

Santa Cruz County Office of Education Communications Plan 2019-2021



Dr. Faris Sabbah, Superintendent of Schools

Plan available at <https://sccoe.link/communicationplan>

#SantaCruzCOE

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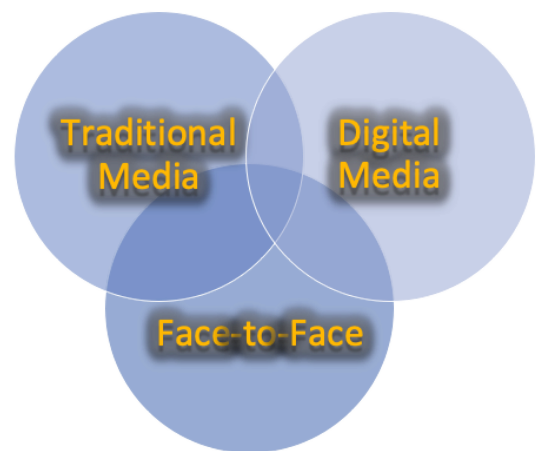
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Committee Members

Jason Borgen	Chief Technology Officer, Tech+ Services
Yvette Brooks	Executive Assistant/MIS Technician SELPA, Student Services
Nikolette Cendreda	Payroll Audit, Business Services
Sharon deJong	Department Coordinator Special Education, Student Services
Steven Hoy	Career Tech Ed. Partnership (CTEP) Asst. Director, Student Services
Jennifer Izant Gonzales	Project Director Alternative Education, Student Services
Sage Leibenson	Administrative Assistant to Superintendent
Melissa Lopez	Payroll Support Manager, Business Services
Rose Moonwater	Web and Communications Coordinator, Tech+ Services
Melissa Roberts	Senior Director - New Teacher Project, Ed Services
Eric Sanders	Technology Infrastructure Analyst, Tech+ Services
Audrey Sirota	Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator, Ed Services
Kris Stanga	Senior Director - District Support and Leadership, Ed Services

Overview

Santa Cruz County Office of Education (Santa Cruz COE) serves over 40,000 students across the county. The Santa Cruz COE supports school districts, students, educators, families, and the broader community. This is accomplished through programs and services that provide oversight, direct student programs, and that lead systemic change. The Santa Cruz COE's mission is *to lead an equitable and innovative learner-centered education system*. With five divisions and close to 50 departments and/or projects, one challenge of the Santa Cruz COE is how to effectively communicate the work across the vast stakeholder groups—internally and externally, as well as locally and globally. To that effect, the Santa Cruz COE convened a Communication Planning Committee (CPC) in 2018-19 to develop a strategic Communication Plan that will guide systemic approaches in communicating Santa Cruz COE's work toward supporting students and families across the greater Santa Cruz County region. With equity at the center of all Santa Cruz COE's work, the committee wanted to ensure communication efforts serves ALL groups. The CPC therefore identified three channels of communication: **Face-to-Face, Traditional Media, and Digital Media**. These three channels are interrelated and must be utilized by all divisions for successful outreach to Santa Cruz COE stakeholders. The following plan provides goals and actions aligned to all three channels based upon a series of needs assessments that took place throughout the 2018-19 school year. The goals and actions identified will be implemented through the 2020-2021 school year.



Aims:

- The Santa Cruz COE is **committed** to effective communication promoting awareness, increasing knowledge, and inspiring collaborative learning communities.
- The Santa Cruz COE uses varied and dynamic means of **personal interactions, traditional media, and digital media** to promote countywide student services and district support.

Needs Assessment

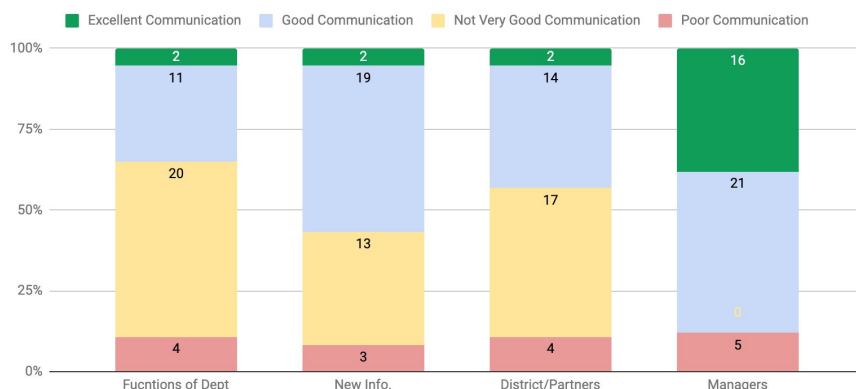
Focus Groups and Interviews

In the Winter of 2018, Communication Committee members met with several internal and external stakeholders including staff, administrators, and various Santa Cruz County community members. Overall, this feedback group reported they are “unsure” about other departments’ work as there is little communication nor collaboration. Staff did reveal that email communication about trainings and events are helpful, but somewhat disorganized. There was a concern that meetings with all staff are difficult for teachers and other staff working in South county area to attend.

Principals across the county were interviewed at a Principal Network Meeting. There was consensus that email communication about County Office events and trainings were well communicated. There was mention about how the Santa Cruz COE can be a lead in countywide school closures and/or other emergency situations.

Internal Communication Survey

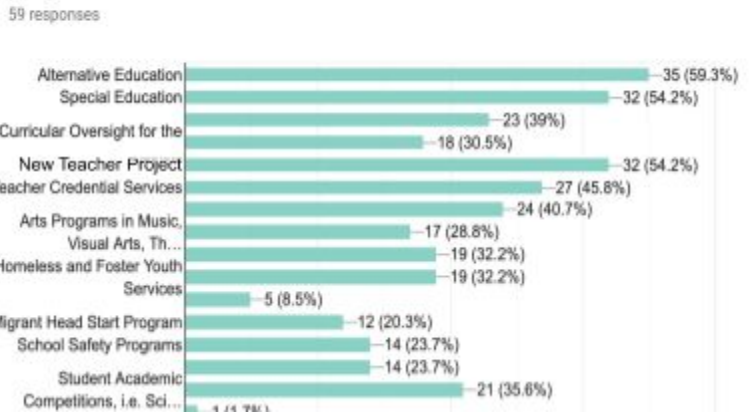
In the Winter of 2018, an Internal Communication survey was administered to all Santa Cruz COE staff. 44 staff members completed the survey (15%). The CPC will work to increase the percentage of respondents as this percentage reflects a lack of engagement of Santa Cruz COE staff. As seen in this figure, close to 66% of respondents stated there is Poor or Not Very Good Communication. Almost 50% of respondents were also dissatisfied with communication about new information. Sharing information to internal staff around ongoing work with Santa Cruz COE partners and districts is also minimal as just over 50% of respondents rated communication is Poor or Not Very Good. Managers are perceived to be doing well in communication about department/division work as close to 95% of respondents state manager communication is Excellent or Good. Internally, there definitely appears to be silos of communication channels that have difficulty leaving the department/division.



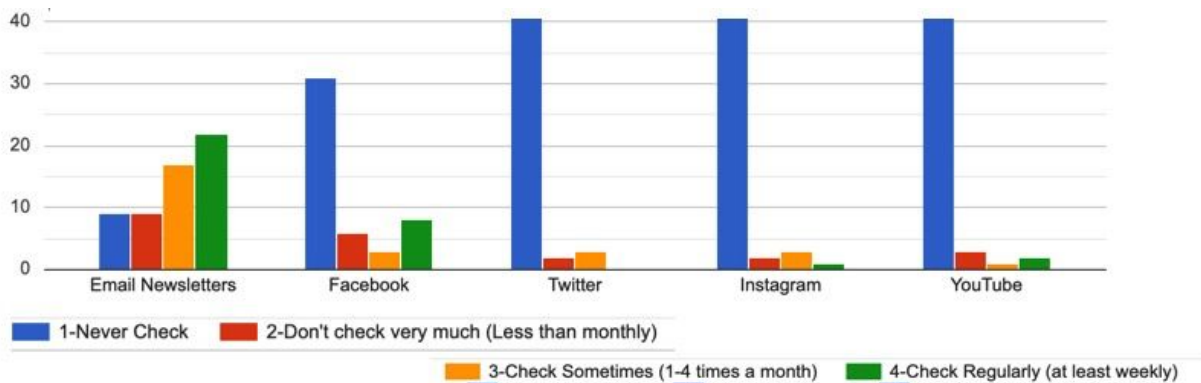
External Communication Survey

In the Winter of 2018, an External Communication survey was administered to the community via email newsletter, social media, and shared during community meetings. There were 59 respondents representing various community engagement, but the majority (66%) representing educators across the county districts. As represented in the chart, external stakeholders are most familiar with direct student services (Alternative Education, Special Education) along with district support through the New Teacher Project--over 50% of respondents mentioned they are familiar with these programs. Respondents are split around items they are most interested in hearing about.

I am familiar with the following Santa Cruz County Office of Education programs:



Out of 59 respondents, 21 mentioned school employee trainings, 19 respondents said visual and performing arts programs, 18 said curricular oversight, and 17 are interested about Alternative Education Programs. This information suggests the Santa Cruz COE's outreach is diverse and the need for communication around all programs is evident. Many of the respondents utilize Email newsletters the most of any communication with over 20 stating they check regularly (at least weekly). Direct mailers are also checked more than others with 12 stating they check regularly. Most respondents stated they rarely check Social media (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook) with Facebook being used most (31 respondents said they



never check).

One respondent said "Communication should be targeted at helping people know about programs relevant to them or to the students they serve." The Santa Cruz COE aims to serve and communicate educational programs to all using all traditional and modern-day tools available.

Goals & Actions

Channel - Face-to-Face

Goal: Increase our presence and exposure both internally and externally.

Strategy: Provide diverse and equitable opportunities for personal relationships and face-to-face connections at local and regional events across the county and beyond.

Rationale: Connecting with community members and staff on an ongoing basis provides opportunities for transparency and awareness.

	2019-2020	2020-2021
External	<i>Each year</i> , curate and share a list of at least 5 external meeting locations available to community members and groups for the purpose of hosting meetings/events. Information should include facilities regulations, costs, building capacity, tech and amenities.	
	Build a community outreach kit that includes at least 4 promotional items: Annual Reports, brochures, pens, and a banner.	Increase number promotional items in kit to six.
	<i>Each year</i> , at the first Manager's Meeting provide volunteer sign-up forms for employees to sign up for their participation at external events.	
	Send representatives to a minimum of 4 community events, geographically distributed across the county.	Increase the number of events to 6.
Internal	<i>Each year</i> , develop one signup form for all department events that require volunteers. Managers are expected to sign-up for at least 1 event/year.	
	Research at least 2 south county meetings spaces to make available for internal meetings.	Begin scheduling south county workshops, and trainings, and/or meetings and make available to all staff.
	All-staff meetings will be held quarterly. At least 1 meeting hosted in south county.	All-staff meetings will be held quarterly. At least 2 meetings hosted in South county.

Channel - Traditional Media

Goal: Utilize traditional media to extend our reach to a greater audience that we may not otherwise reach to promote and discuss news affecting the educational community.

Strategy: Use a variety of multilingual news sources (newspaper, radio) to communicate programs, events, and articles.

Rationale: Communicating through traditional media methods to ensure equitable access to information about COE divisions and programs while conserving paper resources.

	2019-2020	2020-2021
External	Develop a minimum of 3 month-long runs of commercials and/or PSAs to share and promote Santa Cruz COE programs and events.	Increase frequency to 4 month-long runs of commercials.
	Monthly Superintendent column in at least 1 local newspaper to discuss overarching educational events.	Research an additional periodical to publish Superintendent's Report to the community.
	Each department will create event and program content (i.e., flyers) and send it for distribution 2-4x per year (if applicable)	Increase program content to 3-6x per year.
	Each year , review the Santa Cruz COE "on hold" phone message and make changes as appropriate.	
	Develop a press release template and media advisory template to share with all staff. Develop a "how-to" reference guide for staff about how to share this information with the press.	Review and update press release template and reference guide.
	Research 1 partnership for TV opportunities including Community TV, KION, and KSBW.	Create 2 opportunities to appear on TV.
Internal	Begin implementing communications conventions, i.e. logos and branding on all collateral including business cards.	Continue implementing communications conventions, i.e logos and branding. Update as necessary.

Channel - Digital Media

Goal: Utilize multiple digital platforms to increase awareness of programs for a variety of audiences.

Strategy: Create an engaging presence on various digital media platform.

Rationale: Increase awareness of ALL programs to strengthen our community.

	2019-2020	2020-2021
External	At least 3 times a week, post on at least 2 social media platforms that include updates about partnerships, events, and program highlights.	Increase posting frequency to 5 times per week.
	At least quarterly, produce an email Newsletter and send to at least 1,700 subscribers informing the public of successes, program highlights, and achievements, and upcoming events.	Increase number of subscribers to 2000.
	Research opportunities to build and grow a professional and employee-created video presence on various social media that highlight both Santa Cruz COE and department-specific content.	Post at least 5 videos on specific social media platforms.
	Create a social media platform specifically tailored to students and post at least 2 times per week.	Increase posting to at least 4 times per week.
Internal	Create and pilot best practices guidelines for department social media use and email signature.	Maintain guidelines and best practice reference documents with current information.
	Each year , create 5 new “how-to” reference guides for using and producing digital content and make available to all departments. Review and update old reference guides.	
	Each year , Highlight at least 4 personal stories to maximize collegiality.	
	Build intranet as a central hub for each division’s recent activities by publishing one quarterly update. This platform will also store documents regarding technology tutorials, communication conventions, How-To Reference Sheets, and birthdays.	Evaluate intranet usage and determine additions for the intranet including use of multimedia.
	Research adding of Santa Cruz COE as an included agency to existing Media Release agreements for at least five districts.	Implement as feasible.
Convene a social media committee to create guidelines for (1) student-focused and (1) community-focused social media platforms.	Review and update social media guidelines.	

Communication Conventions: Guidelines for Branding and Sharing Content

As we communicate using different forms of media, please integrate the following practices into your efforts:

1. Determine your audience.
2. Define your core message (with students at the center).
3. Choose impactful photographs (**any photos of students require permissions*)
4. Include Santa Cruz COE branding (logos, colors, hashtags, URLs etc.) on all media wherever possible.
5. Ensure the information is accessible to those with disabilities.

Face-to-Face

- Develop a succinct and persuasive message about the programs you offer in your department.
- Have your business cards available.
- Ensure “Santa Cruz COE” is evident in all messaging, programs, and events.
- Using Multimedia Presentations (i.e., Google Slides)
 - Use Santa Cruz COE Templates (Google Docs, Google Slides, Etc.)
 - Reference and link photos and content from previously published Santa Cruz COE websites and articles
 - Use best practices for multimedia presentation (i.e, color contrast, less text, etc.) See [resource from Presentation Zen](#) for tips.

Traditional Media

- To invite the Press to your event, send them a Media Advisory which details only the title, time, location, and any other pertinent information regarding your event.
- Create press releases for large external events and send to the Press List. A press release is a ready-to-go article that the Press could publish 3-5 days before your event.
- Develop positive rapport with reporters.
- Use Santa Cruz COE logos, links to web pages, and hashtags in traditional media to reference social media accounts.
- Utilize Public Service Announcements (PSAs), Community Calendars or Op-Eds

Digital Media

The Santa Cruz COE ensures safe, ethical and responsible use of digital media by all employees through the acceptance of the [Responsible Use of Technology Guidelines](#).

- Use standardized and popular keyword Hashtags wherever possible (i.e., #SantaCruzCOE, topic, and create department hashtags - ie., #SCmath). Keyword hashtags enables Santa Cruz COE to be searched on larger digital networks.
- Be aware and follow/like current local networks where people seek similar information.
- Incorporate hashtags and links to website and/or social media accounts within all staff email signatures, and potentially include COE tagline when available.
- For “calls to action, such as asking for donations, supply a direct link to the donation page to make it as easy as possible for them to help us with that request. For events, include all relevant info on date/time/location and a **link** to register. Follow or like similar pages or orgs and share relevant content.
- Tag news outlets/tv/radio or community leaders to bring attention to an event.
- Monitor comments and engage sensitively on any issues. Be mindful of the specific wording you use to discuss your content.
- Learn conventions of specific platform (YouTube/Twitter/Facebook/Instagram) and utilize the strengths of each platform to build a following.
- Post clear guidelines and policies posted on any interactive digital media page. Deleting any comments is prohibited by law without clear social media policy posted.

Web Articles

- Required elements: Title, text, and least one photo is required to post any digital media article - videos are optional but encouraged.
- Article length can vary, but 300-500 words is an ideal length.
- Write in third person and avoid using acronyms and [confusing jargon](#).
- Tips for writing a captivating article: Include an emotional/aspirational hook, [use interesting but common vocabulary](#), use a storytelling arc, etc.

Professional Development

Staff will receive ongoing training for the above mentioned communication conventions.

Trainings are not limited to but will include:

- How to Navigate Social Media Platforms and Conventions
- How to Write Media Advisories and Press Releases
- How to Create Templates

Training Metrics

Type of Training	Metric
Face-to-Face Training	5-6 workshops every year
Traditional Training	3-5 documents every year
Digital Training	2 Videos and 2 newsletters

Budget Expectations

Item	Description	Cost
Promotional Items	Promotional items supporting the Santa Cruz COE in building awareness and understanding services (i.e., Pens, pencils, etc.).	\$3,500
Supplies	Supplies to promote Santa Cruz COE including fliers and items to set-up exhibits (i.e., brochure holders, table cloth, etc.)	\$500
Commercials	Radio and possible TV commercial slots	\$2,500
Contracts	Graphic design and video production	\$13,500
In-Kind	Free commercial space, Op-Eds, etc	In-Kind
Total		\$20,000

Evaluation

The CPC will be meeting quarterly each year to evaluate the components of the plan. The metrics used to evaluate the plan will include:

Face-to-Face	Traditional Media	Digital Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and External Survey Data Attendance at events Media kit usage External event sign-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and External Survey Data Radio/TV Frequency Press Release/Media advisory frequency Program content information distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and External Survey Data Social media engagements Website traffic Newsletter statistics

Next Steps

The CPC will be building annual implementation/operational plans to support this plan. This document will remain as an evolving document and may be revised as needed.

Appendix

Current Media Contacts

see: sccoe.link/press for details

Templates

The following templates (and more):

- Media Advisory,
- Agendas
- Presentations
- Flyers

Google Docs Template Gallery: <https://docs.google.com/template>

Google Slides Template Gallery: <https://sccoe.link/slidetemplate>

Google Sheets Template Gallery: <https://sccoe.link/sheetstemplate>