

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN | JUNE 2016

Arlington Heights School District 25 Communications Plan

Embracing Today Inspiring Tomorrow

@AHSD25

Facebook.com/AHSD25

July, 2016

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INSPRA & NSPRA
Arlington Heights School District 25

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Introduction

Purpose:

This plan is to provide District 25's Communications Coordinator, District 25 staff (teachers, administrators, assistants) and the Arlington Heights School District 25 Board of Education a guideline for the communication process and policies that District 25 is to follow.

District 25's message is strong and must be communicated in a strategic and mindful way to best showcase the positive influence this district has on the students and families of Arlington Heights, as well as the Arlington Heights Community.

Who are we speaking to?

Arlington Heights School District 25 serves a proud and dedicated community of 76,000 people. Arlington Heights is made up of students, parents, families, veterans, volunteers, workers, singles, couples, seniors, and a diverse collection of people of all races and ages. District 25 must reach this wide range audience in an exciting way using the avenues and following the guidelines detailed in this plan.

Whose responsibility is this?

The responsibility of reaching the Arlington Heights community, including the parents, students and staff members of District 25 is of the Communications Department of AHSD 25. The Communications Coordinator must work with the school board, administration, teachers and staff to generate a message that coincides with the vision and image found through the strategic planning process the District is currently going through (spring 2016).

Following the timetables, guidelines and processes put forth in this Communications Plan will help to reach the District's desired audience. This plan should be constantly under review based on experiences and suggestions from the Communications Department and from the Arlington Heights community.

It is the Communications Department's job to embrace District 25's message and image and communicate that message and image to the public and constituents of Arlington Heights through the strategies and avenues listed in this plan.

Arlington Heights School District 25

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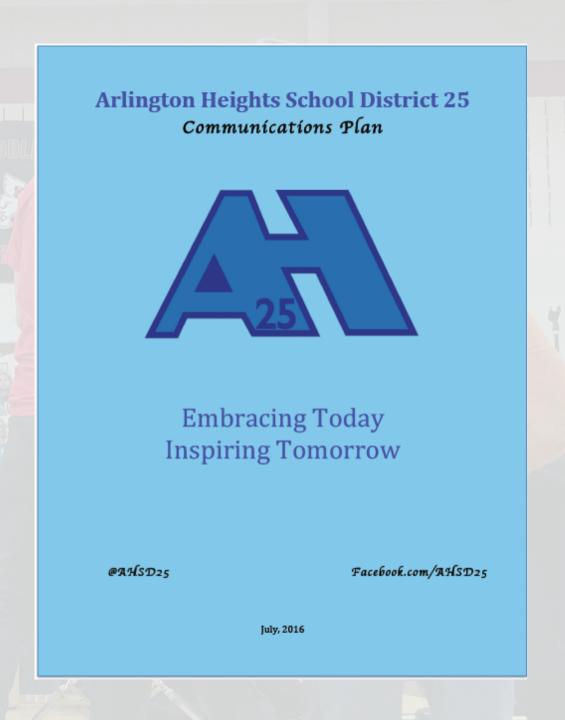
One year into my start in District 25.

Answered two questions:

What does this role entail?

What is communications in SD25?

Lacked
Connection to the "why".
Essence.



WHAT CHANGED?

Plan vs. Guide

Essence
Vulnerability
It's Personal

Yes, and...
Pick up the phone
Selfie-Videos

Pictures & Branding

Storytelling

Arlington Heights School District 25
Communications Plan



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WHAT CHANGED?





DEPARTMENT'S MISSION

We tell the everyday story of our District by opening the window to the classroom from a place of vulnerable presence and personal connection in order to best engage our community, and create community using all viable communication tools, tactics and strategies.

We also create the space needed for our staff and teachers to fearlessly communicate, by promoting vulnerability and authenticity as the key to communication, which leads to connection.

DISTRICT 25'S MESSAGE: THIS IS PERSONAL.

Everything done here in District 25 is done from a personal place. It is from this personal place that our staff enters our buildings, and our students come to learn. The personal relationships our students have with their learning, and our staff has with our students and the community, is what makes District 25 a desirable place to be.

The District's adaptive, flexible, and passionate learning environment, houses adaptive, flexible and passionate teachers and students. This message of personal connection our students and staff have to their roles is something the Department of Communication is proud to champion using our many tools of communication.

Any written article, written communication, video or message that District 25 puts out to the public should speak to the message above. Any communication that comes from the District office must answer this question in the affirmative: "Does this show how personally meaningful education and arowth is to us all here in District 25?"



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The Head of Communications and Storytelling is often notified by principals or teachers of happenings or special events going on in their buildings, or unique students that would make for a good story. These deserve to be covered and told to our community.

It is also this Department's belief that there is a story in every minute of every classroom, and in order to find those stories, the Head of Communications and Storytelling must be extremely mobile. Working from buildings, being seen, and connecting with the staff at the buildings are all ways to find the everyday stories that make District 25 unique, special and personal. Popping into classrooms must be common practice, and in order to do that, the Head of Communications and Storytelling must be trusted by teachers, principals and staff members to always have their best interest in mind when covering a story.

Having a "Yes, and" mentality when asked to help promote, cover, or help out on a project with teachers and staff is essential to the Head of Communication's job. "Yes! I can help, and here's how I am available." Teachers and staff members feel passionately about their projects and classroom and they deserve to feel that same passion from this department. This will go a long way in establishing trust.

TELLING A STORY

Different stories lend themselves to different coverage, but the main focus should be the students, teachers or community. The story needs to be told in a way that aligns with the department's and the District's values, beliefs and brand.

This is Community. This is Personal. - Brand/Value/Belief as of 2019-2020

Storytelling at its core must be genuine and authentic. It is an incredible tool that creates perspective and creates a base for people's opinions about an organization. Giving people the space, both physically and energetically, to tell their story is the best way to generate this type of authenticity.

Storytelling is a powerful tool that stems from curiosity in everything. Asking, "How is that interesting?" when approached with a story idea is essential to finding and covering content. The Head of Communications & Storytelling must use this powerful tool to write their District's own narrative and take control of the way the District is seen/experienced.



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YES, AND...

The "yes, and..." mentality is vital to the success of this department. Teachers, students, staff, principals, cabinet members, administration, media, parents, organizations, colleagues, community partners, etc., will all have ideas and proposals that will be brought to the Head of Communications & Storytelling's awareness. Going into all of these ideas with a "Yes, I can help, and here's how I am willing to help..." is vital. These ideas/proposals/stories come from a personal place and they deserve to be validated and covered with curiosity. Also, you never know what will come from saying "Yes."

PICK UP THE PHONE

This is a simple, yet, effective technique. Usually, when the phone rings in the Communications Department, it is a question that is urgent to the caller and easily answered by the Head of Communications & Storytelling. Whether it be a staff member with a question about how to update something on the website, or a media member with a question about a story they are covering, picking up the phone ensures that the request will be given the proper attention, in the moment, and the caller will not need to find an answer on his/her own, often leading to more work for the HoC&S in the long run. Pick. Up. The. Phone.





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SELFIE-VIDEOS

The Head of Communications & Storytelling has developed an easy, fun and effective way to not only tell a story but bring the students and teachers to the forefront of the story. With the selfie-video tactic, the HoC&S covers a story by interviewing the subject (student, teacher, or staff member) with a phone as if they are taking a selfie photo. This gives the students/teachers a casual and comfortable platform to tell the story in their own words. The HoC&S must make sure to do a few things to ensure to get the most out of this video:

- Bring the subject to a well lit area away from the classroom (the hallway or the LMC).
- The HoC&S must be in the video as well.
- Have the subject voice their nerves.
- Casually practice the interview by asking them about their project or subject/topic.

The selfie-video tactic honors the phrase "there's a story in every classroom". This is something that can be utilized without an appointment, or a teacher reaching out to you. These videos are then posted on FB, Twitter, sd25.org, etc.





THE BIG IDEA

COMMUNICATION IS PERSONAL

There are many responsibilities that the Head of Communications & Storytelling has. In fact, there are 21 pages worth listed in this guide. The Head of Communications & Storytelling must manage all social media, all parent communication, all community communication, the brand of the District, every emergency communication, every page of the website, and more. But at its core, the Communications Department was created to simply tell District 25's story.

Who works here? Who are our teachers? Who are our administrators? Who are our students? What motivates us? What motivates this community? What does it feel like to live, work, and learn in Arlington Heights School District 25?

Asking and answering these questions upon tackling every responsibility listed in this guide will ensure the HoC&S is headed in the correct direction. Go toward what feels like District 25. Go toward what feels personal, and this job will become easeful, comforting, rewarding, and impactful.







