

Summer Learning Communications Plan



TOOL

Students, families, teachers, and other school staff are bombarded with messages and information all day. At the same time, as your district engages with the work of shifting the paradigm for summer learning, communicating with your key audiences is paramount to securing their participation, building excitement for this new framework, and strengthening community.

So how do you make sure your message gets across?

This tool will help you strategically plan your communications, so you reach the right audiences at the right time with messages that move them to action using these five steps:

- 1 [Set Communications Goals](#) - **Why** is a communications plan important for your summer learning program?
- 2 [Identify Your Audiences](#) - **Who** do you need to reach?
- 3 [Craft Your Key Messages](#) - **What** do you need to say?
- 4 [Identify Methods](#) - **How** are you going to communicate?
- 5 [Develop a Communications Calendar](#) - **When** is the best time to reach your audience?

PLEASE NOTE: Before you begin, remember to coordinate with your district communications office, if applicable. Also, take some time to review your current communications so you can identify areas that need improvement.

Effective communication is:

- Strategic
- Planned
- Inclusive
- Frequent
- Proactive



Step 1: Set Communications Goals

Why is a communications plan important for your summer learning program?

The first thing you need to do when you're building a communications plan is to figure out why you need one.

What do you want to accomplish?

Why is it necessary?

What action do you want your audience to take?

Stating your goals(s) will help you stay focused on your why throughout the process of building your communication plan.

Some goals for communications around summer learning may be to:

- Build district buy-in for the summer learning program
- Inspire students and generate excitement for the summer program
- Get students excited about enrolling in the summer program
- Inform and involve families
- Inform and recruit partner organizations
- Recruit teachers
- Coordinate with building staff



FatCamera/Canva Pro.

If one of your communications goals is to recruit students, check out the [summer learning recruitment guide](#) from [The Wallace Foundation](#). It has guidance and templates you can use specifically for student recruitment.



To accomplish your goals, you'll need to inform your audiences. But it's also important to consider what you want people **to think, feel, and do.**

On the next page, write your goals and what you want your audience to think, feel, and do.

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What are your goals?	What do you want people to think, feel, do?
EXAMPLE: Recruit more students for our summer program	THINK: We want students and families to think our summer program is fun and educational. FEEL: We want them to be excited about joining us. DO: We want them to enroll.
	THINK: FEEL: DO:
	THINK: FEEL: DO:
	THINK: FEEL: DO:

Step 2: Identify Your Audiences

Who do you need to reach?

Once you identify your communication goals, you need to identify your audience. Being specific about whom you need to engage will help you tailor messages that resonate. Remember to consider both audiences that are internal to your district (teachers, administrators, district staff) and external (families, parents, community groups, school board members).

Learn what audiences think about summer learning programs. The more you know about what’s important to them, the more effective your communication will be.

PLEASE NOTE: Because you are changing the way your district approaches summer learning, it may also be helpful to identify people who champion the change, those who resist it, and those who are neutral so that you can communicate effectively with them as well.



Photo by Jessica Scranton for FHI 360.

Audiences to Consider

General	Specific
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers• Students• Parents/Caregivers• Partners• District Staff• School Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Education Teachers• Elementary School Teachers• Students who have participated in previous district summer learning programs• The Boys and Girls Club• Human Resource Department• Transportation Department

On the next page, write your goals and your audiences for each.

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Goal	Audience: To achieve your communications goal, who do you need to reach?
EXAMPLE: Recruit more middle school students for our summer program	Families and caregivers of middle school students

Step 3: Craft Your Key Messages

What do you need to say?

Different people need different messages. It's important that you tailor your language to each of your audiences. But remember to keep all of your messages short and to the point. Be simple and direct. Be specific about what you want and why it matters.

Develop a few key messages that will help you and your team deliver clear and consistent communication and help staff and other audiences understand and embrace the information.

Telling a story, using real-world examples, and sharing data are all good ways to craft an appealing message.

Use this checklist to make sure your message is effective:

- This message appeals to my audience
- The message is easy to read and does not use jargon
- The tone of the message fits my goal and is appropriate for my audience
- The visuals tell a story

Sample Ineffective Message

Audience: Parents

Ineffective message: Research shows that academic achievement of early adolescents improves with increased time on task. To that end, we have designed an evidence-based summer learning program that incorporates at least 90 minutes of math and ELA instruction per day.

Sample Effective Message

Audience: Families and caregivers of middle school students

Message: This summer, students can have fun AND strengthen their academic skills at R.I.S.E. Summer Camp! They can go on field trips, do hands-on projects, and serve the community with new friends, all while sharpening their reading, writing, and math skills. Enroll now using this registration link or email us for more information!



Photo courtesy Grand Prairie School District (Texas).

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In the table below, copy and paste your goals from Step One and your audience segments from Step Two. Then, write an effective message for each audience segment. Be sure to make a note of the visuals you want to use for each message.

EXAMPLE GOAL: Recruit more middle school students for our summer program	
Audience segment: Families and caregivers of middle school students.	Message: This summer, students can have fun AND strengthen their academic skills at R.I.S.E. Summer Camp! They can go on field trips, do hands-on projects, and serve the community with new friends, all while sharpening their reading, writing, and math skills. Enroll now using this registration link or email us for more information!
Goal One:	
Audience segment	Message
Goal Two:	
Audience segment	Message
Goal Three:	
Audience segment	Message

Step 4: Identify Methods

How Are You Going to Communicate?

Next, identify communication channels for each goal. Make sure to create your communications plan far enough in advance to be deliberate, to consider a range of methods, and to select methods that **reach your audience where they already go to get information**. “If we build it, they will come,” is not an effective communications strategy.

As you identify your methods, find ways to reach diverse audiences. For example, use printed materials or phone calls for parents or caregivers in addition to electronic communications. Be sure to translate materials into multiple languages for families who do not speak English.

Also, remember that communication is an ongoing activity, especially when you’re talking to busy families and staff who might miss a single email or phone call. Think about the variety of communications methods available to you and choose the ones that you can use several times until you achieve your goal.

Methods to Consider

	One-Way Communication Use when you want to share information	Two-Way Communication Use when you want feedback or interaction
In person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speeches • Distribution of “talking Points” to influential leaders • Staff Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences • Focus groups • Workshops • Meetings • Town halls • One-on-one conversations
Virtual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail, email, or website information • Printed materials • Electronic messages • PowerPoint presentation • Multimedia (video) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Webinars or electronic town halls • Feedback surveys • Polls • Blogs • Twitter

Example Goal: Recruit more students for our summer program

Audience segment Families and caregivers of middle school students	Methods Backpack flyer; Robo-call; Radio segment; Parent/student portal banner; District website; Text message
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Goal One:

Audience segment	Methods
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Goal Two:

Audience segment	Methods
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Goal Three:

Audience segment	Methods
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Step 5: Develop a Communications Calendar

When is the best time to reach your audience?

This sample communications calendar is a place to put it all together by planning when your communications will go out and reflecting on the success of your messages to help you plan again next year. Bring your goals, audience groups, messages, and methods from the previous steps, and add the frequency and specific dates for each. You now have a clear calendar outlining actions to implement a comprehensive, properly sequenced, and effective communications plan.

PLEASE NOTE: People need to hear a message **at least three times** to remember it. Plan to communicate with each audience multiple times.

Sample Communications Calendar							
Audience	Message Tip: Insert links to flyers, longer messages...etc.	Writer	Messenger	Method	Frequency	Key Dates Be sure to plan for key dates including gaining input, feedback, approval, and submission deadlines	Notes Make notes about how to ensure success; consider how long each step in the process will take, any special costs or expertise required, as well as how you'll decide if you're successful
EXAMPLE Goal: Recruit more middle school students for our summer program.							
Families and caregivers of middle school students	This summer students can have fun AND strengthen their academic skills at R.I.S.E. Summer Camp! They can go on field trips, do hands-on projects, and serve the community with new friends, all while sharpening their reading, writing, and math skills. Enroll now using this registration link or email us for more information!	Summer School Program Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals (school-based outreach) Maria in technology department (web-based outreach) Trey in communications department (media engagement) 	Emails; flyers; Phone calls home for key students; Radio segment; Parent/student portal banner; District website; Text message	Monthly during spring	10-9-22 gather input from team and complete comm plan. 10-15-22- draft message 11-2-22 gain approval on communications plan 1-15-23 submit messages to messengers 2-2-23-delivery 3-2-23 delivery 4-2-23 delivery 5-2-23 delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Trey to secure radio segment funding in the September 22nd budget meeting. Monitor enrollment early on to ensure messages are being received successfully in middle schools.

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Date Drafted/Revised:

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Goal One:

Goal Two:

Goal Three:
