



2021-22 Communications GUIDE

This booklet is produced by the Communications Office for use by administrators, parent empowerment liaisons, campus webmasters and crisis coordinators.

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Contacts

Office of Communications

- **Sylvia Wood**, *Chief Communications Officer* **281-891-6014**
713-876-2561 (Cell)
- **Frankie Johnson**, *Executive Assistant* **281-891-6007**

Communications Department

The Office of Communications' responsibilities include preparation and distribution of district communications, including media relations, the district website, print publications and automated messaging. The department is your connection between your school and the news media, and will prepare and distribute all district-related news releases and photographs to the news media and on the district's website at www.springisd.org.

- **Sara Butler**, *Executive Director*..... **281-891-6017**
979-777-9939 (Cell)
- **Monica Velez**, *Executive Assistant*..... **281-891-6010**
- **Kristen Cobb**, *Communications Director*..... **281-891-6021**
248-996-4535 (Cell)
- **Jim Wineman**, *Creative Services Coordinator* **281-891-6018**
- **Rony Canales**, *Web Specialist* **281-891-6030**
- **Pete Lares**, *Web Specialist*..... **281-891-6011**
- **Michael Esterheld**, *Communications Specialist*..... **281-891-6378**
- **Georgina Garza**, *Bilingual Graphic Design Specialist*..... **281-891-6108**
- **Andy Nguyen**, *Graphic Design Specialist*..... **281-891-6015**
- **Nathalie Ramirez**, *Bilingual Communications Specialist*..... **281-891-6708**

News Media Relations

All media calls should be directed to the Communications Office.

Spring ISD and the News Media

Our first obligation is to ensure that a good instructional day occurs every day in Spring ISD schools.

Public trust and confidence are enhanced when the community knows about and understands school operations and programs. Both the community and the school district benefit when a positive, cooperative attitude is maintained between the school district and the news media.

Spring ISD willingly provides information about programs, projects, school board actions and all items held to be public information and not excluded by the Federal Family Rights and Privacy Act and the State Open Records Law.

The district philosophy is one of cooperation while still protecting students and employees from undue public exposure in cases when that exposure could serve to harm the individual or disrupt the operations of the school. If you have questions regarding public information, call the Spring ISD Communications Office.

Staff/Media Procedures

Throughout the year, campuses and departments have various events and activities where media coverage is requested. The Communications Office is responsible for coordinating media coverage for our district and schools. All requests for media must be submitted, in advance, to the Communications Office. The Director of Communications will contact the media to arrange for coverage.

NO CAMPUS/DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL SHOULD CONTACT THE MEDIA DIRECTLY.

News releases and/or media advisories are prepared regarding events submitted to the Communications Office. These are sent to area media for their consideration. Media are asked to let us know ahead of time if they will be able to attend the scheduled event. The Communications Office will then contact the designated school/department to let them know to expect media presence.

MEDIA MUST HAVE THE DISTRICT'S CONSENT TO BE ON SPRING ISD PROPERTY.

Media do not need permission to be in public areas, such as across the street from campuses.

The Communications Office will contact campuses if the media are requesting admittance, and arrangements will be made accordingly. In most situations, a staff member from the Communications Office will escort media on Spring ISD property.

Employees and the Media

If a media representative contacts a Spring ISD employee about a school-related issue, the employee should politely and simply inform the media representative that all media requests must be submitted to the Spring ISD Communications Office at **281-891-6009**. The employee should then immediately contact the Communications Office and provide any information they have about the request, such as the name of the person representing the media, the reason for the call, and a contact number.

How to Request Coverage

Outside media coverage is arranged on an event-by-event basis. To request coverage, please submit your request and information via Send Us News, an online submission form located at www.springisd.org on the Departments menu.

When submissions are made via Send Us News, a notification is sent immediately to Communications staff. The submission is placed on the department's news calendar for planning purposes and posted immediately on the district website calendar when appropriate.

Please remember that before a student may be photographed or interviewed, it will need to be verified with the school registrar whether the student has an objection to publicity in e-school.

Submitting Information

If Communications staff are unable to attend a campus event, we ask campuses to send pictures and information about the event to the Communications Office. In addition, please remember to post your event information on your school website and social media.

Media Interviews

The Communications Office will coordinate all media interviews and work with departments and campuses to identify the appropriate representatives to be interviewed. Communications will work with the interviewees in advance to prepare them for the interview. Print and online media often request phone interviews, and broadcast media will want to capture the interview on camera.

Never speculate.

Stick with the facts.

Don't discuss other schools or districts.

There is no such thing as off the record.

The microphone is always on!

Contact Information

Kristen Cobb, Communications Director
kcobb12@springisd.org
281-891-6021 (Office) 248-996-4535 (Cell)

Crisis Communication Steps

When an emergency occurs:

1. Call the appropriate administrator (Campuses should call their assistant superintendent.)
2. Call the Communications Office. The principal is responsible for the care of students and staff at the location. After safety has been established, the maintenance of public trust and confidence is of prime importance. That is best done by effective communication through the Communications Office. Please provide accurate and objective details to the Communications Office at the earliest possible time.
3. The Chief Communications Officer, Executive Director of Communications or the Director of Communications will serve as district spokespersons during an emergency or crisis situation.

Communications Checklist

Chief Communications Officer activates division calling tree and supervises the response. Below are the typical steps taken:

Communications Executive Director and/or Director:

1. Prepare a parent communique and media statement based on facts received from the Incident Commander (Coordinate with other agencies' communications offices when applicable. Example – Sheriff's Dept.)
2. Coordinate with Spring ISD Police Department on response to clarify issue
3. Distribute Parent Communique and Media Statement to:
 - a. Board of Trustees, Superintendent, Cabinet and Principals, Asst. Superintendents, front desk receptionist.
4. Distribute communique to parents and staff via:
 - a. Automated phone/email (by campus principal when possible; if not, Communications will send messages in English and Spanish)
 - b. District and campus website, if necessary
 - c. Social media, if appropriate
 - d. Printed letter or backpack mail when applicable
 - e. Respond to Media
 - f. Update information as it becomes available and continue to communicate to designated audiences.

Communications Director:

1. Organize press conferences
2. Monitor news coverage

Contact Information

Sylvia Wood, Chief Communications Officer

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Sara Butler, Executive Director

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Campus Webmasters

Campus webmasters are appointed by campus principals to maintain the campus website. The basic design format of each campus website is predetermined by the Communications Office, but campuses have some flexibility in terms of the website navigation menu and the arrangement of information on the campus home page and other campus web pages. The district Web Specialist will serve as a resource and will train and assist campus webmasters.

The responsibilities of the campus webmaster include:

- Attend four campus webmaster meetings annually (five meetings if you are a new webmaster) to get updates and best practices.
- Update the campus homepage news and announcements section with current news weekly. Post required district information, including reports and notifications as necessary.
- Update the campus calendar, or make sure that someone on the campus is updating the campus calendar, with all campus-level events weekly.
- Update the campus homepage with current campus accolades and accomplishments. New content should be added two times per month at a minimum.
- Manage and maintain all campus-level users and pages hosted by Schoolwires, including communicating best practices for editing and updating sites, scheduling and leading web content training sessions for campus staff as necessary.
- Serve as the liaison between the school and the Office of Communications as it relates to website updates and requirements.

Criteria for Campus Websites

Campus Website Information

The following items are required to be current on your campus website:

- Contact Information - Address, Phone, Fax should be in the website footer.
- Calendar Information - Keep all dates and times up to date.
- School Supply List
- Registration Requirements
- Campus Improvement Plan
- TAPR Reports
- School Report Cards
- Federal Report Cards

Other information that should be on your campus website includes:

- Namesake information
- PTO (if any)
- Bell / Lunch schedule
- Visitor information
- Mission statement, vision, beliefs, etc. (if any)
- School mascot, song and mottos (if any)
- Immunization information

Student Privacy

Always verify whether a student has an objection to publicity in e-school before posting a name or photo on the campus website. Do not release a student's information, which includes, name, photo and work if they have an objection. If you have any doubts, call the parent/guardian.

Web Design for Campus Websites

Maintain the style that has been preset for your website

The web page template and base styles (colors, fonts, links) are defined for you. While custom styles can be applied in the editor, we recommend these changes be kept to a minimum so your web pages look consistent throughout your campus website. Use no more than three fonts and no more than three font colors on a web page.

Edit photos and graphics

We recommend that photos and graphics used on campus websites be resized and/or edited before uploading into Schoolwires.

Keep your web page professional

Animation and sound that is not essential to convey the message on the web page should be omitted.

Music and sound should not be "on" by default; give the web page user the choice whether to turn it "on." Gratuitous animation (e.g., animated GIFs) is unprofessional looking, visually distracting and potentially dangerous. Blinking or flickering graphics at certain frequencies can be triggers for those susceptible to seizures.

Organize your categories so that menus can be limited to one line only.

Use space wisely.

Get the most impact with your photos.

Contact Information

Pete Lares, Web Specialist
plares@springisd.org
281-891-6011

Rony Canales, Web Specialist
rcanales@springisd.org
281-891-6030

Submitting News/Points of Pride

News Releases

A news release is how various news media gather information about your school, such as awards and upcoming events. It is important that certain pieces of information be provided to increase the probability that your information will be used appropriately.

For the release to be timely, please send information to the Communications Office at least two weeks in advance. (Three weeks is even better.)

Send Us News Link

It is easy to submit news electronically to the Communications Office. Go to the Spring ISD homepage at www.springisd.org, go to the Departments menu, click on Communications, then click on the **Send Us News** link located in the green bar on the left-hand side of the page. The Send Us News link is also located on the Staff Intranet under Board Recognitions, and in the myspringisd.org portal on the Employee tab.

Points of Pride Awards

Points of Pride awards are presented at Board of Trustees' meetings to students and staff who have earned honors or recognition at the state or national level. When you check the state or national box on the Send Us News form, you will be sent an additional form to fill out for Points of Pride recognition.

The following lists will help you prepare to send a news submission:

Information needed about an upcoming event:

- Time, date and location.
- Admission charge if applicable. Can tickets be purchased in advance? Where and how?
- Why is the event being held?
- What will happen at the event?
- Why would the community be interested in this event?
- The number of years the event has been held.
- Information about the organization sponsoring the event.
- Name, phone number and email address for more information.

Information needed about an award or recognition:

- First and last names of students or staff receiving the award. Staff members must have a first name. Mr. and Mrs. are not used in news stories.
- Titles and/or teaching assignments of staff.
- Grades of students.
- The official name of the award.
- Name of organization sponsoring the award.
- Time, date and location of the award presentation.
- Why was the recipient selected for the award or recognition?
- Benefits of receiving the award.
- Name, phone number and email address for more information.

General requirements:

- Verify whether there are objections to publicity in each student's file.
- If there's any doubt about publicity, call the parent/guardian.
- Spell out all acronyms.
- Make sure names are spelled correctly.
- Make sure teachers' first names are also included.
- Include key contacts and their phone numbers and email addresses.

Contact Information

Michael Esterheld, Communications Specialist
mesterhe@springisd.org
281-891-6378

Communicating Your Story

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Good photos present your school to the community and help your community visually connect with students and staff.

Notify the Communications Office when you have photo opportunities. Advance notice is best, but a photographer is sometimes available on short notice also.

Your school should have a good digital camera available, and we recommend that each campus take photos whenever events or activities are happening for posting on your campus website and Twitter account. If a district photographer is not available, the campus photos will serve as a backup.

PhotoShelter

The Communications Office maintains an archive of photos accessible to you for your website, social media or graphic design projects. If you need assistance with location a photo, contact Web Specialist Rony Canales at 281-891-6030.

Here are the steps for accessing photos:

- Go to SpringISD.org/photos
- Click on “Galleries” at the top of the page
- From here, you can navigate the archive folders by date on the left side of the page. Once you are in a particular folder by year, you can search within that folder by keywords.
- Do not use the keyword search at the top of the main page, as you will be directed to log in.
- Once you locate an image that you would like to download, download the image using “media” password.

Tips for taking your own photos:

- Verify that the students being photographed do not have an objection to publicity before the photograph is taken.
- Digital photos should be taken at the highest possible resolution. A camera that shoots 5 megapixels or higher is best.
- Save the digital photo as a jpeg.
- Consider photographs of people engaged in activity rather than a more formal group shot.

With Photography

- Please attach your jpeg photo(s) to an email and send it to Jim Wineman and Rony Canales in the Communications Office. Please include the identifications of the people in the photo, from left to right and also please include information on the recognition or activity pictured. Also include time, date and location of the photo.
- When submitting a photo, every person pictured must be identified from left to right with their first and last name. Staff members must have a first name also. Mr. and Mrs. aren't used in photo captions. Verify that the students in the photo do not have objections to publicity in their file.
- Don't submit holiday photos after the holiday has passed. Holiday photos need to be taken well in advance and submitted for publication before the big day.
- Don't be shy. Get close to your subject and take your photo with an emphasis on the subject's face. Tight shots of people engaged in an activity make the best photos.
- Get on the same level with your subject – especially younger students.
- A good practice is to photograph people from the waist up.
- Avoid taking large group photos. Three to five people make the best group photos.
- Be aware of where the sun or windows are located in relation to your subject. Avoid taking photographs in front of a window or with people facing the sun.

Contact Information

Jim Wineman, Creative Services Coordinator
jwineman@springisd.org
281-891-6018

Rony Canales, Web Specialist
rcanales@springisd.org
281-891-6030

Communicating Your Story With Graphic Design

Our graphic designers create layouts and designs for the district's instructional, promotional and recruitment publications, including, but not limited to, newsletters, brochures, posters, fliers, displays, book covers, printed programs and advertising campaign products.

Although the graphic designers are not able to produce campus newsletters, due to time constraints, they may serve as a resource by helping design a newsletter template to meet your needs and advising in layout strategies for your newsletter.

- Campus Brochures - Designing and producing a brochure about your campus. Examples are available upon request.
- Promotional Materials - Producing a variety of promotional materials, including posters, mailers and banners.
- Programs - Creating programs for events that have districtwide impact. Please see the District Event Protocol in this guidebook.

Due to high demand, please submit your campus or department graphic design project request through the Graphic Design Request Form at SpringISD.org/Communications. You can learn more about the district's branding and design guidelines at SpringISD.org/Branding.

Contact Information

Andy Nguyen, Graphic Design Specialist
andyn@springisd.org
281-891-6015

Georgina Garza, Bilingual Graphic Design Specialist
ggarza@springisd.org
281-891-6108

Communicating Your Story With Video

Video Stories Bring the Community Into the Schools

Many campus events or educational programs may be produced into short video stories for publication on the district's website and YouTube channel. These stories can help show the public the good things going on at our campuses. The communications office is equipped to videotape and edit these events for viewing on the web.

- If you know of an upcoming event, please notify the Communications Office in advance.
- Video stories to be produced for the web usually work best with two or more on-camera interviews. Consider who can best describe the event.
- Check to see if there are objections to publicity among the students before the videotaping.
- If there are students with objections to publicity, make sure the photographer knows who they are.
- If you aren't sure if your event can be a story, let us know anyway and perhaps we can figure out how to make it work. The only sure way that it won't work is if the Communications Office doesn't know about it.
- It's never too early to submit an idea for a video story. Tell us about the event or idea, and who might be a good candidate to be interviewed.

Tools, tips and more are available at SpringISD.org/Communications

Contact Information

Jim Wineman, Creative Services Coordinator
jwineman@springisd.org
281-891-6018

Blackboard Mass Notifications

Blackboard Mass Notifications is a valuable tool to engage parents, students and the community. You can write a message once, select preferred communication methods and publish across your desired channels—saving time, creating consistency and building capacity.

Users

- Designated by campus principal
- Campus principal plus one or two campus leaders
- Training is required before usernames and passwords are assigned
- Training video available from the Communications Office
- If a user resigns or moves to another campus, notify the Communications Office immediately so their user status can be discontinued or updated

Submit your request for users to plares@springisd.org. Include email address, work phone number and cell phone number. If they need to be trained, the Communications Office will make sure they receive a link to the training video; once the training has been completed and confirmed they will be assigned a username and password.

Districtwide Emergency Messages

- District messages will be sent by the Communications Office.

Campus Emergency Messages

Campus emergency messages are to be used in situations in which a principal or his/her designee considers it essential and urgent to make immediate contact with parents or families. Most emergency situations will likely involve incidents that impact students during the school day, such as a precautionary lockdown, rainy day dismissal, evacuation, etc. Whenever possible, emergency messages and their delivery shall be reviewed by the Communications Office and the assistant superintendent for your campus. Communications has an archive of crisis message templates that can quickly be used for campus emergency situations. It is advisable that campus emergency messages be sent by the principal. Hearing a school administrator speak calmly about an emergency situation serves to reassure parents that the situation is under control. During an evacuation, when it would be difficult for school administration to send the automated message, the Communications Office will send the message for you.

Campus Outreach Messages

- Push notifications to district mobile app
- Be judicious in the number of messages you send to avoid message fatigue. Combine messages when possible.
- Remember, parents can opt-out of automated messages so don't over message.

Message Approval

Campus outreach messages need to be approved by the principal or principal's designee before distribution.

Message Length

Limit phone message length to less than 60 seconds; 35 to 40 seconds is even better.

Voice Recorded vs. Text-to-Speech

Emergency and Outreach messages should always be voice-recorded to personalize the call and, in the event of an emergency situation, provide a calm voice. It is recommended that attendance messages be sent using the text-to-speech or blend-it options.

Take Advantage of the English and Spanish Options

Do send your message in English to the primary English-speaking homes and in Spanish to the primary Spanish-speaking homes. It is extremely important that the primary language designation in eSchool is accurate.

Make Sure Data in eSchoolPlus is Correct

- This communication tool will only be as good as the data that is stored in eSchoolPlus.
- Verify that information is correct and updated in eSchool regularly.
- Information in eSchoolPlus will be uploaded nightly to the Blackboard Mass Notifications automated messaging system.

Contact Information

Kristen Cobb, Communications Director
kcobb12@springisd.org
281-891-6009 (Office) 248-996-4535 (Cell)

elevate

Communications supervises elevate, our online, two-way communications tool that is used to gather feedback from our stakeholders – parents, staff, community members, business partners and students. This tool is available to stakeholders directly from any campus website and the district’s homepage.

Elevate also is used throughout the district to establish a safe channel for reports of bullying to be submitted to the district with an anonymous option, as required by David’s Law.

As a school leader, you will be an administrator of the tool and responsible for answering questions, concerns and comments received in the elevate tool that are tagged to your campus. The elevate tool is easy to use and can be accessed from any phone or device, at any time of the day or night. You will be trained on the tool and provided your login information before the start of school.

Of course, the district’s elevate tool does not replace face-to-face meetings or phone calls. Elevate simply offers another way for Spring ISD to hear from its stakeholders.

Contact Information

Sara Butler, Communications Executive Director
sbutle2@springisd.org
281-891-6017 (Office) 979-777-9939 (Cell)

District Event Protocol

Communications will assist you with any event that would have districtwide impact. Examples are dedications, groundbreaking, ribbon cuttings, etc. There are certain protocols that need to be consistent at these events: Performance Guidelines, Major District Events Planning Guidelines and Print Program Protocol.

Performances at District Events

The Director of Performing and Visual Arts (PVA), will assist in planning for any and all public performances at district events (such as but not limited to: dedications, anniversary celebration, etc.).

Contact Information

Joe Clark, Director of Performing and Visual Arts
jclark@springisd.org
281-891-6197

Major District Events Guidelines

1. Contact the Chief Communications Officer regarding any upcoming major district event. This may include anniversaries, groundbreaking ceremonies and school dedication ceremonies, etc.
2. Schedule event:
 - a. Submit date/time recommendation before school year begins.
 - b. Do not schedule during first nine weeks, on weekends or during testing.
 - c. Schedule start time no earlier than 9 a.m.
 - d. Evening events are allowed.
 - e. Final date and time will be approved by Cabinet.
3. Schedule meeting with the Communications Office to begin the process. Include your campus/department planning team in this meeting.
4. Program:
 - a. Program planning will include the campus principal, Communications team, PVA director and assistant superintendent of administration.
 - b. The program/ceremony should last no longer than 45 minutes.
 - c. Select and use an emcee.
 - d. Recommended Agenda:
 - Welcome
 - Presentation of Colors
 - Song: Star-Spangled Banner

- Pledges (USA/TX flags)
- Invocation
- History of campus, facility and/or namesake
- Namesake or family remarks
- Student performance(s)
- Student message
- Presentation of proclamation and/or flag, etc.
- Greeting from the Board of Trustees
- Superintendent's message
- Principal's message
- Official ribbon cutting for dedications
- Closing remarks
- Sponsors
- Other

- e. Include superintendent and board president or designee in the program.
- f. Student performances must meet Performing and Visual Arts (PVA) Guidelines for Public Performance.
- g. Plan program with photo opportunities in mind and identify students with objections to publicity in advance.
- h. Communications staff and PVA director will be present during the program dress rehearsal, as appropriate.

5. Staging the Event

a. Requirements:

- Floor plan (seating arrangements)
- Sign-in tables
- Greeters
- Refreshment: cake, punch, paper goods, other
- Parking: reserved space and signs
- Police officers
- Order air conditioning
- Assign person to assist public officials
- Ribbon and scissors for ribbon cutting

- 6. Communications will give final approval of printed invitations, programs and brochures.

Print Program Protocol

Contact the Communications Office for assistance with program design for district events. Contact Graphic Design for program templates and event-specific agendas.

Every program should include the campus name and event date, including the year, on the cover. The back cover should include the school name and address; principal and assistant principal names; Board of Trustee names; superintendent's name, and district logo. The school mascot, colors and enrollment may be included on the back cover also.

Smore Newsletters

Spring ISD offers a free tool called Smore to generate campus newsletters. Parents love hearing news about their school, and a campus newsletter is a great avenue to keep your school community informed. You can create custom newsletters to send a Principal's Update, share professional development opportunities with staff, or share districtwide information with your community - the possibilities are endless! A few things to remember:

- Every campus can have 2 designated users
- Smore integrates with Blackboard Mass Notifications, making it easy to distribute
- TIP: Don't just send link to newsletter, embed the HTML code in Blackboard so email is visible when recipients open email
- The Communications Office will send you ready-to-go content every Thursday!

Social Media Guidelines

Spring ISD uses a variety of social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram) to actively engage students, staff, families, media and the general public with important activities, events and information. These platforms allow for Spring ISD to conduct an instantaneous two-way dialogue with the audience.

All social media accounts established by Spring ISD schools or departments must be approved by the Office of Communications. Social media sites managed by any Spring ISD staff will follow all applicable local, state and federal laws in addition to any district policies. All staff are expected to use social media channels for purposes that align with the district's educational mission.

Notify the Communications Office if you are using Twitter on behalf of your campus. Your campus Twitter handle will be added to the Spring ISD Campuses Twitter list.

Best Practices

Like other communications tools available to campuses, including the campus website and automated messaging system, the principal is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the tool is used appropriately and responsibly. Campus and staff use of Twitter must comply with Spring ISD Technology Responsible Use Guidelines.

To assist principals, we are providing best practices for using Twitter.

Administrator Guidelines:

1. Determine how much time you can commit to maintaining and monitoring social media accounts.
2. Identify your audience. Are you using social media to:
 - a. Share information with parents?
 - b. Engage students?
3. Define your objectives. What do you hope to accomplish? Be specific.
4. Create your messaging
 - a. Protect and enhance the value of your brand.
 - b. Be conscious of your online persona - you represent your school and ultimately Spring ISD.
 - c. Set a positive tone.
 - d. Be timely - make sure the information you are posting is relevant and current.
 - e. Maintain a professional presence that aligns with your messages and the mission of your school.

- f. Use proper grammar and spelling and always proofread before posting. It is okay to abbreviate words on Twitter.
 - g. Be honest, truthful and make sure you have the facts before you post.
 - h. Before student photo, name or student work is published, make sure they do not have an “Objection to Publicity” on file.
5. The online sharing of student information and data, such as test scores, as well as information on other district personnel is prohibited.

Staff User Guidelines:

1. The campus principal will be responsible for approving individual staff member use of social media for campus communications.
2. Staff members who use social media platforms for school business will need to set up an account for school use separate from their personal account.
3. All items listed above under “Create your messaging” apply to staff members who are using social media for school and classroom communications.

Contact Information

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