



# North Mahaska CSD Communication Plan

(created November 2024)

The purpose of the North Mahaska Community School district's Communication Plan is to ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed of key updates, goals, events, and changes in a timely manner and in alignment with the district's mission, vision, and strategic plan.

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# North Mahaska Community Schools Organizational Structure

## **Board of Education**

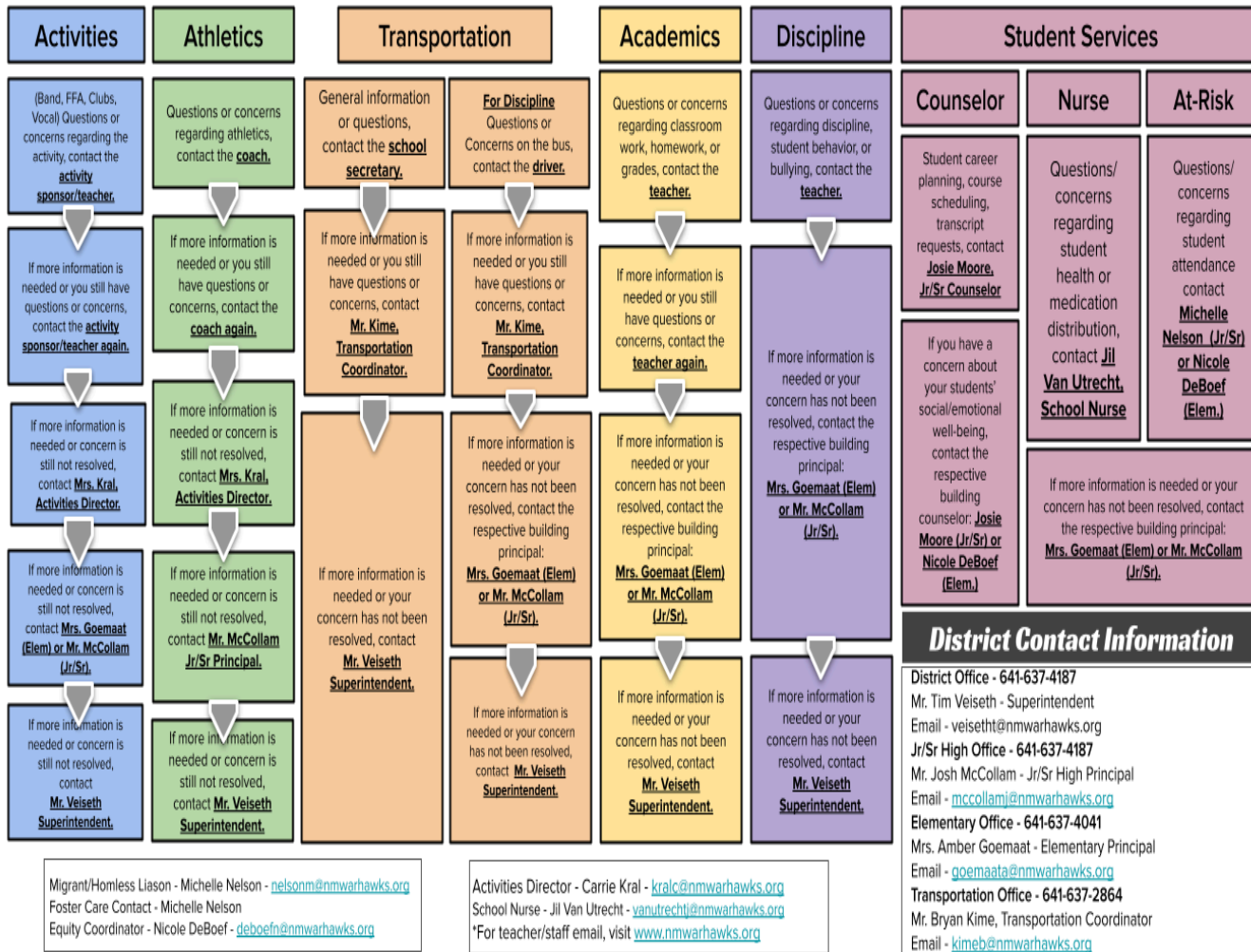
Michelle Sampson  
Polly Ehret  
Brett Morris  
Todd Vanderwilt  
Kraig Koehler

## **Administration**

Tim Veiseth, Superintendent  
Lynette Van Donselaar, School Business Official  
Josh McCollam, Jr/Sr High Principal  
Amber Goemaat, Elementary Principal  
Bryan Kime, Transportation Coordinator

# North Mahaska Community Schools Communication Flow Chart

## Where do you go with a question or concern?



**- Expect The Best -**  
From our Staff, Students, and Community

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## Introduction

Effective communication is essential for the success of any public school district. The district must be able to communicate its mission, vision, and strategic plan to stakeholders effectively and efficiently. A communication plan can be an essential tool for any public school when aligned with the district's mission, vision, and strategic plan. It helps school boards, administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of important updates, changes, goals, and events. It also provides a clear strategy for how communications should be delivered, who should receive them, and when they should be sent. A communication plan helps to ensure that everyone is on the same page and is kept up to date. It will also help to promote transparency and build trust between the district and our various stakeholders, including parents, students, and the community.

This plan includes key strategies that are tailored to the district's needs. These strategies include both in-person and online channels of communication that are easily accessible and consistently utilized. The plan also provides clear and open communication channels for feedback and input.

This communication plan is intended to provide consistent communication that ensures all stakeholders, internal and external, have timely access to information. The plan will identify specific communication channels and strategies for using those channels. In order to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the same information the district will identify and limit the platforms used for communication. When stakeholders know the locations and methods in which the district communicates, it will decrease confusion and miscommunication, as well as reduce the amount of time and resources needed to select and maintain communications on different platforms.

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## **Mission Statement**

**The mission of North Mahaska Schools, in collaboration with the community, is to prepare students to be positive, productive citizens with the passion and skills for lifelong learning.**

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## **Vision Statement**

**North Mahaska will be recognized as an educational leader, with students who fulfill our mission by being productive citizens who reach their maximum potential.**

*Expect the Best - working together to achieve excellence.*

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## **Board Policy**

The North Mahaska Community School Board has approved several district policies that are directly related to communication. This communication plan is an extension of those policies.

Communication Channels - [307](#)

Public comment - [213.01](#), [213.01-R\(1\)](#), and [402.05](#)

Student Publication - [502.03](#), [504.03](#), [504.03-R\(1\)](#),

Social Media - [200.04](#)

## Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a living document that is used to communicate the district's goals and priorities. This plan ensures that all stakeholders are working toward common goals and focuses the district's energy and resources to complete those goals. As we look towards the future we recognize that schools are asked to do more and in many cases with fewer resources. Planning for the future is more important than ever.

In October 2024, the North Mahaska CSD Superintendent and the Board of Education committed to creating a five-year strategic plan. This process was focused on identifying priorities that will help the district succeed in the future.

The Board established its purpose for the Strategic Plan:

- Provide direction and connectivity
- Encourage growth
- Stress the importance of continuous improvement
- Serve as a district compass
- Establish the culture of our organization
- Focus resources on district goals
- Advertise to parents the district's future/current direction (retain/recruitment)
- Align current initiatives with future goals
- Provide clarity in the respective roles of the Board of Education, administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and the community

The NMCS D [strategic plan](#) establishes three Strategic Goal Focus Areas:

1. Academic Excellence
2. Community Engagement
3. Resource Management

The Community Engagement Focus Area illustrates the district's focus on communication protocols that value transparency and stakeholder input.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



#### Cultivate Effective Stakeholder Communication

Strategies to Support	Details of Strategy	Status Update
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance internal and external communication protocols that value transparency and stakeholder input.</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular assessments of communication strategies through surveys and feedback loops</li> <li>• Use platforms like communication apps, SMS, and messaging systems to streamline stakeholder communication.</li> </ul>	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on building active listening skills and cultural competence to engage all stakeholders effectively.</li> </ul>	
Indicators of Success	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct communication effectiveness surveys with at least 75% stakeholder participation</li> <li>2. Ensure 100% of our stakeholders have access to communication platforms</li> </ol>	

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## Communication Priorities

North Mahaska CSD must prioritize effective communication in order to ensure that all stakeholders are informed about the district's goals, initiatives, and events. The district should strive to create multiple channels of communication both in-person and online. This includes hosting meetings and events at schools, utilizing social media platforms, and creating a website with up-to-date information about the district. The district should also actively reach out to parents, teachers, and administrators to ensure that all stakeholders are informed about the district and its plans.

The priority of the communication plan is to be clear and transparent about when and where stakeholders can access district information. As technology evolves so do the platforms that we use for communication. The district can't utilize every social media or internet platform that our stakeholders may use. Instead, the district will be selective, yet consistent, with the platforms that it uses while making sure that all stakeholders know the location or avenue for gaining information, asking questions, and providing feedback.

The district should create a safe and open environment for feedback, allowing stakeholders to provide their thoughts and suggestions. Open communication will ensure that stakeholders feel informed and included in the decision-making process.

The *NMCS D Communication Preferred Method Chart* is intended to provide a quick reference to what method of communication the district will utilize based on the type of communication. The information being sent will determine who will receive the information using these methods of communication. All emergency alerts and school closings will be sent to the Emergency Contacts listed for each student in the district's Student Management System (PowerSchool - School Messenger).

### **Phone and Email Outages:**

In the event that both phone and email systems are down, the district has a plan to ensure that the Elementary Secretary and Jr./Sr. High Secretary can still receive calls. However, setting this up may take some time, as our internet provider does not open until 8:00 AM, by which time students will have already begun arriving at school. Additionally, we will use social media platforms to share updates and important information during the outage.



# NMCSO Communication PREFERRED METHOD CHART

TYPE OF COMMUNICATION	WEBSITE	PHONE ALERT	EMAIL	SOCIAL MEDIA	MEDIA	SMS
Emergency Alert	✓	✓	✓			✓
School Closing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Event Promotion	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Announcements	✓		✓	✓		✓
General Information	✓		✓			✓

It is critical for our stakeholders to reach out to us when they have concerns or questions. If information is not available through our primary channels as illustrated in the *NMCSO Communication Preferred Method Chart* then the next step is to contact the district. This is the most effective and expedient way to gather the information needed. It is important to start communication with the person who is closest and has the most information on the situation. The *Point of Contact Progression Chart* provides a progression of contacts that can be used to effectively gather information and work through situations. When contacting the district, please utilize this progression chart. District staff will ask and redirect your calls as needed to maintain the integrity of this system.



**Point of Contact  
Progression Chart**



**PLEASE REACH OUT TO US**

**(641) 637-4187**

TOPIC	1ST CONTACT	2ND CONTACT	2ND CONTACT	4TH CONTACT	5TH CONTACT
Classroom/Instruction	Teacher	Principal	Superintendent	School Board	
Academics	Teacher	Counselor	Principal	Superintendent	School Board
Curriculum	Teacher	Principal	Superintendent	School Board	
Behavior/Discipline	Teacher	Behavior Interventionist	Principal	Superintendent	School Board
Special Education	Teacher	Principal	Superintendent	School Board	
Athletic	Coach	Activities Director (AD)	Principal	Superintendent	School Board
Activities	Sponsor/Advisor	Activities Director (AD)	Principal	Superintendent	School Board
Technology	Technology Lead	Principal	Superintendent	School Board	
School - Other	Principal	Superintendent	School Board		
Transportation	Transportation Coordinator	Superintendent	School Board		
Food Services	Principal	Superintendent	School Board		
Buildings & Grounds	Superintendent	School Board			

District Protocols/Policies	Superintendent	School Board			
Student Mental Health	Counselor	Principal	Suicide Hotline		
School Safety (Immediate Concern Call 911)		Principal	Superintendent	Police Department	

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## Communication Strategies

Several strategies can be used for effective communication. This district focuses on the following seven strategies for internal and external communication.

### 1. Use The Most Appropriate Approved Channel:

- Choose the most appropriate channel for the message
- The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face
- Ensure the message is compliant with district policies
- Check with the administration before using any new channels

### 2. Clear, Concise, and Error Free:

- Write in simple, easy-to-understand language
- Be as precise as possible
- Keep messages concise and to the point
- Proofread for informational errors as well as any grammar, punctuation, spelling, omitted words, repeated words, spacing/format, and typographical errors.

### 3. Talk to the Audience with a Focus on Customer Service:

- Understand the needs of the audience
- Show respect for the other person and their feedback
- Provide customer service in a friendly and helpful way
- Be open to feedback and questions

### 4. Communicate Early and Visibly:

- Be proactive in communicating information to stakeholders
- Get the message out in multiple ways (e.g. email, website, etc.)
- Make sure messages are seen and heard

### 5. Develop Common Messaging:

- Develop a unified approach to communication
- Ensure all messaging is consistent and clear
- Be aware of any cultural differences that may affect the message

### 6. Utilize Proper Communication Chain of Command:

- Ensure messages are delivered through the correct channels
- Establish a chain of command where communication is shared in a logical and organized manner
- Follow the communication hierarchy for approvals
- Be aware of any protocols that must be followed

### 7. Provide Opportunities for Feedback and Questions:

- Encourage feedback and questions
- Be open to constructive criticism
- Be responsive to inquiries

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## Website

Having an up-to-date website is essential for effective communication. A website can provide a platform to share important information and updates, as well as engage with key stakeholders. It can also be used to showcase events and services, improve customer service and support, and build brand awareness. An up-to-date website is key for staying competitive and staying connected with those who matter most. The district website is the primary source of information for our students and parents.

To maximize the potential of an up-to-date website for communication, there are a few strategies to consider.

- Ensure the website is easy to navigate and all information is clearly laid out
- Keep the website content up-to-date with fresh content, including any recent news or announcements
- Ensure that all content posted to the website is consistent with the school district's mission and vision
- Maintain an accurate calendar and include new events as soon as they are available
- Leverage the website to communicate upcoming events and activities
- Utilize the website to provide useful information and resources for families
- Utilize multimedia elements such as images, videos, and audio to engage visitors
- Make sure the website is accessible to all users, regardless of device or disability

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## Social Media

Social media should not be the primary source of information from the school district as it may not reach all of the school district's stakeholders. Social media is often used to connect with younger generations, but parents, staff, and other stakeholders may not be as active on social media platforms. Additionally, messages shared on social media can be easily lost among the vast amount of content that is shared on these platforms. The school district website or direct email/phone communication should be the primary source of information as it is more comprehensive and can reach all stakeholders.

It is important for a district to only approve specific social media platforms because it ensures that all communication is consistent, clear, and in line with the district's objectives. By limiting the number of platforms used, the district can ensure that all messages are cohesive and that there is no confusion among stakeholders. Also, it helps to save time and resources, as it reduces the need to monitor and manage multiple accounts. Additionally, using only approved platforms allows the district to better control the message and ensure that all posts comply with district and platform policies and standards.

Social media can be used to support the official communication provided on the website or through email and phone alerts by providing an additional platform for disseminating information to stakeholders. It is a great tool that can be used to share quick updates, announcements, or reminders with the school district's followers. It can also be used to highlight positive stories and accomplishments from the school district, which can help build a positive reputation and create a sense of community.

Any social media account for a district-sponsored activity will need district approval and consistently follow the standards and strategies listed below. Requests for new social media accounts will be reviewed and approved by the administration and will start with the employee's immediate supervisor (activities director, building principal, or superintendent).

The following standards will be used by the district when developing official accounts:

- Gain district permission to establish an account
- Establish a clear purpose for the account
- Develop an appropriate name and use consistent district branding
- Create a detailed profile that includes contact information, a link to the school district's website, and other relevant information
- Ensure that all security measures are in place to protect the account and its content
- Turn off/disable or require approval for any public comments
- Provide clear guidelines for staff regarding the use of the official social media accounts

The following strategies shall be used by staff utilizing social media for district communication:

- Make sure all posts adhere to the school district's mission and vision
- Only post content that has already been communicated through the website or phone/email messaging
- Use social media to promote important messages and updates from the school district
- Share positive stories and accomplishments from the school district
- Utilize social media to promote upcoming events
- Don't post any confidential or sensitive information
- Don't post content that is not related to the school district

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## Email Communication Protocols

When done correctly email is a great resource for communicating information. An email should never replace a meeting or face-to-face conversation when those are more appropriate.

When communicating via email keep in mind the following drawbacks:

- **Lack of emotion:** It can be difficult to accurately convey emotions through email. This can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations.
- **Lack of immediate feedback:** Responding to emails can take time, meaning that the recipient may not get an immediate response.
- **Overload:** People can become overwhelmed by the influx of emails they receive, and may miss important messages.
- **Errors:** Emails can be sent with errors, such as typos or incorrect information, which can lead to confusion.
- **Security risks:** Emails can be vulnerable to security risks such as phishing attacks.

The following strategies should be used when communicating through email:

- **Be Responsive:** Respond to emails promptly. Same-day response is preferred but no longer than 48 hours when possible. Don't leave emails unanswered for too long. If needed, provide an update instead of waiting until all information is gathered.
- **Verify Recipients:** Only send emails to the appropriate and intended recipients. All emails should be limited to the specific people who need the information. Verify all recipients in a group email before sending. Do not add a recipient to an email without stating it at the beginning of the email. Do not use Reply All unless all recipients need the information. Always ensure that internal communications do not have external recipients.
- **Use Clear Subject Lines:** A clear and descriptive subject line will help the recipient quickly understand the content of the email.
- **Personalize Messages:** Try to personalize emails when possible. Use the recipient's name and relevant details to make the message more personal.
- **Use a Professional Tone:** Always use a professional and respectful tone when communicating through email. Avoid using slang or jargon, and use appropriate language and grammar.
- **Be Concise:** Keep emails as concise as possible. Stick to the relevant points and avoid writing long emails.
- **Use Appropriate Formatting:** When necessary use bold text, bullet points, and other formatting options to make emails easier to read. Be strategic in the use of formatting options as too much will make emails difficult to read.
- **Proofread:** Before sending an email, proofread it to make sure it is free of any errors.
- **Use Attachments:** If necessary, use attachments to provide additional information. Make sure the attachments are in a format the recipient can open.
- **Be Professional:** Do not forward emails or attachments without the consent of the sender. Do not forward internal communication to external recipients.

## Internal Communication

A significant amount of information is shared daily within the school district to ensure effective and timely sharing of information within the district.

### Goals of Internal Communication

1. Provide open and transparent communication
2. Set clear expectations for when and how to communicate
3. Foster collaboration through communication
4. Provide timely information sharing for effective decision making
5. Include effective feedback loops

### Strategies for Internal Communication

- When possible, communicate face-to-face
- Facilitate regular staff and committee meetings
- Use email for sharing information
- Schedule important dates early and make them available on common calendars
- Ask for feedback



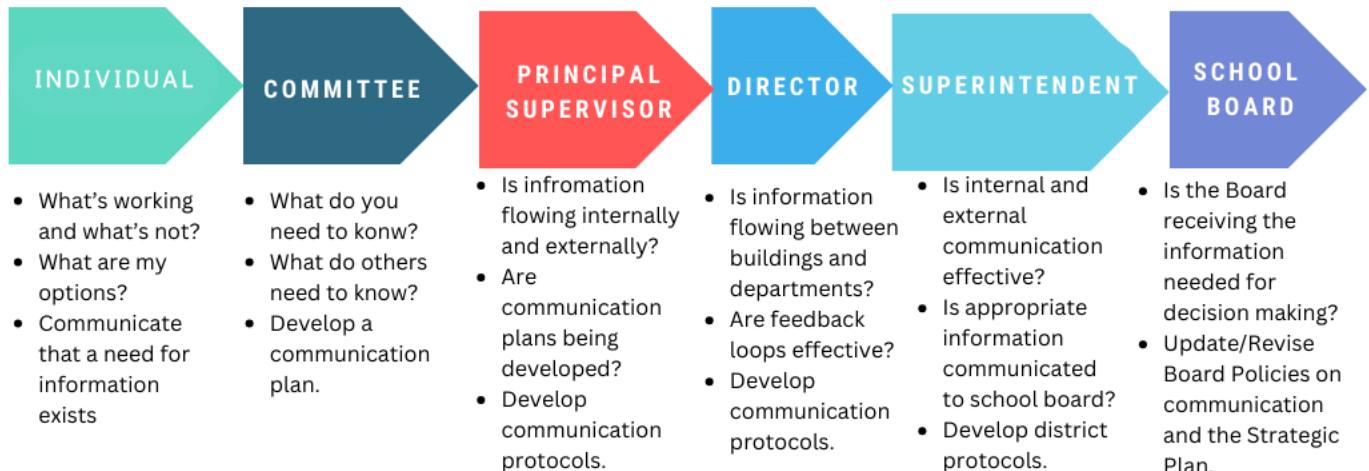
## NORTH MAHASKA COMMUNITY SCHOOL INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

### Develop a Communication Plan

To properly ensure timely and effective communication, it is imperative that buildings, programs, and committees develop a written communication plan.

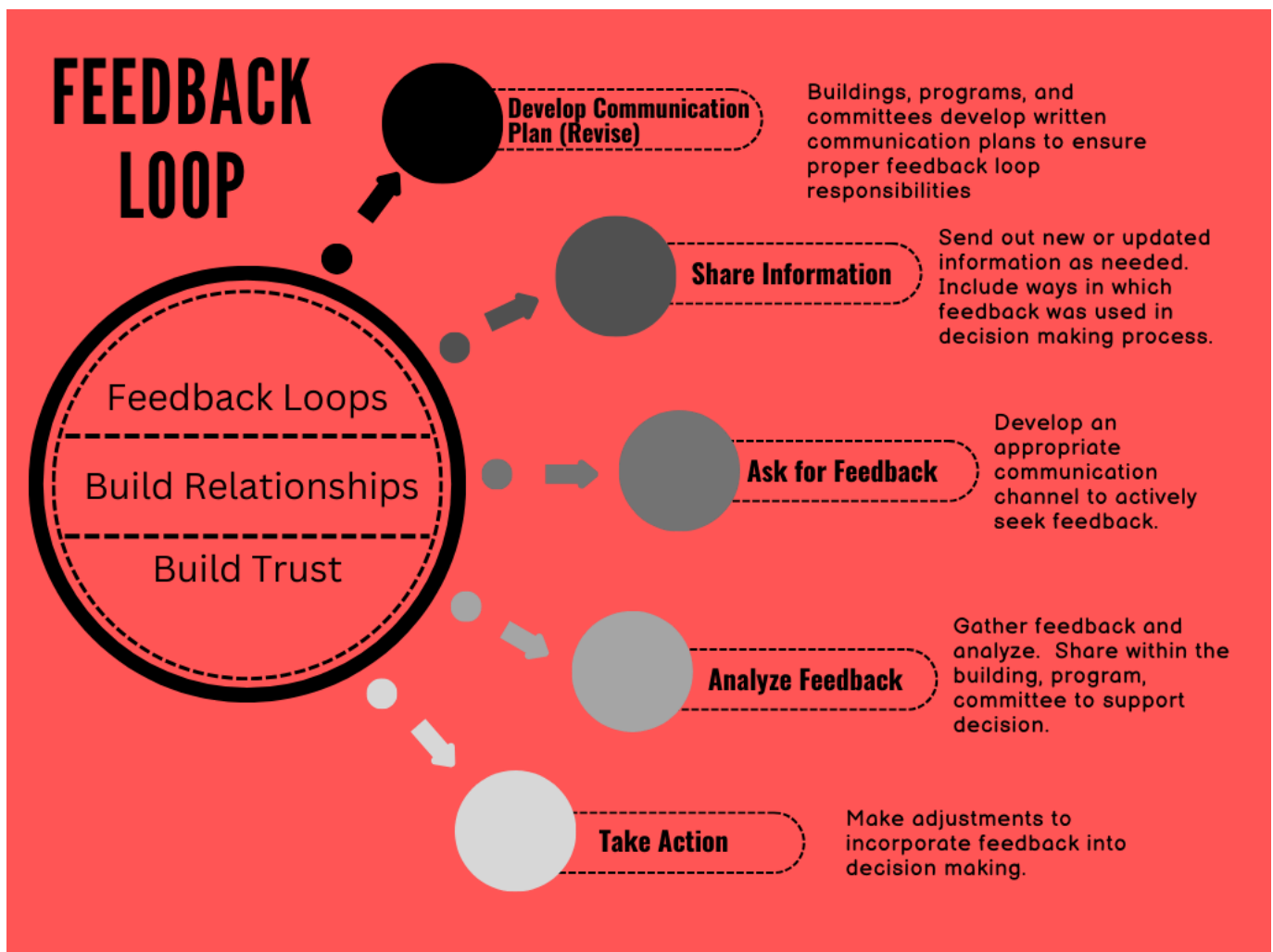
### Communication Plans Include

- Communication Goal
  - What do you need to know?
  - What do others need to know?
- Target Audience
  - Method of Communication
  - Who is Responsible
- Frequency
  - Feedback Loop




## Feedback Loops

It is important that any time information is shared by the district that a method for feedback is available. A feedback loop is a process of collecting and responding to feedback from stakeholders to continuously improve district communications. It involves five steps which include the development of a communication plan, sharing information, asking for feedback, analyzing the feedback, and taking action on that feedback. Feedback loops can be used to not just improve communication but also the programming, protocols, and policies of the district. The intent of the feedback loop is to help decision makers understand the impact that we make as a district. Effective use of feedback loops will help build trusting relationships with our stakeholders.



## Progression of Support

For internal communication to be successful, it is important for staff to understand the support system that is available in the district. This includes a progression of support by our various employee teams. The *Progression of Support Chart* illustrates the communication chain that should be used when an employee, committee, or program needs support.

 <b>PROGRESSION OF SUPPORT CHART</b>				
	<b>1ST RESOURCE</b>	<b>2ND RESOURCE</b>	<b>3RD RESOURCE</b>	<b>4TH RESOURCE</b>
<b>Curriculum (T1)</b>	Principal	Superintendent		
Interventions (2/T3)	Instructional Coach	Principal	Superintendent	
<b>Instruction</b>	Instructional Coach	Principal	Superintendent	
Behavior (PBIS)	Behavior Interventionist	Principal	Superintendent	
<b>Special Education</b>	Teacher	Principal	Superintendent	
Athletic Extracurricular	Coach/Advisor	Activities Director	Principal	Superintendent
Technology	Technology Lead	Infrastructure Technology	Principal	Superintendent
Maintenance	Principal	Maintenance Head	Superintendent	
<b>Finance/ Budget</b>	Principal	School Business Official	Superintendent	
School Safety	Supervisor	Principal	Superintendent	



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## Board-Staff Communication Chain of Command

The organizational structure of the school district is reliant upon effective internal communication. In order for this to happen it is imperative that a chain of command is established and followed so that important information travels up and down the chain of command as needed. Failure to follow this chain or jump the chain creates an information gap that may prevent effective decision-making processes. It is important to note that all communication to and from the School Board goes through the Superintendent as outlined in [Board Policy Communication Channels - 307](#):

*The Board of Education desires to maintain open channels of communication between itself and the staff. The basic line of communication will, however, be through the Superintendent.*

- *Staff Communications to the Board - All communications from staff members to the Board or its committees shall be submitted through the Superintendent. This procedure is not intended to deny any staff member the right to appeal to the Board on important matters through established procedures.*
- *Board Communications to Staff - All official communications, policies, and directives of the Board of staff interest and concern to the staff will be communicated through the Superintendent, who shall also keep staff members fully informed of the Board's problems, concerns, and actions.*
- *Social Interaction - Both staff and Board members share a keen interest in the schools and in education generally, and it is to be expected that when they meet at social affairs and other functions, they will informally discuss such matters as educational trends, issues, and innovations, and general activities of the District. However, since individual Board members have no special authority except when they are convened at a legal meeting of the Board or vested with special authority by Board action, discussions between staff and Board members of personalities or personnel grievances will be considered to be unethical conduct.*

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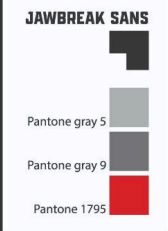
## District Branding

It is important to follow district branding in order to ensure consistency and cohesiveness in all communications. Branding helps to create a unified message and identity for the district, and it helps to establish trust and recognition with stakeholders. By following district branding, the district can ensure that all of its communications are professional, on-brand, and recognizable to those outside of the district.

North Mahaska Community Schools has a long history of various mascots, logos, and representations. Since 2024, North Mahaska has utilized its very own trademarked logos that now represent everything North Mahaska Schools. From logos and letterhead to colors and usage, these brand standards can be found in the "[North Mahaska Style Guide](#)" document.

The logos contained within the Official Identity Style Guide are trademarked and owned by North Mahaska Community Schools. To protect the district brand and ensure proper usage of logos, all usage of these logos requires express written consent from the North Mahaska School Superintendent. To inquire about the usage of these logos please contact the Superintendent at (641) 637-4187.

**All usage must comply with the standards detailed within the Identity Usage and Style Guide.**



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## Summary

A school district communication plan is essential for any public school. It helps school administrators, teachers, and staff to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of important updates, goals, events, and changes. It also provides a clear strategy for how communications should be delivered, who should receive them, and when they should be sent. A clear and effective communication plan helps to promote transparency and build trust between the district and its various stakeholders.

To ensure that the communication plan is effective, district staff should follow the established guidelines and protocols. This includes choosing the appropriate communication channels and methods for each stakeholder group, developing a unified and consistent message, and regularly evaluating and updating the communication plan to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Staff should also take steps to ensure that all communications are reaching their intended audiences and that the visual style is consistent across all channels. By following these steps, staff can help to ensure that the communication plan is successful in meeting the needs of all stakeholders.