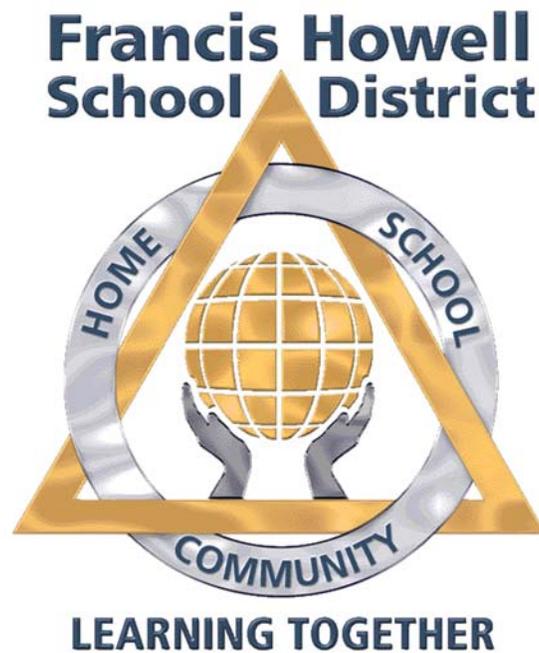


# FRANCIS HOWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT



## Strategic Communications Plan 2017-18

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Francis Howell School District strategic communications plan is to establish a proactive system of communications that provides accurate information to all FHSD stakeholders. Now, perhaps more than ever, it is important that public school districts have the trust and support of their local communities. It is a symbiotic relationship and one that must be perpetually nurtured for the benefit of both students and residents.

Honest and timely communications and authentic community engagement efforts are needed to inform our community that FHSD is always working for the benefit of our students, and the District is a good steward of tax dollars. After two failed tax levies, our community needs to be reminded of the budgetary challenges the District faces while providing a world-class education for our students.

The following plan establishes the guidelines, channels, goals, and strategies required to accomplish these goals through an integrated communications approach intended to achieve transparent communications that will lead to increased awareness, trust, and advocacy.

## **BELIEFS**

The FHSD Communications Department shares the beliefs of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), that effective school public relations:

- Is a crucial leadership function essential to the success of education.
- Is rooted in honesty, integrity, accuracy and ethical behavior, and is always in the public's interest.
- Serves as the conscience and soul of the organization.
- Strives to build consensus and reach common ground.
- Is a fiscally responsible investment.
- Provides counsel and services to all segments of the staff and community.
- Is the shared responsibility of everyone in education and their communities.
- Develops two-way meaningful, trusting relationships with all audiences.
- Requires continuous professional growth to meet the accelerated pace of societal and technological change.
- Enables education to function at its best by bringing schools and communities together.
- Is a critical component for success in the teaching/learning process.
- Serves the public accountability function for the school district.

## **GOALS**

Based on feedback from the Communications and Community Relations surveys as well as input from the Community Relations Committee, this Communications Plan establishes a comprehensive communications and community engagement process designed to support an effective dialogue with all stakeholders in the Francis Howell School District. This document provides an outline for establishing specific communications goals within the District, as well as the actions required to achieve the desired strategic communications and public relations outcomes for 2017-18.

**The three primary goals of the Communications Plan are to:**

- 1. Share important information with internal and external audiences, including student and staff success, that directly helps the District achieve its strategic goals.**
- 2. Improve building level communications and community relations to strengthen the relationships with parents and improve student outcomes.**
- 3. Develop and foster strong relationships and build trust with the FHSD community.**

### **Objective 1.1**

Assist the superintendent with the logistics and execution of the five-year strategic plan process.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

In 2017-18 FHSD will be working to create the next five-year strategic plan for the District. As part of this process, students, staff, parents and community members will all have the opportunity this to provide feedback and be a valuable part of the process. The planning will examine the District's mission, vision, and values, help to identify long-range goals and create critical strategy action plans. The process can be divided into three basic steps:

- **Where are we now?** Reviewing the District's current reality.
- **Where are we going?** Establish consensus about the desired direction of our District.
- **How will we get there?** Setting strategic goals, and determining a plan of action.

Everyone will have the opportunity to participate in one of the three days of community engagement meetings. Each day will be hosted by a different high school, and include three different meetings, one specifically designed for students, staff, and community members. The meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

**9/28 @ Francis Howell Central** – Student Meeting 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM/Staff Meeting 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM/Community Meeting 6:30 – 8:30 PM

**10/3 @ Francis Howell North** – Student Meeting 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM/Staff Meeting 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM/Community Meeting 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

**10/4 @ Francis Howell High School** - Student Meeting 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM/Staff Meeting 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM/Community Meeting 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

A successful strategic plan will serve as a guide to help achieve the District’s Mission, Vision, and Values. It will also build a shared vision for all District stakeholders, and establish a means of tracking progress to ensure the education of our students and the success of the Francis Howell School District.

Strategy: Provide all stakeholders the opportunity to share feedback on the strategic plan	Responsible	Dates
Action		
Core Plan Team Meetings	CEC/MHH/Matt/Laura	9/5, 10/10, 11/1, 12/12
Strategic Plan Team Meetings	CEC/MHH/Matt/Laura	8/24, 9/19, 10/23, 11/15, 12/15
Community Engagement Meetings & materials	CEC/MHH/Matt/Laura	9/28, 10/3, 10/4
Strategic Planning Data presentation	MHH/Cabinet	9/19, 9/28, 10/3, 10/4
SP Communications Schedule ( <i>Appendix A</i> )	Matt	8/1
SP Social Media Schedule ( <i>Appendix B</i> )	Matt/Jen	9/1
SP Community Surveys	CEC/Matt	10/5, 10/26, 11/20

**Objective 1.2**

Regularly provide FHSD internal audiences with timely and accurate information.

FHSD employees are important “brand ambassadors” and sources of information for our larger community. As internal stakeholders are provided with clear and concise information, they will then be equipped to promote the District message with consistency and accuracy when interacting with external stakeholders.

School district employees should be knowledgeable in their understanding of the organizational direction, so they can deliver messages and brand positions that are consistent with the strategic goals of the District. Internal stakeholders are the face and voice of the District, and as such, their interactions, demeanor, and professionalism influence what the public thinks about the organization. The District will continue to

develop, foster and maintain an organizational culture where all personnel understand their critical role in regards to communicating with all audiences.

To accomplish this goal, the District will use the following internal communications channels:

1. eNewsletters (Hotwire, SAW, Admin Advisor, Board Update) that provide timely information to staff regarding important District news.
2. HowellNET, the District intranet, to post information about employee benefits, open enrollment, work calendars, and as a repository for all District forms.
3. Face to face meetings with employees – Kickoff, principal meetings, before and after school chats with the Superintendent and Cabinet to provide updates, answer questions and solicit input.
4. SchoolMessenger phone call/text/email for information about Benefit Open Enrollment, school closings, etc.

Strategy: use established internal communications channels for important information	Responsible	Dates
Action		
Hotwire	Janaca	Weekly (Thu.)
SAW	Janaca	Weekly (Wed.)
Board Update	Jen	Weekly (Wed.)
Admin Advisor	Janaca	Alternating Fri.
HowellNET	Janaca	As needed
Employee meetings	Cabinet	As scheduled
SchoolMessenger	Matt	As needed

### **Objective 1.3**

Leverage existing external communications channels to share important, timely, and transparent information with stakeholders.

The District has multiple established communications channels to provide information to FHSD stakeholders. This helps to maximize awareness and support of the District’s goals, objectives, and programs, and reinforces the Board of Education’s commitment to making communications a priority for the school district.

Strategy: use established external communications channels for important information	Responsible	Dates
Action		
District Website	Janaca	Daily
District eNews	Jen	Monthly
District Social Media	Jen	Daily
"The Connection" Newsletter	Comm. Dept.	Three times annually
Local Media Outlets	Matt	As needed
YouTube	Joe	As needed
SchoolMessenger	Matt	As needed
BOE Recognition	Matt	Monthly
Peachjar training	Joe	As needed

**Objective 1.4**

Increase the number of FHSD parents and guardians receiving important information.

In 2016, the Communication Department began using MarketVolt to create HTML newsletters. Both District and Building eNews are created using this software and sent out via email. Until August of 2017, the contact list of District parents had to be uploaded manually, which caused issues with delivering timely information to parents/guardians. We have worked with MarketVolt and Infinite Campus to automate a daily upload process, ensuring more of our parents receive both the building and District eNews.

The District uses the SchoolMessenger Communicate system to send mass calls and texts to parents/guardians regarding emergencies, weather-related closures, attendance, and other messages. The use of this system is governed by the FCC, and the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA). The TCPA restricts the use of automated telephone equipment, prerecorded voice messages, and SMS text messages. As a result of this legislation, FHSD and other districts were required to have parents/guardians "opt-in" to non-emergency school communications. The law was challenged in 2016, and the FCC amended the language regarding schools to read:

*"We confirm that school callers may lawfully make autodialed calls and send automated texts to student family wireless phones without consent for emergencies including weather closures, fire, health risks, threats, and unexcused absences. We grant school callers additional relief for calls and messages that, while not emergencies, nevertheless are closely related to the school's mission, such as notification of an upcoming teacher conference or general school activity, by clarifying our understanding*

*that such calls are (absent evidence to the contrary) made with the prior express consent of the called party when a telephone number has been provided to an educational institution by that called party.”*

As a result of that change, for the 2017-18 school year, FHSD parents will not have to opt-in for non-emergency messages. Additionally, **FHSD parents always have the option to opt-out or unsubscribe from any or all District electronic communications at any time.**

Also new for the 2017-18 school year, parents will have the option to opt-in to SMS text messaging for communications sent out via SchoolMessenger. The Communications Department will coordinate an informational campaign this fall, this strategy provides parents/guardians with another option regarding how they receive District and school communication.

<b>Strategy:</b> increase the number of patrons receiving eNews and SchoolMessenger communications	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Action</b>		
Automate MarketVolt uploads from SIS	Matt/Jen/Doug	August
Parents no longer have to opt-in for non-emergency SM messages	FCC	2017-18 school year
SM SMS text message opt-in communications	Matt	9/1
SMS Text message prompting parents/staff to opt-in	Matt	9/15

## **Goal 2**

**Improve building level communications and community relations to strengthen the relationships with parents and improve student outcomes.**

The results of the inaugural annual communications survey indicated that “when looking for information about my child’s school,” parents rely primarily on the school website and the school eNews. Both have received increased emphasis from the communications department as a result of the survey and website analytics.

### **Objective 2.1**

Improve the quality of the communications channels that parents prefer

In January of 2017, FHSD negotiated a contract agreement to provide a new template for all 25 District websites, including Vacation Station and the employee intranet. The

other good news is that the District was also able to negotiate a lower rate, saving money and improving websites at the same time.

The new website template has a responsive web design (RWD), meaning that web pages can be viewed in response to the size of the screen used by the viewer. Text, graphics, and images will all be displayed correctly, no matter what device patrons are using. Analytics confirm that more than half of the visitors to FHSD websites are using their smartphone or mobile device for access, and RWD will make the new templates easier to view and navigate. The Content Management System (CMS) used to create and post content on the website will not change, so website administrators and teachers who have web pages will not need to be retrained for the new templates.

The new websites are intended to provide a better user interface with improved visuals and navigation, all while costing the District less money – a “win-win” scenario for everyone involved.

<b>Strategy:</b> Create more user-friendly and easy to navigate websites and improve the quality of the building eNews	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Action</b>		
New RWD website for all schools	Comm Dept	Jan. – Dec. '17
Create new teacher web pages	Janaca	Ongoing
Create additional building specific web content	Comm Dept	Ongoing
Building level MarketVolt training	Joe	Ongoing

### **Objective 2.2**

#### Leverage additional building level communications tools to engage parents

FHSD is one of the few school districts of our size that, in the past, has not allowed building level administrator rights for the SchoolMessenger Communicate system. Training principals (and AA's) in this important communication tool will allow buildings to send out timely phone calls/emails/texts about late buses or open house reminders.

<b>Strategy:</b> Increase the number of building communications options	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Action</b>		
SchoolMessenger Training for all Admin	Matt/SM	8/14 & 8/29
Building Level Comm. presentation	Matt	Admin retreat 9/22/17
Building social media monitoring	Jen	Ongoing

### **Goal 3**

#### **Develop and foster strong relationships and build trust with the FHSD community.**

In addition to effective communications, it is also essential for the success of all FHSD students for the District to fully engage our community to the greatest extent possible. Effective community relations foster a climate of mutual understanding and cooperation between the Board, administration, staff members, students, parents, and community stakeholders. The goal of the communications department is to provide as many opportunities as possible to aid our community in their understanding of the operation of the District, and the education of our students.

#### **Objective 3.1**

Establish a regular schedule of community engagement efforts to provide the opportunity for two-way communications

Strategy: provide multiple opportunities for community feedback	Responsible	Dates
<b>Action</b>		
Community Relations Committee	Matt/Jen	Monthly meetings
Superintendent's PTO Roundtable	Matt	10/24
Annual communications survey	Matt	Jan. 2018
Annual community relations survey	Jen	Apr. 2018

#### **Objective 3.2**

Engage seniors in the community with little or no direct connection to FHSD

In 2015-16 the Francis Howell School District launched a new initiative, Senior PALS (Patrons Assisting and Lending Support), to better engage members of our community ages 60 and older. Feedback from a recent community survey indicated the District needed to provide more opportunities to engage with residents who do not have students in our schools. Senior PALS is one way the District works to better inform our patrons, as well as provide an opportunity for them to share their input.

Thanks to the generosity and support of Sodexo, FHSD's food service provider, there is no cost to attend the Senior PALS events. Senior PALS are invited to spend time in Francis Howell schools for a delicious meal, performances by FHSD students, guest speakers, and more.

One of the goals of the Communications Department has been to increase participation, and during the 2016-17 school year attendance at Senior PALS events increased by 72%. For 2017-18 the Department will work to increase the number of offerings as well as attendance.

In the most recent survey of Senior PALS participants, more than 75% of respondents rated the events as excellent or very good. When asked what types of events they would like to attend in the future, the top two choices were play/musical production and band/choir concert.

Strategy: increase Senior PALS participation	Responsible	Dates
<b>Action</b>		
Identify/schedule additional PALS Events	Jen	currently
Information in The Connection	Matt/Jen	July
Booth at Baue Senior Fair	Jen	8/22
Share Information w/Silver & Gold Club	Matt	As needed
Information at Weldon Spring Senior Day	Matt/Jen	mid-October
FHHS Fall Play (murder mystery)	Matt/Jen	11/8

### **Objective 3.3**

Offer a variety of educational opportunities for the larger FHSD community

#### **Community Education Classes**

The Communications Department, in partnership with the Academic Department, launched a Community Education Program in 2016-17. The purpose of the program is to enrich the lives of FHSD citizens by providing quality, affordable educational opportunities, and activities for community members. The Community Education Program is paid for entirely by participant registration fees. The District is working to establish a series of classes to offer the community based on the feedback provided by the community.

#### **Parent University**

The most successful students often have parents who are very involved in their education. To assist our parents and extend their knowledge and resources, the Francis Howell School District will host the second Parent University on Saturday, Sept. 9 at Saeger Middle School.

Last year over 100 parents registered for the fourteen different sessions. FHSD collaborated with community organizations, as well as internal professionals, to offer the free sessions on a variety of topics related to raising happy, healthy, and successful children. Parents had the opportunity to attend sessions on Academic Support, 21st Century Learning, Health and Wellness, and Preparing for College, as well as visit with a variety of vendors in the vendor fair. Because of our vendor support, FHSD was able to make this a free event for parents.

### Parent Speaker Series

The Francis Howell Parent Engagement Speaker Series is designed to engage top experts, our parent community and school personnel in topics that will support parents and schools in preparing our students today, for a successful tomorrow. The series provides a proactive approach in assisting our parents with information that can help them support their children.

<b>Strategy:</b> increase the quality and quantity of community education programs	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Action</b>		
Fall/Spring community education classes	Chris/Jen	Ongoing
Parent University	Chris/Jen	9/9
Parent Speaker Series	Chris/Jen	TBD
Create additional building specific web content	Comm Dept	Ongoing
Building level MarketVolt training	Joe	Ongoing

### SUMMARY

The key function of this plan is to continue building relationships with all stakeholders to build trust and move all stakeholder groups toward advocacy of the district's strategic goals. Improving the effectiveness and capacity for the district to communicate with all audiences will provide the opportunity to improve the district's image, culture, and quality of education for all students.

FHSD Strategic Planning Communications Plan			
EXTERNAL	June	July	August
District Website	Create SP webpage	Data presentations	SP banner w/link
District eNews			Info in Aug. 1 edition
Building eNews			
Social Media			
The Connection		Info in summer edition	
Building Marquees			
Mid Rivers Newsmagazine			
Community News			
Online Advertising			
SP Postcards		Printed	Shared out to all schools
INTERNAL			
HowellINET			SP banner w/link
SAW	Save the Date		
Hotwire	Save the Date		
AA			
Employee email			
Kickoff			Reminder for employees
Community Engagement Meetings			
CEC Documents Created			
Surveys			

Sept. 4	Sept. 11	Sept. 18	Sept. 25	Oct. 2
		SWOT Analysis 9/20		Survey link
Info in Sept. 1 edition				Info in Oct. 2 edition
SP story		Meeting reminder w/SWOT link		Survey link 10/5
SP story		Meeting reminder w/SWC	Meeting reminder	Meeting reminder/survey
		Meeting reminder	Meeting reminder	Meeting reminder
	SP ad w/dates			
	SP ad w/dates			
	SP ad w/dates			
		Meeting reminder w/SWC	Meeting reminder	Survey link 10/5
		Meeting reminder w/SWC	Meeting reminder	Survey link 10/5
		Meeting reminder w/SWC	Meeting reminder	Survey link 10/5
		Meeting reminder w/SWC	Meeting reminder	Survey link 10/5
		SP email from MHH		
			9/28 @ FHHS	10/3 @ FHN, 10/4 @ FHC
		SWOT Analysis 9/20		
				Data survey 10/5 - 10/16

Oct. 9	Oct. 16	Oct. 23	Oct. 30	Nov. 6
	Survey results	Survey link 10/26 - Vision statement info & Survey link 11/1		Survey results
	Survey results	Survey link 10/26		Survey results
Survey link 10/5	Survey results	Survey link 10/26		Survey results
	Survey results			Survey results
	Survey results		Survey link 10/26	Survey results
	Survey results	Survey link 10/26		Survey results
	Survey results	Survey link 10/26		Survey results
		Vision Statement 10/24		
		Vision survey 10/26 - 11/7		

Nov. 13	Nov. 20	Nov. 27	Dec. 4	Dec. 11
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20		Survey results	
		Survey link		
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20		Survey results	
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20		Survey results	
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20			
			Survey results	
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20		Survey results	
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20		Survey results	
Draft of plan 11/16	Survey link 11/20		Survey results	
Draft of plan 11/16				
	Direction survey 11/20 - 12/7			

Dec. 18	
Final Draft of Plan 12/16	
Final Draft of Plan 12/16	
Final Draft of Plan 12/16	
Final Draft of Plan 12/16	
Final Draft of Plan 12/16	

## **Social Media Schedule of Strategic Planning Community Engagement Posts**

**8/30**

Francis Howell School District is focused on the future. Are you? If you said yes, then we want your help with our next five-year strategic plan. Please save the date, and join us on Sept. 28, Oct. 3, or Oct. 4 to provide your input as part of our strategic planning community engagement meetings. For more information, visit

<http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>

**9/7**

What do you think should be our priorities as FHSD works to prepare students for college and careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? We want to know your thoughts! Please join us and provide feedback as part of the FHSD strategic planning process. Community engagement meetings are being held on Sept. 28, Oct. 3 and Oct. 4, just pick the day that works best for you. For more information, including meeting locations and times, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>

**9/13**

Academics, technology, facilities, transportation, human resources... in financially challenging times, how should FHSD allocate future resources? We want our community to provide input on the direction of our District. Please join us on Sept. 28, Oct. 3, or Oct. 4 to provide your input at any one of our strategic planning community engagement meetings. For more information including meeting times and locations, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>

**9/19**

Do you have an opinion on the future of education in our community? Please join us as Francis Howell works to be "Future Focused" on our next five-year strategic plan. We want the input of our students, staff, and community at one of our community engagement meetings on Sept. 28, Oct. 3 or Oct. 4. For more information including meeting locations and times, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>

**9/25**

FHSD is currently working on our next five-year strategic plan. As part of that work we ask, "Where are we now? Where are we going? And how will we get there?" We need our staff, students, and community to help provide the answers. Please join us on Sept. 28, Oct. 3, or Oct. 4 to provide your input at one of our strategic planning community engagement meetings. For more information, including meeting times and locations, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>

**9/27**

Tomorrow is the first day of our strategic planning community engagement meetings, and we want you to be there to let us know what you think about the future of the

District. Please join us on Sept. 28, Oct. 3, or Oct. 4 to provide your input at one of our strategic planning community engagement meetings. For more information, including meeting times and locations, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>

## **10/1**

You may have missed the first strategic planning community engagement meeting, but you still haven't missed out! We have two more meetings on Oct. 3 and Oct. 4, either one is your opportunity to provide input on the future of FHSD. For more information about FHSD "Future Focused" strategic planning, including meeting times and locations, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/FHSDFutureFocused>