

South Side Area School District  
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# COMMUNICATION PLAN

**2017-2018**

*Working together to meet the needs of our school community.*

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## Vision and Mission

### SSASD VISION

The Vision of SSASD is to become a globally connected, innovative, learning community while maintaining our values and traditions.

### SSASD MISSION

The mission of SSASD is to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for students to achieve in an ever-changing world by supporting and empowering them through community involvement, teaching excellence and district-wide support and collaboration.

Tammy H. Adams

South Side Area School District Superintendent

2017-2018

## Introduction

This communications plan will serve as a guide for South Side Area School District communications strategies during the 2017-2018 school year. It will guide the district as it enables us to facilitate and communicate key messages. SSASD will use this plan to ensure we can perform both academically and efficiently. We believe it is critical to use every tool possible to market the outstanding happenings at SSASD, to inform our community, and improve public perceptions of our school. We hope this plan serves as an effective way of doing things that expresses to the students, parents, staff members and community that SSASD as a public-supported institution, is dedicated to serving the educational needs of the community to the highest degree possible.

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## Types of communication

### MEDIA RELATIONS

SSASD works to publicize our schools' good news, events, activities and awards. The Superintendent is the liaison between schools, the district and the media. A strong relationship with the media is important in promoting district, student and staff accomplishments.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS TRAINING

SSASD develops communications plans; train staff and parent groups; and provides public relations, marketing and communications counsel on issues that impact schools, departments and the district. The administrative team provides advice on written and oral material, including school newsletters, letters home, brochures, talking points, key message development, media requests, etc.

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND OUTREACH

This area of focus is designed to build support and reach out to the SSASD community. We work with community groups, service clubs and organizations, and key businesses to inform, recruit and promote community involvement.

### EMERGENCY/CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT

SSASD provides direction to employees to resolve crisis situations and/or emergencies, including the use of communication vehicles like student/faculty handbooks, parent letters, social media, talking points and key messages. We also provide crisis media relations when schools are locked down or have experienced an incident.

### EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

SSASD administration is responsible for the content and/or publishing of handbooks, memos, newsletters and online information for SSASD employees.

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## *ONE CALL NOW*

The one call now system is an online portal with information specific to SSASD. The building administrators post information on One Call Now and coordinates content creation.

## *REMIND*

Remind is an electronic message app for staff that provides district alerts and news directly from the sender to the contact list. Remind is a one-way communication utilized by both administration and teachers for important information dissemination.

## *MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION*

SSASD provides multimedia resources with messages from the superintendent and other administrators about budget issues, assessment scores and other timely topics. The multimedia resources are available on the SSASD website. Multimedia presentations are also produced for community meetings, budget forums and internal leadership meetings. SSASD photographs are also used in all of our publications, presentations, district website and on Facebook, and Twitter.

## *SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES*

The Superintendent creates weekly Board updates in an email newsletter from the superintendent directly to board members.

## *ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM MEETING*

Another informational mode of communication is the monthly administrators team meeting (principals, assistant superintendent, directors and supervisors), and features brief updates on current district issues in a quick, easy-to-discuss manner. During these meetings we discuss policy and procedures, action items, management items, instructional news, training and development opportunities and FYI reminders. Administrators and supervisors participating in the ATM are encouraged to share the information with their staff through memos or meetings.

## *BUILDING BOARD REPORTS*

A monthly electronic word document drafted by all administrators and directors is published for the board and Superintendent to review. The reports are available on Board Doc.'s for district board members. The principals' reports contain building news and information and announcements as they relate to the four domains of the Principals Rubric and the director's reports provide monthly updates pertaining to department news and information.

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## OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### *THE ANNUAL REPORT*

The annual report showcases the district's achievement and accomplishments of the strategic plan. The annual report is mailed to all district residents and is published online each summer. The annual report can be accessed here:

<http://www.sssd.k12.pa.us>

### *BUILDING NEWSLETTERS*

Each building administrator distributes various types of newsletters/updates. The goal of the publications is to provide a compilation of timely information to our school community.

### *DISTRICT NEWSLETTER*

The SSASD Newsletter is a partnership between SSASD and our community. It is distributed to our community members, teachers and parents in SSASD three times per year. It includes the annual district report, district news, events, budget information, feature stories, district resources and more.

### *SSASD'S FACEBOOK AND TWITTER PAGES*

Each building at SSASD has Facebook and Twitter pages. The pages provide real time district and school news to the community. The pages are used as a tool to relay information of school closures, emergencies, good news and events. The pages aim to engage the community about local, state and national education news/topics, and to post student and staff pictures and achievements.

### *SSASD WEBSITE*

The District's website, <http://www.sssd.k12.pa.us> is a comprehensive source of information about district programs, schools, curriculum, policies, events, and operations. It was designed to meet the needs of parents, students, and the community. The site is created using web best practices. The performance of this site is monitored by using analytics and a yearly survey to ensure the site meets key indicators and the goal of the communication plan.

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- Schoology: Learning Management System  
<http://www.sssd.k12.pa.us>, provides parents and students detailed information about individual teacher classroom assignments, lessons, handouts, materials, expectations and procedures.

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## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Goal 1: Establish an effective community relations program to build collaborative relationships and strengthen support for and confidence in SSASD.**

### STRATEGY 1:

Cultivate and strengthen relationships with the districts Key Communicators to engage them in the district's vision and financial challenges to help them understand and engage in the vision and challenges.

#### ACTION 1:

Ongoing update of the Key Communicator contacts through the Key Communicator Database.

#### ACTION 2:

Give access of Key Communicator Database information for use in communications with established parent organizations (PTO, South Side Area Youth Leagues, Boosters organizations)

### STRATEGY 2:

Maintain and improve superintendent's outreach programs.

#### ACTION 1:

Arrange speaking engagements for the superintendent at strategically selected community and civic organizations (when necessary).

#### ACTION 2:

Maintain and continue to build the Key Communicator database.

#### ACTION 3:

The superintendent conducts meetings with key stakeholders to reach parents, employees and the community at large.

#### ACTION 4:

Develop a community advisory panel that convenes biannually.

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## **Goal 2: Maintain an effective media relations plan that enhances the district's image in the community.**

### STRATEGY 1:

Execute a strategic media communications plan that is proactive and reactive.

#### ACTION 1:

Respond in a timely, reliable fashion to media inquiries and requests.

#### ACTION 2:

Provide the media with proactive stories about SSASD.

#### ACTION 3:

Assist media by providing access to schools/classrooms and district education experts who can provide interviews and background information about education related topics.

#### ACTION 4:

Members of the administrative team will act as district spokespeople and public information officers when directed by the superintendent.

#### ACTION 5:

Social media has become part of media relations where reporters can follow the building Twitter and Facebook pages.

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**Goal 3: Establish an effective employee communications plan that improves knowledge about, and support for the district.**

**STRATEGY 1:**

Utilize the Key Communication tools for employees.

**ACTION 1:**

Deliver a monthly employee newsletter to provide timely district and education news, board of education action items, and SSASD events to all employees and board members.

**ACTION 2:**

Deliver the superintendent's update to board members on a weekly basis.

**ACTION 3:**

Deliver the monthly ATM agenda to district leadership to be discussed and then disseminated to respective employees.

**ACTION 4:**

Use the employee resource drive to post important information for employees.

**ACTION 5:**

Utilize the digital sign to highlight district publications, events, and share positive educational stories.

**ACTION 6:**

Use social media and Schoology to enhance employee communications.

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## Goal 4: Establish a strong, positive, connection between individual schools and our community.

### STRATEGY 1:

Develop tools and resources to help principals become more effective in their roles as communicators for the district.

#### ACTION 1:

Provide assistance to schools as needed for marketing opportunities, brochures, web page, and Key Communicator Contacts.

#### ACTION 2:

Review schools' current communication methods and tools (including the website) as necessary and make suggestions for improvement.

#### ACTION 3:

Provide media training that will help principals understand how to work with the media and develop skills to communicate appropriate messages for their schools (as needed).

#### ACTION 4:

Write and distribute articles for school newsletters on important topics; will include photographs/video when appropriate.

### STRATEGY 2:

Update targeted communications for parents of SSASD Pre-K program.

#### ACTION 1:

Ongoing updates to social media.

#### ACTION 2:

Pre-K information is available on school website.

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**Goal 5: Support members of the Board of Education in their efforts to engage the community around district issues and initiatives.**

**STRATEGY 1:**

Develop strategies for effective community engagement for the Board of Education.

**ACTION 1:**

Utilize social media to inform the public about board meetings (i.e. Twitter and Facebook).

**ACTION 2:**

Support board members with informational videos and presentations to be used during public meetings.

**ACTION 3:**

Support board members with talking points and frequently asked questions on district issues such as: PA Core, Budget, SLO's, SPP's, and PVAAS.

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## Goal 6: Communicate the district's vision and goals through strategic messaging.

### STRATEGY 1:

Develop message/position statements that represent the district's vision, goals, challenges and accomplishments.

#### ACTION 1:

Evaluate the district's Comprehensive Plan to determine messaging points.

#### ACTION 2:

Disseminate the district vision both strategically and prominently throughout the district's buildings and publications.

#### ACTION 3:

Communicate financial challenges through the website, Facebook, and newsletters that represent the district's goals and challenges.

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## Goal 7: Improve the public's access to online district information and provide online tools that empower the public to interact with SSASD.

### STRATEGY 1:

Develop online communications, including the website, for stakeholders-parents, students, potential employees, businesses, and the general public-that best facilitate the flow of information and provides an efficient and clear delivery of services.

#### ACTION 1:

Improve the Web governance structure and organizational policies that define responsibilities, relationships, and rules involved in managing the districts online communications.

#### ACTION 2:

Gather data and analyze the needs of stakeholders (Web and social media users) in order to develop an appropriate Web/online structure and content.

#### ACTION 3:

Work with IT to identify technology that will facilitate accurate and timely communications with stakeholders.

#### ACTION 4:

Provide access to online tools such as Parent Portal, One Call Now, and Schoology.

#### ACTION 5:

Write appropriate content for the identified web audience.

#### ACTION 6:

Identify news and other content that can be published online to keep stakeholders informed.

#### ACTION 7:

Use website and Facebook analytics data to monitor usage and ensure best practices.

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## STRATEGY 2:

Use social media to provide immediate two-way communication with stakeholders and build relationships and awareness of issues.

### ACTION 1:

Maintain Facebook and Twitter pages to reach stakeholders who use these forms of online communications.

### ACTION 2:

Use Facebook and Twitter to extend the reach of our communications and positively market the district.

### ACTION 3:

Use Twitter and Facebook to provide real-time communications about events, school board meetings, activities and crisis situations.

### ACTION 4:

Use social media to monitor conversations about SSASD and manage rumors and misinformation.

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**Goal 8: Maintain an effective Emergency Operations Plan and Building Handbook policy and procedures that ensures the public and staff are informed, safeguards student and staff privacy, maintains safety and protects the educational process.**

**STRATEGY 1:**

Identify and prepare communications tools to be used during a crisis.

**ACTION 1:**

Ensure that staff is trained on One Call-the districts emergency messaging system for communicating with parents via phone.

**ACTION 2:**

Relay emergency school closure/alert through the district web page and social media.

**ACTION 3:**

Develop a media call list for school emergency alerts.

**STRATEGY 2:**

Identify key roles and responsibilities to be instituted during a crisis.

**ACTION 1:**

Determine decision points and timeline for release of alerts and notifications.

**ACTION 2:**

Coordinate with law enforcement on the release of information to ensure its accuracy.

**STRATEGY 3:**

Develop and use key messages.

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## ACTION 1:

Identify target audiences.

## ACTION 2:

Identify timelines for communications.

## ACTION 3:

Identify affected individuals and ensure their privacy.

## ACTION 4:

Work with law enforcement/first responders in developing key messages.

## ACTION 5:

Gather background information.

## ACTION 6:

Write base key messages for parents, media, students, staff and general public.

## STRATEGY 4:

Develop media plan.

### ACTION 1:

Identify a media staging area.

### ACTION 2:

Identify media onsite at crisis area.

### ACTION 3:

Determine coordination with law enforcement/first responders.

### ACTION 4:

Identify and communicate timeline for updates to the media.

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## STRATEGY 5:

Work with building administrators to prepare for crisis communication.

### ACTION 1:

Communicate to principals how the communications plan will support them during a crisis, which may include One Call, Facebook and/or Twitter.

## EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

The following resources will be utilized to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of this communications plan:

- Principal/leadership survey
- Employee survey
- Key communicator survey
- Community feedback survey
- Social Media and website usage

## CONCLUSION

This communications plan is an outline for communications efforts in 2017-2018. Should the district's needs change significantly during this time period, this plan will be altered. This plan will be updated each year to reflect progress and new goals.

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