

NSPRA COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW RECAP



COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED
SCHOOL DISTRICT 59

WHAT YOU'LL SEE TODAY

1 THE AUDIT PROCESS

2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

3 ANALYSIS INSIGHTS

4 IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS
& NEXT STEPS





AUDIT PROCESS



AT A GLANCE



THE AUDIT PROCESS



Research

- **Material Review:** Review of all communication materials (newsletters, websites, social media, etc.) for effectiveness, readability, and engagement
- **SCOPE Survey:** NSPRA's proprietary, online School Communications Performance Evaluation Survey used to collect feedback from three groups: families (800), staff (285), and the community (18)
- **Focus Groups & Interviews:** Core of the audit process designed to listen and gather perceptions from internal and external stakeholders
 - Composed of 10 small, audience-specific groups including: families, teachers, community outreach specialists, school office managers, community members, principals, BOE members, and SLT



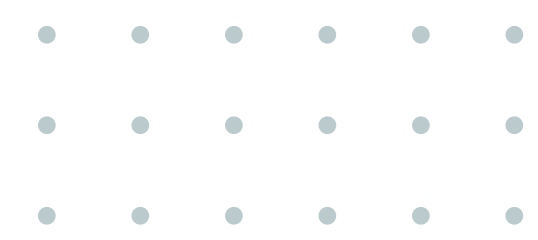


Analysis

- **SWOT Analysis:** Auditor identified items as specific internal strengths (S), weaknesses (W), external opportunities (O) and threats (T)
- **Goal of SWOT:** Framework that helps organizations match their goals, programs, and capabilities to their environment

THE AUDIT PROCESS

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CCSD59 Board of Education has established “two-way communication and collaboration” as a strategy for achievement of its five-year Strategic Plan goal related to family and community partnerships. • CCSD59 has an abundance of resources that allow the offering of a large number of educational opportunities for students. • CCSD59 staff are held in high regard for their dedication to students. • The district has devoted resources to engagement with its families through the work of the community outreach specialists, most of whom are bilingual. • Branding is established and used consistently to support the district’s mission and vision. • The Communications Department has identified its available communication tools and departmental mission in a “Strategy and Guidelines for Communication” document. • The <i>Weekly Staff Update</i> sent out every Friday provides a one-stop shop for important news for district staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stakeholders do not feel they are included in the decision-making processes of the district. • Some stakeholders feel that district communications are hard to understand and written above their reading level. • The district, schools, departments and classrooms use multiple, sometimes duplicative, communication tools and do not have an aligned schedule for regular communications. • There do not yet appear to be enough translation resources to fully support students and families whose first language is not English, and the communications provided in Spanish, Polish and other languages are not always timely or accurate. • There is no comprehensive strategic communication plan to guide the district’s communication priorities, which leads to communications that tend to be more reactive than proactive.



THE AUDIT PROCESS



Recommendations

- **Recommendations:** Auditor provided actionable steps to take based on the following:
 - Audit feedback
 - Best practices
 - Alignment with district mission and goals

Recommendation 1:

Develop a strategic communication plan that includes measurable objectives focused on moving the district toward achieving its goals.

Recommendation 2:

Adapt communication practices to more effectively connect with different audiences.

Recommendation 3:

Enhance the district's website to increase stakeholder use and engagement.



THE AUDIT PROCESS



Recommendations

- **Our Approach:** We are seeking open, honest feedback to make our district communications as effective as possible - we can only improve if we are willing to engage in the study and evaluation of our practices and procedures

- **Whenever opinions are solicited about an institution and its work, there is a tendency to dwell on perceived problem areas.** This is natural and, indeed, is one of the objectives of an audit. Improvement is impossible unless there is information on what may need to be changed. It is therefore assumed that CCSD59 would not have entered into this audit unless it was comfortable with viewing the school district and its work through the perceptions of others.
- **Perceptions are just that.** Whether or not stakeholders' perceptions are accurate, they reflect beliefs held by focus group participants and provide strong indicators of the communication gaps that may exist.





RESEARCH FINDINGS

SCOPE SURVEY RESULTS - DISTRICT IMAGE

- **DIVERSE** was the number one word used to describe the district
- Families & school board members praised CCSD59 staff, noting teachers are fantastic and responsive, staff members are caring and nurturing, and the Superintendent is personable, approachable, and authentic

72% parents & 56% staff rated the district as **excellent** or **above average**

Overall Perception of District	CCSD59	National Average	National Low	National High
Parents	4.1	3.8	2.6	4.3
Employees	3.7	3.6	2.3	4.2
Community*	3.4	3.3	2.1	4.3

SCOPE Scorecard

CCSD59

NATIONAL

Avg.

Low

High

PARENTS/FAMILIES

General Perceptions

Overall perception of the district (3)

4.1

3.8

2.6

4.3

Overall satisfaction with communication (3)

4.1

3.8

3.1

4.2

Level of feeling informed:

About school and district events and programs (1)

3.7

3.3

2.5

4.1

About crises/serious incidents (1)

3.7

3.5

3.0

4.1

About my student's progress in school (1)

4.0

3.7

3.1

4.4

About how I can support my student's learning (1)

3.9

3.4

2.4

4.1

Agreement with statements about communication:

I trust the communication I receive from my school/department (2)

4.0

3.8

3.1

4.4

I trust the communication I receive from the district (2)

4.2

4.1

3.4

4.5

STAFF	General Perceptions				
	Overall perception of the district (3)	3.7	3.6	2.3	4.2
	Overall satisfaction with communication (3)	3.6	3.6	2.6	4.2
	Level of feeling informed:				
	About crises/serious incidents (1)	3.6	3.4	2.8	4.0
	About how I can support student achievement (1)	4.1	3.7	3.0	4.4
	About how I can best represent the school/district as an ambassador (1)	3.4	3.2	2.4	3.8
	About topics that make me feel valued as an employee (1)	3.9	3.2	2.3	4.0
	Agreement with statements about communication:				
	Trustworthiness of communication from the district (2)	3.7	3.7	2.7	4.3
	Trustworthiness of communication from my school/department (2)	4.0	4.0	3.3	4.5

SCOPE SURVEY - COMMUNICATIONS

- More than **88%** of families and employees agree or strongly agree communications are easy to understand
- **78%** families & **98%** staff rely on daily/weekly email to learn information
- Families feel most informed about student successes, achievements, school safety, and events
- More than **70%** of stakeholders who use social media for District info utilize Facebook
 - Engagement rate across all District social accounts were above national average

75% parents & **57%** of staff rated communications as **excellent** or **above average**

Overall Perception of District Communications	CCSD59	National Average	National Low	National High
Parents	4.1	3.8	3.1	4.2
Employees	3.6	3.6	2.6	4.2
Community*	2.9	3.2	2.0	4.1

FOCUS GROUP



"I don't want to log in and search for messages that each teacher and the principal sends, plus read a newsletter from the school and parents."

"They should use KISS Method (for communications): Keep it simple and explain things using language parents can understand."

"Only one parent is allowed to get their child's school or district email, so I miss lots of information that my husband gets."

"We never tell all the good news stories. We need to celebrate our wins."

"The district only offers English, Polish and Spanish translations, but we have lots more languages spoken such as Russian and Ukrainian."

"The district administrators and school board need to go to events at the schools to engage parents."

NATIONAL BENCHMARK

NSPRA utilizes a benchmarking framework* to assess programs. In 2023, they created a rubric focused on seven (7) critical function areas (CFA):

- CFA 1: Comprehensive Professional Communication Program
- CFA 2: Internal Communications
- CFA 3: Parent/Family Communications
- CFA 4: Marketing/Brand Communications
- CFA 5: Crisis Communication
- CFA 6: Bond-Finance Election Plans and Campaigns
- CFA 7: Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Communications

Of the seven, the auditor found CCSD59 to be **well-established** in all except for CFA 4, where we were found to be **exemplary**.

**For additional info on the National Benchmark: Rubrics of Practice, visit page 33 of the audit.*

ANALYSIS INSIGHTS



SWOT COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS



- **Strengths**

- District has devoted resources to engage with families, especially those who are bilingual
- Branding is established and used consistently
- Weekly Staff Update provides one-stop-shop for important news for District staff

- **Weaknesses**

- Some stakeholders don't feel they're part of decision-making process
- Some stakeholders feel communications are written at too high of a reading level
- Multiple communication tools can be confusing

- **Opportunities**

- More good news stories highlighting what's happening in district
- Increase opportunity for families to connect with district-level admins and BOE members

- **Threats**

- Small vocal minority is having most influence on CCSD59 decision-makers

A photograph of a classroom scene. A teacher with long brown hair and glasses is seated at a desk, looking down at a piece of paper. A young student in a red shirt is sitting next to her, also looking at the paper. The background is a blurred classroom with other students and colorful posters on the wall. A semi-transparent blue banner with rounded corners is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

NEXT STEPS - IN MOTION

- **Effective Content (2.1-2.3)** - Writing content at an eighth-grade reading level, ensuring it still captivates and relates to our targeted audiences
- **NSPRA Audit (4.1)** - Sharing NSPRA audit report with participants, including survey takers, focus group members, communications committee, and community
- **Employee Engagement (5.3)**- Engaging employees in discussions where decisions impact them
- **Good News Stories & Staff Awareness (6.1)** - Seeking out and developing stories on the positive things happening across the district and increasing awareness among school staff when administrators are visiting
- **Information Availability (6.2)** - Ensuring all audiences are aware of where information is available (i.e., staff portal, weekly staff updates, etc.)
- **Board Member Participation (8.2)** - Increasing board member attendance at school events, adopt a school (outside of school child/children attend)

NEXT STEPS - 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR

Per NSPRA, it is realistic to implement two or three recommendations per year. Given the undertaking of developing a strategic communications plan, we will prioritize efforts on the following strategies in the 24-25 school year.

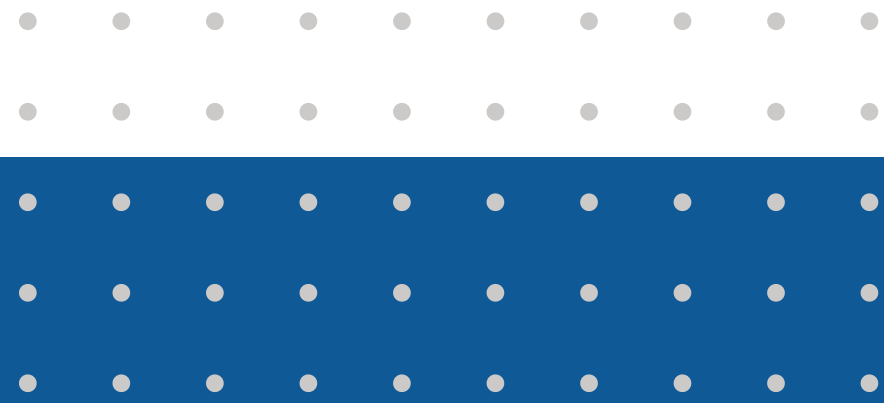
- **Strategic Communications Plan (1)** - Develop strategic communications plan that includes measurable objectives focused on moving the district forward in achieving new goals
 - Involve Strategic Communications Planning Task Force and other key stakeholders in planning process, sharing regular updates with BOE members
- **Adapt Communication Practices (2)** - Increase ability to effectively communicate with different audiences, including sharing facts/figures in narrative manner, when possible, and proactively preparing for potential confusion or misunderstanding
- **Standardized Practices (7):** Begin researching different potential school communication platforms to streamline processes



NEXT STEPS - LOOKING FORWARD

Beyond the 2024-25 school year, we will look to execute the following recommendations. Important to note, 1) these will be included in the Strategic Communications plan with more specific timing goals and 2) several elements within these overall recommendations will be implemented in part of other strategies in motion for this school year.

- **District Website (3)** - Update district's website to increase stakeholder use and engagement
- **Maintain Two-way Communication (4)**: Continuing to build trust with constituents
- **Transparency & Decision Making (5)**: Increasing participation in and transparency around processes
- **Enhance Internal Communications (6)**: Set clear, defined communications roles and expectations among internal audiences
- **Standardized Practices (7)**: Implement new system to streamline communications
- **Enhance School Board Visibility (8)**: Increase communications and outreach efforts to strengthen community engagement
- **Increase Translation Accessibility (9)**: Increase non-English speakers' access to translated communications



THANK YOU



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