



WINOOSKI SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE



WINOOSKI SCHOOL DISTRICT



www.wsdvt.org



info@wsdvt.org



60 Normand Street Winooski,
VT 05404

WSD PROMISE TO THE COMMUNITY

All students will graduate from the Winooski School District (WSD) college and career-ready at a cost supported by a majority of the Winooski community. WSD students will lead healthy, productive, and successful lives and engage with their local and global community.



WSD COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



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INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is vital to the success of the Winooski School District. No matter your position, as a district employee, you are not just a communicator but a district representative responsible for upholding our values and mission through your communication.

We are committed to honest, transparent, and consistent communication with stakeholders. Frequent, clear communication builds trust and understanding of our strategic commitments and the district's vision for student success. Our district has diverse outreach needs, and strong relationships are essential.

This employee communications guide presents a clear framework for engaging with and communicating with internal and external audiences.

The Director of Communications is responsible for delivering accurate information promptly and maintaining internal and external communication for the district.

Major operational areas include:

- Internal communication
- External communication
- Message Creation
- Social media(Facebook, Instagram)
- Electronic messaging(BlackboardConnect)
- District and Winooski Newsletter
- Community and media relations
- Video Production
- Budget and annual report communication
- Crisis communication



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS
We are the future.



SHARE YOUR NEWS, PHOTOS, AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

NEWSLETTERS

There are two newsletters: the bi-weekly District Updates, which is sent electronically to families and staff, and the Winooski Newsletter, which is mailed to Winooski residents and posted online. Content for both newsletters can be submitted to the Director of Communications.



From WMHS Chorus teacher Mikayla Keleman:

We are thrilled to announce that Passy Matendo was selected to participate in the prestigious Vermont All-State Music Festival, held from May 8-11.

Accompanied by her music teacher, Mikayla Kelemen, Passy attended the festival in Barre, where she showcased her exceptional talent and dedication to music.

SHARE YOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Have you captured anything you'd like highlighted on social media or the newsletters? Please email the Director of Communications.



From JFK 3rd grade teacher Mary Carleton:

Third mathematicians were challenged to measure the lengths of objects in nature using rulers marked with halves and fourths of an inch to generate data and make a line plot using their data. We created whole class line plots to share in the hallway near our classroom, come and take a look the next time you're in the building!



PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

We LOVE capturing moments with our students and school events. Please email the Director of Communications and the WSD Superintendent with any updates or happenings.





NEED COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT?

Do you need communications support for publicizing an event or engaging with families and the community? Last March, we successfully collaborated on outreach for two community events: Holi and Iftar. Both events were fantastic and engaged our community. Reach out to the director of communications for support.





MEDIA OPT OUT

Representatives from WSD, the media, and our partner programs (including 21C afterschool, summer programming, and other afterschool activities) may photograph, videotape, and/or interview students in connection with school programs or events for printed or online publications, newsletters, news releases, website stories, videos, social media, and other school publications ONLY with permission.

As of the 2023-2024 school year, the district implemented an **“opt-out”** media approach. Unless WSD has a signed Media Release Opt-Out Form on file, a student’s photo/image/interview may be used in any previously stated media capacities. This form allows parents or guardians to refrain from allowing the WSD, the media, or our partner programs to take photos, videos, or interviews of their minor children.

Media opt-out is listed under parental permissions in PowerSchool. The Director of Communications will send out the media opt-out list quarterly.





MEDIA RELATIONS

As we continue to engage with the media to share our school's great stories and achievements, it is essential that our efforts are coordinated and aligned with our communication strategy. To streamline the process and ensure effective media outreach, please follow the following procedures when developing story pitches or engaging with the media.

Story Pitch Development:

- All story pitches must be submitted to the Director of Communications for review and approval before outreach.
- Clearly outline the key points of the story, its relevance to our school, and potential angles that would interest the media.
- The Director of Communications will review and provide feedback on all submitted story pitches.
- Once approved, you will receive confirmation to proceed with media outreach.

Media Outreach:

- All media outreach efforts must include the Director of Communications in the communication loop. Please CC the Director of Communications on all email correspondence with the media.
- If a media outlet expresses interest in a story, coordinate with the Director of Communications.
- The Superintendent must approve all media requests.

Interview Requests:

- If you receive a direct interview request from the media, promptly inform the Director of Communications. Include details such as the proposed date, time, and format (in-person, phone, virtual).

Crisis Communication Protocol:

- In the event of any media inquiries related to sensitive or crises, immediately inform the Director of Communications.



GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

The WSD recognizes the media's crucial role in reporting news and information about its policies, programs, services, events, students and employees. The Office of Communications is committed to providing necessary information to the media and working within deadlines.

IMPORTANT: All media outreach efforts must include the Director of Communications in the communication loop and coordinate with them if a media outlet expresses interest in a story

The Director of Communications can help you prepare for interviews and develop talking points. We also have a press kit with valuable information about the district that you can share.





GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Do

- Define your objective
- Anticipate interview questions — especially the tough ones.
- Prepare your responses — they should be concise and free from jargon and acronyms.
- Outline 3-5 key points you would like the audience to remember from your interview and reiterate them as you respond to the reporter's questions.
- Stress the positives, but remember, honesty is key. It's important to be truthful in your responses to maintain your integrity and the trust of your audience.

Don't

- Go "off the record" or off-topic
- Speculate or be enticed to respond to what-if scenarios
- Provide personal opinions
- Violate confidentiality
- Lie or manipulate the truth
- Attempt to downplay a serious situation
- Get confrontational or talk down to the reporter
- Say "no comment" — if you cannot answer, explain why





SCHOOL MESSAGING PROCEDURES

The Winooski School District uses the Final Site Connect (Blackboard Connect) mass notification system to deliver targeted, relevant messages to families and staff members via phone and email.

VOICE CALLS

Voice calls are essential to regular family communication, mainly due to the diversity of languages spoken within our community. We understand that many families are multilingual and may face challenges with written communication in their native language. Therefore, voice calls become the primary means of effectively conveying information, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder comprehension.

Audience:

- Families: Vital information, announcements, and updates, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder comprehension.
- Staff: Critical updates, unexpected changes in schedules, and urgent matters.

Frequency:

Regular voice calls are scheduled to accommodate our families' diverse linguistic backgrounds. These calls will focus on conveying important information in a clear and accessible manner. Other communication channels, like emails, will complement voice calls to ensure comprehensive coverage.





SCHOOL MESSAGING PROCEDURES

EMAIL

Email serves as the primary mode of communication for detailed information, announcements, and routine updates.

Audience:

- Families: General announcements, newsletters, event invitations, and academic updates.
- Staff: Professional development opportunities, administrative updates, and collaborative information.

Frequency:

Regularly, depending on the nature of the information.

TEXT MESSAGES

Text messages are reserved for brief information and emergency notifications.

Audience:

- Families: Emergency alerts, last-minute reminders, and immediate updates.
- Staff: Urgent reminders and time-sensitive information.





SCHOOL MESSAGING PROCEDURES

COMBINED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Some information is relevant to both families and staff. In such cases, communication will be delivered through multiple channels to ensure comprehensive coverage.

Examples:

- School-wide events and announcements.
- Significant policy changes affecting both families and staff.
- Bi-weekly newsletters, a key component of our communication strategy, will be sent to families and staff to keep them informed about school-wide events, announcements, and policy changes.

Frequency:

Occasional, as needed. Efforts will be made to streamline communication to avoid redundancy.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Timeliness: All communication will be timely and relevant. Urgent messages will be sent immediately, while routine updates will follow a predetermined schedule.

Consistency: Communication will be clear, concise, and consistent across all channels. The same information will be conveyed to families and staff, ensuring a unified message.

Accessibility: We are committed to ensuring that communication is accessible to all recipients, valuing and including diverse needs and preferences.



SCHOOL MESSAGING PROCEDURES

REQUEST FOR MESSAGING

Following a structured procedure is essential when staff members wish to communicate specific messages to the school community.

- All communication requests should be directed to the Director of Communication, who will serve as the central point for coordination.
- Staff should include the content of the message, the desired dissemination timing, and the preferred method of communication. Voice messages are only reserved for the most critical communication since they are the most intrusive method.
- When a message is approved for voice dissemination, only one occurrence is allowed unless approved by the superintendent. This streamlined approach ensures consistency and avoids potential information overload for our families.





SOCIAL MEDIA

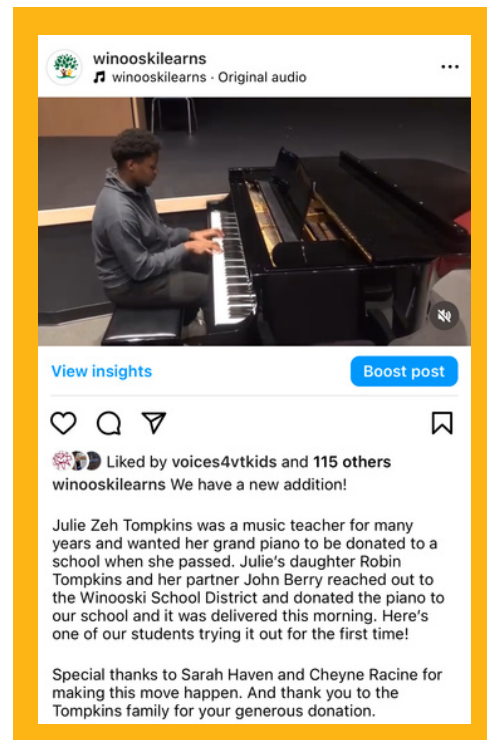
The Winooski School District is committed to using technology safely, consistently, responsibly, and effectively for learning, communication, and productivity. We recognize and support the use of approved online social media to enhance instruction and research, support the learning environment, and improve communication.

As a school district, we maintain two official social media accounts as part of our social media strategy. They are as follows:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/winooskilearns>

Instagram: [@winooskilearns](https://www.instagram.com/winooskilearns)

An official social media account is any account that represents the WSD, its schools, departments, programs, or extracurricular activities. Only district employees should “own” official school and district accounts.





CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

As part of the Districtwide School Safety Team, Communications Office staff will support schools and departments during any crisis or emergency by:

- Gathering facts and disseminating accurate information as quickly as possible.
- Collaborating with public information officers (PIOs) who work for emergency services agencies.
- Preparing and delivering targeted messages for staff, families, community members, and the media.
- Developing talking points for school personnel and managing the flow of information to avoid accidental disclosure of premature, incorrect, or confidential information.
- Serving as the point of contact for all media inquiries.
- Monitoring news reports and social media posts.

The district's policy is to maintain an open and proactive relationship with the media. At the same time, all communication during a crisis must be carefully managed. The Crisis Communications Team will develop all written information to be released publicly and approved by the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent of schools will designate the district's primary spokesperson.

Staff and parents come first, then the media. The priority is to internal audiences - students, staff, families, and the Board of Education. Make sure they find out first from the district.





FACT SHEET

- Location: Winooski, Vermont
- District Size: Approximately one square mile, making it the smallest geographical school district in Vermont
- Grades Served: Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade.
- School Configuration: All grades are housed within a single educational center
- Diversity: Winooski School District is recognized as one of the most diverse school districts in Vermont, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural backgrounds and identities among its student population
- Commitment to Equity: The district is dedicated to providing an equitable and inclusive learning environment, ensuring that all students have access to resources and support to thrive academically and socially
- Academic Offerings: Winooski School District offers a comprehensive range of educational studies, extracurricular activities, and support services to meet the needs and interests of its diverse student body.
- Focus on Personalized Learning: The district prioritizes personalized learning and student-centered approaches to education, fostering an environment where students can reach their full potential.
- Collaborative Community Partnerships: Winooski School District works collaboratively with families, community organizations, and local businesses to enrich the educational experience and provide opportunities for students to engage with their community
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement: The district is dedicated to continuous improvement, regularly evaluating and adapting its curriculum, instructional practices, and support systems to benefit all learners
- Values: The Winooski School District values diversity, equity, inclusion, collaboration, and personal empowerment. It strives to create a nurturing and supportive learning environment for all students, staff, and families.





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