



**Amherst County
Public Schools**

**Amherst County Public Schools
Communication Plan**

Overview

Amherst County Public Schools is committed to cultivating excellence in every child, every day. We believe that part of this process is establishing and maintaining open and efficient communications with all stakeholders. As part of this process, ACPS is devoted to planning, facilitating, and implementing opportunities to share challenges and solutions to issues impacting the school community.

Principles for Communication

This plan was developed to assure:

1. All communications support the ACPS' vision and mission
2. Effective two-way communications with the Amherst County Public Schools Community
3. ACPS Families and community members are aware of opportunities and supports
4. Transparency in school district operations

Objective 1: Determine school community needs, expectations, opinion, attitudes, knowledge levels.

Internal Stakeholders: All ACPS Staff

External Stakeholders: ACPS Students and Families, Amherst Community, Amherst Business, Amherst Civic and Faith Based Organizations

Internal		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop and implement mechanisms for identifying needs. These opportunities will be given yearly to school communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs Surveys• Informal conversation (school visits)	
Create longitudinal data as it relates to identified needs of the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with research and analytics providers to facilitate informed decisions. (Hanover)	
Determine and develop best practices based on data collected from the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research best practices (Hanover).• Share data with appropriate Strategic Plan Sub-Group so they may begin work on addressing needs.	
Develop a “State of the Division” message and presentation to be delivered each year to share successes, areas to improve, goals for future, and results of survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop consistent template for presentation• Hold address at a school each fall	

External		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop and implement mechanisms for identifying needs. These opportunities will be given yearly to school communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Needs Surveys ● Town Halls ● Informal Opportunities (i.e Coffee w/ Superintendent) 	
Cultivate and strengthen relationships with the school community to engage them in the district's vision; help them understand district beliefs and values and ultimately engage in the mission by considering challenges and developing solutions to those challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ongoing update of the issues collected and discussed with the following groups.. ● Exchange information for use in communications for the following community members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher Councils ○ Established parent organizations (PTA) ○ Student Councils ○ Faith/Community Leaders ○ Chamber of Commerce ○ School Board Meetings ○ communication tool for residents with and without children in school 	
Create longitudinal data as it relates to identified needs of the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborate with research and analytics providers to facilitate informed decisions.(Hanover) 	
Determine and develop best practices based on data collected from the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research best practices (Hanover) ● Share data with appropriate Strategic Plan Sub-Group so they may begin work on addressing needs. ● Create "Parent University" modules to provide support for parents based on survey feedback. 	
Develop a "State of the Division" message and presentation to be delivered each year to share successes, areas to improve, goals for future, and results of survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop consistent template for presentation ● Hold address at a school each fall 	

Messages: (Types of messaging: Media, website, social media, newsletters, mailings, leadership memos, annual report – who is responsible & protocols for each)

Evaluation: (When and how)

Materials/Budget: (Anticipated need)

Objective 2:

Communicating division expectations and opportunities to the school community.

Develop a systematic approach to keeping families/parents, and staff (school community) informed of division programs and their expectations.

Internal Stakeholders: All ACPS Staff

External Stakeholders: ACPS Students and Families, Amherst Community, Amherst Business, Amherst Civic and Faith Based Organizations

External		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Student Progress/Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set consistent division/school level expectations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communications between teacher and families regarding progress. Frequency/timeliness of updating online gradebook with grades and assignments Minimum response time for teacher to respond to parent email/voicemail Create "Parent University" Modules that may be accessed by students/parents at any time regarding monitoring student progress and accessing the necessary supports. 	
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Academic Programs and the relationship with Post k12 Opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional development to ACPS staff so counselors and administrators are not the sole keeper of knowledge concerning the academic and Post k12 opportunities available to students during their ACPS careers. Development of presentations by administrators, teachers, and counselors at every ACPS school to promote the academic 	

	<p>and CTE pathways that are available to students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create “Parent University” Modules that may be accessed by students/parents at any time regarding program of studies, CTE pathways, internship opportunities, college applications, etc. • Develop age/grade appropriate counseling sessions to help students understand the connection between school and career 	
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Student Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update annually the Amherst County Public School Handbook outlining expectations, policies and consequences for behavioral violations • Provide presentation with Staff and Administration to educate students, parents and families on expectations, policies and consequences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ VTSS Positive Behavior Models shall be included • Create “Parent University” Modules that may be accessed by students/parents at any time regarding expectations, policies and consequences. • School-based VTSS teams will communicate positive behavior 	
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Extra and Co-Curricular Offerings and requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide printed and online access to program/club/team offerings eligibility, expectations, schedules, etc. • Provide presentations/meetings with principals, program directors, advisors, and coaches to educate and inform parents/families on offerings, requirements, changes in program, etc. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing opportunity for clarification and information from advisors/coaches/program directors via email/voicemail/face-to-face • Create “Parent University” Modules that may be accessed by students/parents at any time regarding extra and co-curricular offerings and requirements. 	
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Internal		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Professionalism and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set consistent division/school level expectations for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional Ethics ○ Communicating Effectively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Positive relationship building ■ Customer Service ■ Critical Listening ○ Participating in Professional Development • Provide access to expectations and supports through TalentEd Portal 	
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Instructional Practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set consistent division/school level expectations for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Innovative Practices ○ Project Based Learning ○ Critical Thinking Opportunities ○ Real Life Connections • Provide access to expectations and supports through TalentEd Portal 	
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set consistent division/school level expectations for 	

Programs and the relationship with Post K12 opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Program of Studies PreK-12 ○ Career Pathways ○ Life Ready Skills ● Provide access to expectations and supports through TalentEd Portal 	
Develop a mechanism that communicates division expectations regarding Relationship Building with other staff, students, and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set consistent division/school level expectations for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive relationship building ○ Customer Service ○ Critical Listening ● Provide access to expectations and supports through TalentEd Portal 	

Messages:

Evaluation:

Materials/Budget:

Objective 3: ACPS will determine and implement varied and effective forms of communication for staff, students, and families while understanding the diverse needs of our school community.

Internal Stakeholders: All ACPS Staff

External Stakeholders: ACPS Students and Families, Amherst Community, Amherst Business, Amherst Civic and Faith Based Organizations

Internal		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop a systematic approach to communicating on a regular basis with all staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop catalogue of division communications that mirrors the VDOE supts memo system. • Develop a twice-monthly report to all staff that mirrors the School Board Report compiled by the Superintendent. • Develop a review of relevant information following each monthly school board meeting with all staff. • Identify a designated content manager 	
Division will maintain a uniform process of reporting information to leadership to support understanding and minimize information overload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic review of location and availability of summaries with leadership. • Continued maintenance and organization of leadership shared drive 	
Schools will maintain a uniform process of reporting information to staff to support understanding and minimize information overload.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic review of location and availability of summaries with faculty and staff. . • Continued maintenance and organization of eschools' shared drive 	
Develop system for school-level cataloging of staff-wide communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a designated content manager • Gather input on effective information sharing formats 	

External		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop communications tailored for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a series of communication strategies to address varied parent/family segments 	

parent/family segments based on needs, expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written Correspondence ○ Electronic correspondence ○ Automated messaging ○ Face to face and interpersonal correspondence ○ Multiple Media Outlets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social ■ Print ■ TV/Radio 	
Analyze data from communication mediums to make adjustments in implemented strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilize the following analytics tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Google analytics ○ Hootsuite Analytics ○ Geomaps 	
Implement a method for providing language and cultural diversity in school communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinate with Division ELL 	
Develop a process to provide school related information to organizations who work with students outside of the school system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a master list of organizations with ties to students (day cares, church groups, civic organizations, etc.) ● Provide these organizations with access to Power Announcer ● Send alerts and event updates to these organizations 	
Develop a process to provide timely responses to community inquiries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide articulated policy for reply timeline expectations. 	

Messages:

Evaluation:

Materials/Budget:

Objective 4: Enhancing Communication

ACPS will facilitate and enhance effective and meaningful communication between families and schools as well as district and staff.

Internal Stakeholders: All ACPS Staff

External Stakeholders: ACPS Students and Families, Amherst Community, Amherst Business, Amherst Civic and Faith Based Organizations

Internal		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Provide communications training sessions to site-level staff to include critical listening, customer service, and use of district communication platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Professional Develop Modules to be completed by all staff. • Assure that new staff receive the same training as part of on-boarding each year • Assess effectiveness of training and adjust accordingly 	
Provide continuing training sessions as part of Principals' meetings on how to train teachers and staff to communicate their school's message.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Leadership Conferences to provide in-depth communication training. • Provide on-going training during weekly/monthly leadership meetings. 	
Supply administrators with talking points documents and other easy-to-use communication tools as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop consistent "talking points" templates for use when leadership must deal with difficult situations, significant changes, etc. 	

External		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Develop a process for engaging and involving families in school and division communication platforms/forums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to School Nights, • New Parent Orientations • Parent University 	
Establish trust of information through consistent channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a review for a consistent look of all sharing of information and news on social media and website 	

Create a “Family Champion” program for each school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Family Champion Job Description and Expectations document. • Develop criteria and process for selecting family champion • Provide yearly professional development for family champions 	

Messages:

Evaluation:

Materials/Budget:

Objective 5: Crisis Communication:

- A. Develop procedures to communicate with internal and external stakeholders regarding preventative measures.
- B. Develop procedures to communicate with internal and external stakeholders during and after crisis situations.

Internal Stakeholders:ACPS Staff

External Stakeholders: Amherst County Sheriff’s Office; Amherst County Public Safety

Internal		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Crisis communications evaluated after each event and written plan and procedures updated based on evaluation results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAR with division team immediately following crisis events • 1-7 days after the event depending on the size and scope of the crisis situation. 	
Plan for provisions of emergency back-up and additional support for district communications office in the event of a large scale crisis or emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and train select SAO staff. 	Begin process in the 2021-22 school year.
Deployment of Tabletop exercises at the school level and joint crisis drills with public safety agencies at the district level; systemic evaluation of drills to assess employee readiness in crisis response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement tabletop scenarios at the school level. Coordinate with SRO's to conduct school level scenarios. • Coordinate direct of Public Safety and ACSO to conduct division level exercises to assess division and agency readiness and ability to work together in crisis situations. • Develop rubric to evaluate response to scenarios in order to assess employee Conduct at least one tabletop drill at each of the schools in the division prior to end of 20-21 school year; establish quarterly calendar for the conduct of drills. • Schedule a meeting with Public Safety and LEO to discuss readiness and develop a training plan prior to July 31, 2021. • Develop rubric in conjunction with Public Safety and LEO's to assess employee readiness in crisis situation readiness in crisis response. 	
Conduct Crisis Communication Rubric of Practice with ACPS Safety Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete rubric with safety committee at May 27 safety meeting 	Next meeting is scheduled for May 27

External		
<i>Strategies:</i>	<i>Tactics:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
Crisis communications evaluated after each event and written plan and procedures updated based on evaluation results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAR with LEO and Public Safety following crisis events • 1-7 days after the event depending on the size and scope of the crisis situation. 	
Conduct Crisis Communication Rubric of Practice with ACPS Safety Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRO's participate in Safety Committee Meetings and can provide input as we complete the rubric • Next meeting is scheduled for May 27 	
Deployment of Tabletop exercises at the school level and joint crisis drills with public safety agencies at the district level; systemic evaluation of drills to assess employee readiness in crisis response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement tabletop scenarios at the school level. Coordinate with SRO's to conduct school level scenarios. • Coordinate direct of Public Safety and ACSO to conduct division level exercises to assess division and agency readiness and ability to work together in crisis situations. • Develop rubric to evaluate response to scenarios in order to assess employee readiness in crisis response. • Conduct at least one tabletop drill at each of the schools in the division prior to end of 20-21 school year; establish quarterly calendar for the conduct of drills. • Schedule a meeting with Public Safety and LEO to discuss readiness and develop a training plan prior to July 31, 2021. • Develop rubric in conjunction with Public Safety and LEO's to assess employee readiness in crisis situations 	

Messages:

Evaluation:

Materials/Budget: