



**Sumter County Schools  
PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN  
2018-2022**

SUMTER COUNTY  
SCHOOLS

# PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN 2018-2022

## **Introduction**

The Sumter County Board of Education believes that one of a school district's primary responsibilities is to communicate to parents and taxpayers how effectively and efficiently school funds are being spent. Additionally, a district should seek to open a two-way path of communication to enable the district to seek public insight into how stakeholders define a high-quality educational program. It is a strong belief of the Board that the public has the right to be informed and involved in school matters, and should feel welcome to contribute.

Therefore, the district will implement a multifaceted, effective public relations plan to provide a forum for our public to obtain clear information while inviting active involvement. Additionally, this effort will enable the district to immediately stifle disruptive misinformation, while showcasing the accomplishments that will create a sense of pride within the community. In poll after poll, education is among the top three issues that the American public wants to know more about. The Sumter County School District is committed to answering this call through open and honest articulation.

This planning guide serves the following purpose:

- Defines high-level strategic communication goals for the Sumter County School District and recommends steps for achieving them
- Defines the district's key audience
- Articulates messages and information to support the district's mission and vision, as well as the district's strategic plan
- Identifies online, social media, print, and in-person communication strategies available to reach district constituents

## **Rationale**

The Sumter County School District schools are doing a better job today than ever before, as we respond to a wide array of family and community needs. We are focused on lifelong learning and addressing the physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of family members of all ages.

Unfortunately, at the same time, all schools across the nation have more critics and competition than ever before. Therefore, each school district must have a means to effectively tell its success stories and to assist the public with accurately interpreting data to assess district progress.

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## **Public Relations Goals**

The primary goal of the Sumter County School District Public Relations Plan is to effectively communicate our mission, goals, accomplishments, challenges, and accountability to the community. Through this public relations plan, the Board of Education will focus on two related goals: interpreting our school district for the public; and interpreting the public, through a variety of information gathering and feedback methods, for the school district and key decision-makers.

It is our belief that effective communication will work to discover community priorities and community needs, while establishing the level of community support needed to successfully develop fiscally responsible annual budgets and plans.

## **Public Relations Objectives**

The Sumter County School District Board of Education will work to attain the following public relations objectives:

1. Keep the public informed about the policies, administrative operations, objectives, and educational programs of the schools.
2. Provide the means for furnishing full and accurate information, both favorable and unfavorable, together with interpretation and explanation of school plans and programs.
3. Adhere to a policy of openness and honesty in communicating with citizens, staff, the news media, and other organizations.
4. Make available the background material on all school policies and resolutions, excluding confidential material, such as legal matters, sensitive personnel matters and student identifiable information
5. Establish and enhance appropriate and effective communication between the administration and other district employees.
6. Present publications to keep citizens informed about educational services, achievements, needs, costs, revenues, and expenditures.
7. Develop and maintain an organizational environment where all district staff members are aware that they share the responsibility for communication of school policies, programs, and activities to parents and other stakeholders.
8. Use technology to foster communication between the district and families outside of the school environment through the district web site, email, social media, and a mass notification service.
9. Increase face-to-face communication with the community, including representatives of business and industry.

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## **District Mission Statement**

The mission of Sumter County Schools is to graduate all students.

## **District Vision Statement**

To ensure that all students receive an equitable education and graduate, college and career ready.

## **District Commitments**

1. Foster a relationship among the home, school, and the community.
2. Use accurate and current data to plan and deliver instruction to all learners.
3. Base all decisions on the needs of students.
4. Provide a caring, safe, and orderly environment that is vital to learning.
5. Hold high expectations for students, parents, teachers, and leaders; and we will provide support to reach those expectations.
6. Strive consistently to create an atmosphere of excellence.
7. Take responsibility for learning, for both our students and ourselves.
8. Instill the belief that learning is a life-long process.

## **District Strategic Plan**

### **Goal Area #1: Teaching & Learning**

**Systems:** Effective Leadership System, Coherent Instructional System, Supportive Learning Environment and Professional Capacity

**Structures:** T & L Collaborative, CAI-AC Collaborative & Instructional Technology

- Performance Objectives: Prepare students for College and Career Readiness
- Performance Objectives: Increase student achievement
- Performance Objectives: Provide high quality professional learning, monitoring and support

### **Goal Area #2: Human Resources**

**Systems:** Professional Capacity

**Structures:** Supt. Collaborative, Principal Support Meetings and New Teacher Academy

- Performance Objectives: Acquire highly effective people for all positions
- Performance Objectives: Identify and retain high performing faculty and staff
- Performance Objectives: Develop succession plans

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## **Goal Area #3: Operations and Student Services**

**Systems:** Effective Leadership System and Supportive Learning Environment

**Structures:** Intervention Services Collaborative, Technology Meetings, Safety Committee, Data Clerk Meetings, SPED Meetings, Attendance Support Meetings

- Performance Objectives: Ensure effective and efficient operational processes
- Performance Objectives: Ensure safe and healthy environments for students and staff
- Performance Objectives: Develop and implement practices to support at-risk students

## **Goal Area #4: Stakeholder Engagement**

**Systems:** Family and Community Engagement

**Structures:** Annual Title I Meeting, Family Connections Collaborative

- Performance Objective: Develop effective processes and communicate them clearly
- Performance Objective: Increase meaningful business relationships
- Performance Objective: Increase meaningful higher education relationships
- Performance Objective: Develop and sustain meaningful relationships with community leaders.
- Performance Objective: Train to build capacity within families and staff through training, resources and support from Family and Community Engagement Coordinator

## **Goal Area #5: Business Services**

**Systems:** Effective Leadership System

**Structures:** Supt. Collaborative, Budget Meetings, School Nutrition Safety Meetings

- Performance Objectives: Ensure effective and efficient financial practices
- Performance Objectives: Develop a collaborative district budgeting process
- Performance Objectives: Maximize federal, state, local and alternative funding sources

### **Activities**

- Attends meetings of the Board of Education and provides such reports as the Superintendent or designee may request

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- Supervises and coordinates the preparation, printing and distribution of system publications such as recruitment brochures, orientation brochures for new personnel and information brochures for prospective residents
- Develop and maintain an interactive district web page and social media account and encourage up-to-date school web pages and social media accounts
- Work with schools in the district to support and coordinate their social media efforts, including developing "Best Use" policies for the district
- Utilize a mass notification system to be utilized for emergency notifications, outreach campaigns, and other communication needs between the schools and its staff members and students
- Submit ongoing news releases to various media outlets
- Work with the schools to promote events that bring the public into the schools (i.e. Open House, guest speakers, brown bag lunch/dinner with the superintendent/ principal, honor roll recognition programs, Veteran Day programs, etc.) to build informed support and solid community relationships
- Work with OneSumter and the Chamber of Commerce to promote Sumter County Schools
- Works with the curriculum department and other staff members, in publicizing and promoting any performances, exhibitions, displays, or special programs sponsored by the schools and open to the public
- Work with the Finance Director to provide opportunities for the public to be informed through the entire budget-making process
- Promote the district's strengths/achievements, and its solutions to various issues
- Publicize individual student and faculty/staff achievements and develop recognition programs (i.e. Kids Under Construction Show with Georgia Southwestern State University, Superintendent's Board Recognition Program: "Teachers and Parents in Support of Students")
- Answer public and new resident requests for information in a timely and open manner
- Provide public relations training to staff in areas such as talking to the media, communicating in a crisis, and recognizing that non-certified staff should be a part of the school PR team
- Identify PR representative to serve as the district's liaison with community groups, such as civic organizations and service clubs, while developing ways to bring the community into the schools

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- Provide outstanding customer service to the community we serve
- Host events that bring the public into the schools (i.e. Open House, guest speakers, brown bag lunch/dinner with the superintendent/principal, honor roll celebrations, Veterans Day programs, etc.) to build informed support and solid community relationships
- Attend and promote “Parents on the Prowl” meetings and events

### **Person Responsible**

To ensure that citizens and staff have an opportunity to be informed about their schools, the Board of Education identifies the Superintendent of Schools as the Chief Officer of Communication. The superintendent will work with the District’s Public Relations Director to:

1. Provide the appropriate liaison services between the district and the news media
2. Support, plan, and execute appropriate direct communications between school and home
3. Assess the public's knowledge and attitudes about the schools, and use this information in planning a communication program
4. Assist in ensuring that communication plans and skills exist in each school and department
5. Assist with the publicity for all district programs as requested

### **Key Audiences**

Sumter County School District constituents are divided into internal and external audiences.

Below is an overview of target audiences within each category.

1. Internal
  - a. Faculty
  - b. Staff
  - c. Students
  - d. Board of Education
2. External
  - a. Parents
  - b. Alumni
  - c. Public officials

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- d. Community members
- e. Prospective homeowners/students
- f. Higher education
- g. News media
- h. Emergency services

### **Resources**

Although the Board of Education acknowledges that public relations is intrinsic to the mission of the district, the budget does not allow for the appointment of a full time public relations director. The district will provide the resources needed for printing and distribution of any and all public relations materials.