



**BERGENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN
2016-2021**

*Approved by the Bergenfield Board of Education
December 21, 2015*

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Introduction

The Bergenfield 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 Bergenfield Public 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 Bergenfield Public 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 Bergenfield Public School District schools are doing a better job today than ever before, as we respond to a wide array of family and community needs. The district has extended the school day and the school year to offer an education that, through advanced technology, goes far beyond the school walls. 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.

Public Relations Goals

The primary goal of the Bergenfield Public 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 Bergenfield Public School District Board of Education will work to attain the following public relations objectives:

1. Keep the public informed about the policies, administrative operation, 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, and sensitive personnel matters.
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 members of the educational and other communities.
8. Exploit the advantages of technology to foster communication between the district and families outside of the school environment through the district web site, e-mail, social media, and a mass notification service.
9. Increase face-to-face communication with the community, including representatives of business and industry.

Institutional Mission

The mission of the Bergenfield Public School District is to offer programs and services that enable all students to become self-directed, lifelong learners who are successful in college and the workplace while displaying a strong sense of citizenship. The district provides a safe and nurturing setting designed to prepare students with 21st century skills consistent with Common Core State Standards. The Bergenfield Public School District fosters partnerships for the purpose of educational, operational, and fiscal responsibility.

Core Beliefs

- We believe that by providing objectives that are clearly explained and measurable we will meet our mission
- We believe that by providing active and appropriate student engagement we will meet our mission
- We believe that by providing opportunities for student choice and problem solving we will meet our mission
- We believe that by employing strategies such as differentiated instruction and project-based learning we will meet our mission
- We believe that by allowing multiple performance-based assessments we will meet our mission
- We believe that by the use of effective classroom management strategies that maximize a positive environment we will meet our mission
- We believe that by providing comprehensive and well-articulated routines, rules and procedures for classroom behavior we will meet our mission
- We believe that by modeling passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning we will meet our mission
- We believe that by the use of all available resources, including, but not limited to technology, will enhance teaching and learning and we will meet our mission
- We believe that by implementing strategies that promote high-level analytical, creative and critical thinking skills we will meet our mission
- We believe that by providing for multicultural awareness and celebrating diversity we will meet our mission

District Strategic Plan

1. 80% of students take 1 AP exam with a minimum score of 3
2. 80% of students obtain a score of 1500 on the SAT
3. 80% of seniors take Calculus
4. 80% of sophomores complete Algebra 2 with a B or better
5. 80% of seniors have 3 years of a world language
6. 80% of students pass the Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Biology State Tests
7. 80% of 8th grade students take Algebra 1
8. 50% of 8th grade students are in the Advanced Proficient range on NJASK/PARCC ELA
9. 50% of 8th grade students are in the Advanced Proficient range on NJASK/PARCC Math
10. 35% of 5th grade students are in the Advanced Proficient range on NJASK/PARCC ELA
11. 35% of 5th grade students are in the Advanced Proficient range on NJASK/PARCC Math
12. 35% of 3rd grade students are in the Advanced Proficient range on NJASK/PARCC ELA
13. 75% of 3rd grade students are in the Advanced Proficient range on NJASK/PARCC Math
14. 95% of kindergarten students will achieve a minimum score of 600 as measured by the Star Early Literacy Program

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Activities

- Publish and distribute a quarterly school newsletter
- Develop and maintain an interactive district web site and social media accounts
- 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
- Host events that bring the public into the school (i.e. Back to School Night, guest speakers, job shadowing/mentoring, brown bag lunch/dinner with the superintendent/principal, honor roll breakfasts, job interviews with the Chambers of Commerce, community service projects, Realtor tours, American Education Week open houses, Veteran programs, etc.) to build informed support and solid community relationships
- Establish a Public Relations Committee of the Board to take a proactive stance in anticipating problems and providing solutions
- Work with a public relations consultant to assist with all aspects of the district's publications such as its newsletter, press releases, NJDOE required plans and reports, and the district's QSAC and annual School Report Card
- Provide opportunities for the public to be informed and involved through the entire budget-making process (i.e. develop budget/bond issue campaigns and publications)
- Conduct formal and informal research surveys to determine public opinion and attitudes as a basis for planning and action
- Promote the district's strengths/achievements, and its solutions to various issues
- Publicize individual student and staff achievements and develop recognition programs
- Answer public and new resident requests for information in a timely and open manner
- Provide public relations training to staff and PTA's in areas such as talking to the media, communicating in a crisis, and recognizing that non-teaching staff is part of the school PR team
- Identify administrators to serve as the district's liaison with community groups, such as civic associations and service clubs, while developing ways to bring the community into the schools
- Provide outstanding customer service to the community we serve

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 assigned public relations consultant 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

Bergenfield Public 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
 - 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 officer. Therefore, the board has contracted the services of a consulting company specializing in the development of discretionary grants and public relations materials. The district will provide the resources needed for printing and distribution of any and all public relations materials.

Evaluation

The Board of Education will conduct an annual survey of community members, administrators, teachers, and parents on an annual basis to identify community concerns and to identify strategies for addressing them in a timely manner.