



Montville Board of Education

Communications Plan

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Objective

To communicate relevant information to stakeholders in Montville Public Schools to ensure that our school district provides information about, and celebrates the work of, the school community.

Principles

- We must take a proactive approach to telling our district's story.
- We must strive to solve problems through open communications.
- We must invite and welcome feedback from our stakeholders.

Stakeholders

Internal:

Students
Teachers and Instructional Staff
School and District Administration
Operations and Facilities Staff
Board of Education

External:

Parents / Guardians
Town Residents
Town Boards
Community Organizations
Local / State / National Media
State Legislators

Communications Philosophy

We believe that effective communications benefits all stakeholders.

We believe meaningful public engagement supports our goals.

We believe effective communication is a two-way process involving both internal and external stakeholders.

Outcomes - All Stakeholders will:

- Understand and own our Vision, Goals, and the desired Skills and Dispositions of an MPS graduate
- Be proud of our schools and the quality of opportunities provided to our students.
- Be involved and engaged in our schools.
- Be informed on key issues.
- Show mutual respect, trust, and understanding.
- Invite, recognize, and respond to feedback.
- Exhibit values of caring, integrity, teamwork, and excellence.

Communications Action Plan (CAP)

Our Communications Action Plan has six goals:

We will:

1. Promote Positive Community Relations
2. Promote Positive Student/Parent Relations
3. Promote Positive Teachers/Staff Relations
4. Promote Positive Media Relations
5. Effectively Manage Crisis Communications
6. Provide Effective Communications Training and Support

Goal 1. Promote Positive Community Relations	
Objectives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities for two-way communications among community members, the Board of Education, and administration • Expand the use of technology and other media • Increase public exposure to district information 	
Strategies	Progress
Participate in legislative forums and regular discussions with legislators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laurie meets with Representatives Kevin Ryan and Kathleen McCarty to discuss upcoming legislation and advocate for district needs • Upcoming Legislative forum, January 2023 • Take a role in CABE resolutions
Hold community forums on relevant topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple community forums held in 2020-2021 to address pandemic planning • Community Zoom meetings that are interest-based with a clear topic (e.g. internet and social media safety, healthy relationships, bullying – Marc Brackett?)
Enhance information available through electronic media: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to post information on website, twitter, and Instagram 2. Improve website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Survey Monkey and website to gather information regarding budget development • Publicize Twitter and Instagram feeds on Website; ensure proper safeguards to who makes posts and their clearance (some are student-run) • Develop plan to update website and ensure clear access to important information and internal structures to get information to webmasters; Increase the number of staff trained in website use • Maintain district Facebook page; buildings forward photos to a shared district folder and C.O. manages posts with captions. Use these to feed current photos to the website • Use Booster sign – “Check out student artwork displayed at Town Hall” or “See us on Facebook;” welcome new staff; celebrate retirees, etc.
Market our schools to the public: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote our district’s programs 2. Update ‘media pitch’ documents as needed and determine distribution methods 3. Enhance Montville Public Schools’ brand recognition by creating focus on our Vision, Board Goals, Skills and Dispositions of a Graduate and Definition of Deep Learning and Identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create “media pitch” documents to publicize work (most recent was explanation of bond expenses) • MHS Brand Recognition – Implement process to identify a new nickname / mascot • Redesigned MHS main entrance foyer provides a more balanced presentation of who we are and what has been completed; posters celebrating graduate successes • Showcase student artwork throughout the community through the Art Around Town program • Issue school newsletters (link to FB page)

<p>Use Board Meetings to promote public relations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote district information at Board meetings 2. Increase attendance of public at meetings 3. Use Board meetings to educate community and promote relationship-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in Board meeting configuration to welcome public and encourage administrator participation • Change in principals' reports to Board to presentations every other month across all levels aligned with our vision and definition of deep learning • Change in citizens' comments at Board meetings to allow comment on agenda items at end of meeting and to follow comments with a public building of future agenda items • Allow public comment on non-agenda items at the beginning of the meeting when there is a large group of parents in attendance who want to speak
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<p>Goal 2. Promote Positive Student/Parent Relations</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build student and parent ownership in the district by promoting trust, goodwill, and a positive environment for teaching and learning 	
<p>Strategies</p>	<p>Status</p>
<p>Increase public recognition of students and achievements in district</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add "This Month's Marvels" section to website • Use website to communicate all successes • MHS Foyer recognition of college / career plans and successes in all areas • Top Tyl Way Students • Revised student achievement and recognition program at MHS
<p>Expand distribution of information to students and parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase use of School Messenger for communication (regular building updates to families) • Use the Athletic Boosters score board to recognize accomplishments • Ensure messages are accessible to EL students' families
<p>Expand opportunities for students and parents to have input on decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue surveys of students and parents to gather input on instruction, SEL, programs being introduced...all schools are surveying staff now, will be surveying students and families in the spring
<p>Promote parent engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have parent groups at each building • Capitalize on Zoom's ability to connect parents to schools (online PPT's etc.) • Joint music concerts across levels • Re-start parent/student events (picnics, movie nights) • Give people multiple reasons to come into our buildings • Recognize "Friends of Montville Schools" – community resources that have positively affected our students or programs • PTO/PTA groups all have Facebook pages • Schools to send home conversation starters to have at home with your students

Goal 3. Promote Positive Teacher / Staff Relations	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide employees the tools needed to represent their district • Foster collaborative relationships with BOE and employees 	
Strategies	Status
Increase public recognition of teachers and staff in district. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Superintendent recognizes staff accomplishments in reports to the BOE • Recognition is posted on the website • Recognize teaching and non-teaching staff through Marvel program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstated gifts for staff appreciation • Regularly use website for recognition • Marvel program – Include both Board recognition and recognition within the school • Try to use more frequent, low-cost gestures (set a regular agenda item for admin. meetings to share strategies across administrative group) • Use slide shows to celebrate staff's personal and professional successes
Expand distribution of information to employees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine what information is needed and best format to provide it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor management committees have been used for collaborative problem-solving

Goal 4. Promote Positive Media Relations	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communications to the public through news media • Increase positive public perception of Montville Public Schools by increasing the number of positive stories provided to the media. 	
Strategies	Status
Expand professional relationships with members of the media. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain relationships with print media contacts • Maintain relationships with electronic media contacts • Maintain relationships with television news contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to media requests same day, when appropriate • Re-build relationship with The Day • Educate school community about what information can legally be shared with media and with parents • Make positive connections with media; encourage communication about positive events to the media
Provide information for BOE members in engaging with media on important topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board chair serves as Board spokesperson to media
Consider briefing members of the press on key issues before BOE meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ???
Regularly review BOE Media Relations and Community Relations Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All revised in Sept. 2019

Goal 5. Effectively Manage Crisis Communications	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively manage crisis communications, mitigate negative impacts in the community, and encourage fair, objective media coverage. 	
Strategies	Status
Define communication protocol for handling media interaction during crisis situations based on District Safety and Security Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with police and SROs on protocols for responses Investigate possibility of building-wide group text messaging
Counsel internal stakeholders (BOE, Administration staff) on appropriate role in a crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All have been guided that only the Superintendent and Board chair respond to media unless otherwise delegated

Goal 6. Provide Effective Communications Training and Support	
Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all internal stakeholders understand their role and options as ambassadors to the community. Increase positive public perception of Montville Public Schools. 	
Strategies	Status
Train BOE members on effective communications strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does Board want to re-start work with Nick Caruso on Lighthouse Project?
Educate / update BOE members on information currently available through the district website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to do this after website is revised; target date Sept. 2023
Define student and employee opportunities to engage in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage contributions to the district Facebook page Recognize staff and students for their efforts to promote our programs
Ensure all staff are appropriately trained in use of social media and the release of student or district information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use New Teacher training for this purpose