

Sabbatical Report 2018

Communication Plan

Research how schools are engaging and connecting to their communities, and based on my findings, develop a robust communication plan relevant for our school to ensure all aspects of communication are effective and well managed.

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1. Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank the staff, Board of Trustees and community of Waiiau School for supporting my sabbatical and for allowing me the time to investigate an area of particular interest professionally. The time to rest, reflect, clarify my thinking and re-energise myself through time away from the everyday work of my school has been much valued by me and I know the learning I have undertaken will be valuable for the future of my school.

Thank you to Maureen Kerr - Leadership consultant for challenging me to clarify my thinking around what I wanted to focus my learning time in this sabbatical on, and asking piercing in-depth questions when developing the communication plan.

Thanks also to Clare Hocking - Leadership Adviser, Canterbury Region for her support through my learning journey.

I also acknowledge and thank local Canterbury and Christchurch Schools who were available to share their insights into their schools' Communication Plans.

Thank you to the Ministry of Education for making principal sabbatical leave available.

2. Introduction

Communication Plan

In its simplest definition, a communication plan outlines who you need to communicate with, about what, how you're going to do it, and how often.

Effective communication is crucial to any organisation, and schools are no different. With a comprehensive communications plan, you can promote your school to parents and the community, connect with current students, attract future students, and successfully engage potential staff members.

A solid, actionable plan is critical for school communications success, but things are moving pretty fast these days for even the savviest communicators.

Managing communications effectively is a key dimension of leadership. This is stressed in *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (Ministry of Education) and in *Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners* (Education Council). The cultural competencies of *Wānanga* and *Whanaungatanga* contain behavioural indicators and outcomes specific to leaders that can be applied in all situations.

Effective communication underpins the knowledge, skills and dispositions principals require to have a direct and indirect influence on student outcomes, as identified in the *Best Evidence Synthesis on leadership*.

Taking time to review our communications strategy and ideas was time well spent during my sabbatical. Many problems, in and out of schools, can be directly traced to the effectiveness of school's communications – whether information was communicated or not, what was communicated, how it was communicated, and who communicated it. Communication for a school must at all times be clear and timely for its purpose.

Taking time to think about what we want to say also ensures we maintain our integrity and professionalism, of our school, and the wider educational community.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the sabbatical was to:

- Review and research how schools are engaging and connecting to their community and how they communicate.
- Review how Waiiau School has been communicating to Children, Parents, Staff, BOT and our wider community.
- Update Waiiau School's Communication Plan.
- Improve/build on Waiiau School's current communication strategy.

4. Background

Principals apply a range of formal and informal communication skills every day. Communications may be deliberately planned or ad hoc; face to face or virtual; written, video or verbal; digital or non-digital.

We need to consider how effective our existing communication strategies are:

- What are your key reasons for communicating with your audiences?
- What are your key messages?
- Are your reasons for communicating helping you lead change or lead learning in your school?
- How do you ensure your key messages are communicated clearly and consistently?
- How does the way you are communicating help you to build trusting and respectful relationships with your audiences?
- How do your communication strategies change over time?
- Are there two or three aspects of communication that you should emphasise during the next year?
- When did you last review your strategies?
- What feedback on them do you have or need?

5. Literature Review and Reflection

1. Enhance your schools strengths
2. 4 key content areas
 - Crisis communication
 - Internal communication
 - Media and community relations
 - Parent engagement
3. Importance of keeping up with technology
4. Must always consider
 - Peoples ability to use technology
 - Privacy
 - Confidential issues
 - Cultural differences
5. Teachers community
 - Where teachers meet and learn

6. Findings

1. What is a plan for communication?

Planning is a way to organise actions that will lead to the fulfilment of a goal.

- Our goal in this case is to raise awareness about our school to the local community.
- Inform children, staff, BOT, and parents of notices and events.
- Ensure there are effective pathways of communication.

2. To develop a plan for communication of any sort, you have to consider some basic questions:

- Why do you want to communicate with the community? (**What's your purpose?**)
- Whom do you want to communicate it to? (**Who's your audience?**)
- What do you want to communicate? (**What's your message?**)
- How do you want to communicate it? (**What communication channels will you use?**)
- Whom should you contact and what should you do in order to use those channels? (**How will you actually distribute your message?**)

The answers to these questions constitute your action plan, what you need to do in order to communicate successfully with your audience. The remainder of your communication plan, involves three steps:

- **Implement your action plan.** Design your message and distribute it to your intended audience.
- **Evaluate your communication efforts, and adjust your plan accordingly.**
- **Keep at it**

3. The attached Principal's Communication Plan has been developed taking into consideration all the above points.

Communication is an ongoing activity for any organisation that serves, depends upon, or is in any way connected with the community. The purpose, audience, message, and channels may change, but the need to maintain relationships with key people in our community remain. As a result, an important part of any communication plan is to continue using and revising our plan, based on our experience.

4. It was challenging finding any school that had a formal communication plan. Although everyone I contacted could clearly identify the purposes of communication in a school and the different ways communication took place and its importance to improve student learning and engagement.

7. Implications

1. A clear Communication Plan states exactly who is responsible and how communication will take place.
2. A school Communication Plan is an ongoing document that requires regular revision.
3. The Communication Plan needs to be shared so that all parties know their role.

8. Recommendations

1. Revise Communication Plan annually.
2. Survey all stakeholders to ensure their ongoing needs are being met in the most effective way possible.
3. Continue the dialogue with professional forums to follow, and contribute to the development of the Communication Plan.
4. Review and update the current Communication Plan.

9. Bibliography

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12. Campus Suite: <https://www.campussuite.com/3-steps-creating-school-communication-plan/>



Principals Communication Plan

Ensuring there is an open/clear plan for communication for our school

	What	How	Timeframe	Outcome
Board of Trustees	- Informal, regular meetings with Chairperson and BOT Members	- Meeting with Chair - School newsletters, Citizen (Community) - School website - Emails to BOT - Facebook - Informal conversations (Daily contact) - Phone/texts - Meeting with BOT members relating to their portfolio	- Formally twice a term at BOT meetings - Informal meetings - as required - Meeting before BOT meeting	- Any emergency issues Principal will have contacted BOT Chair - The management systems have been effective - BOT are kept well informed - BOT are aware of any urgent emergencies as they arise - Kept up to date/ aware - any professional changes i.e. legislative changes
	- Students achievement targets and progress reports	- Principal's report - Email	- Formally twice a term at BOT meeting	- Updated targets in relation to identified needs and trends
	- Education Act changes as they occur	- Principal's report	- Formally twice a term at BOT meeting	- Kept up to date
	- Patterns trends identified i.e. absenteeism	- Principals' report	- Formally twice a term at BOT meeting	- BOT provide support as required, included in school targets as appropriate
	- Charter - Annual Goals	- Principal's report - Analysis of variance	- Formally twice a term at BOT meeting	- BOT, set and are aware of, strategic direction.
	- Legislation compliance - Nag	- Principal's report	- Formally twice a term at BOT meeting	



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	What	How	Timeframe	Outcome
Staff	- Teaching and learning conversations	- Informal contact everyday - Staff meetings - Staff yearly calendar - Weekly whiteboard - Email - Face to face - Whiteboard	- On going/Daily Basis - As applicable	- Communication between Staff and Principal open, transparent and clear. - Kept up to date day to day admin on needs to know basis - BOT strategic direction and targets - Process in place - urgent communication / emergency issues - Principal identify - Specify trends and address as requested i.e. special education
	- Children's welfare and wellbeing	- Informal contact everyday - Email - Phone - Staff meetings - RTLB, RtLit, Social Worker, Health Nurse etc - Principal /teacher/parent meeting - 'Of Concern' Register	- Immediately / as required - Every Term	- Principal aware of any issues relating to students and then able to access appropriate support
	- Management	- Staff meetings, - Informal contact everyday - Email - Phone/texts	- As applicable	- Staff kept up to date on a need to know basis
	- Professional Development	- Staff meetings - Courses - Email	- Ongoing, as appropriate to school targets and goals	- Staff continually upskilled - Improvement in teaching and learning outcomes
	- Informal contact with staff (Wellbeing, health, safety)	- Contact everyday	- Ongoing	- Happy, healthy staff - Improved learning outcomes for students -
Non Teaching	- Teacher Aide	- Informal contact everyday - Formal meetings - Whiteboard - Email, texts, phone	- Ongoing	- Upskilled and confident
	- Executive Officer	- Informal meeting every work day - Email, texts - Phone	- Daily basis	- Efficient, effective Executive Officer - Understands and can use ranges of skills and programmes (Etap, Enrol, Novopay)
	- Relievers	- Informal contact - Whiteboard - Email/text - Formal meetings	- As required - Daily class plan	- Effective relievers reflecting our school values
	- Cleaner	- Informal contact - Phone - Whiteboard - Calendar on cleaners door	- Informal contact everyday	- Kept informed of dates and work required



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	What	How	Timeframe	Outcome
Whanau/ Parent /Caregivers	- Day to day operation	- Citizen, newsletters, texts ,emails, phone tree, class Dojos newsletters, facebook, school website, surveys, SeeSaw. -	- Weekly/fortnightly with sufficient time to make decisions	- Parents are kept well informed of day to day operations of the school -
	- Celebration of events and learning	- School assembly, Seesaw, parent meetings, - Mid year concert - Learning conferences - Reports - Matariki, Prizegiving, Sports eventsNewsletters, Citizen, School website, School Docs,	- Day to day - 6 months - End of Term 2 and Term 3 - 3 written reports a year - On going	- Waiau School activities and learning celebrated - Notified in a timely manner of changes of routine - Kept well informed of their children's educational progress - Parents kept well informed of well being and welfare at school.
	- Learning Conferences	Planned meeting with Parents, Teacher and Student.	- End of Term 2 and Term 3	- Informed parents and teachers
	- Reporting to Parents/Caregivers	- Telephone, email, face to face, facebook, school website, School Docs, Citizen, Newsletters. - As applicable priority learners will be actively involved in setting IEP's and their study programme	- Yr 1 - 3 Half yearly - Yr 4 - 6 End term 2 & 3 - All - Full written report December	- Parents of priority learners will be actively involved in setting IEP's and their child's progress.
	Formal - Formal Curriculum Reports to BOT	- Report to BOT	- Triennial audit and report plan	- Identify trends - Set targets in relation to identified needs
	- Formal Curriculum Reports to Parents	- Learning conferences (End of Term 2& 3) - Reports	- 3 written reports a year	- Parents well informed of their child's educational progress
	- Emotional wellbeing of children	- Ongoing discussion with teachers and parents - Use of professionals (RTLb, RTLit, Wellbeing, Social workers, Health Nurse)	- Ongoing - as required	- Student provided with optimal support
Informal	- Curriculum presentations	- BOT - Parent Sessions	- Yearly - Regularly as appropriate	- Informed parents/community of modern teaching and learning and how to help their children.
	- Assemblies	- Face to face - Email, newsletters, Facebook	- Weekly	- Students share their learning and excellent examples of their work - Parents informed of general student progress, achievement and social skills.
	- Mid year concert	- Concert	- Middle of year	- Informed, entertained adults and students
	- Informal contact with Parents	- Face to face	- Ongoing	Regularly kept informed of current success and learning requirements.



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	What	How	Timeframe	Outcome
Community	School celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen / Newsletter - School and BOT news, Facebook, school website, website calendar, newspapers, Seesaw. - Posters - Events - Sports, Community/Parent Concerts, Prize giving, assemblies etc 	Regularly as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School will keep community well informed of school events and celebrations - Wider educational community - COL - COL - Well represented. Part of that involvement will involve sharing and contributing to strengthened learning across the whole community
	Special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen / Newsletter - School and BOT news, Facebook, school website, website calendar, newspapers, See saw. - Posters 	Recorded on yearly calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community aware of actives they can be part of. - Community well informed and feel part of our Waiau School family
	Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsletters, Citizen, newspapers, Dojos, text, Facebook, Seesaw, Assemblies, Prize Giving, Sport events, Badges, School displays. 	Every week	
	Information eg - Earthquakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newsletter - Parent ringing list - See saw - School Website - Facebook 	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School will continue to be the hub of the community for emergencies i.e. Earthquakes & celebrations



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	What	How	Timeframe	Outcome
Learners (Student Voice)	- School wide focus to encourage and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach how to have a voice - Demonstrate & articulate what they are doing - Assemblies - Mid year concerts - Goal setting - Year 6 leadership - Buddies - Focus in classroom reflection - Students confidently discuss and articulate their learning and understand what means good learning. - Self management of their learning behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 Way learning conferences twice a year. Children demonstrate to parents - Every week 	- Articulate students who reflect our school values and ethos.
	- Students take ownership of their learning and behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking responsibility for their own learning and behaviour - PBL - Social theme for week - School Values - Demonstrating correct behaviour/ learning attitude 	- Every day	- Children confidently articulate and discuss their learning and understand what makes good learning and self manage learning and behaviour.