

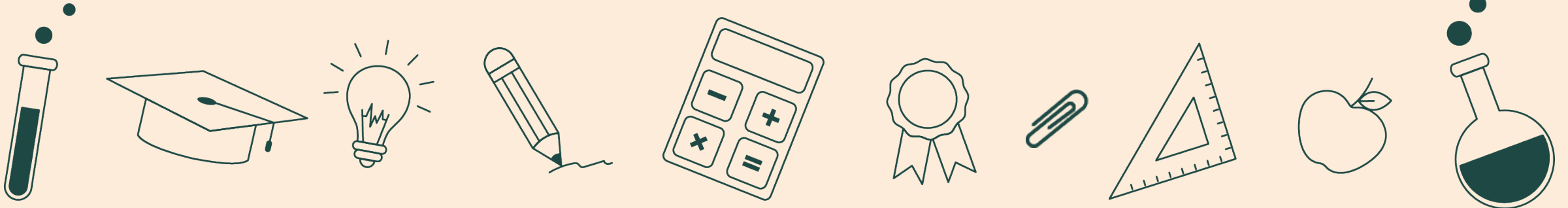


Effective Communicating

Why and How to Communicate With Families, the Media and Stakeholders

Erica Acha-Morfaw, Administrative & Communications Coordinator
State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia

Michelle Wirth, Director of Communications,
Georgia Charter Schools Association





Mission

The mission of the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia is to improve public education by authorizing high quality charter schools that provide students with better educational opportunities than they would otherwise receive in traditional district schools.





Vision

Innovative and superior charter schools advancing education in every community.



Agenda

- ❖ Communications Planning
- ❖ Communicating with the Media
- ❖ Success Story Theme
- ❖ School Communications Exercise
- ❖ Effective Charter School Messages



Communications Planning

Key Objectives:

- Establish a communications committee
- Create a strategic plan
- Know your mission and vision
- Learn your audience and their needs
- Set SMART goals
- Create themes and tones that support your goals
- Plan your content in advance



Communications Committee



Purpose & Goal

A communications committee's purpose and responsibilities include, but are not limited to; drafting, presenting, and executing communications plan and policy recommendations; managing all owned media (i.e. website, social media, newsletters, etc.); providing updates on news-worthy events and happenings within the school; and informing on communications insights and best-practice techniques.

The goal of a communications committee is to ensure the proper execution of all policies as directed by the Board.



Strategic Communications Planning



- Determine communication needs.
- Identify key internal and external audiences and outline how you want to communicate with them.

Define Goals:

- Establishing your school's "voice"
- Increase positive news coverage
- Improve content variety
- Improve owned media engagement
- Redesign website
- Establish crisis plan
- Establish content calendar
- Set KPIs and evaluate plan implementation



Know Your Mission



- Can members at all levels of the organization recite the mission and give examples how they “live” the mission?
- Does the board read the mission statement at every board meeting? Why is this important?
- Where can your mission be seen around the school?
- Is the mission used on all written communications?



Setting Your Goals

Set the goals you want to achieve over the 2021-2022 school year.

Goals should be SMART.

S – Specific

M – Measurable

A – Attainable

R – Relevant

T – Timely

Goal example:

- Recruiting new community investment
- Gaining commitments for upcoming events
- Build support for school initiatives
- Increase student enrollment



Setting Your Theme & Tone

November 2021 Example

Theme: Cultural Moments – Holidays, milestones, events
Thanksgiving, Giving Tuesday, holiday season kickoff

Tone: Caring, giving, community-oriented
Communications

Charter School Toy Drive: Giving Tuesday Kickoff!

Encourage faculty, students and families to bring in toys for donation starting on Giving Tuesday (Tuesday after Thanksgiving) and ending the day before winter break. Toys will be distributed in partnership with local non-profit.



Example Communications Calendar



Sample Communications/Content Calendar

July

- Back to school prep
- Enrollment/vacancy ann.
- Open house

August

- Back to school
- School updates/ann.
- SCSC training calendar

September

- School activity update
- School awards ann.

October

- School benchmark ann.
- SCSC renewal app opens

November

- CCRPI score release

- Holiday message, Giving Tuesday
- Community giveback

December

- Holiday messages
- School fundraising

January

- National School Choice Week
- SCSC renewal app closes

February

- Black History Month
- SCSC renewal board meeting

March

- Renewal decision ann.
- Teacher recruitment
- Charter lottery open
- Women's History Month
- Pie Day

April

- Autism awareness
- National poetry month
- Earth Day

May

- National Charter School Week
- Graduation announcement
- Scholarship award announcements

June

- Annual comms/content plan review
- Summer activity announcements

Legend:

- ❖ Internal Audience – School board & faculty
- ❖ External Audience – Families, communities & press
- ❖ Both Audiences



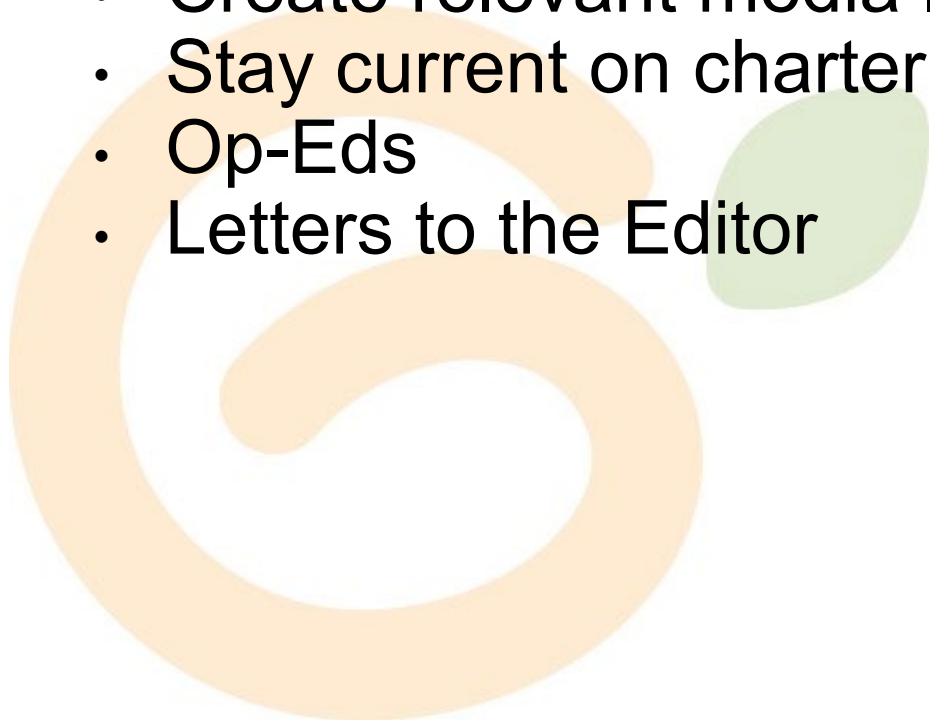
Items to Consider When Developing a Strategic Communications Plan

- Do you have a great mission and vision statement?
- How do you communicate the mission with various stakeholder groups?
- Do you have an e-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter or other kinds of owned media?
- Have you established a primary and secondary media contact?
- Does your plan contain an emergency/crisis communications component?
- How often do you revisit your communications strategy?




Communicating With the Media

- Effective press releases/Media Advisories
- Develop relationships with reporters
- Research who covers education, science or other relevant topics
- Create relevant media list
- Stay current on charter and education news
- Op-Eds
- Letters to the Editor



Communication Channels

- School website
 - Mobile app
 - Notifications and alerts
 - Email
 - Social media
 - Blogs
 - Video
 - School Newsletter
 - SCSC Newsletter
 - GCSA Newsletter
 - Others?
- 

Consider Your Audience

- Parents
- Your Community/General Public
- Fellow Educators

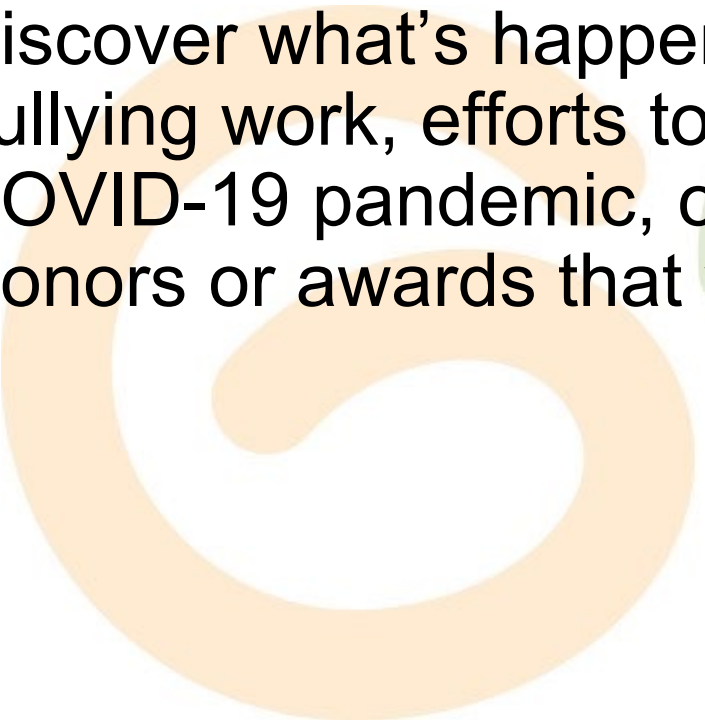
Reinforce Your School's Mission

Use Pictures, Videos and Sound to Tell Your Story

What Makes a Good Story?

- **Uniqueness:** Make sure this story bring something new and different to the table.
- **Timeliness:** Immediate, current information and events are newsworthy because they have just recently occurred.
- **Human Interest Story:** People are interested in other people. We like unusual stories of people who accomplish amazing feats or overcome adversities because we can identify with them.
- **Prominence:** Are important people involved? (Are elected officials, celebrities, big companies, or local leaders visiting your school)?
- **Impact:** Will this story impact a subject or topic people care about?

How to Discover Potential Stories

- Consulting the calendar for events, holidays & deadlines
 - Monitoring current news – national, state & local
 - Find what's new or innovative in your classroom, a club or organization that you oversee or highlight what your students are doing in their free time/school breaks.
 - Discover what's happening in your school community (anti-bullying work, efforts to go above and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic, organizing a food drive)
 - Honors or awards that you or colleagues receive
- 

Communications Calendar



GCSA Sample News Calendar

MAY

- National Charter School Week
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- Graduation announcements
- Scholarship announcements/totals

JUNE

- Annual PR/communications plan review
- What are your students doing this summer?
- Prepare "back to school" press release

JULY/AUGUST

- Enrollment press release (if you have vacancies)
- "Back to school" press release

SEPTEMBER

- Open House

OCTOBER

- Announce innovative new programs

NOVEMBER

- CCRPI Scores Release
- Invite your state and federal Legislator to visit
- Authorizer renews charter
- GivingTuesday
- Thanksgiving messages
- What are students doing to help the community

DECEMBER

- School fundraiser
- Holiday messages
- Prepare for National School Choice Week
- Hour of Code/Computer Science Education Week

JANUARY

- Highlight enrollment (state releases)
- National School Choice Week
- Weather closings
- "Beating the Odds"

FEBRUARY

- Highlight Black History Month celebration/programming

MARCH

- Highlight legislative session participation online
- Teacher recruitment fairs
- Youth Art Month
- Charter school lottery
- Women's History Month

APRIL

- End of year activities and awards
- Prepare for National Charter School Week/Teacher Appreciation
- National Poetry Month
- Autism Awareness Month

Successful Story Themes

- **Joy:** Charters make learning enjoyable by developing creative ways to teach difficult subjects and engage kids.
- **Personalization:** Charters recognize students as individuals with their own specific interests and needs.
- **Innovation:** Charters incorporate state-of-the-art technology into the classroom (e.g. virtual reality chemistry lab)
- **Achievement:** Charters help students overcome achievement gaps and prepare for success in college and in life.
- **Contribution:** Charters facilitate important community outreach that affect students' home-lives and health.
- **Inclusion:** Charters help students from a variety of backgrounds succeed.

Successful Story Themes

Innovation:



Successful Story Themes

Joy:



Successful Story Themes

Achievement:



Successful Story Themes

Contribution:



News

Weather

Sports

Connect

Watch



Breakout: Potential Story Ideas

What are some unique stories happening now or coming up within your school?

For Social Media

- i.e. Spirit week, fund raising event

For News Media

- i.e. Award recognition, score releases

Charter School Messages that Work

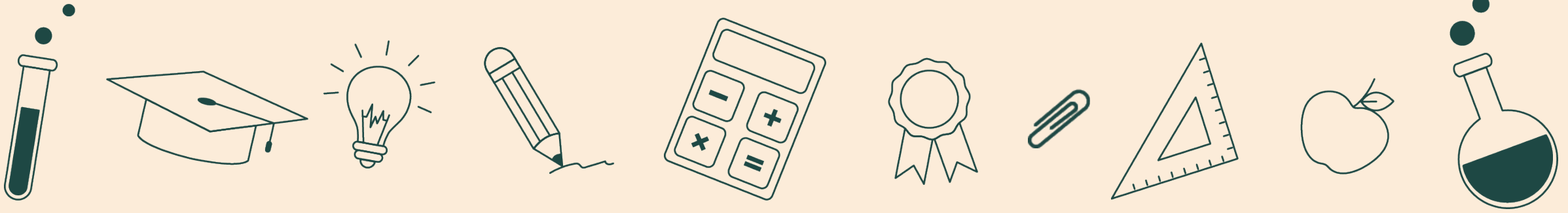
- Fairness: Every student deserves the chance to get a great public education, regardless of their zip code, income, or ability level.
- Students First: Charter schools puts the needs of children first. Students are at the center of all decisions.
- One Size Does Not Fit All: Students deserve an education that will meet their individual needs, because a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work for children.
- Bring Value: Public charter schools strengthen the overall public-school system because they have the flexibility to bring in new approaches, and with that flexibility comes accountability.

Effective Communications About Charter Schools

- Charter schools are tuition-free, independent public schools that are allowed to be more innovative and are held accountable for improved student achievement.
- Charter public schools are required by law to accept all students and give families greater access to more public school options.
- Charter public schools have the unique ability to adapt to the evolving needs of their students and make quick effective changes.
- All Georgia charter public schools are overseen by a nonprofit volunteer board of directors.

Questions & Answers





Contact Us

Website: scsc.georgia.gov

Twitter: @SCSCGa

Address: 504 Twin Towers West,
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr., SE,
Atlanta, GA 30334

Phone: (404) 656-2837