



Providing equitable support
to our school districts in their
mission to educate all students.

2011-12

Communication Plan

Northwest Regional Education Service District

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NWRESD Mission

The Northwest Regional Education Service District is committed to providing equitable support to our school districts in their mission to educate all students.

Guiding Principles

Our Customers

- Will be treated with respect, dignity and professionalism.
- Will have fair and equal access to NWRESD programs and services.
- Will have ample opportunity for input regarding programs and services provided by the NWRESD, as well as evaluative responses regarding their quality.

Our Services

- Will be aligned to the needs and priorities of our component districts and the Oregon Department of Education.
- Will represent quality, innovative and cost- effective options.
- Will maximize fiscal and human resources consistent with the district's mission and guiding principles.

Our Staff

- Represent efforts to hire the most talented people, who are excited about working at NWRESD.
- Actively participate in continuous self and program improvement opportunities.
- Work in settings that communicate staff value and expectations of high performance.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Northwest Regional Education School District (NWRESD) Communications Plan is to present a clear and concise framework for communicating with our community.

The plan primarily addresses two types of audiences: **internal** (students and families, educational and office staff, administration and Board of Directors) and **external** (component school districts, parents, Oregon Department of Education, businesses, community groups, and other members of the NWRESD community).

Staff support for and involvement in this plan is vital—particularly, educational and office staff who are highly influential sources of information for the public. The NWRESD staff carries the message of our District to their families and friends who in turn form opinions about the ESD services and programs.

We must have as a top priority the goal of clearly communicating our unified message at all times.

The Superintendent's Office staff will implement and manage community relations, publications, marketing, and offer leadership on all comprehensive communication services and strategies for the District under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

Two driving questions for every program or activity will be:

1. How does this benefit our districts and students?
2. How do we communicate it to our stakeholders?

Crisis Communications and Emergency Response

Crisis communications and emergency response are handled by the Superintendent's Office, and detailed in the "NWRESD Emergency Operations Plan." For more information on crisis communications, please contact the Communication Department at (503) 614-1252.

TARGET AUDIENCES

INTERNAL

1. Students and Families
2. Educational and Office Staff
3. Administration
4. NWRESD Board

EXTERNAL

1. Component School Districts
2. Parents and Parent Organizations
3. Oregon Department of Education
4. Non-component school districts and local colleges and universities
5. Associations (COSA, OAESD, OEA, AEA, etc.)
6. Key Collaborators – police, fire, medical, public service agencies, and private non-profit agencies
7. Business Community
8. Elected Metro, State, and Federal Officials
9. Community Groups

OBJECTIVES

Our objective is to improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open communication between the NWRESD Board, administration, staff, students, parents, component districts and other ESD communities.

ACTIONS

1. Clarify District flow of information

- a. Maintain and distribute up-to-date organizational chart.
- b. Maintain and update this communication plan annually.

2. Provide ongoing training and support for administrators in effective communication with staff and the public

- a. Provide communication training sessions as part of leadership meetings.
- b. Supply administrators with public relations fact sheets and other easy-to-use communications tools.
- c. Subscribe to school communication publications (e.g. National School Public Relations Association and Oregon School Board Association) and relay pertinent ideas and information to administrators.
- d. Provide automated method for programs to report upcoming events to the Superintendent's office.

3. Provide targeted audiences information on agency-wide issues

- a. Distribute relevant information from meetings.
- b. Distribute *external* publications and news releases to employees electronically.
- c. Issue FYI bulletins to staff and districts on issues of immediate concern.

4. Create and maintain a system to encourage information flow

- a. Provide the opportunity for each staff member to participate in a monthly group meeting with their supervisor regarding department/agency issues and suggest ideas that will be forwarded to the appropriate decision making body.
- b. Encourage departments to offer distribution lists and listservs (automatic mailing lists from the internet).
- c. Conduct electronic surveys (email) at agency and site levels to provide feedback on flow of information.
- d. Maintain email suggestion box (suggestions@nwresd.k12.or.us)
- e. Maintain superintendent's council.
- f. Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.

5. Publish and distribute informational pieces

- a. Develop informational materials.
 - i. District/Program Informational Brochures
 - ii. E-Newsletters
 - iii. Press releases as needed.
 - iv. Informational video and video clips
- b. Maintain information on District website.

6. Communicate with our component districts

- a. Provide District communication materials to superintendents and advisories.
- b. Develop partnerships with districts.
- c. Conduct electronic surveys (email) at district and site levels to provide feedback on flow of information.
- d. Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.
- e. Expand use of website to facilitate communication between districts and ESD.
- f. Attend monthly component district school board meetings, report proceedings back to the ESD, and provide information as needed.
- g. Provide overview of annual report to component districts.

7. Communicate with other external audiences

- a. Attend community meetings as needed to provide information.
- b. Provide District communication materials to key leaders.
- c. Develop partnerships with groups.
- d. Conduct electronic surveys (email) at district and site levels to provide feedback on flow of information.
- e. Offer informal meeting opportunities to receive input.
- f. Expand use of website to facilitate communication between parents and schools/programs.
- g. Participate in state-wide educational meetings.

8. Be visible in the community

- a. Attend community organization meetings.
- b. Encourage program staff to talk positively about NWRESA schools and programs to friends, neighbors, and community acquaintances.
- c. Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups.
- d. Promote The G.A.P.S. Foundation.

STRATEGIES

1. Keep Communications Simple

- a. Use clear, concise and non-educational style for all general publications.
- b. Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences.
- c. Translate communication pieces when appropriate for various language groups.

2. Create Information Sheets

- a. Create information sheets on four or five topics such as district and state budgets, school safety, accountability, etc.; update them bi-annually or as needed.
- b. Have informational documents available on-line for quick reference.
- c. Use template for uniformity so that new topics can be addressed rapidly.

3. Communicate Early and Often

- a. Prepare information sheets when appropriate to send out to principals, office managers, and other staff as needed.
- b. Follow-up with memos or communications to all staff if necessary.
- c. Make telephone calls if in doubt.

4. Communicate Face-to-Face

- a. The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face.
- b. Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate.

5. Keep Communications Brief and to the Point

- a. In order to keep a person's attention, be brief and to the point.
- b. Use bullet points when appropriate.
- c. Highlight message in the title.
- d. Proofread all documents for errors.

6. Emphasize Customer Service

- a. Ensure customer's questions or concerns have been addressed.
- b. Actively listen to understand the message beyond the words.
- c. Never be dismissive.
- d. Follow up on customer's questions or concerns.

7. Educate Staff

- a. Help staff to understand what they say to friends, neighbors, and community members impacts how NWRESD schools and programs are perceived.
- b. Engage frontline staff in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately. They are the best link to districts, parents and the community.

8. Develop Relationships with our Community

- a. Seek regular input.
- b. Maintain a high level of visibility for the District through participation of key staff in various professional and community activities.

9. Prepare our Messages

- a. Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with information sheets.
- b. Develop responses that represent our program or district message.
- c. Avoid technical jargon by keeping it simple and using quotable "sound bites," when appropriate.
- d. Provide staff with a written process for communicating with the media.

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Because different measurements work best in different situations, a tracking system will be developed to measure communication effectiveness.

- **Benchmarking** - will be used to ascertain what communication strategies are being implemented by others.
- **Focus groups** - will be conducted to collect qualitative information as needed.
- **Performance Surveys** - will be used to ascertain people's opinion and to collect quantitative information.
- **Web site Counters**- will be used to measure number of hits for selected pages.

The Communications Plan will be reviewed and updated once a year, or as deemed necessary by the Superintendent, Board of Directors and/or Communications Department.

Appendix A - Current Communication Methods

We will identify the communication tools that are most widely accepted and preferred by the community through quarterly assessment and adjust accordingly. Our current communications methods are:

1. Printed Materials

- a. Agency Overview—Two-page informational sheet with agency demographics, who we serve, and major areas of service [map on the back]. Available from literature racks in each service center.
- b. Annual Report to districts and community—A comprehensive, 40+ page report detailing NWRESD programs and services utilized by component school districts, a breakdown of service credit utilization, top accomplishments for the school year and goals for the coming school year. The report is compiled during the summer and printed in October. ESD board members and administrators present the reports in-person to all 20 school district boards October thru December.
- c. Board-to-Board Newsletter—From NWRESD Board to board members in the 20 component school districts. Provides an overview of current issues facing our board as well as a variety of resources that are relevant to school board members. Published quarterly and distributed to over 175 component board members and district superintendents.
- d. Guide to Programs and Services— Contains descriptions and costs for ESD programs, staffing, and other services. Published in the spring as a tool for component districts to use when signing up for ESD services.
- e. Local Service Plan— Outlines programs and services NWRESD provides to component districts each school year. Published in the spring.
- f. Brochures—One comprehensive agency brochure revised each summer, and misc. department- and/or program-level brochures as needed.
- g. Staff and Component Regional Schools District Directory— Lists all NWRESD sites, phone numbers, staff email addresses as well as regional schools contact information. Distributed to ESD staff, component schools & district offices and various agencies in the community and state. Online version is updated throughout the school year and has a search function that allows users to put in keywords to quickly locate information. Published and distributed in early October.
- h. Emergency Phone Tree—Maintained and distributed by the Superintendent's office for the purpose of communicating emergency closure information to staff.
- i. Misc. Newsletters—Provided by individual departments.

2. Email Communication

- a. Monday Memo—A weekly communication that includes timely information regarding internal operations, meeting reminders, staff recognition and training opportunities.
- b. Press Releases—Sent to appropriate media and posted on agency Web site.
- c. Staff Suggestion Box—Staff may bring suggestions to the attention of the ESD’s Central Management Team (CMT), via an e-mail to suggestions@nwresd.k12.or.us. The Communications Dept. is the only recipient of the emails. They are passed on anonymously to CMT and reviewed on the first Monday of every month and responses reported back to staff in the following Monday Memo.
- d. Board minutes, agendas and notes.
- e. Superintendent communications to all staff sent on an as-needed basis usually pertaining to issues with agency-wide impact.

3. Web Site/On-Line Communication

- a. Emergency information link on home page—Link to FlashAlert Newswire and displays information from NWRESD and component districts.
- b. “About NWRESD” Web page—Information about component districts, Partners in Education, The G.A.P.S Foundation, Agency overview, history, mission, etc., and frequently-used links such as job openings and maps and directions.
- c. Adobe PDF copies of all printed communications (newsletters, reports, brochures, press releases, etc.).
- d. Board minutes, agendas and notes.
- e. Strategic Plan—communicates planned actions to be taken for agency improvement.

4. Face-to-Face Communication

- a. All staff inservice
- b. Superintendent’s Council
- c. Executive Advisory Team, (EAT), Central Management Team (CMT), and Leadership Team

5. State and federal Reporting

- a. Financial
- b. Student
- c. Programs
- d. Grants

Appendix B - NWRESD Communications Matrix - Methods at a Glance

	Monday Memo	Prof. Development Activities	Website	Supts. Forum	Leadership	Memos	Board Notes	Speaking Engagements	School Site Visits	Brochures	Personal Contact	Informational Meetings	Strategic Plan Update
Districts		X	X							X	X	X	X
Staff	X		X			X	X				X	X	X
Board Members			X				X		X		X	X	X
Students										X		X	
Parents											X		
Parent Groups													
City Chambers													
Residents													
Legislators													
NWRESD Unions												X	
Key Communicators													
Business Community													
Civic Groups													
Community Groups													
Non-Component School Districts													
Local Colleges													
Website													
Media													

Current	X
No Need	
Need to Add	0

Appendix C - NWRESD Decision Matrix

	Board	Executive Adv Team	CMT	Superintendent	Leadership Team	All Staff	Program Staff	Service Center Staff	District Superintendents	Component School Boards	ODE
Hiring/Firing	D/I	I	I	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I
Salary Schedule	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	N/I
Facility Equipment Use	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/D/I	I	I	I	I	I	I	N/I
Insurance	I	I	I	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I
Workshops	D/I	D/D/I	D/D/I	D/D/I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I	N/I
Emergency Closure of Programs	N/I	I	I	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I
Organizational Structure	D/I	I	I	D/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I
Dress Code	I	I	I	D/I	I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I
Purchasing (<75,000)	N/I	D	D	D	D	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I
Purchasing (>75,000)	D/I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I	N/I
Staff Evaluation	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I
Staff Discipline	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/I	I	N/I	N/I	N/I	I	N/I	N/I
Student Discipline	I	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/I	N/I	I	N/I	I	N/I	N/I
Agency-wide Strategic Planning	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I
Design & Use of Scorecards	N/I	I	I	D/I	I	I	I	I	N/I	N/I	N/I
Starting new Programs	D/I	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Dept. Budget Development	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/I	D/I	I	I	I	I	I	D/I

Key: D= Decide, D/I=Decide with Input, I= Input, N/I = No Input

Appendix D - Future Ideas

- a. Establish a “State of the Schools” report delivered by the Superintendent to be aired on public access channels twice a year in November and March.
- b. Expand use of staff portal.
- c. Provide each site with a copy of the NWRESD video.
- d. Include groups in mailings and provide opportunities for them to sign up for our community listserv.
- e. Host NWRESD “town hall” meetings or forums when appropriate.
- f. Produce a monthly video series called “Ring the Bell” focusing on a student, staff member, program, school, department, etc. Video to be shown on cable channel and/or at Board meetings.
- g. Highlight staff with articles in district communications pieces, outside media, and through recognition at events.
- h. Acknowledge the work of all NWRESD staff through a comprehensive, and agency supported, peer recognition program.
- i. Incorporate auto-dialer notification system for key communication needs.