7.8%	Average response rate to district surveys (response/email subscribers): 10%
Attendance at 60+ events	January-December 2019 Unique RSVPs: 332 Total RSVPs: 720	January-December 2020 Unique RSVPs: 400 Total RSVPs: 800

District-initiated news coverage and positive news coverage	FY19 initiated coverage: 46 stories / 18% of coverage  FY19 positive stories: 203 / 80% of coverage	FY21 initiated coverage: 60 stories / >25% of coverage  FY21 positive stories: >200 stories
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**Communications Goal 2:** Refine and review use of current communications tools to ensure they are used to maximum effectiveness.

**District Alignment:** Strategic Plan: Effective and Efficient, Portrait of a Graduate: Ethical and Global, Communications Plan 1.0: Goal 3.

**Strategic Objectives:**

- Increase reach through digital media channels.
- Increase opportunities for two-way communication.
- Increase parent and community knowledge of Mehlville School District's mission, goals, objectives and program.

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Use Google Business pages to share school news and photos monthly.	Parents Prospective Parents Community	Communications Department	Ongoing beginning in August 2020
Create Facebook events for major district events that we'd like parent/community involvement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First day of school</li> <li>• Conferences</li> <li>• MHS vs. OHS athletic events</li> <li>• Homecoming</li> <li>• Board of Education meetings and listening sessions.</li> </ul>	Parents Staff Students Community	Communications Department Principals	Ongoing
Use invite feature on Facebook posts with a large number of likes to encourage more page likes.	Parents Community Staff	Communications Department	Ongoing
Use Instagram stories.	Parents Students Staff	Communications Department	Ongoing
Collect email addresses for e-Messenger. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include call to action to subscribe on What's New section of website.</li> <li>• Promote subscriptions in print Messenger.</li> <li>• Collect email addresses during 60+, Community</li> </ul>	Parents Community	Communications Department	Ongoing

<p>Enrichment enrollment and other events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide choice in email products to reduce unsubscribes.</li> </ul>			
<p>Follow a regular schedule to review district and school websites to ensure they contain accurate information that is easy to find.</p>	<p>Parents Students Staff Community</p>	<p>Communications Department</p>	<p>Focus for 2020: Middle and High School websites</p> <p>Focus for 2021: District website</p> <p>Focus for 2022: Elementary websites</p>
<p>Review and update PeachJar e-flyer guidelines and settings</p>	<p>Parents Staff</p>	<p>Communications Department</p>	<p>Spring 2021</p>

**Measuring Progress**

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline (Feb. 1, 2020)</b>	<b>Goal (June 1, 2021)</b>
Facebook followers	8,265 followers	9,000 followers
Twitter followers	2,711 followers	2,900 followers
Instagram followers	1,606 followers	2,000 followers
LinkedIn followers	615 followers	700 followers
e-Messenger subscribers	18,558 subscribers	20,000 subscribers

**Communications Goal 3:** Establish effective employee communication programs to improve internal communication, employee engagement, district climate and consistency of external messaging.

**District Alignment:** Strategic Plan: Teacher Support, Portrait of a Graduate: Communicators, Communications Plan 1.0: Goal 2

**Strategic Objectives:**

- Provide opportunities for two-way communication and for staff to have input on decisions that affect them.
- Increase employees' awareness of Mehlville School District's mission, goals and programs, as well as their role as ambassadors for the district.
- Increase recognition of employees internally and externally for their accomplishments.
- Improve employee morale and trust in the district.

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Publish a monthly employee newsletter as a primary source of information for staff.	Staff	Communications Department, Department Directors	Ongoing
Collect feedback via an annual staff climate and communication survey.	Staff	Communications Department, Assistant Superintendent of Schools	Second semester 2021
Recognize employees for 5, 10 and 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40 years of service.	Staff	Communications Department, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent	2020-2021 school year
Meet with building staff at least once a semester during faculty meetings. Ensure an agenda item includes gathering feedback.	Staff	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Director of Communications	Ongoing
Support Human Resources with employee recruitment and retention activities	Staff	Communications and Human Resources departments	Ongoing
Highlight staff in newsletters and media relations for their expertise related to instruction and support of students.	Staff Parents Students Community	Communications Department	Ongoing

Provide staff with speaking points, frequently asked questions, or other information related to new initiatives, ballot measures and other situations as needed.	Staff	Communications Department	Ongoing
Organize an Opening Day Rally to build staff alignment around district goals, and improve communication and foster relationships across campuses.	Staff	Communications Department and central office staff	August 2020
Provide staff with professional development on media relations, social media and staff recognition.	Staff	Communications Department	Media relations: Summer 2021  Social media: August 2020  Staff recognition: Fall 2020

**Measuring Progress**

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Goal</b>
Open rates for staff newsletters	August-December 2019 49.5% open rate	August-December 2020 55% open rate
Results of staff climate survey	Spring 2019:  "I feel like a valued member of our staff team." Strongly Agree and Agree: 78.13%  "I enjoy coming to work." Strongly Agree and Agree: 85.01%	Spring 2021:  "I feel like a valued member of our staff team." Strongly Agree and Agree: > 80%  "I enjoy coming to work." Strongly Agree and Agree: > 87%



**Communications Goal 4:** Achieve coordinated communication, both internally and externally, regarding safety issues and crisis management.

**District Alignment:** Teacher Support, Effective & Efficient, Communications Plan 1.0 Goal 2

**Strategic Objectives:**

- Counsel school principals and staff in managing crisis communication.
- Provide timely, accurate information to internal and external audiences.
- Work closely with the media to provide accurate, timely information.
- Serve as part of the district's Safety Assessment and Planning Committee.

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Ensure crisis plans include crisis communications component.	Crisis Response Team	Director of Communications, Executive Director of Planning and Development	Ongoing
Maintain library of crisis letters and alerts, and checklists, for schools to use in emergencies.	Administrators	Director of Communications	Ongoing
Provide immediate and ongoing counsel to principals, administrators and other key staff during a crisis. Manage all external communications during a crisis.	Staff Parents Community	Director of Communications	Ongoing
Work with Safety Committee to review building crisis plans.	Administrators Principals Safety Response Team	Director of Communications, Executive Director of Planning and Development	Ongoing
Continue participating in crisis management/communication training		Director of Communications	Ongoing

## Measuring Progress

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Goal</b>
Results of parent communication survey: How would you rate the district at communicating emergency information?	December 2019  Very Good and Good: 85.89%	December 2020  Very Good and Good: > 87%