



Communications and Public Information

The successful opening of school is supported by effective communication from the LEA to its various stakeholders. Communications should be concise, clear, and consistent regarding the protocols the district is implementing in order to open schools in a safe manner and minimize risk to students, staff, and other stakeholders. In addition, the school community should be prepared to be flexible and responsive to anticipated changes due to the fluid nature of the situation and the need to quickly and appropriately respond.

FOCUS AREA 1

Communications and Public Information

The goal of the LEA’s communication plan should be to ensure stakeholders, particularly parents and families, have accurate information to determine both the safety and effectiveness of their students’ educational programs. If the school is welcoming students back to campus (or a hybrid model of in-person and online classes), is it safe for their students to return? If the LEA is implementing an online, distance learning program, does it offer high-quality instruction and effective learning opportunities?

EQUITY CONSIDERATION

During these unprecedented times, communication with families is of the utmost importance. Therefore, we encourage LEAs to:

- Translate all communication, whether written or oral, to provide families with access
- Ensure planning to communicate with those who are hearing impaired, blind etc.
- Engage with as many diverse parents as possible at all critical points
- Be sure to offer as many opportunities to develop parent capacity regarding key elements of LEAs protocols

1. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: In what ways are school community stakeholders able to make an informed decision regarding returning for the 2020–21 school year?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

LEAs should include community stakeholders in the development process of their Communication Plan. This could be through a parent/family survey or by using previous research and data regarding home to school communication. Parent/family communication needs and preferred methods should be considered.

Because of the fluid nature of a pandemic, stakeholder communication will need to adjust and evolve to reflect current conditions, new medical and safety protocols, and address questions and concerns from the public. It is important for LEAs to consider ways in which they might incorporate stakeholder feedback and facilitate two-way communication.

Resources

- [Communications Plan Stakeholder Overview Document](#)
- [Communications Plan Stakeholder Detailed Document](#)
- [Key Messages Document](#)

2. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How should the LEA provide periodic feedback and assessment of messaging and communication methods to ensure the plan is updated and reflective of stakeholder needs?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

LEAs and/or Public Information Officers should provide multiple opportunities for two-way communication including, but not limited to, telephone hotline, web comment form for FAQs, online town halls, and personal outreach to key communicators and stakeholder leaders. This information will help shape effective messaging and communications strategies for the school community.

An effective LEA communications plan addresses the diverse needs of stakeholders and the community it serves. It is important for the materials to reflect the demographics, diversity, and cultural needs of stakeholders.

- Both qualitative and quantitative data should be considered.
- Assigned district personnel should reach out to community leaders to solicit honest and constructive feedback.
- Be sure to show stakeholders how feedback is being used to improve communications and outreach.

Resources

Samples of District surveys:

- [Teachers](#)
- [Classified](#)
- [Managers](#)

3. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How do materials address the diversity of stakeholders and foster inclusivity?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

A one-size-fits-all approach to communications is rarely effective and does not promote equity and inclusivity. Fostering respect and diversity by providing appropriate support and materials is critical to effective communications.

A school community receives information in a multitude of ways. It is important that a communications plan provides several ways of distributing information to all stakeholders. The method of distribution will be informed by the resources available to LEAs and the communications practices in place at the school and district levels.

- Materials are translated in appropriate languages for the community.
- Materials are accessible (i.e., visual impaired/blind and Deaf and Hard of Hearing).
- Materials are graphic in nature for easy and quick comprehension and to grab attention.
- If there are any town hall or stakeholder engagement meetings, interpreters should be available.
- Identify universal documents that should be translated for school stakeholders.
- Create a countywide library of translated documents.
- Visuals/graphics are a universal language.
- Videos or online activities should include live caption and closed captioning.

Resources

- [CDC Website](#) (graphics, Spanish translation)
- [Riverside Public Health Website](#) (graphics, Spanish, videos)

4. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: What strategies and tools will be used to communicate the opening plan?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

Through technology, implementation of best practices, and the deliberate allocation of resources, LEAs have a multitude of communications tools at its disposal. What is important is that the communication tool and the intended target audience are compatible.

Examples of tools to be used for messaging:

- School website
- Fact sheets
- Staff email
- Automated phone calls
- School newsletters
- Letters to parents
- Brochures
- Information packets
- Signs/posters
- School marquees
- Social media

Identify key audiences and include details about all tasks and activities necessary to accomplish a communication plan. This section should include the target date, target audience, person(s) responsible, and status for all of the activities.

