



# Goodrich Area Schools

## District Communications Plan

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[www.goodrichschools.org](http://www.goodrichschools.org)

# Goodrich Area Schools

## Vision and Mission Statements

### District Vision Statement

*Preparing People for Life*

### District Mission Statement

*Learners of all ages will develop the skills and habits they need to build emotionally and physically healthy lives while growing into caring, responsible adults.*

**Wayne Wright**

Superintendent of Schools

#### **Goodrich Area Schools Board of Education**

Greg Main, President

Jeff Brown, Vice President

Ashley Herriman, Secretary

Kurt J. Schulte, Treasurer

David Cramer, Trustee

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#### **Office of the Superintendent**

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## Summary

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In our efforts to foster productive relationships and effective communication with our employees, students, parents, and the broader community, Goodrich Area Schools has developed a District Communications Plan. The plan primarily addresses two types of school district audiences: **internal** (students, teachers, staff, administration, and the school board) and **external** (parents, local businesses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, and other members of the Goodrich community).

Staff support for, and involvement in, this plan is vital. The Goodrich Area Schools staff carries the message of the school district to their families and friends who in turn, form opinions about our schools. We must have, as a top priority, the goal of clearly communicating our unified message at all times.

The Office of the Superintendent will manage publications, marketing, community relations, and offer leadership on all comprehensive communications for the district, under the direct supervision of the Superintendent.

## Our Challenge

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Goodrich Area Schools is committed to honest, transparent, and consistent communications with our stakeholders. We have substantial and diverse needs, similar to any large organization whose mission includes meeting the expectations of multiple audiences.

The act of communicating means different things to different people. For example:

- A parent who wants to know how to access their child's grades online and reach a teacher to ask questions.
- A student who needs academic resources to excel and avenues to discover additional opportunities.
- An employee who needs to find out when the Professional Development day will be held and what is expected of them on that day.
- An interested taxpayer who is seeking details on how bond dollars have been spent before deciding on how to vote in the upcoming bond election.
- The administrative team that is eager to increase enrollment by promoting the value of our school district.

Whatever the need, the responsibility of ensuring that the Goodrich Area Schools structure a viable, sustainable, and credible communications system falls not only on the Office of the Superintendent, but on leadership throughout the district.

A communications system is only as good as the commitment to contribute to its success. Planning for and requiring shared responsibility will ensure a system that is worthy of a leading organization and meets the needs of our stakeholders.

We must not take communications for granted. Providing frequent, clear, and results-driven communications is the key to fostering trust and increased loyalty to the district. An absence of information creates a void where individuals and the community fill in the blanks with determinations of their own – more often than not, resulting in misperceptions and destructive opinions.

We allow for communications that are reactive when appropriate. But, the goal is to establish a district-wide communication style that is both proactive and interactive. We will lead with our message, encourage conversation, seek feedback from our constituents, and measure our progress.

## Communication Goals

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The Office of the Superintendent will provide leadership and counsel to accomplish the following goals:

1. Develop and maintain positive relationships with all stakeholders to strengthen support of the district.
2. Create key messages and talking points to establish “one voice” for the district.
3. Establish brand identity for the district and build on that image and reputation.
4. Continue to maintain transparency to improve public perceptions about the district.
5. Improve community engagement through consistent and dynamic interaction.
6. Support customer service needs through robust information channels and printed materials.
7. Maintain proactive media relations to enhance the district’s image on local, state, and national levels.
8. Identify opportunities for public visibility through event participation.

# Target Audiences

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## Internal:

1. Students
2. Staff
3. Board of Education

## External:

1. Parents
2. Prospective employees
3. Goodrich Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
4. Goodrich business community
5. Elected officials
6. Civic groups
7. Neighborhood associations
8. Law enforcement
9. Senior Citizen groups
10. Faith-based groups
11. Community groups
12. Local Genesee County school districts/Genesee Intermediate School District
13. Electronic Media – website, email, Facebook, Twitter, local television
14. Print Media – local newspapers, building/district newsletters, flyers, brochures, etc.

# Objectives

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Our objective is to improve internal and external communication systems with the specific goal of creating open, two-way communication between the Board of Education, the district administrative team, staff, students, parents and the Goodrich community.

## 1. Clarify district flow of information

- a. Distribute organizational charts to all staff and parents/community members showing the communication process both internally and externally

## 2. Provide regular information on district-wide issues

- a. Distribute all external publications and news releases via postings on the district website
- b. Issue brief notices/updates to staff and parents on issues of immediate concern, via SchoolMessenger

- 3. Create a system to encourage flow of information from parents/community to the district**
  - a. Conduct parent surveys to obtain feedback
  - b. Offer community meeting opportunities to receive input
- 4. Publish and distribute informational pieces**
  - a. Building/district informational brochures
  - b. Budget/Salary/Compensation information posted on district website
  - c. Press releases as needed
  - d. Informational items posted on district website/social media
  - e. Employment opportunities posted on district website/social media
- 5. Communicate with civic, community, faith-based groups**
  - a. Include groups in mailings
  - b. District representation at community meetings to provide information as needed
  - c. Develop partnerships with groups
  - d. Recognize community member contributions at Board of Education meetings
- 6. Be visible in the Goodrich community**
  - a. Attend community organization meetings
  - b. Encourage participation in local service clubs
  - c. Host “town hall” meetings or forums when appropriate
  - d. Encourage staff to speak positively about Goodrich Area Schools to friends, neighbors, and community acquaintances
  - e. Seek business partnerships through contacts in local groups
  - f. Encourage staff attendance at athletic and extracurricular events
  - g. Develop partnerships with faith-based community groups
- 7. Highlight Student/Staff Accomplishments**
  - a. Highlight student/staff accomplishments during the “Spotlight” portion of Board of Education meetings
  - b. Acknowledge staff members who exemplify educational excellence and/or service to others by going above and beyond their regular job duties with an Apple Award nomination
  - c. Feature student/staff accomplishments in local newspapers and on local television stations, and via social media outlets

## Strategies

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- 1. Keep communications simple**
  - a. Use a clear and concise style for all publications
  - b. Vary the types and level of communication to target diverse audiences
- 2. Communicate early and often**
  - a. Provide information when appropriate to send out to all administrators, office support staff, teachers, and other employees as needed

- b. Follow up with memos or communications to all staff if necessary
- 3. Communicate face-to-face**
  - a. The more difficult the situation, the more important it is to communicate face-to-face
  - b. Encourage staff to relay messages through personal interaction when appropriate
  - c. Coordinate communication with staff during the Superintendent's Administrative Team meetings.
- 4. Keep communications brief and to the point**
  - a. In order to keep a person's attention, be brief and to the point
  - b. Highlight message in the title
  - c. Proofread all documents for errors
- 5. Emphasize customer service**
  - a. Develop customer service guidelines for all Goodrich Area Schools employees
  - b. Provide customer service training for employees
  - c. Reward exceptional customer service with an APPLE Award or with acknowledgement messages from administrators/directors/supervisors
- 6. Train staff**
  - a. Train staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors, and people in the community has a direct impact on how Goodrich Area Schools is perceived
  - b. Engage frontline staff in the conversation, and make sure they have access to information immediately, as they are the best line to parents and the community
  - c. Follow-up with memos of communication to staff if necessary
  - d. Make telephone calls if in doubt
- 7. Develop relationships with our community**
  - a. Develop relationships with community groups and deliver messages to them as needed so they will take the message to the community more effectively and accurately
  - b. Maintain a high level of visibility for the district through participation of key staff in various professional and community activities
  - c. Ask for input on areas of concern
- 8. Study the media**
  - a. Pay attention to the type of stories aired or published
  - b. Note who is generally used as a source of information
  - c. Develop relationships with editors and education reporters
- 9. Prepare our messages**
  - a. Study issues facing education and be prepared to respond with information
  - b. Develop responses that represent our school or district message



# Methods

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We will identify the communication tools that are most widely used and preferred by the Goodrich community. Our current communication methods may include, but are not limited to:

## **1. Printed materials**

- a. Weekly classroom notes
- b. Weekly building notes
- c. District annual report
- d. Monthly or quarterly district newsletters from the Office of the Superintendent.
- e. Any form of advertising, made available in school offices or sent home with Goodrich students, will be limited to materials that promote district-sponsored events/programs or events/programs that have been deemed to be beneficial to our student body, staff, or school community. These materials must be consistent with the district's educational standards and goals and must be screened by the Superintendent or his/her designee. Final discretion regarding whether to advertise and the content and value of the materials will be with the Board and must meet the terms spelled out in Policy #9700.01 – Advertising and Commercial Activities.

## **2. Email/Phone/Text communication**

Goodrich Area Schools utilizes an email/phone/text communication system to connect with both internal and external audiences. Use of this system will be limited to school announcements only, and will not be made available for advertising or promotion of events/programs, except those deemed necessary by administration.

## **3. Publications posted online**

The district can save money and time by continuing to provide the majority of our printed materials on our district's website and social media sites. On-line examples include, student and athlete handbooks, Human Resources and Payroll information for employees, staff directory, and budget information.

## **4. Website/Social Media Sites**

The district's website and social media sites should be utilized as the key marketing tool. It should be kept up-to-date and include pertinent information for both our internal and external customers.

## Assessment and Accountability

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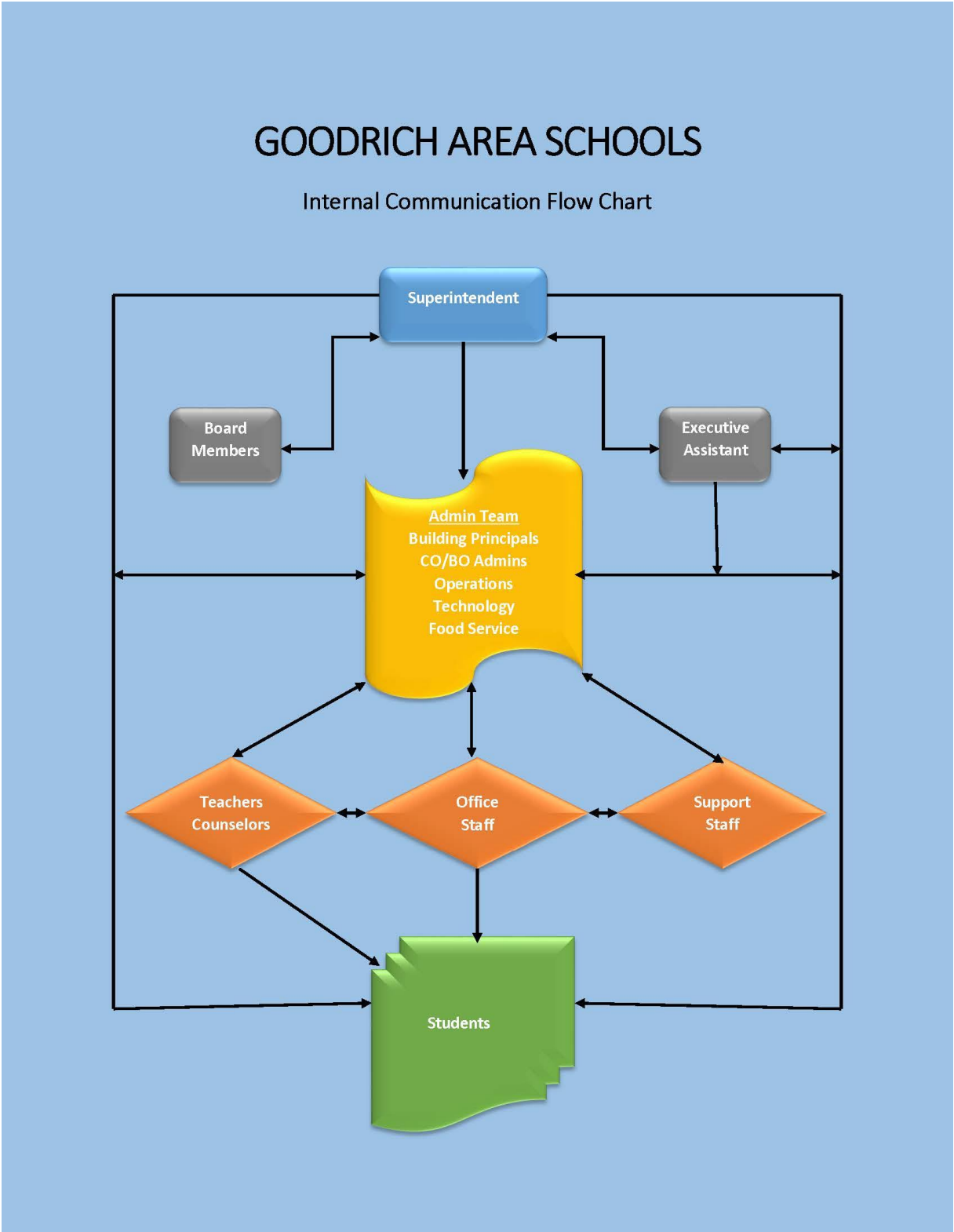
A tracking system will be developed to measure communication effectiveness.

1. **Research** – will be used to ascertain what communication strategies are being implemented in other school districts
2. **Focus groups** – will be conducted to collect qualitative information as needed
3. **Surveys** – electronic surveys will be used to ascertain people’s opinion and to collect quantitative information
4. **Website** – will be used to monitor feedback from community, both internal and external

The District Communications Plan will be reviewed and updated as deemed necessary by the Superintendent, Board of Education, and the Administrative Team.

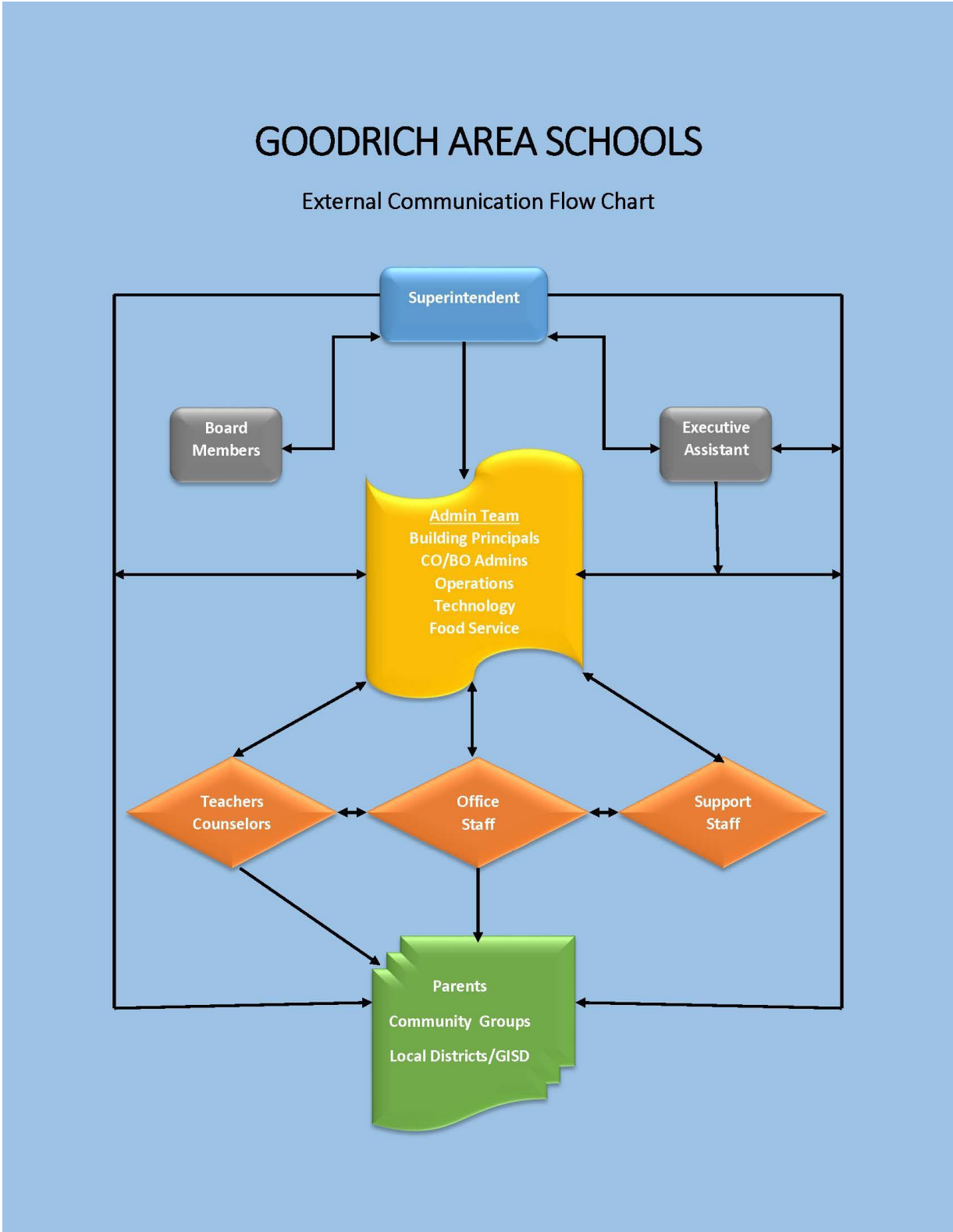
# Internal Communication Flow Chart

The flow chart below shows the flow of information for our internal customers.



# External Communication Flow Chart

The flow chart below shows the flow of information for our external customers.



# Goodrich Board of Education

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The Goodrich Area Schools Board of Education exists for the purpose of providing a system of free, public education for children in grades K-12. The system was created by, and is governed by, State statutes. Members of the Board are chosen by citizens to represent them and the State in the governance of the local schools.

The Board has the dual responsibility for implementing statutory requirements pertaining to public education and for meeting the desires of residents. While the Board has an obligation to determine and assess citizen desires, it is understood that when the voters elect delegates to represent them in the conduct of specified educational programs, they, at the same time, are endowed with the authority to exercise their best judgement in determining policies, making decisions, and approving procedures for carrying out the responsibility.

The powers of the Board are:

- Educating Students: In addition to educating students in grades K-12, this function may include operation of preschool, adult education, community education, training, enrichment, and recreation programs.
- Providing for the safety and welfare of students while at school or at a school-sponsored activity or while enroute to or from school or a school-sponsored activity.
- Acquiring, constructing, maintaining, repairing, renovating, disposing of, or conveying school property, facilities, equipment, technology, or furnishing.
- Hiring, contracting for, scheduling, supervising, or terminating employees, independent contractors, or others who carry out District powers.
- Receiving, accounting for, investing, or expending District money; borrowing money and pledging District funds for repayment; and qualifying for State School Aid and other public or private money from local, regional, State, or Federal sources.

The Board understands and models its policy-setting responsibilities on actions that are in the best interests of students and their achievement. The Board of Education:

- Adopts and ensures periodic review of policies and regulations for the Goodrich Area Schools.
- Has in its Bylaws a Code of Ethics that includes that their first and greatest concern must be for the educational welfare of the students.
- Builds relationships with the Superintendent and staff based on mutual trust and respect.
- Seeks input from stakeholders and clearly communicates its actions and reasons for them.
- Recognizes that the Board, Superintendent, and Administrative Leadership Team have separate and distinct roles and responsibilities. The Board is responsible for making policy. The Superintendent, with the Leadership Team, is responsible for translating such policies into a plan of action that will demonstrate performance and achieve results.

# Communication Policies

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The Goodrich Board of Education has adopted written policies to guide the Superintendent and Administrative Leadership Team's communications and public relations efforts. These policies can be found on the Goodrich Area Schools district website, under "Board of Education," "Board By-Laws and District Policies." They include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A bylaw which states that the Board will maintain two-way communications with the citizens of the district and shall keep them informed of the progress and problems of the school district, and the citizens shall be urged to bring their aspirations and concerns to the attention of the Board.
- A bylaw regarding public participation at Board meetings, which recognizes the importance of community input on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on district matters in a fair and orderly manner.
- A policy which commits the staff and Board of Education to statements of values to guide them to ethical behavior, and as a means of setting an example for students.
- A policy regarding parent involvement in the school program, which recognizes and values parents and families as children's first teachers and decision-makers in their education. Through this policy the Board directs the establishment of a Parental Involvement Policy by which a school-home partnership can be established.
- Policies that protect and prevent disclosure of confidential information of any employee or student.

## Board-Staff Communication

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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.

### A. **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.

### B. **Board Communications to Staff**

All official communications, policies, and directives of the Board of staff interest and concern will be communicated through the Superintendent, who shall also keep staff members fully informed of the Board's problems, concerns, and actions.

### C. **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, discussions between staff and Board members of personalities or personnel grievances will be considered to be unethical conduct.

# How to Effectively Communicate with School Officials

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Parents are often discouraged when they attempt to communicate with central office administrators and school board members and are sent back to building-based officials in order to resolve a problem their child may be experiencing in school. To prevent that frustration, parents can become informed about the “chain of command,” or where to begin the communication sequence regarding their problem or concern.

Many parent and community questions are easily and completely answered by communicating directly with the educator in charge of the class or program. Each situation should first be addressed at whatever level the initial action was taken with appeals moving on to the next level on the chain of command. The easiest way to communicate is via e-mail, a phone call is the next preferable way, and then a face-to-face meeting when necessary.

## **On Matters Involving Instruction/Curriculum**

1. Classroom Teacher
2. Principal
3. Superintendent
4. Board of Education

## **On Matters Involving Athletics**

1. Coach
2. Athletic Director
3. Principal
4. Superintendent
5. Board of Education

## **On Matters Involving Student Discipline**

1. Classroom Teacher
2. Assistant Principal
3. Principal
4. Superintendent
5. Board of Education

## **On Matters Involving Facilities/Grounds/Buildings**

1. Principal
2. Director of Operations
3. Superintendent
4. Board of Education

## **On Matters Involving Transportation**

1. Bus Driver
2. Principal
3. Director of Operations
4. Superintendent
5. Board of Education

# District Complaint Procedure

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Board of Education policy delegates to the administration the responsibility of developing a written plan for the handling of complaints about the school district programs, facilities or personnel. This document is designed to fulfill that obligation.

1. Any citizen of the district may file a complaint regarding the operation of any aspect of the school program.
  - a. The complaint, question or concern should, at the initial step, be delivered orally to the person who is the most directly involved in the perceived issue.
  - b. The individual receiving the complaint should work to understand the full nature and importance of the points made and respond orally or in writing to the person originating the complaint with any information that may shed further light on the situation. This will be done within 48 hours (or 2 school days) of receiving the complaint.
  - c. The complainant should make every attempt to gain all relevant information surrounding the situation.
  - d. The complainant and the person receiving the complaint should jointly work toward a fair and equitable resolution of the issue consistent with the previous policies, practices and complaint resolutions.
  - e. If no agreement is reached within 5 days on an appropriate resolution, the complaint shall be processed to the immediate supervisor of the person first receiving the complaint. At this point the complaint may be reduced to writing for clarity. All relevant information including the first level process and disposition should be included. The same attitude toward resolution of the complaint should prevail at this level as at level one.
  - f. Complaints not resolved at level two within 5 days shall be processed to the Superintendent.
  - g. Complaints received by individuals out of sequence as described in A, B, E, and F will be referred to the proper person for initial discussion.
  - h. During the complaint process, all parties will conduct themselves in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The best interest of the child will be kept in mind consistent with district, building and classroom rules and procedures.

**Note:**

It should be kept in mind that a formal complaint is an indication that normal channels of communication have failed. All efforts to re-establish positive links between the home and school staff should be made. Lasting good will rarely survive victory or defeat through arbitration.