

# **Barrington Public Schools Strategic Communication Plan**

## **Introduction**

The 2012-2017 Barrington Public Schools Strategic Plan was adopted in December, 2012 with the following mission statement to define the district's path for the future: The Barrington Public Schools will empower all students to excel. The mission statement has a very clear focus on student learning and vision, values, beliefs and goals statements complete the framework for the comprehensive strategic plan.

The strategic planning process carefully defined challenges and enabled the development of relevant goals that create the opportunity to not only sustain the Barrington Public Schools over time, but to focus improvement activities where they will have the greatest positive impact. An external scanning process and the collection of community survey information yielded the following challenge: strengthening communication, collaboration and partnerships between schools, parents, businesses and the community. Specifically, Goal Two of the Barrington Strategic Plan: Build productive partnerships for education was developed with the strategy to foster community engagement and two way ongoing dialog to meet this challenge and the Barrington School Committee and the Barrington Public Schools are committed to Goal Two. Development of the Strategic Communication Plan serves as the Action Step to meet this goal.

The purpose of the district Strategic Communication Plan is to ensure timely, professional, systematic, two way communication that promotes student success, district achievement and positive relationships with all stakeholders.

The district Strategic Communication Plan presents a clear, concise work plan for communicating effectively with our community. The plan addresses our internal and external audiences. The Barrington Public Schools promotes the active engagement of the community not only to nurture a better understanding of the goals and attributes of public education, but also to create effective partnerships to benefit our students. Barrington Public Schools stakeholders will understand and value the investment they have made in public education through effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Staff engagement in and support for the district Strategic Communication Plan is critical to its success, as teachers and support staff are highly influential sources of information for the public. It is a top priority of the Barrington Public Schools to clearly communicate a positive, unified message at all times.

The Barrington Public Schools Central Office will implement and manage publications, marketing and community relations efforts and offer leadership on the comprehensive communications strategies and services for the district under the direction of the Superintendent.

# **Barrington Public Schools Strategic Communication Plan**

## **Critical Questions**

- How does this plan benefit students, parents, the community and staff?
- What methods should we use to communicate/gain information to/from our stakeholders?
- How do we let our stakeholders know about our action plans and progress toward achievement of identified district goals?

## **Communication Goals**

Use multiple and appropriate methods of communication and engagement to reach all stakeholders and every part of the community to gain meaningful input, participation, partnerships and shared responsibilities for student success.

Recognize the value of creating a branding image that reflects the district commitment to excellence in teaching and learning and conveys a desired and unique image; publications reflect professionalism and quality.

## **Assessment, Accountability and Opportunities for Community Engagement and Input**

In order to measure the effectiveness of the district Strategic Communication Plan we will employ a variety of methods matched to our situation and needs.

## Barrington Public Schools Strategic Communication Plan

<b>Strategic Direction:</b>	<b>Suggested Goals:</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Suggested Action Steps for Consideration:</b>
Partnerships for Student Success	1. Broaden public understanding of Barrington Public Schools quality teaching, learning and student achievement	A. Create a “One Clear Voice” initiative to deliver and reinforce clear, consistent messages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop key messages for staff, board and key communicators</li> <li>2. Design information materials to create a “brand” image; Include logo and mission on all communications</li> <li>3. Create BPS State of the Schools address</li> </ol>
		B. Develop public information materials for Barrington Public Schools that emphasize the district’s core values and the attributes of every school	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create public information materials available to realtors, at all schools, board meetings and other functions</li> <li>2. Revise and update the website according to best practice and include Realtor link and FAQs</li> <li>3. Expand cable television/live stream offerings</li> <li>4. Provide regular updates from the district for school newsletters</li> <li>5. Create video segments on website</li> <li>6. Develop an annual written report for direct mail distribution to the community</li> </ol>
		C. Continue to clearly and consistently communicate the successes of schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include Achievement Recognition in School Committee meeting agendas</li> <li>2. Include Spotlight on Teaching and Learning in School Committee meeting agendas</li> <li>3. Points of Pride and brainstorming on the topic “What’s Right with Our Schools” and incorporate in website to be updated monthly</li> </ol>

## Barrington Public Schools Strategic Communication Plan

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	2. Focus the communication efforts on engaging stakeholders to take action to support students and the needs of our community	A. Establish regular two-way communication with the Barrington community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a publication for electronic distribution to district residents</li> <li>2. Provide news inserts for business/community publications</li> <li>3. Implement a “speaker’s bureau” of in-district experts for use by community and business organizations</li> <li>4. Use ENN (Eagle News Network) to deliver information on a regular basis</li> <li>5. Initiate regular communication with community organizations</li> <li>6. Enhance communication with senior citizens to recognize their contributions and include them in the activities of the Barrington Public Schools VIP for senior citizens</li> <li>7. Communicate with neighbors, partners and businesses regarding initiatives, calendars and events</li> <li>8. Study current education issues and be prepared to respond regarding district reforms and initiatives</li> <li>9. Develop a Realtor outreach campaign to provide resources to help clients learn about the Barrington Public Schools</li> <li>10. Hold Community information nights</li> <li>11. Develop collaborative business efforts</li> </ol>
B. Build relationships with elected officials		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet with government agencies</li> <li>2. Meet with government officials</li> </ol>	
C. Establish and maintain positive relationships with media outlets		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issue regular press releases</li> <li>2. Create a system to regularly share positive stories about Barrington Public Schools</li> <li>3. Maintain student pages on local publications</li> </ol>	

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		D. Establish regular two-way communication with Barrington Public Schools' parents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide training for parents and community on how best to access information and provide input</li> <li>2. Expand volunteer program</li> <li>3. Help parents become advocates for their children through information sessions</li> <li>4. Connect early with new families – Parent Ambassadors Club to welcome new families to schools and serve as resource contacts and advisors with peer connection to schools – packet of information</li> <li>5. Create a Barrington Public Schools Essential Pack for new families</li> <li>6. Revisit the format of Open House</li> </ol>
		E. Increase opportunities for student voice in communications problem-solving	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involve students in district communication efforts</li> </ol>
		F. Develop public engagement/outreach strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish coffee hours and town hall style meetings with principals and central office administrators and community/parents</li> <li>2. Develop and implement annual events that support positive community relationships by encouraging continued district-wide participation</li> <li>3. Hold study circles on “hot topics”</li> <li>4. Provide opportunities for public input that don't require attendance at a meeting</li> <li>5. Develop collaborative partnerships with government agencies</li> </ol>

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			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Develop outreach programs to distribute information and gain feedback on issues impacting facilities</li> <li>7. Provide visual signs of welcome and appreciation at schools</li> <li>8. Continue community involvement with Senior Project, volunteering, enrichment clusters</li> <li>9. Hold “listening lunches” or coffees at local venues in community at a regular time and day with featured topics – opportunity to gather opinion research and information</li> <li>10. Provide first hand opportunities for community members to visit schools to gain a greater understanding of the district</li> <li>11. Provide opportunities for public input that don’t require attendance at a meeting</li> <li>12. Make a special effort to connect with parents who typically aren’t involved in school</li> </ol>
		<p>G. Expand and improve the district website/Aspen</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redesign homepage to include a search option for easier navigation by users</li> <li>2. Update information on a regular (weekly or bi-weekly)</li> <li>3. Make publications available in PDF format</li> <li>4. Promote the website as a source of accurate information</li> <li>5. Add a “Frequently Asked Questions” section to the homepage to both share complex information in a way that can be understood by the community and ( ask district office and school secretaries to track most frequent questions for website) incorporate responses to the most frequently asked questions by callers</li> <li>6. Add a realtor link to the district website</li> </ol>

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			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Consider a redesign of the website to include more photos of students and a more appealing graphic design with district motto and logo in prominent place</li> <li>8. Define expectation for teachers to keep information updated and keep all information current – conduct reviews by the district – everything on the site must be constantly updated</li> <li>9. Include online integrated district activity and events calendar</li> </ol>
		<p>H. Effective use of social media</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include at least three district and schools tweets a week</li> <li>2. Investigate Teacher blogs/district blog</li> <li>3. Investigate RSS feed</li> <li>4. Investigate Mobile apps</li> <li>5. Investigate Text messages for non-critical information</li> <li>6. Investigate Text messages for critical information</li> <li>7. Consider district Facebook account</li> </ol>
		<p>I. Expand and improve school newsletters</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop graphics standards and train school staff in best practice for school newsletters</li> <li>2. Implement a consistent and current Principal’s message format for newsletters</li> <li>3. Conduct readership surveys of school newsletters</li> <li>4. Investigate different ways to distribute school newsletters to a broader audience</li> </ol>

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Efficient, transparent, forward-thinking communication	1. Annually review and update Strategic Communication Plan	A. Create individual communication plans for major initiatives or changes in district programs or practices	1. Assess communication needs and how they relate to the district’s strategic directions and the overall Strategic Communication Plan as new efforts arise
		B. Conduct regular research and evaluation components on communication efforts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the plan format based on the four-step public information process of research, planning and assessment, communication and evaluation</li> <li>2. Conduct opinion polling on a regular basis</li> <li>3. Conduct readership surveys of staff and parent publications</li> <li>4. Create Smartsheet for internal implementation of outlining goals, targets, implementation timelines, and responsibility to delineate and communicate accountability</li> <li>5. Conduct focus groups for gathering qualitative information relevant to specific district initiatives</li> <li>6. Create surveys of stakeholders, district employees, parents and students with sample sizes sufficient to predict outcomes</li> <li>7. Employ a variety of tools to elicit feedback from stakeholders and community members</li> <li>8. Hold community forums for gathering information</li> <li>9. Utilize website and social media statistical analysis, tied to direct mail and other marketing.</li> <li>10. Utilize social media knowledge and its effective use through professional development</li> <li>11. Maintain the ability to disaggregate the results to drive our continuous improvement of our communication efforts</li> </ol>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Create a formal evaluation process to better gauge the pulse of our stakeholders and effectiveness of our communication efforts</li> <li>13. Administer annual satisfaction surveys to parents, faculty, staff and students</li> <li>14. Benchmark communications efforts in aspirational districts</li> </ul>
	2. Improve internal communications	A. Facilitation of two-way communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue and expand working groups including the solicitation of input and the conduction of research to ensure successful implementation of district initiatives</li> <li>2. Create Communications working group to enhance communication, provide input relative to communication and information</li> <li>3. Create key communication protocols regarding the rationale for actions and result of district initiatives</li> </ul>
		B. Develop communication protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop guidelines for email and voicemail communications</li> <li>2. Evaluate the effective of automated district messages in lieu of music</li> <li>3. Evaluate communication with parents – in person meetings should be encouraged and always an option/follow up with email or note as needed</li> <li>4. Make phone calls if in doubt/return phone calls within 24 business hours</li> <li>5. Share information internally before public release</li> <li>6. Share at the earliest possible point and provide regular updates</li> <li>7. Avoid technical language and acronyms by preparing a short, simple statement when needed</li> <li>8. Encourage In person meetings with staff</li> </ul>

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Strategic Direction:	Suggested Goals:	Objectives:	Suggested Action Steps for Consideration:
			9. Develop standards and expectations for staff communication 10. Continue to involve staff in decisions that impact them
		C. Improve district communication	1. Continue Monthly Superintendent’s Update 2. Promote Success of Barrington Public Schools personnel and celebrate staff contributions and efforts
		D. Strengthen school building-level communication	1. Create protocol to create agendas, share minutes and report outcomes of in PLC collaborative meetings 2. Share electronic Parent newsletter with staff 3. Ensure all staff receive complete information and receive the same information 4. Build a consistent “Principal’s Memo” for building communications
		E. Emphasize the role of employees as ambassadors for Barrington Public Schools	1. Equip all employees to be ambassadors providing a positive, polite, and professional first impression and guiding stakeholders to necessary information and communication avenues 2. Provide in-service and review ambassador role with all staff on a regular basis 3. Recognize employee efforts as ambassadors 4. Ensure new staff orientation program stresses the importance of communication and acquaints new employees with the culture of the Barrington Public Schools and the community

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		F. Provide professional development opportunities in effective communication in-service training for all staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide administrators with regular training in media relations</li> <li>2. Incorporate regular reviews of communication protocols at faculty and staff meetings</li> </ol>
		G. Improve support staff communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schedule regular meetings with central office personnel to update them on activities and issues around the district and provide opportunities for questions</li> <li>2. Develop a process to more effectively include school secretaries in the communication loop</li> </ol>