



# Framingham Public Schools

## Communications Plan

2015-2016

*“The mission of the Framingham Public Schools is to educate and empower all our students to reach their fullest potential every day. We expect our students to become responsible, enterprising, highly literate, culturally proficient, productive and resourceful citizens of the world.”*

## Introduction

This Communications Plan has been developed to not only meet the recommendations of the Framingham School Committee's Communication and Public Relations Task Force, but to also sincerely improve the level of two-way communication with our students, staff, families and community. In *Vision 2020: Excellence and Equity: A Strategic Plan for Achieving Educational Excellence in the Framingham Public Schools*, our school community recognized the importance to "promote community support for a high-performing system with appropriate resources, strong partnerships and broad-based communication." This is one of the three overarching goals of Framingham Public Schools.

Framingham Schools have dedicated faculty, administrators and staff who work tirelessly every day with a very capable, diverse and enthusiastic student body. We need to appropriately and consistently celebrate this collaboration along with the support of our families and the community. We also need to engage all of our stakeholders in a two-way conversation to continuously develop and maintain strong relationships. These relationships are the cornerstone of any healthy school system and want them to be a cornerstone of ours.

This plan is a working document that will be reviewed and updated frequently throughout this school year. We are grateful for the efforts of the Task Force to assist in our planning as it has provided concrete recommendations and suggested timelines for our communication plan. The Communication and Public Relations Task Force are listed below.

### **Task Force Recommendation #1**

Improve the quality of the communications (letters, memos, press releases, verbal decisions, etc.) from the Superintendent's office and other sources within FPS. Communications should be timely, clear, accurate, consistent, complete, and deliver an open and transparent message that speaks to all stakeholders and conveys a genuine picture of the state of affairs in FPS. The quality of communications should be consistent from school to school. Two specific steps should be taken:

- a) Within 30 days, establish a review process for all further communications that includes proofreading, editing, and completeness of message.
- b) By August 1, 2015, establish a communications policy to govern communications moving forward for proper approvals, flow, and professionalism, so that it can be communicated to all stakeholders and in place as the 2015-2016 school year begins.

### **Task Force Recommendation #2**

Overhaul the district website, as it is a critical information hub and communications center. A project manager should be appointed immediately. Promptly finalize the features needed, select the best third party tools, allocate a budget to include training and ensure that enough staff are engaged on website updates to achieve the quality of communications noted above. If such an

effort was properly resourced, and there was a concerted effort, then there would be major project milestones every month and the new website could be operational by January 1, 2016.

### **Task Force Recommendation #3**

Support genuine two-way communications. The community is not a passive recipient of outbound communications. It can provide important input to a whole range of issues, and possible easy solutions, if they were simply noted and acknowledged. It could also decrease distrust and speculation which is created in the absence of good communications. In general, all stakeholders need their voices heard and responded to in a meaningful, appropriate, and timely manner.

### **Task Force Recommendation #4**

Ensure that communications relating to academic matters are given a high priority. Keeping parents more consistently informed regarding academics, promises a substantial payback in student happiness and achievement and family satisfaction. District-wide academic initiatives and changes must be communicated clearly and consistently.

## The Plan

The Communication Plan is intended to:

- Provide a timely, accurate and professional portrait of Framingham Public Schools.
- Maintain strong relationships with our stakeholders
- Further the trust our community has in our schools.
- Provide procedures for all members of our community to engage in appropriate and productive two-way communication.
- Further our strategic goals to enhance learning for all students.
- Establish clear FPS voice.
- Highlight continued district/school initiatives.
- Coordinate internal communication within our school system.
- Be a continuous work in progress as needs and communication methods change.

Immediate Actions:

- **Own our information - Staff, families and students get district/school information directly from the district/school.**
- Examine the Final Report (May 2015) from Communication and Public Relations Task Force.
- Create an administrative communications committee to review current practices, and develop short-term best practices for two-way communication.
- Centralize communications process (press, releases, website, etc.)
- Establish a review process for all further communications that includes proofreading, editing, and completeness of message.
- Create Crisis Communication Plan.
- Overhaul District/School Websites to include information covering events and calendars, emergencies, snow days, latest news, press releases, newsletters, programs and curriculum, sports and extracurricular activities, menus, policies, decisions, contact information, bus routes, homework, homework help, budget, and staffing, with translation, search, and archive capability.
- Maintain and update the Framingham Public Schools Facebook (only 1 way communication). Identify community Facebook groups.
- Create an educational YouTube Channel for video distribution and streaming which can be incorporated on the school and district website and social media.

## Communication and District Goals

### *Vision 2020*

**Strategic Goal 3:** Promote community support for a high performing system with appropriate resources, strong partnerships and broad-based communication.

#### **Communications Goal 1:** Develop pathways for regularly informing our school community and the broader of Framingham.

##### ***Actions:***

- Facilitate conversation among school stakeholder groups and district administrators.
- Facilitate connection between nontraditional stakeholders (senior citizens, businesses, etc.) and district administrators
- Identify and maintain electronic communication means (email, listservs, and social media) to provide information for identified population (teachers, administrators, parents, students, town officials, business leaders, etc.).
- Develop centralized press release system.
- Analyze the ConnectEd usage reports and recommend best practices for district personnel and principals to use the system effectively.
- Implement and maintain social media tools.
- Build and maintain partnerships with business and community leaders.
- Provide district representation for community-led meetings: Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, business partnerships and senior citizen groups.
- Build and maintain a partnership with the Framingham Alumni Association.
- Develop a database of Framingham alumni in an effort to connect with graduates.
- Work with the Framingham Educational Foundation to contribute to their web presence.
- Develop a process for tracking, monitoring and responding to complaints, issues, and problems.

#### **Communication Goal 2:** Explore and identify the means in which our website and social media can be used to maximize awareness and support of district and school goals.

##### ***Actions:***

- Overhaul [www.framingham.k12.ma.us](http://www.framingham.k12.ma.us)
- Maintain school committee website on the Framingham Public Schools website, including agendas, meetings and important announcements.
- Implement and maintain social media tools.
- Manage effective and accurate public district calendars on the website.
- Train key personnel for effective use of the website for increased communication.
- Make available DESE materials including district report card and school report cards online.
- Develop a process to collect/communicate the results of survey data.
- Broadcast video/media through social networking on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Framingham Access TV.
- Produce video/media of Framingham Public Schools special events to support internal and external communications.

- Create video/media (informational and educational in format) for release on website and Framingham Access TV.
- Utilize instructional video/media to build awareness of events at the school and district levels.
- Publish information to increase stakeholder knowledge of the Framingham Public Schools.
- Create logos for programs and initiatives. Make logos available to school personnel.
- Publish articles to local area newspapers to reach patrons with messages targeting key goals and district finances.
- Develop a multi-year communication training strategy for district administrators and principals
- Make available and distribute fact sheets of district goals and objectives to media.
- Publicize DIP and SIPS and updates of progress during the school year.
- Establish a “New to Town” link on the website.

**Communications Goal 3: Establish effective employee communication plans to improve internal communication and employee engagement.**

***Actions:***

- Develop district-wide expectations for communication to and from staff.
- Insure communication expectations are part of new staff orientation.
- Develop protocols for ensuring the accuracy and professionalism of content.
- Assist schools and departments with internal communication plans and actions.
- Maintain school and department web pages in cooperation with directors, coordinators and department heads.
- Develop and maintain Staff handbook for all staff.
- Develop a staff orientation video that welcomes new employees to Framingham and includes key messages.
- Create and manage a district shared site and promote it as the primary source of information for staff members.
- Offer one-on-one training sessions for employees who are responsible for making departmental updates to the website.
- Add content to department and special interest pages to increase usage of the site.
- Continue to promote the website to employees through newsletters, e-mails, pamphlets, and other marketing materials.
- Provide ongoing professional development and training for staff members.
- Offer communication training to Framingham administration.
- Continue with ConnectEd system upgrades and training for new system features.

**Communications Goal 4: Establish strong, positive genuine two-way communications and connections between individual schools and their communities.**

- Provide training for school communication teams to facilitate communication among staff and community.
- Establish group and individual training for web content management with key personnel.

- Establish group and individual training for staff to ensure PTO communication is accurate.
- Implement parent portal on X2 for consistent access by parents
- Facilitate communication between staff and students via X2 Aspen.
- Provide resources for staff members and parent leaders and encourage their use in order to build connections and partnerships in the community.
- Continue to develop and implement new features for school websites.

**Communications Goal 5: Create brand identity and develop key messages and talking points about the Framingham Public schools.**

***Actions:***

- Establish administrative communications committee to implement and oversee this implementation of this plan and provide feedback on communication planning projects conducted by Framingham Communications.
- Generate talking points for administrators regarding mission, initiatives or individual situations.
- Develop templates of PowerPoint presentations, videos, press releases and other media to for administrators.
- Provide consistency in the prologue of all Framingham produced media.
- Provide expectations of quality for content and presentation of media