2021

Communications Management Audit

for the Fort Bend Independent School District

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1 – Introduction

In December 2019, Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. (Gibson), as part of its continuing contract to provide internal auditing services for the Fort Bend Independent School District (Fort Bend ISD, FBISD) Board of Trustees, initiated a Communications Management Audit. In March 2020, the audit was put on hold temporarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Audit activities resumed in Summer 2020 and the work was completed in May 2021. Gibson wishes to thank the FBISD leadership and staff for their assistance in conducting this audit and the Board Audit Committee (BAC) for overseeing this important work.

This introductory chapter provides a summary of the audit findings and recommendations, a description of the audit objectives and scope, and Gibson's approach and methodology for conducting the audit.

Audit Summary

Gibson's audit of Fort Bend ISD's communication management function identified some notable strengths, as well as opportunities to improve communications to the District's many stakeholders. Fort Bend ISD's communications team has earned numerous awards from the Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA), and the audit team identified many areas where the Department meets the best practice standards set forth by NSPRA. The special events and recognition ceremonies organized by the Communications Department, such as graduation ceremonies and staff services awards, are perceived very favorably by all of the stakeholders who provided feedback to the audit team through interviews, focus groups, and/or the employee survey. Department and campus administrators reported a high level of satisfaction with the communication supports and services provided by Communications Department staff (e.g., more than 87 percent of administrators that responded to the employee survey perceive Department staff to be accessible and responsive), and there is broad consensus amongst these employee stakeholders that the Communications Department "does a lot with available resources."

Areas for improvement center on the lack of a comprehensive communications strategy and plan to drive the focus of the work of the Department. Moreover, the Department does not systemically research and evaluate the effectiveness of its communications strategies, tactics, or initiatives, which has limited its ability to make data-informed decisions to determine whether any adjustments to strategies and tactics are needed moving forward.

It is important to point out that analysis of feedback from the District's stakeholders comprised a significant portion of this Communications Management audit. Unlike an assessment of other school District functions that rely more on a quantitative analysis of key performance indicators and benchmarking, the efficiency and effectiveness of the communications management function is best assessed based on the qualitative feedback provided by the stakeholders who are the receivers of the communications. For this reason, a significant portion of this audit report is dedicated to summarizing stakeholder feedback.

Analysis of employee survey data, as well as anecdotal information shared in interviews and focus groups, highlighted some areas where the District could do a better job of reaching out and communicating with certain stakeholder groups. While a high percentage of employees reported that they are satisfied with the overall quality of communications they receive, satisfaction levels varied widely across employee groups (staff in operational departments, such as Transportation and Facilities Management, reported the lowest rates of satisfaction). Feedback from Trustees was slightly less positive, as there have been some concerns regarding the accuracy of certain communications made by the Department and a perceived lack of experience in proactively addressing major crisis situations. Whether it relates to digital and print publications, social media, District and campus websites, or specific marketing and branding campaigns, the Department does not systematically research stakeholder attitudes, expectations, and preferences regarding the various communication vehicles.

This audit contains 11 recommendations to improve the communications management functions at Fort Bend ISD. The recommendations are listed in Table 1, along with the priority assigned by the audit team. The audit team assigned a priority level to each recommendation based on perceived risk and/or impact to the organization. Recommendations are not listed in order of priority but rather the order in which they appear in the report.

Table 1. Summary of Audit Recommendations

No.	Priority	Recommendation
Department Organization and Management		
1	Medium	Reorganize the Communications Department to better define and align the functions of the Department.
2	Medium	Provide additional communications guidance through local board policy in selected areas.
3	High	Modify the Department's Communication Plan to more clearly link the Department's initiatives and activities to the District's priorities.
4	High	Incorporate research and evaluation components into the Communications Plan.
5	High	Develop communication protocols for District and campus administrators to follow during an emergency/crisis.
6	Medium	Provide training to District leaders and administrators to support them in being effective communicators.
Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations		
7	High	Collect feedback from all stakeholder groups to assess communications strategies and their effectiveness.
8	Medium	Conduct biennial reader surveys for each print and digital publication to assess reader satisfaction and expectations.

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No.	Priority	Recommendation
9	Medium	Expand website and social media analytics.
10	Low	Formalize an employee ambassador program with strategies to promote employee ambassadorship.
11	Medium	Collaborate with Human Resources to develop and maintain employee email distribution lists.

Audit Objectives and Scope

The primary objective of the Communications Management Audit is to evaluate Fort Bend ISD Communications Department programs and practices in order to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. The scope of this audit included an assessment of Board policies and administrative guidelines related to internal and external communications, and the Communications Department's organizational structure and staffing, processes and procedures, communication strategies, and planning documents. This audit also included a review of digital and print publications, social media, District and campus websites, branding and marketing, and media relations, as well as an analysis of stakeholder perceptions of and satisfaction with the quality and frequency of communications they receive from District leadership, as well as central office and campus administrators.

The scope of this audit did not include an assessment of specific District or campus/department communications, messaging and/or content, or evaluate the impact or effectiveness of specific communication efforts and outreach activities.

Approach and Methodology

The findings and recommendations included in this audit report were informed by the following data collection and analytical activities.

Data Analysis and Benchmarking

Gibson collected and analyzed current year and historical data provided by Fort Bend ISD, which included budget and expenditure data, position data, job descriptions, legal and local board policies, strategic planning documents, department operating procedures, samples of District publications and videos, social media and website analytics, and other program-specific information. The audit team also reviewed the District and campus websites and social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn).

To provide additional context, Gibson benchmarked Fort Bend ISD to five districts that are similar in size, student demographics, and overall performance (see Table 2). Gibson's benchmarking analysis relied exclusively on publicly available information from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and district websites. It is important to note that Gibson conducts benchmark analyses to provide context and does not draw conclusions based on any singular benchmark or indicator.

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Table 2. Profile of Benchmark Districts, 2019-20

District	Region	Enrollment	# Schools	Performance (Alpha/Scale)	% Economically Disadvantaged
CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS ISD	04: HOUSTON	117,120	87	B/89	54.3%
KATY ISD	04: HOUSTON	83,241	63	A/92	32.7%
FORT BEND ISD	**04: HOUSTON**	**77,575**	**80**	**B/89**	**43.5%**
NORTH EAST ISD	20: SAN ANTONIO	64,215	75	B/89	49.5%
ARLINGTON ISD	11: FORT WORTH	59,453	78	B/86	72.1%
NORTHSIDE ISD	20: SAN ANTONIO	107,135	121	B/87	47.8%

Source: https://txschools.gov/districts and Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2019-20

In addition to benchmarking, the audit team compared elements of Fort Bend ISD's communications program to the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) *2018 Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures*. NSPRA is an internationally recognized organization that provides school communications training, products, and services to school leaders throughout the United States, Canada, and the US Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools worldwide.

Interviews and Focus Groups

During the Summer of 2020, the audit team conducted 29 telephone interviews with Communications Department staff, the Superintendent, members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), the Board of Trustees, and community members. The audit team also conducted four focus group sessions with elementary and secondary school principals and parents. The primary objective of the interviews and focus groups was to gather information about Fort Bend ISD's Communications Department and programs, and to solicit feedback from different groups of stakeholders regarding their perceptions of program strengths and areas in need of improvement. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews and focus groups were conducted remotely via *Zoom*. A complete list of interviewees and focus groups can be found in *Appendix A – Interview Roster*.

Staff Survey

Gibson developed and administered a survey to collect feedback from all District employees regarding communications from the District and campus/department. The primary purpose of the survey was to measure employee's satisfaction with the overall quality of the communications they receive from the District as well as from their respective campus/department on various topics of importance, including the frequency, accuracy, timeliness, and trustworthiness of information disseminated through various mediums and communication vehicles, such as social media, District and campus websites, newsletters, and videos. A copy of the staff survey can be found in *Appendix B – Staff Survey Instrument*.

The staff survey was administered in both English and Spanish to all District employees using *Qualtrics*, an on-line survey platform. Employees within the Departments of Transportation, Facilities, and Child Nutrition also received paper surveys, as many of these staff do not routinely access a computer during

the work day. In total, the audit team administered 12,355 staff surveys, and received a total of 6,643 responses, for an overall response rate of 53.8 percent.

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The remainder of this report is organized into the following chapters and appendices:

- Chapter 2 – Department Organization and Management
- Chapter 3 – Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations
- Appendices
  - Appendix A – Interview Roster
  - Appendix B – Staff Survey Instrument
  - Appendix C – Summary of Responses to Open-Ended Question

2 – Department Organization and Management

Background

The Communications Department (the Department) in Fort Bend ISD provides Districtwide and campus communications and public relations support in order to engage and build positive, mutually beneficial relationships between all stakeholders. The Department provides the following types of services:

- **Strategic communications support** such as developing communication plans to promote District and campus initiatives, providing public relations support, crisis management and counseling, and developing marketing and branding strategies.

- **Print and digital publications** such as electronic news bulletins, Board meeting summaries, general information guides, staff newsletters, and numerous other program-specific District and campus communications.

- **Web-based communications** including managing the District's website content and social media accounts and providing support for content on campus websites and Twitter accounts.

- **Editorial marketing services** to assist schools and departments with their local communications efforts, such as news releases, campus newsletters, parent letters, etc.

- **Graphic design and supports** for District leadership, schools, and departments, and videography services to promote Districtwide initiatives and programs.

- **Special events and recognition ceremonies** such as graduation ceremonies, annual staff service awards and recognition ceremonies, school dedication ceremonies, bond referendum information campaigns, and media relations.

There are some functions that are often associated with the Communications Department but are not currently under its purview. They include:

- **Public Information Requests (PIR)** are managed through the Department of Legal Services.

- **Community relations** is primarily the responsibility of the Department of Collaborative Communities, which manages the District's business and community partnership programs, volunteer and mentor programs, and parent organizations.

- **Printing services** are the responsibility of the Print Shop, which is organized within the Department of Business and Finance.

Department Organizational Structure and Staffing

Fort Bend ISD's Communications Department is comprised of 15.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and is led by a Chief Communications Officer (CCO). Under the direction of the Superintendent, the CCO is responsible for providing strategic leadership in planning and developing proactive communications to support District initiatives that support student achievement. Some of the essential duties and responsibilities outlined on the CCO job description are to:

- Provide strategic leadership on critical District projects and initiatives to support the Superintendent and leadership team to ensure a clear focus on the achievement of all students.

- Provide advice and counsel to the Superintendent, leadership team, and principals on sensitive Districtwide initiatives and school issues.

- Provide leadership and training to District staff related to effective communications, marketing, and incident/crisis response.

- Develop and implement marketing and branding strategies.

- Provide strategic advice, analysis, and communication related to incident/crisis response and District and school issues that reach key audiences to represent the District in a professional and caring manner.

- Provide strategic leadership and direct all facets of the daily operations and functions of the communication team, including public relations, event planning, advertising, strategic publications, and in the development of high quality and effective web, video, and social/viral media.

- Provide strategic leadership and oversee the District's media relations activities and use such opportunities to strengthen the District's messages to its community.

- Oversee aspects of employee recognition programs through Board meeting recognition scripts and employee recognition programs.

The organizational chart for the Communications Department is presented in Figure 1 below.

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Figure 1. Communications Department Organization Chart, 2020
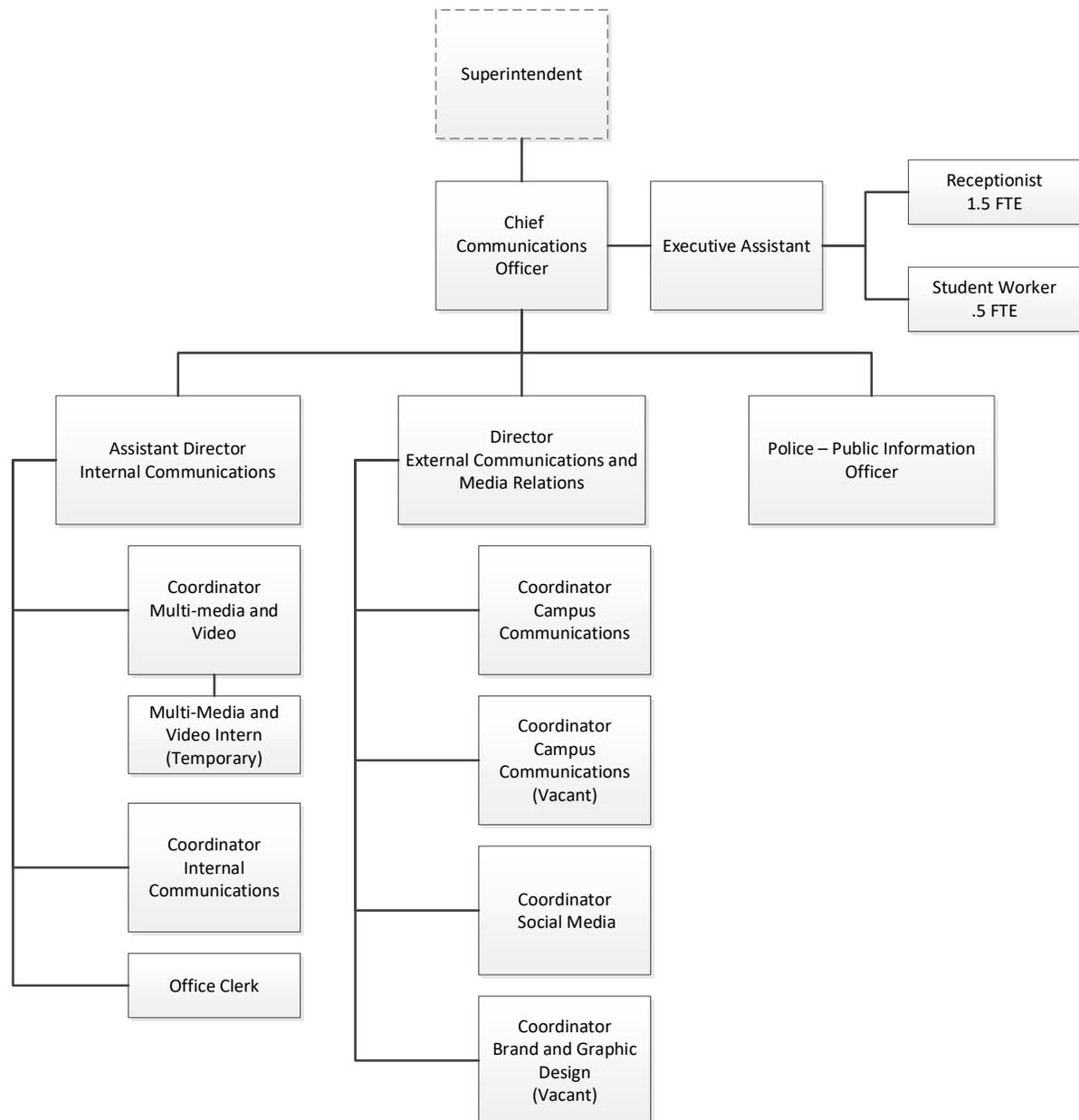
Source: Fort Bend ISD

Over the past five years, Department staff decreased 1 FTE (6.1%), from 16.5 FTEs in 2015-16 to 15.5 FTEs in 2019-20. Over this time period, staffing fluctuated from a high of 17.5 FTEs in 2016-17 to a low of 12 FTEs in 2017-18. Table 3 below details the change in FTE by position.

Table 3. Department Staffing by Position Type, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Position Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	5-Year Δ
Chief	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	**0.0**
Director/Assistant Director	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	**1.0**

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Position Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	5-Year Δ
Coordinator	3.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	**2.0**
Specialist/Facilitator	3.5	3.0	-	-	-	**-3.5**
Clerical/Admin/Receptionist/Temp	7.0	5.5	3.0	4.3	6.5	**-0.5**
Total Department FTE	**16.5**	**17.5**	**12.0**	**13.3**	**15.5**	**-1.0**

Source: Fort Bend ISD Staffing Data, 2013-2020

Some of the staffing fluctuations the Department experienced over this time period can be attributed to a central office reorganization that occurred in 2017-18, which resulted in the establishment of the Department of Collaborative Communities. The community relations function and the 3.5 FTE positions associated with it (the Director of Parent and Community Engagement, the Community Engagement Liaison, the Shared Dreams Facilitator, and a part-time Community Engagement Specialist) were realigned under this new department. In addition to the central office reorganization, the Communications Department also underwent some organizational restructuring and position reclassifications. This resulted in a net increase of 2 FTE Coordinator positions (two of which were vacant at the time of this audit), a net decrease of 1 FTE Specialist position (in addition to the 2.5 Specialist FTEs referenced previously), and a net decrease of 0.5 FTE administrative support position (which included a net decrease of 1 FTE Administrative Assistant and 0.5 FTE Receptionist position, and a net increase of 1.0 FTE Multi-Media/Intern position). In 2019-20, the Department also added a new Public Information Officer position (1.0 FTE).

Department Expenditures

Table 4 below presents a five-year summary of Communication Department expenditures by type of expenditure or object code. Total Department expenditures increased 5.7 percent ($110,569) from 2015-16 to 2019-20 (the most current year available). On a per student basis, total expenditures remained relatively flat, with the exception of 2017-18, when expenditures decreased 7.6 percent from the prior year due to a decline in Professional and Contracted Services.

Table 4. Communication Department Expenditures by Expenditure Type, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Object Code/Expenditure Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
6100 Payroll Cost	$966,412	$1,055,122	$1,049,503	$1,047,953	$1,194,727
6200 Professional/Contracted Services	$774,015	$641,843	$444,545	$597,962	$529,062
6300 Supplies and Materials	$52,721	$143,171	$150,283	$162,803	$154,397
6400 Other Operating Costs	$150,334	$146,471	$190,475	$194,209	$170,352
Total Department Expenditures	**$1,943,482**	**$1,986,607**	**$1,834,806**	**$2,002,927**	**$2,054,051**
Expenditures per Student	**$26.66**	**$26.94**	**$24.48**	**$26.31**	**$26.48**

Source: Fort Bend ISD Expenditure Data, 2015-2020

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Audit Findings and Recommendations

Commendation 1: Fort Bend ISD's communications team has earned numerous awards from the Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA).

Fort Bend ISD's Chief Communications Officer (CCO) currently serves as the President of the Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA), an organization dedicated to improving public education in Texas via quality communication services. In this capacity, the CCO and her staff have access to ongoing professional learning opportunities, emerging technology, and awareness of best practice research. The CCO was also the winner of the TSPRA 2017 Professional Achievement Award, which recognizes full-time professionals in the field of school public relations who hold a professional membership in TSPRA for at least ten years, and who have exhibited a creative, dedicated, and professional approach to school communications. Maintaining membership in professional public relations associations aligns to the standards for professional growth and development and helps to ensure that Department leadership continues to refine skills and expand their knowledgebase.

Finding 1: The Communications Department is not staffed to meet the demand for services or accomplish desired outcomes.

Several observations were made by the audit team in its review of the Department's organizational structure, staffing levels, and position responsibilities. These are discussed briefly below.

- The Department's organizational structure reflects a "stakeholder-centric" model whereby staff are aligned according to their focus on either the District's "internal" or "external" stakeholders. As illustrated in Figure 1 above, all positions within the Department (with the exception of the Public Information Officer) report to either a Director of External Communications and Media Relations or an Assistant Director of Internal Communications. While this "stakeholder-centric" model is not uncommon in school district communication departments, the functions within these organizational units do not singularly focus on either "internal" or "external" communications. For example, the two Campus Communication Coordinator positions report to the Director of External Communications and Media Relations, but a key responsibility of this position is to serve as a liaison between the Communications Department, other departments, and campuses (i.e., supporting "internal" stakeholders). Similarly, the Assistant Director of Internal Communications is responsible for "providing direction in keeping the internal public informed about the goals, programs, and activities of the school District" as well as "promoting the District's Bond communications program"[1] – the latter of which primarily focuses on communications to external stakeholders. The emphasis on "internal" and "external" nomenclature in the position titles of the Director and Assistant Director organizational model is somewhat misleading, and staff report that it has resulted in some confusion and overlapping

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[1] Assistant Director of Internal Communications job description (2019).

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responsibilities. It can also inhibit accountability as it is not always clear who is and/or should be responsible for which functions.

▪ Anecdotal feedback provided to Gibson during interviews and focus groups with Department staff and other stakeholders was unanimous in the perception that the Communications Department appears to be under-resourced. The Brand and Graphic Design Coordinator position was vacant at the time of this audit, stretching the capacity of other staff in the Department to meet the demand for these services. The Communications Department has since collaborated with the Print Shop to permanently shift responsibility for some of the graphic design work (mostly to fulfill campus requests) to that Department, alleviating some of the workload and leaving open the possibility of repurposing this position. In addition, one of the two Campus Communication Coordinator positions was also vacant at the time of this audit.

▪ The Multi-Media and Video Intern position was created as a temporary part-time position responsible for working collaboratively with Communications Department staff as well as with other department and campus staff on all projects and events. The intent of a 'temporary' position is to provide a career pathway into the Communications Department. The individual occupying this position, however, has been in this role since 2018-19, which exceeds the timeline for a 'temporary' placement. In practice, the functions performed by the individual occupying this entry-level position for three years now expand beyond those listed on the job description.

▪ Coordination of all special events and staff recognition ceremonies, such as graduations and annual staff service award ceremonies, is one of the primary responsibilities of the Internal Communications Coordinator, who receives significant support from the Executive Assistant. While feedback from Fort Bend ISD leadership and staff at all levels within the organization about the special events and ceremonies organized by the Department has been overwhelmingly positive, there is some consensus that this function is under-resourced, particularly as the number of special events is increasing.

▪ Several of the job descriptions for positions within the Communications Department have not been reviewed or updated recently and may not accurately reflect current position roles and responsibilities, or the reporting structure. The Executive Assistant job description was last updated in 2015, and the Chief Communications Officer, the Campus Communication Coordinator, and the Receptionist job descriptions were last updated in 2016. All of the other job descriptions have been updated within the past four years.

To provide context for the organizational and staffing analysis, Gibson reviewed the websites and organizational charts (where available) of the communications departments for each of the five comparator districts (Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, Katy ISD, North East ISD, Arlington ISD, and Northside ISD). This analysis yielded two key observations. First, the functions and responsibilities of communications departments varied across districts. As examples, the communications department in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD provides translations services; Northeast ISD's communications department oversees volunteer programs and services; and, Arlington ISD's communications department includes community relations.

It is unclear from Gibson's review of the five comparator district websites where responsibility for special events and recognition ceremonies resides within their respective organizations. Second, not all districts provide the full list of departmental staff/positions on their website, making it difficult to determine staffing levels, nor do they provide enough information (beyond position title) to truly understand the scope and responsibilities of each position. The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) also does not provide any guidance on communications department staffing. For these reasons, the audit team was unable to benchmark Fort Bend ISD's staffing ratios with the comparator districts or best practice standards.

Recommendation 1: Reorganize the Communications Department to better define and align the functions of the Department.

Fort Bend ISD must ensure that the Communications Department is organized and staffed to effectively and efficiently support the strategic communications goals of the District. Ultimately, Department staffing must be driven by the goals and strategies articulated in its communications plan. It must also ensure that staffing levels and employee skill sets are sufficient to accomplish important initiatives and meet the demands for services.

The existing position vacancies provide the Department with a timely opportunity to fill and/or reclassify positions to address any gaps in skillsets, functions, or service levels within the Department. A realigned organizational structure will also help to ensure accountability for key functions. Based on this assessment, the audit team recommends the following changes to better define and align the functions in the FBISD Communications Department:

- Reclassify the Assistant Director of Internal Communications to an Assistant Director of Communications and Multi-Media, and reclassify the Director of External Communications and Media Relations to a Director of Communications and Media Relations. Both of these reclassifications would reflect a change in the job title only and would not require a change in pay grade.

- Reclassify the Multi-media Intern position to a Specialist of Multi-Media and Video. This reclassification would reflect a change in the job title and profile, and may also require a change in pay grade to reflect the increase in the requirements of the new position.

- Reclassify the Internal Communications Coordinator position to a Coordinator of Special Events and Programs. This reclassification would reflect a change in the job title and profile, but would not require a change in pay grade. This position would exclusively focus on coordinating Districtwide special events and recognition ceremonies, as well as supporting campuses with communications for special events.

- Add a new Special Events and Programs Intern position to support the increased and seasonal demand for public-facing special events and ceremonies. This position would provide administrative support for this function.

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- Reclassify and repurpose the vacant Brand and Graphic Design Coordinator position to one that would allow the Department more flexibility in meeting the demand for videography services as well as branding and graphic design services. This reclassification would reflect a change in the job title and profile, but would not require a change in pay grade.

- Delineate responsibility for supporting specific campuses to each of the Campus Communication Coordinators positions. Ensure these positions coordinate with the Department of School Leadership to provide campus-specific supports to principals.

- Collaborate with the Human Resources Department to fill the remaining vacant positions and to ensure all job descriptions accurately reflect position roles and responsibilities.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. The department needs have changed since the audit was started a year and half ago and we have had some slight modifications in work flow and we'd like to move forward with at least one of the recommendations and convert the FTE originally designed to support graphics, to now support events and recognitions. This was an area noted in the audit and this move would support that issue. The added demand of events and recognition have put added pressures on the current team and dedicated staff to address this will even out the work flow.

Finding 2: Board policy does not address several communications functions.

According to the NSPRA's *2020 Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures*, governing boards should adopt written policies to guide the district's communications and public relations efforts. These policies should include:

- A policy that commits the organization to providing comprehensive communications/public relations in an open and honest way that meets the needs and desires of all internal and external publics;

- A policy regarding the release of information about individual staff, students, or clients;

- A policy that describes public involvement in the organization's decision-making;

- A policy that enables employees, parents, and others to appeal policy or administrative decisions;

- Policies that require the organization to learn what employees and patrons want to know and to provide that information in various ways; and,

- A community involvement policy that encourages interested citizens to review the district's mission, goals, and objectives; and to become educated about and offer opinions on issues that may require action in the future.

Fort Bend ISD maintains all board policies in the online Board Policy Manual on the District's website at http://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/483. LEGAL policies contain compilations of federal law, state law, and court decisions as statutory context in which all other policies are to be read, while LOCAL policies are

policies adopted by the Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustees and reflect the decisions of the Board regarding the educational needs of students and the priorities and values of the community. EXHIBITS contain forms, charts, or other types of supporting information for these policies.

Gibson reviewed Fort Bend ISD's online policy manual and identified LEGAL and LOCAL Board policies that relate to (either directly or in part) District communications, public information and requests for information, community relations, stakeholder involvement in decision-making, District and campus website content, and staff service awards. Gibson identified four LEGAL Board policies, one EXHIBIT, and nine LOCAL Board policies related to these topics. Excerpts of these policies are listed below in the order that they appear in the online Board Policy manual.

Local Governance Policies

- **Policy BBD (LEGAL) Board Members Training and Orientation.** *Public Information Act Training* – Not later than the 90th day after taking the oath of office, each board member shall complete training of not less than one and not more than two hours regarding the responsibilities of the board and its officers and employees under Government Code Chapter 552 (Public Information Act).

- **Policy BBD (EXHIBIT) Framework for School Board Development.** *Accountability* – The Board measures and communicates how well the vision is being accomplished. The Board reports District progress to parents and community in compliance with state laws and regulations. *Advocacy* – The Board promotes the vision:

  - The Board demonstrates its commitment to the shared vision, mission, and goals by clearly communicating them to the Superintendent, the staff, and the community.

  - The Board ensures an effective two-way communication system between the District and its students, parents, employees, media, and the community.

  - The Board builds partnerships with community, business, and governmental leaders to influence and expand educational opportunities and meet the needs of students.

  - The Board supports children by establishing partnerships between the District, parents, business leaders, and other community members as an integral part of the District's educational program.

  - The Board leads in recognizing the achievements of students, staff, and others in education.

- **Policy BDF (LOCAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process.** *Philosophy* – The Board believes that collaboration and partnership with the community supports sound decision-making. *Purpose* – The purpose of this policy is to establish expectations for the formation of Board-appointed committees that may from time-to-time be created to support the District's planning and decision-making.

- **Policy BED (LOCAL) Board Meetings Public Participation.** *Philosophy* – The Board believes that a forum should be provided for members of the public to express feedback and share information with the Board. Public participation at Board meetings is an important part of the community engagement process and should provide an opportunity for collaboration, partnership, and information sharing.

- **Policy BJA (LOCAL) Superintendent Duties and Qualifications.** *Duties* – The Superintendent shall fulfill the responsibilities of the public information coordinator and shall receive, on behalf of Board Members, the training specified by Government Code 552.012. *Communication with the Board* – The Superintendent shall establish and oversee a system of communication that builds and sustains a unified and effective Team of Eight. This shall include:

  – Timely updates on significant issues as they arise, using agreed upon criteria and procedures;

  – Responding in a timely and complete manner to Board requests for information that are consistent with Board policy and Board Operating Procedures;

  – Providing recommendations and appropriate supporting materials to the Board on matters submitted for Board consideration; and,

  – Provide fiscal updates and budgetary information to the Board in a timely manner.

- **Policy BQ (LEGAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process.** *Planning and Decision-Making Process* – A board shall adopt a policy to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process that will involve the professional staff of a district, parents of students enrolled in a district, business representatives, and community members in establishing and reviewing the district and campuses' educational plans, goals, performance objectives, and major classroom instructional pro-grams.

- **Policy BQA (LOCAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process District Level.** *Philosophy* – The Board believes in a District culture that embraces care, respect and safety. In addition, a culture of truth-telling through an honest feedback loop must be associated with strategic planning and decision making in order to tell a comprehensive story related to District progress, the development of the whole child, and student achievement. Further, the Board believes in the importance of the District partnering with stakeholders for input in the planning and decision-making process in order to promote student growth and continuous improvement of District operations to achieve the District Mission, Vision and Goals.

- **Policy BQB (LOCAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process Campus Level.** *Philosophy* – The Board believes in a campus culture that embraces care, respect, and safety. In addition, a culture of truth-telling through an honest feedback loop associated with community-based accountability is necessary in order to tell a comprehensive campus story related to development of the whole child and student achievement. Further, the Board believes in the importance of the campus

partnering with stakeholders for input in the planning and decision-making process in order to promote student growth and continuous improvement and to achieve campus goals aligned to the District Mission, Vision, and Goals.

Business and Support Services

- **Policy CQA (LEGAL) Technology Resources District, Campus and Classroom Websites**. *Information Required on Website* – A district that at any time on or after January 1, 2019, maintained a publicly accessible internet website shall post on a publicly accessible website the following information [...details required and optional content to be posted on a district's website(s)].

Personnel

- **Policy DJ (LOCAL) Service Awards**. The Board expects that continuous service of District employees be rewarded with tangible items of appreciation and recognition. The Superintendent or designee shall determine appropriate recognition items for employees after each five years of consecutive service in the District; these items must be standard across the District.

Community and Governmental Relations

- **Policy GB (LEGAL) Information Access/Requests for Information.** A superintendent shall be a district's officer for public information. Each department head shall be an agent of the officer for purposes of complying with the public information laws.

- **Policy GB (LOCAL) Public Information Program.** The Board recognizes the importance of providing a public information program to help ensure that school patrons and employees are informed about the programs and services of the District. The Board shall authorize the establishment of a department of School and Community Relations to assist in meeting that goal.

- **Policy GF (LOCAL) Public Complaints.** *Philosophy* – The Board believes student success is best achieved in a well-functioning, positive, nurturing, and collaborative community. Therefore, the District shall provide an equitable process for addressing community complaints that values individuals, fosters positive resolution, and preserves relationships.

- **Policy GK (LOCAL) Community Relations.** *Inform* – The District shall provide and maintain channels of two-way communication to inform and encourage the community to collaborate and partner with the District. Proactive communication between the District and the community in order to inform District actions and decisions.

Based on this review, Gibson identified several areas that are not currently addressed by either the LEGAL or LOCAL Board policy framework, but may be areas where additional guidance from the Board in the form of policy is needed. A review of comparator district online policy manuals found that some districts

have established LOCAL Board policies to more clearly communicate the Board's intentions and requirements on these topics.

- **Crisis Communications** – Both Katy ISD and Arlington ISD have established Policy GBAA (LOCAL) School Communications Program/News Media Relations that addresses news releases and communications during a crisis: *News Releases* – News releases concerning political or controversial issues or the overall operation of District schools, or involving more than one campus, shall be made only by the Superintendent or designee. Other news releases concerning athletic events, programs, and activities at an individual campus shall be made by the office of communications. *Communications During a Crisis* – In any crisis situation affecting the District or an individual campus, the Superintendent shall be the official District spokesperson and shall be responsible for all communication with the news media.

- **Accessibility Standards** – North East ISD has established Policy CQA (LOCAL) Technology Resources District, Campus, and Classroom Websites that requires administrative procedures be developed for all new, newly added, or modified online content, and functionality to be accessible to people with disabilities (e.g., closed captioning) as measured by conformance to the benchmarks for measuring accessibility.

- **Communications Strategy and Plan** – Fort Bend ISD does not currently have a policy that authorizes the Superintendent to develop a communications strategy and plan to ensure the District's goals and objectives are met. The need for a more comprehensive communications strategy and plan was expressed by Trustees during interviews with the audit team. (See *Finding 3* with regard to deficiencies with the Department's current Communications Plan.)

- **Campus Logos and Mascots** – Fort Bend ISD does not currently have a policy that addresses the legal requirements for the use of school logos and/or team mascots. (The branding guidelines established by the Communications Department only address the use of FBSID logos, color palette, and recommended typefaces.) Feedback from District leadership, Department staff, and other department administrators suggest that this is an area where specific guidance from the Board is needed. Many staff cited recent examples of campuses using trademarked mascots and/or logos, which could potentially result in legal complaints. It was not readily apparent if any of the comparator districts have addressed this issue through LOCAL Board policy.

In addition, some LOCAL Board policies are either very dated or narrowly focused. For example, the issue date for Policy GB (LOCAL) Public Information Program is 2/19/1985. This policy authorizes the establishment of a School and Community Relations Department, which no longer exists. Policy GK (LOCAL) Community Relations, on the other hand, addresses proactive and two-way communication between the District and the community in order to inform District actions and decisions. It does not, however, reference the need for proactive and two-way communications with District employees.

Not all guidance, however, needs to be (nor should it be) established in Board policy. Administrative regulations and standard operating procedures can provide more specific guidance and instruction on

various topics in alignment with LEGAL and LOCAL Board policy. At present, there are no administrative regulations and/or standard operating procedures related to Communications published on the District's website. A statement on the website reads "FBISD is in the process of providing public-facing administrative procedures. The contents of this page will be updated as staff approves standard operating procedures that align with Legal and Local policies."

Recommendation 2: Provide additional communications guidance through local board policy in selected areas.

Based on the audit team's policy review, it is recommended that the Board develop new policies that 1) requires the Superintendent (or designee) to develop a comprehensive communications strategy and plan in support of accomplishing the District's strategic goals and objectives; 2) ensures compliance with the use of trademarked logos and mascots; and, 3) ensures compliance with accessibility standards for online content.

The Board should determine whether or not a new policy is needed that would specifically designate the Superintendent as the District's official spokesperson during a crisis situation or on topics that are highly controversial in nature (similar to Katy ISD and Arlington ISD). At present, the Director of External Communications and Media Relations serves as the official district spokesperson. The Communications Department should continue to research communication policies in other districts for ideas and insights, particularly in the area of crisis communications. The Board should also review Policy GB (LOCAL) Public Information Program to determine whether it needs to be updated or eliminated.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. In working with the Board Policy Committee, the department can receive additional guidance from the Board through updated policies to reflect our practices and strategic initiatives.*

Finding 3: The Department's Communication Plan is missing essential components of a well-developed and comprehensive plan.

One of the primary functions of Fort Bend ISD's Communications Department is to develop and guide effective communication strategies to ensure the accomplishment of the District's strategic goals and objectives. To do this effectively, it is essential that the Department have a research-based communications plan aligned to the Fort Bend ISD Strategic Plan that will drive the focus of the work of the Department. As part of this audit, Gibson collected and reviewed the Department's communication strategy and planning documents, which included the 2018 Communications Plan and the 2019-20 Communication Strategy and Planning document.

The 2018 Communications Plan states that it is "intended to provide a roadmap for achieving goals and priorities that ensure the accomplishment of the District's mission and vision." The plan was developed by the Chief Communications Officer and the Director of External Communications with limited input from Department staff, District leadership, or other stakeholders. It has not been well-socialized within the Communications Department nor has it been socialized outside of the Department, evidenced by the fact

that most of the stakeholders interviewed were not familiar with the Department's communications plan when asked about it. The communications plan document is 27 pages and includes following sections:

- The District's vision, mission, and background;

- A list of five Communications Department objectives;

- A bulleted list of the seven target audiences (taxpayers/community at large, parents, community partners, students, employees, media, and elected officials);

- Eight key messages;

- A description of the Communications Department organization and key functions;

- A sentence that addresses planning, which states that the Department will "proactively plan strategic and organized responses to specific happenings or initiatives that could impact stakeholders' views or support of Fort Bend ISD";

- Communications tactics, which includes brief descriptions of the Department's responsibilities with respect to media relations, branding, publications, website, and other communication tools, public relations support, Twitter and Facebook, and special events and recognitions; and,

- Fourteen appendices, which includes descriptions and procedures related to 1) Planning: communication channels, crisis/campus incidents, called bond/tax election, hiring a new superintendent, change in leadership, change in policy, program or financial strategy, inclement weather closure or delayed start, surge in enrollment, and 2) Tactics: branding guidelines, publications and communications tools, services, website guidelines, social media strategy, and special recognition programs.

While there are many informative and useful aspects of this plan, it is not serving its intended purpose to "provide a roadmap" for the Department. Importantly, the plan does not link any specific strategies or tactics with specific projects or initiatives to accomplish the Department's five objectives. It also lacks the following essential components:

- References to any relevant District policies;

- Description of specific communication initiatives;

- Specific strategies and/or tactics for accomplishing each of the stated objectives;

- Description of how strategies and tactics differ for each target audience;

- Description of methods for determining the effectives of communication strategies and tactics;

- Performance indicators to track and measure progress;

- Timelines for accomplishing specific initiatives; and,

- Project budget and required resources for accomplishing specific initiatives.

Separately, the audit team also reviewed the Department's 2019-20 Communication Strategy and Planning document, which is a two-page document (or flyer) specifically focused on the District's "60 Years of Excellence" campaign. The document outlines 10 key messages and three District goals. Each goal includes several tools/tactics to meet each goal (see Figure 2). While this is a good example of a more detailed plan related to a specific initiative, it is not referenced in the Department's communications plan, and also lacks many of the essential elements described previously.

Figure 2. Fort Bend ISD Communications Strategy and Planning for 2019-20

Source: Fort Bend ISD

Not having a comprehensive plan that drives the focus of the work of the Department appears to be a contributing factor to the perception by some District leaders and other stakeholders that the Communications Department is "reactive and not proactive." Approximately 68 percent of staff that responded to Gibson's survey agreed/strongly agreed with the following statement: "*FBISD leadership communications are proactive.*" Feedback from stakeholders that participated in interviews and focus groups also expressed a need for communications to be more proactive, particularly when a situation or topic may be perceived as unpopular or highly controversial (e.g., Sugarland 95, school boundaries). Other anecdotal feedback provided to the audit team suggests that several communication strategies have been developed and driven by the Superintendent in response to certain situations, rather than being part of a more deliberate and planned strategy initiated and developed by the Communications Department.

Recommendation 3: Modify the Department's Communication Plan to more clearly link the Department's initiatives and activities to the District's priorities.

Developing an effective communications plan would help to ensure alignment between the District's mission and goals with the Communications Department's strategies and initiatives for supporting the District in achieving them. A well-designed and research-based communications plan should serve as a framework for determining communication priorities, focusing the work of the Communications Department, and clearly demonstrating how projects, tasks and responsibilities align with the major priorities of the District.

To ensure that communications are more strategic and proactive, the Department should modify its communications plan so that it is organized around specific communication goals, objectives, and initiatives. For every initiative, the plan should include projected timelines and budgets, as well as an outline of the communication roles and responsibilities for all staff (not just staff within the Communications Department), because often staff outside of the Department, as well as Board members, play an important role in ensuring efficient and effective dissemination of information. Moreover, the plan should guide the development and dissemination of key messages that are critical to Fort Bend ISD's major initiatives and goals, and should present a roadmap for effectively communicating with all of the District's internal and external stakeholders. The Department should ensure that the cultural preferences for communications amongst the District's diverse stakeholder groups and target audiences are also adequately addressed. It is important that the plan provide a full picture of the scope and responsibilities of the Communications Department and include a description of all ongoing communication activities, such as the digital and print publications, video productions, marketing campaigns, and special events.

Once finalized, the plan should be distributed to District and campus leadership and posted on the District's website. The plan should be evaluated semi-annually to monitor progress to determine whether any adjustments to strategies and tactics are needed. As new communications initiatives unfold, the communications plan should be updated.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. The department plans to work with the new superintendent to update the communications plan and ensure all activities are aligned to the District's priorities.

Finding 4: The Communications Department does not systematically research and evaluate the effectiveness of its communications strategies, tactics, or initiatives.

Being able to measure outcomes is a critical component when decisions must be made about continuing specific communication activities given limited resources and staff capacity. The Communications Department currently tracks a limited number of metrics related to website and social media operating statistics (e.g., number of followers, number of content clicks, number of engagements), *Let's Talk!* analytics, or surveys administered after a special event or recognition ceremony (e.g., graduations). These operating statistics and survey data, however, do not provide sufficient guidance to ensure an effective communications program.

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Beyond these metrics and data, the audit team did not obtain evidence that the Communications Department has established any other indicators to measure performance, nor has it implemented processes to routinely collect qualitative or quantitative data to assess the effectiveness of specific communication strategies, tactics, or initiatives. The absence of a research and evaluation component makes it difficult for the Department determine the effectiveness and/or impact of its communications efforts, and to make data-informed decisions to determine whether any adjustments to strategies and tactics are needed moving forward.

Recommendation 4: Incorporate research and evaluation components into the Communications Plan.

To ensure an effective communications function, the Communications Department should evaluate every major communication effort to determine whether planned goals were met and objectives achieved. Evaluation metrics and measurable outcomes should be established for each communications initiative and incorporated into the communications plan. The communications plan should include a variety of approaches for regular and ongoing evaluation of communication effectiveness and the results should be shared with District leadership and used to inform communication strategy. For each initiative, the Department should seek to answer the following questions:

- Did the target audience receive the communication?

- When did they access the information?

- How much of the information did they consume?

- Did the target audience understand the key message(s)?

- How can the next communication be more effective?

The Department must clearly define what is to be measured for each initiative. This can range anywhere from "stakeholder reach" (e.g., number of households that received a publication), to "stakeholder engagement" (e.g., number of 'likes' on a social media post, satisfaction levels with the frequency and quality of shared information), to "impact on stakeholder behavior" (e.g., passage of a bond referendum), or any combination of the above. For each indicator, the Department should establish baseline targets against which to track and measure progress.

The Department should also determine what tools and processes (including frequency and timeline) will be used to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys, for example, are an effective tool for understanding stakeholder perceptions, expectations, and needs. The results are quantifiable and can easily be used to compare current performance to past performance. Focus groups allow for a deeper understanding of stakeholder perceptions and expectations and are particularly useful to gather feedback about the effectiveness of messaging. Analyzing social media statistics as it relates to a specific initiative or topic is also very useful. It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of communications across stakeholder groups/segments and to use those results to revise and improve communications strategies and tactics.

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Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. As part of the communication plan revamp, we will work to incorporate data and analytics that will help drive the work of the department. Additional resources and funding to support this effort would allow the current team to refocus tasks to engage in this important work.

Finding 5: District and campus administrators are not provided with complete communication protocols to follow during an emergency/crisis situation.

A crisis is an event that occurs suddenly and most often unexpectedly, and if not managed well, can result in confusion and mistrust amongst stakeholders. Providing communications and public relations support to District leadership and department and campus administrators during an emergency or crisis situation is an important service provided by the Communications Department. Notably, the District added a Public Information Officer position in 2019-20 to act as a liaison between Fort Bend ISD police department, District and campus administrators, the news media, and the public. The primary role of this position is to assist in the distribution of timely information related to student safety issues at Fort Bend ISD campuses and develop and execute proactive communication campaigns that emphasize the District's commitment to student safety to all stakeholder groups.

Appendix B of the Department's Communications Plan (referenced previously) outlines some general steps principals should follow, with regard to communication protocols, in the event of a campus emergency or crisis situation. For example, the plan instructs principals to "first assess/life and safety issues immediately, and take actions in accordance with campus emergency procedures" and to "notify their Assistant Superintendent for additional guidance and support." Appendix B also specifies the role of the Communications Department and the Department of School Leadership in the event of a crisis. For example, the plan states that "Fort Bend ISD's Communications Department will work collaboratively with the Department of School Leadership and campus principals to assist with messaging related to sensitive situations."

Beyond these instructions, however, there is little other guidance to support principals or other District administrators with their communications during an emergency or crisis situation. For example, the plan states that "campus principals should develop and issue messages if there is an immediate safety concern, or if communications staff cannot provide a response in the timeframe needed by the campus", but it does not include any standard forms or templates for principals to model their communications. Further, approximately 75 percent of District administrators and campus principals that responded to Gibson's survey disagreed/strongly disagreed with the following statement: "There are clear communication protocols to follow during an emergency." Feedback from District and campus administrators during interviews and focus groups, particularly from those that are new to Fort Bend ISD and/or new to their leadership position, also agreed with this sentiment.

Recommendation 5: Develop communication protocols for District and campus administrators to follow during an emergency/crisis.

A well-developed and consistently updated crisis communication plan will ensure that Fort Bend ISD has the infrastructure in place to respond as-needed to a range of natural disasters or other crises. While it is not possible to plan for every scenario or event, a well-managed crisis communication plan can help manage messaging to preserve the District's brand, reputation, and credibility. At all levels, it is imperative that communications occur consistently and information be presented with clarity.

It is recommended that the Department create a crisis communications management plan that establishes protocols to ensure transparency around crisis issues and/or events and to support District and campus administrators in their communications. This plan should align with and complement the District's disaster readiness plan (if one exists). This document should be a stand-alone document (separate from the departmental Communications Plan discussed previously) so that it can be routinely updated and shared digitally. All District and campus administrators should receive annual training on crisis communication protocols.

The plan should communicate broadly how the District will handle and communicate about a crisis and outline the steps that need to be taken in regard to communications with both internal and external stakeholders. The plan should identify by name members of the District's crisis communications team and include their contact information, and should specify the roles and responsibilities of others (by position) in the communications process. It should also include which communication vehicles are to be used (e.g., Twitter, email, news release) and by whom. Importantly, the plan should include a series of templates covering a variety of communications to address common situations (e.g., technology outages, social media threats) that District and campus administrators can easily leverage. Other elements that should be addressed in the crisis communications management plan include:

- References to relevant district policies;

- Protocols for communications to non-English speakers so that they receive the same information at the same time as English speakers during a crisis;

- List and description of backup systems and networks to communicate critical information relevant to district staff, families and stakeholders;

- Contact information for local government offices, public health departments, evacuation centers, police and fire departments, the Red Cross, and other organization that district and/or campus administrators may need to communicate with during a crisis; and,

- Tactics for proactively engaging the media.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. The department will curate the standard protocols on how, when and what to communicate to parents and stakeholders to support the growing needs of faster and more consumable communications.

Finding 6: The Communications Department does not provide communications and/or media relations training to District leaders and administrators.

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One of the responsibilities articulated in the Chief Communications Officer job description is to "provide leadership and training to district staff related to effective communications, marketing and incident/crisis response." However, the Department does not provide any formalized or ongoing communications training to District leaders or administrators. Stakeholders that provided feedback to the audit team during interviews and focus groups were unanimous in their desire for communications-related training to support them in their role as District leaders. Specific examples cited by focus group participants where more training would be welcomed include: media relations and interviewing skills, public speaking (face-to-face and videoconference), social media, written communications, and developing effective PowerPoint presentations. Some stakeholders also said they would like more training related to legal statutes that dictate access to public information (e.g., FERPA). In reality, delivering timely, unified messages to the appropriate audiences is a shared responsibility of the entire organization, so not adequately training and supporting District leaders and administrators to be effective communicators increases the risk of having communications that are ineffective, inaccurate, or otherwise not well-received—all of which could negatively impact the District's image and reputation.

Recommendation 6: Provide training to District leaders and administrators to support them in being effective communicators.

The Communications Department should implement a communications training program to assist District leaders and administrators in their communications with staff, students, parents, media, and community members. A well-implemented communications training program will help to set expectations for effective communications and increase accountability for this function throughout the District. The Department should ensure that all District leaders and administrators (veterans as well as new hires) receive ongoing training in the best communications techniques and the proper use of tools and technology. Examples of training topics that should be addressed include:

- Relevant Board policies and other legal requirements
- Emergency/crisis communications procedures and protocols
- Media relations and interviewing skills
- Social media etiquette and best practices
- Telephone, voicemail, and email etiquette and best practices
- Videoconferencing etiquette and best practices
- Branding guidelines
- Ambassadorship
- Cultural competency

The Department should leverage existing avenues for delivering professional development, such as principal Town Hall and/or PLC meetings, workshops, webinars, or other online resources.

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Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. The department will engage crisis communications training for the Board and leadership, as well as training for principals to support the growing needs of faster and more consumable communications to stakeholders.

3 – Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations

Background

Understanding stakeholder perceptions and expectations about communications – whether it is from District leadership, department administrators, or school principals – can help to identify whether current communication strategies, channels, and vehicles are effective, and can help inform the District's communication strategy moving forward.

The audit team solicited feedback about the District's communications from different internal and external groups of stakeholders – Trustees, District administrators, principals, teachers and other Fort Bend ISD employees, parents, and community representatives – through interviews, focus groups, and an employee survey. This chapter provides a summary of the feedback received from Fort Bend ISD stakeholders, as well as findings and recommendations for areas in need of improvement. The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows:

- Stakeholder Feedback
    - Communication Channels
    - Quality and Frequency of Communications
    - Employees as Ambassadors
    - Communications Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
    - Cross-departmental Communications
    - Communications Support for District Leadership and Administrators
    - Special Events and Recognition Ceremonies
    - Digital and Print Publications
    - Social Media
    - District and Campus Websites
    - Branding and Marketing
    - Media Relations
- Findings and Recommendations

Stakeholder Feedback

Gibson conducted 28 interviews and four focus groups to collect anecdotal feedback from the District's different stakeholder groups. A list of interviewees and focus groups is contained in Appendix A. Stakeholders were probed about their preferences for how and how often they would like receive

information from the District and campus leadership, the quality of communications they receive, and suggestions for how Fort Bend ISD could improve communications to better meet their informational needs.

Gibson also administered a survey to all Fort Bend ISD employees to better understand their preferences for and reliance on different communication channels and satisfaction with the overall quality and frequency of communications they receive from the central office and from their campus. Employees were also asked to respond to the following open-ended question: *What one thing could Fort Bend ISD leadership/administration do (more of, or differently) to improve communications with District employees?* Detailed responses are included in *Appendix C*. In total, 6,643 employees responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of nearly 54 percent. Table 5 below details the response rate by employee work location. District central office staff includes school-based itinerant staff (e.g., special education, temporary staff) as well as auxiliary staff (e.g., transportation, child nutrition, facilities maintenance and operations, security and security).

Table 5. Survey Response Rate by Work Location

Location	Total Employees	Response Rate
District Central Office	4,746	42.8%
Elementary School	3,758	58.0%
Middle School	1,604	58.0%
High School	2,150	55.8%
Other School	97	61.9%
Total	**12,355**	**53.8%**

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Gibson also disaggregated and analyzed survey responses by employee type (somewhat overlapping with department) and years of employment with Fort Bend ISD. Tables 6 and 7 show the disaggregated survey response rates for each group.

Table 6. Survey Response Rate by Employee Group

Employee Group	Total Employees	Response Rate
Campus Administrator	250	54.8%
Child Nutrition Staff	539	45.5%
Clerical Staff	1,256	57.6%
District Leadership	14	35.7%
Educational Aide	1,088	55.0%
Facilities/Maintenance Staff	757	55.7%
Other Central Office Staff	535	68.0%
Other School-based Staff	223	65.5%
Safety/Security Staff	350	30.9%
Student Support Staff	509	68.2%
Teacher	5,200	56.2%
Temporary or Sub	1,116	18.3%

Employee Group	Total Employees	Response Rate
Transportation Staff	518	34.4%
Total	**12,355**	**53.8%**

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Table 7. Survey Response Rate by Years of Employment at Fort Bend ISD

Years of Employment	Total Employees	Response Rate
Less than 2 Years	4,033	48.5%
2 to 5 Years	3,598	52.5%
6 to 10 Years	1,672	52.9%
More than 10 Years	3,052	54.7%
Total	**12,355**	**53.8%**

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Communication Channels

Communication channels are the means through which people in an organization communicate. Thought must be given to which communication channels should be used to deliver various types of messages. In general, complex messages require more interactive channels that facilitate two-way communication to ensure clarity (e.g., staff meetings), while less complex messages can be delivered using one-way communication channels (e.g., newsletters). Communication channels include face-to-face interactions, staff meetings, emails, phone calls, text messages, newsletters, social media, websites, etc. Since employees in Fort Bend ISD send and receive messages using a variety of channels, one objective of the employee survey was to assess how much employees *rely on* different channels to send and receive communications and to measure their perceptions of the *overall quality* of the communications they receive through each channel.

The survey specifically asked employees to distinguish between the communications they receive from their campus leadership (e.g., principal/school office) or department leadership (e.g., supervisor for centrally-based staff), and the communications they receive from the District leadership (e.g., the school board, superintendent, or district offices). Based on the survey results, there tends to be a high positive correlation between the communication channels employees most rely on and their perception of the overall quality of those communication channels. This was true for communications from both school/department leadership and for communications from District leadership.

Figure 3 illustrates the degree to which employees rely on communication channels and their overall perception of the quality of those communication channels, while Tables 8 and 9 below provide details by type of communication channel for school/department channels and District leadership channels, respectively.

Figure 3. Communication Channels from School/Department Leadership – Employee Reliance and Perception of Quality
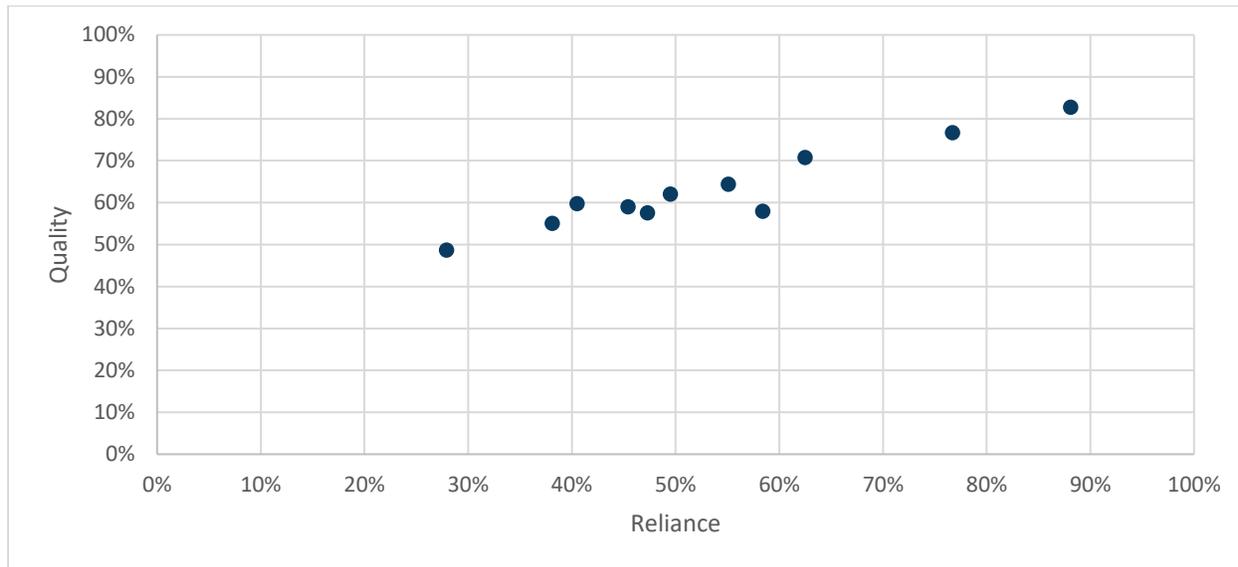

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Note: Reliance percentages reflect the degree (Quite a Bit/Very Much) to which employees rely on a communication channel and their perception of the overall quality (Good/Very Good) of a communication channel.

Table 8. Communication Channels from School/Department Leadership – Employee Reliance and Perception of Quality

Communication Channel	Reliance	Quality
Personal communications from supervisor	88.1%	82.8%
Faculty/Staff Meetings	76.7%	76.7%
Automated Emails	62.5%	70.8%
Word-of-Mouth	58.4%	58.0%
Newsletters and E-newsletters	55.1%	64.4%
Automated Text Messages	49.5%	62.1%
Schoology	47.3%	57.6%
School Website	45.4%	59.0%
Automated Phone Calls	40.5%	59.8%
Printed Materials	38.1%	55.1%
Campus Social Media	27.9%	48.7%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Note: Reliance percentages reflect the degree (Quite a Bit/Very Much) to which employees rely on a communication channel and their perceptions of the overall quality (Good/Very Good) of a communication channel.

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Table 9. Communication Channels from District Leadership – Employee Reliance and Perception of Quality

Communication Channel	Reliance	Quality
Automated Emails	65.7%	71.7%
FBISD Website	63.5%	70.3%
District-wide Staff/Department Meetings	57.0%	64.4%
Word-of-Mouth	52.0%	56.6%
Board Meetings	51.3%	64.7%
Automated Text Messages	45.5%	60.3%
Schoology	42.7%	56.5%
Newsletters/E-newsletters	41.8%	56.7%
Automated Phone Calls	40.8%	59.2%
FBISD Social Media	35.8%	54.4%
Printed Materials	33.8%	55.3%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Note: Reliance percentages reflect the degree (Quite a Bit/Very Much) to which employees rely on a communication channel and their perceptions of the overall quality (Good/Very Good) of a communication channel.

As Table 10 suggests, automated emails are the most relied on communication channel for communications from District leadership (it is the second most relied on communication channel for communications from school/department leadership after personal communications from a supervisor). However, this was not true for every employee group. Table 10 below shows the most relied on communication channel for communications from District leadership for each employee group. Campus administrators and other central office staff tend to rely most on Districtwide staff/department meetings; District leaders tend to rely most on School Board meetings; and, teachers, temporary staff, and other school-based staff tend to rely most on information shared on the District's website.

Table 10. Communication Channels from District Leadership – Reliance by Employee Group

Employee Group	Reliance	Most Relied on Communication Channel
Campus Administrator	80.5%	District-wide Staff/Department Meetings
Child Nutrition Staff	74.1%	Automated Emails
Clerical Staff	80.6%	Automated Emails
District Leadership	100.0%	Board Meetings
Educational Aide	77.5%	Automated Emails
Facilities/Maintenance Staff	70.0%	Automated Emails
Other Central Office Staff	67.3%	Districtwide Staff/Department Meetings
Other School-based Staff	70.6%	FBISD Website
Safety/Security Staff	57.5%	Automated Emails
Student Support Staff	69.7%	FBISD Website
Teacher	58.7%	Automated Emails
Temporary or Sub	77.6%	FBISD Website
Transportation Staff	68.0%	Automated Emails

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Note: Reliance percentages reflect the degree (Quite a Bit/Very Much) to which employees rely on a communication channel.

Quality and Frequency of Communications

Seventy-three percent of staff responding to the survey were mostly or very satisfied with the overall quality of communications from District leadership, and 76 percent were mostly or very satisfied with the overall quality of communications from their campus/department leadership. However, satisfaction levels varied widely across employee groups, with District leadership and campus administrators reporting the highest levels of satisfaction, and transportation staff reporting the lowest levels of satisfaction. Approximately 22 percent of transportation staff and 10 percent of safety/security staff indicated that they are very dissatisfied with the overall quality of communications from their school/department; satisfaction with the overall quality of communications from District leadership followed a similar pattern.

Figure 4. Employees Satisfaction with the Overall Quality of Communications from the District Leadership and Campus/Department Leadership
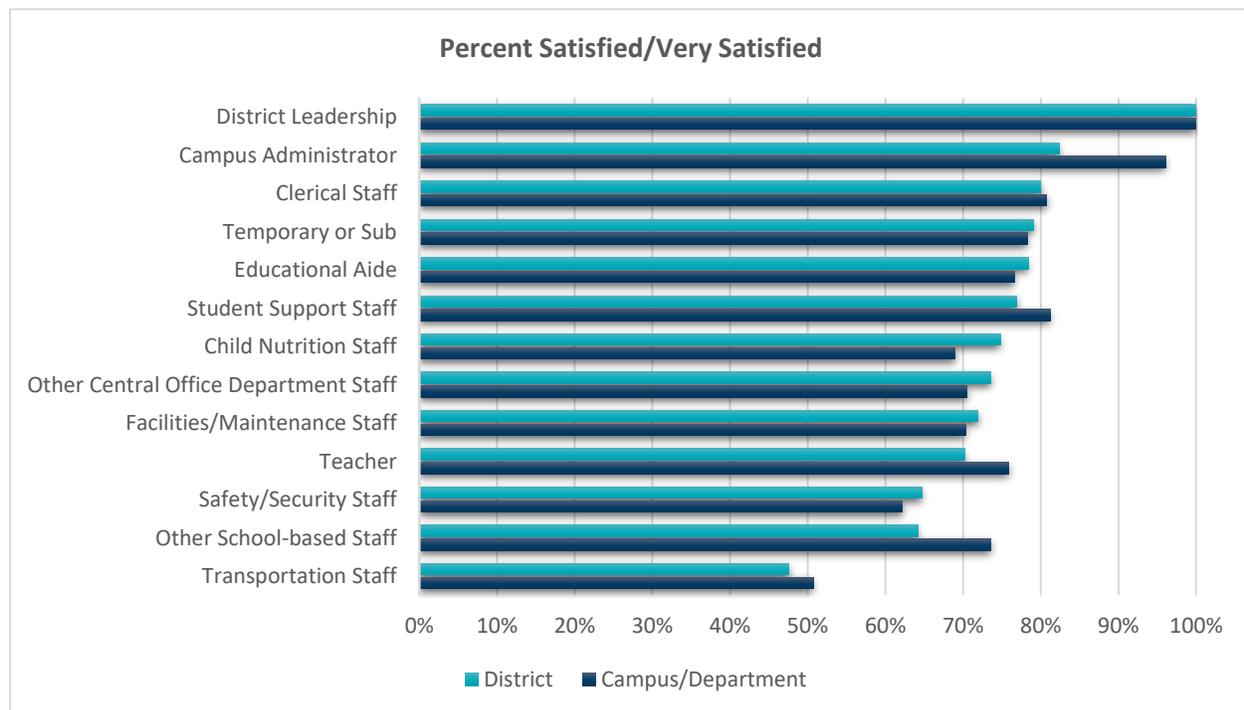
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

More than 80 percent of staff that responded to the survey consider communications from their campus/department leadership to be accurate, informative, relevant, trustworthy, and clear/easy to understand. Fewer staff consider communications to be timely and proactive. On these criteria, staff found communications from District leadership to be somewhat less favorable, though still greater than 67 percent.

Figure 5. Communications from District Leadership and Campus/Department Leadership
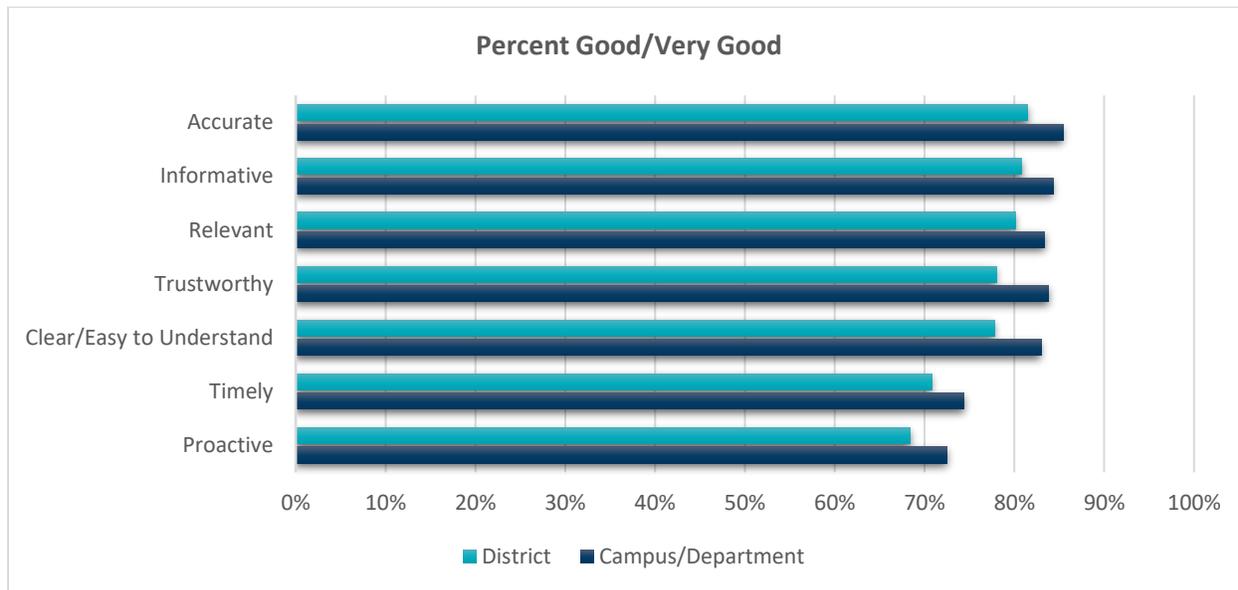
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

When asked about the quality of the District's communications about certain topics of interest, communications about District events and programs were rated highest (75.3%), followed by communications about natural disasters, and staff, school and student achievements. Communications about central office reorganizations, District finances/stewardship, and bond/tax elections were rated lowest, with less than 66 percent of staff rating them as good or very good.

Figure 6. Quality of Communications from District Leadership, by Topic

Percent Good/Very Good

Topic	Percent
District Events/Programs	75.3%
Other Natural Disasters	73.7%
Staff Achievements	73.4%
School Achievements	73.2%
Student Achievements	73.0%
Campus Events/Programs	72.6%
Changes in District Policy	72.6%
School Safety	69.9%
COVID-19 Pandemic	69.6%
Change in Academic Programming	68.8%
Change in District Leadership	67.9%
Change in School Leadership	66.8%
Inclement Weather	66.1%
Bond/Tax Elections	65.5%
District Finances/Stewardship	63.3%
Central Office Reorganizations	58.8%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Overall, staff report that the frequency of communications they receive on most topics is just right, with only a small percentage of staff indicating that they are receiving too many communications. Topics that tended to rate the lowest in terms of quality (e.g., central office reorganizations) also tended to have a higher percentage of employees reporting that they did not receive enough communications about that topic.

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Figure 7. Frequency of Communications from District Leadership, by Topic
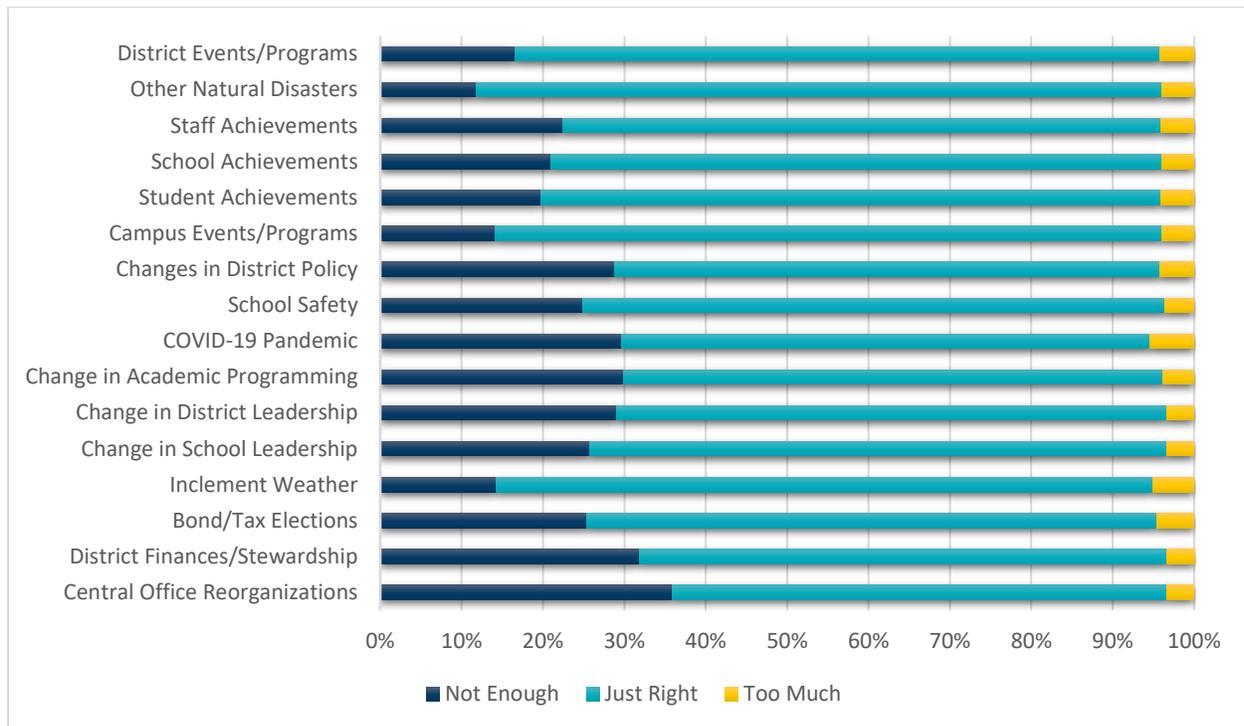
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Employees were asked to rate the effectiveness of the District's communications about its key message of quality of education in Fort Bend ISD and allowing students to reach their full potential. Nearly 73 percent of staff that responded to the survey believe that the District is effective/very effective at creating awareness of its mission in the school system, while 69 percent of staff believe that the District is effective at celebrating diversity and inclusion. Staff feedback suggests that the District is less effective in its communications to stakeholders who do not have children in the school system, with just 50 percent of staff rating the District's communications as effective/very effective in this area.

Figure 8. District Communications About Key Messages
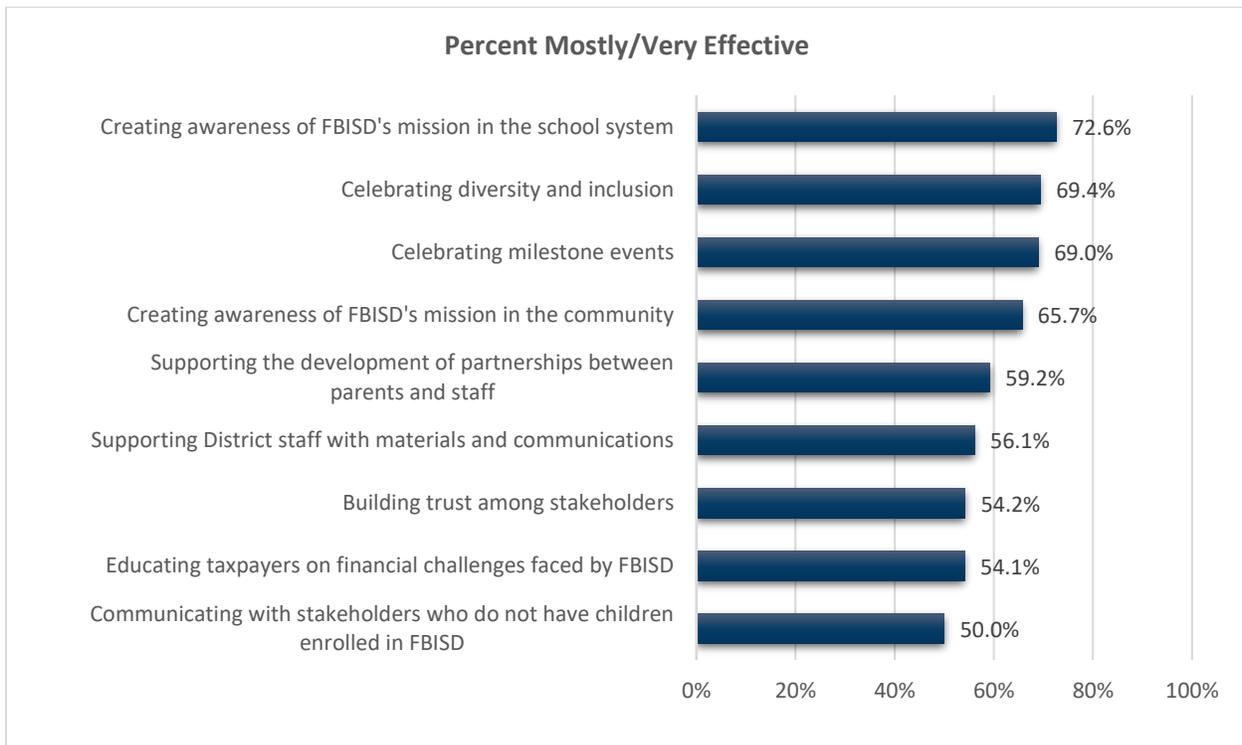
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Employees as Ambassadors

Employees are often considered the most credible sources of information about a school district, so it is therefore critical that the District enables them to be positive ambassadors in support of its vision, mission, goals and objectives. Employees that feel valued and are satisfied in their current position or role tend to be the most positive ambassadors. Conversely, employees that do not feel valued or are otherwise dissatisfied can be become disengaged, leading to low employee morale and poor work performance, both of which can be detrimental to the district's brand and image.

Overall, a high percentage of employees that responded to the survey would recommend Fort Bend ISD to friends and family as a place to work and/or to send their children. However, these sentiments are not universally shared across all employee groups or school levels. On a scale of 1 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely), employees responded with an average rating of 7.5 when asked *"How likely you are to recommend Fort Bend ISD to friends and family as a place to work?"* and an average rating of 7.9 when asked *"How likely are you to recommend Fort Bend ISD schools to friends and family as a place to send their children?"*

Table 11 shows the average ratings to both of these questions by employee group. When asked about recommending Fort Bend ISD as a place to work, transportation staff had the lowest average rating (6.9), followed by other school-based staff (7.0), teachers (7.2), and student support staff (7.3). When asked

about recommending Fort Bend ISD as a place to send their children, responses overall were higher and there was slightly less variation across employee groups.

Table 11. Likelihood of Recommending Fort Bend ISD as a Place to Work and a Place to Send Their Children, by Employee Group

Employee Group	Recommend as a Place to Work	Recommend as a Place to Send Their Children
Campus Administrator	8.0	8.4
Child Nutrition Staff	7.8	8.4
Clerical Staff	7.8	8.2
District Leadership	10.0	10.0
Educational Aide	8.1	8.3
Facilities/Maintenance Staff	8.3	8.6
Other Central Office Staff	7.5	8.1
Other School-based Staff	7.0	7.6
Safety/Security Staff	7.8	8.1
Student Support Staff	7.3	7.7
Teacher	7.2	7.6
Temporary or Sub	8.1	8.4
Transportation Staff	6.9	7.6

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Employees located at high schools had the lowest average ratings to these questions; otherwise, responses to these questions did not vary much by employees at other locations.

Table 12. Likelihood of Recommending Fort Bend ISD as a Place to Work and a Place to Send Their Children, by Location

Location	Recommend as a Place to Work	Recommend as a Place to Send Their Children
District Central Office	7.8	8.2
Elementary School	7.6	8.0
Middle School	7.6	7.8
High School	6.9	7.5
Other School	7.7	8.0

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Using these data, the audit team also calculated a Net Promoter Score (NPS) for each employee group, which is a measure of staff enthusiasm. Net promoter scores are calculated by asking respondents to rate an institution on a scale from zero to ten (staff rated working at Fort Bend ISD and sending children to Fort Bend ISD on this scale). The percentage of those responding nine and ten is subtracted from those responding zero to six. A score above zero is considered good, scores above 20 percent are considered favorable, and scores above 50 percent are considered excellent.

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Overall, employees were more positive about sending children to Fort Bend ISD than working at it, and the degree of enthusiasm for the District varied considerably by employee group. However, high school staff, other school-based staff, and transportation staff had negative promoter scores (unfavorable NPS rating) with respect to working at Fort Bend ISD. Teachers (who make up nearly half of all employees) also had a low NPS score (3.5) with respect to working at Fort Bend ISD. Other employee groups had more favorable NPS ratings. The analysis of NPS reveals employee groups who are likely to be the most positive ambassadors for Fort Bend ISD, as well as employee groups who could potentially be detractors and/or are otherwise indifferent.

Table 13. Percent of Employees that Would Recommend Fort Bend ISD as a Place to Work and a Place to Send Their Children, Net Promoter Score and Rating by Employee Group

Employee Group	Place to Work		Place to Send Their Children	
	NPS Score	NPS Rating	NPS Score	NPS Rating
Campus Administrator	32.5%	Favorable	46.3%	Favorable
Child Nutrition Staff	27.4%	Favorable	43.9%	Favorable
Clerical Staff	24.5%	Favorable	37.6%	Favorable
District Leadership	100.0%	Excellent	100.0%	Excellent
Educational Aide	28.5%	Favorable	35.8%	Favorable
Facilities/Maintenance Staff	42.2%	Favorable	51.1%	Favorable
Other Central Office Staff	14.1%	Good	32.6%	Favorable
Other School-based Staff	-9.5%	Unfavorable	14.5%	Good
Safety/Security Staff	20.3%	Favorable	33.3%	Favorable
Student Support Staff	6.5%	Good	16.0%	Good
Teacher	3.5%	Good	17.7%	Good
Temporary or Sub	29.0%	Favorable	40.4%	Favorable
Transportation Staff	-0.8%	Unfavorable	21.6%	Favorable

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Table 14. Percent of Employees that Would Recommend Fort Bend ISD as a Place to Work and a Place to Send Their Children, Net Promoter Score and Rating by Employee Location

Employee Location	Place to Work		Place to Send Their Children	
	NPS Score	NPS Rating	NPS Score	NPS Rating
District	23.4%	Favorable	36.6%	Favorable
Elementary	15.9%	Good	29.9%	Favorable
Middle	14.1%	Good	21.2%	Favorable
High	-5.5%	Unfavorable	11.9%	Good
Other	12.5%	Good	26.4%	Favorable

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Employees that feel valued tend to be the most positive ambassadors. Nearly 68 percent of staff that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed with the following statement: *FBISD believes employees are its greatest asset*. Approximately 11 percent of staff *strongly disagreed* with this statement. The rates of agreement and disagreement varied widely across employee groups. Employees with the highest rates

of agreement include District administrators (100%), substitutes/temporary staff (82%), and child nutrition staff (82.5%), while employee groups that had the highest rates of disagreement include transportation staff (17.1%), teachers (14.3%), and other school-based staff (13%). Interestingly, staff with less than two years of employment with Fort Bend ISD had the highest rates of agreement (75.2%), while staff that have been employed with Fort Bend ISD between six and 10 years had the lowest rates of agreement (58%) with this statement.

Fort Bend ISD must ensure that employees have accurate information so they can effectively communicate about District strengths, issues and challenges. Approximately 83 percent of staff that responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "*The communications I receive from District leadership/administration enable me to be a good ambassador for Fort Bend ISD*." Transportation staff again had the lowest rate of agreement (although still relatively high) with 72 percent of staff reporting that they agree/strongly agree with this statement. Similarly, 84.9 percent of staff that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed with the following statement: "*The communications I receive from my school/department enable me to be a good ambassador for Fort Bend ISD.*"

Overall, employees agreed with positive statements about Fort Bend ISD, but perceptions ranged widely (20 percentage points) based on specific statements. Figure 9 below details the percent of employees who agreed/strongly agreed with positive statements about the District. As noted previously, the statement that received the lowest rate of agreement was *FBISD believes employees are its greatest asset.*

Figure 9. Positive Statements About Fort Bend ISD
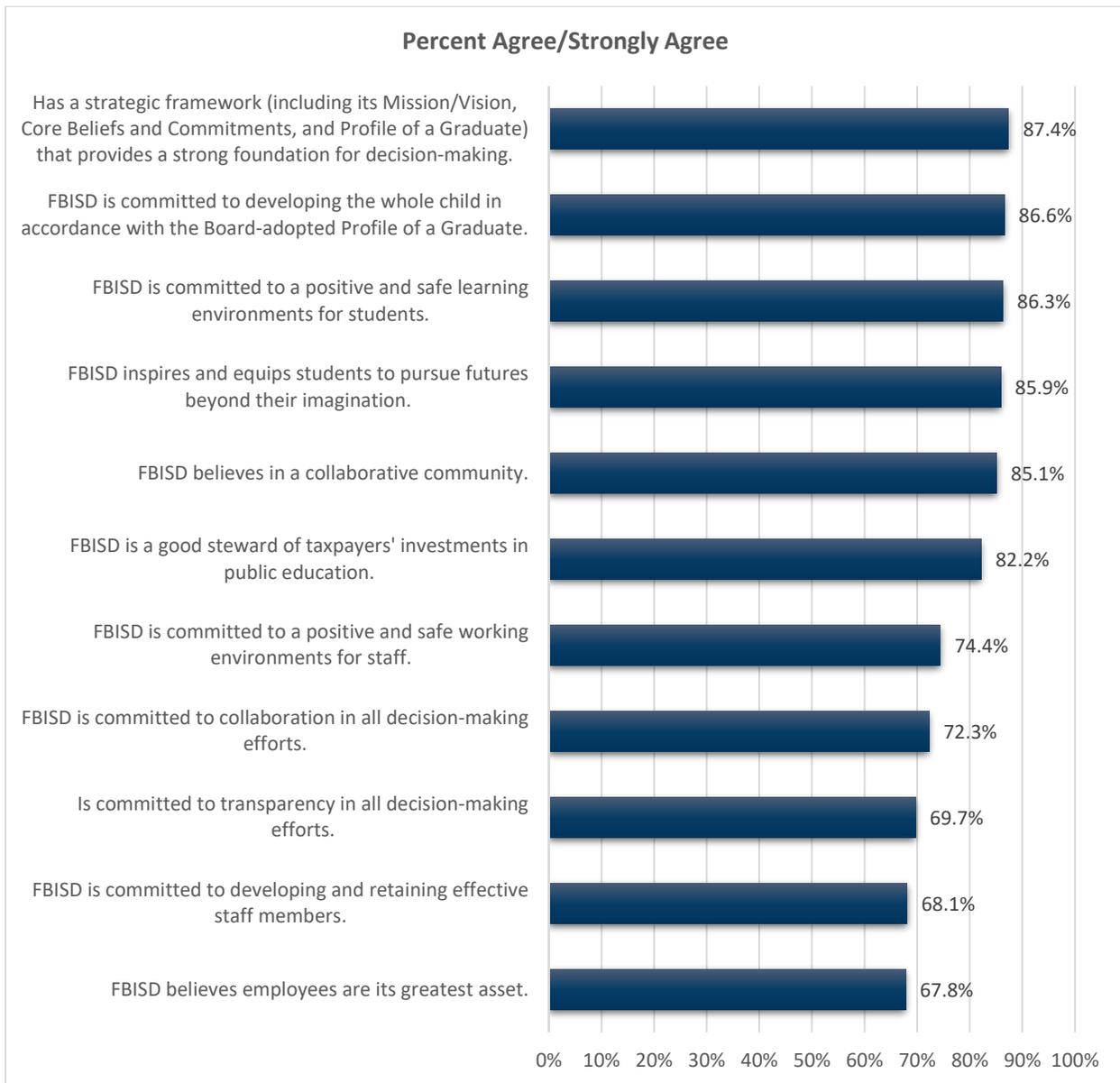
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Communications Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fort Bend ISD launched a series of communications to provide internal and external stakeholders with up-to-date information regarding the District's response to the pandemic. For example, the District created a *COVID-19 Update* website to provide stakeholders with timely updates to District policies and procedures, news, and other announcements. The Superintendent also posted a series of video messages to further explain the District's decisions in response to the pandemic.

It should be noted that interviews and focus groups with District stakeholders were mostly conducted in July and August of 2020, just four months into the pandemic. Gibson's employee survey was administered in December 2020, nine months after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping in mind this context, Gibson questioned stakeholders regarding their overall satisfaction with the District's communications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (*not* about whether or not they agreed with decisions that were being made in response to it).

Stakeholder satisfaction with the District's communications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic overall was favorable, but satisfaction levels varied by stakeholder group. The majority of employees that responded to the survey reported that they were satisfied/very satisfied with the District's communications about the pandemic. As shown in Figure 10 below, communications about COVID-related policies such as mask wearing and social distancing received the highest rates of satisfaction (81.9%), while communications about school reopening plans received the lowest rates of satisfaction (67%).

Figure 10. District Communications About the COVID-19 Pandemic
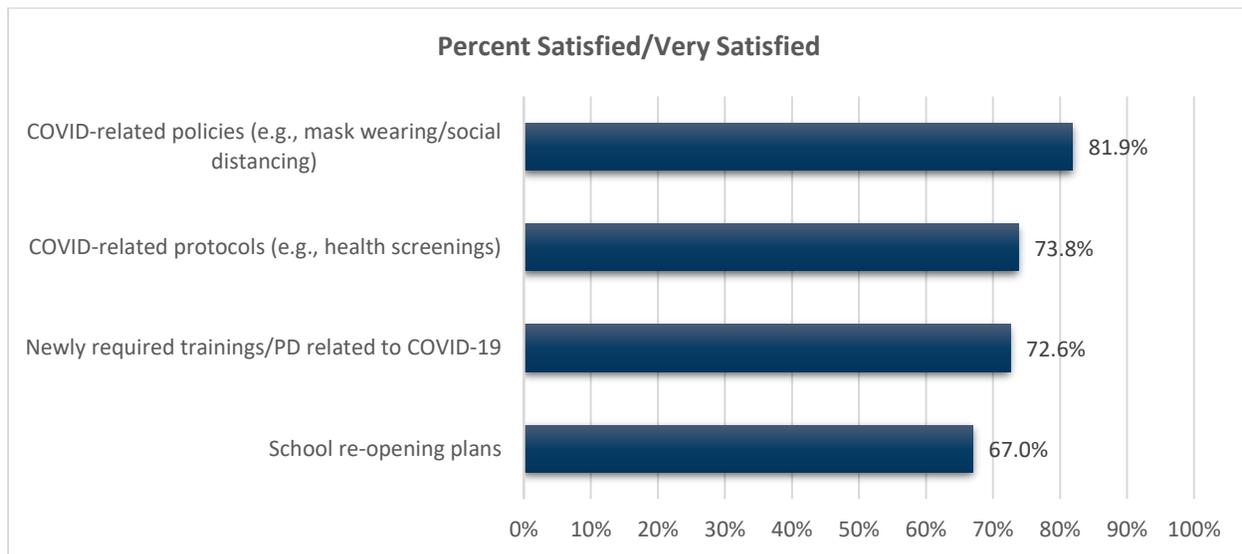
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Figure 11 below shows the percent of employees by position type that indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the District's communications regarding school reopening plans. One hundred (100) percent of District leadership that responded to the survey reported that they were satisfied/very satisfied with the District's communications about school reopening plans, while 57.5 percent of educational aides, 59.9 percent of transportation staff, and 63.3 percent of teachers that responded that they were satisfied/very satisfied with the District's communications on this topic.

Figure 11. District Communications About School Reopening Plans

Percent Satisfied/Very Satisfied

Category	Percent
District Leadership	100.0%
Temporary/Substitutes	80.7%
Other Central Office Department Staff	77.6%
Child Nutrition Staff	76.6%
Safety/Security Staff	75.5%
Campus Administrator	75.0%
Facilities/Maintenance Staff	72.1%
Other School-based Staff	69.9%
Clerical Staff	69.6%
Student Support Staff	68.4%
Teacher	63.3%
Transportation Staff	58.9%
Educational Aide	57.5%
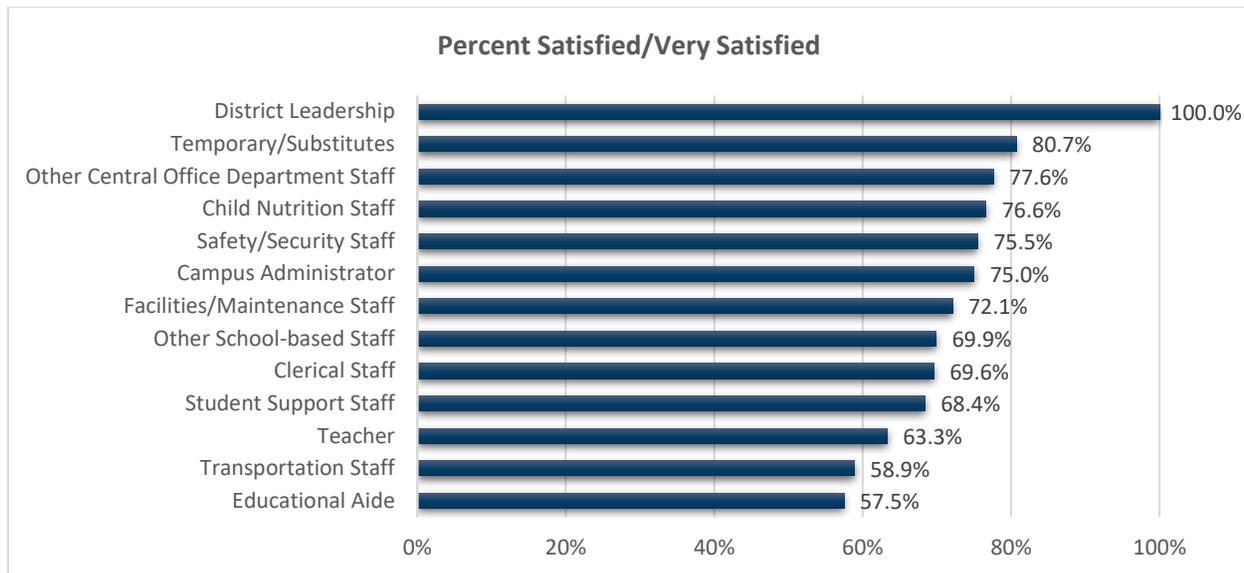
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

When asked about their satisfaction with District's communications about these topics in focus groups, parents said that they would like more information about the rationale for *why* certain decisions were made by District leadership, not just *what* the final decision was. For example, parents expressed that they were very appreciative that the District surveyed both parents and students regarding their preferences for school reopening during COVID-19, but then also expressed disappointment because the District did not provide them with the survey results.

Cross-departmental Communications

Gibson specifically asked District and campus administrators (only) about their perceptions of communications upward, downward, and across the organization. Nearly 80 percent of District and campus administrators that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed that the District supports effective communications from schools to the central office (upward), and 77 percent of administrators agreed/strongly agreed that the District supports effective communications from central office to the schools (downward). Rates of agreement were slightly lower regarding the effectiveness of communications across schools (75.1%) and across central office departments (73.7%).

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Figure 12. Fort Bend ISD Supports Effective Communications
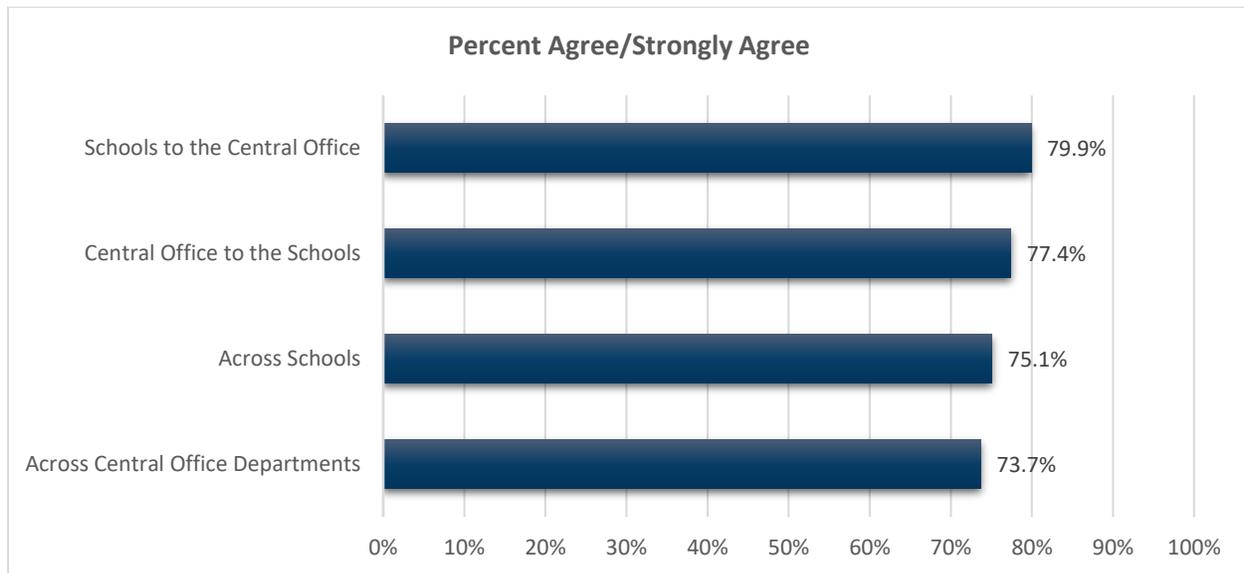
Percent Agree/Strongly Agree

Category	Percent
Schools to the Central Office	79.9%
Central Office to the Schools	77.4%
Across Schools	75.1%
Across Central Office Departments	73.7%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Communications Support for District Leadership and Administrators

District administrators and campus principals reported very high levels of satisfaction with the services and supports provided by the Communications Department. More than 86 percent of District and campus administrators that responded to the survey indicated that Communications Department staff are accessible and responsive, and that they are satisfied with the supports they receive from the Department with respect to public relations and special events. A slightly smaller percentage (82.1%) of District and campus administrators reported that they know who to contact within the Communications Department when they need assistance with public relations.

This survey response data was further supported by anecdotal feedback provided during interviews with District administrators and focus groups with elementary and secondary principals. In this context, principals expressed a need for more support for non-emergency communications, such as developing campus newsletters.

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Figure 13. Statements about the Communications Department

Percent Agree/Strongly Agree

Statement	Percent
Communications Department staff are accessible.	88.3%
Communications Department staff respond to my requests in a timely manner.	87.4%
I receive the public relations support I need from the Communications Department.	87.2%
I am satisfied with the supports to my campus/department for special events.	86.3%
I know who to contact for public relations help in the Communications Department.	82.1%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Overall, Trustees provided mostly positive feedback when asked about the communications supports and services provided to them by the Communications Department. Trustees noted that they are frequently supported in their communication efforts with talking points, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and video presentations. They are particularly satisfied with the weekly *Board Update*. Trustees noted that much of the information they need (and request) is appropriately filtered through the Superintendent and is timely.

However, Trustees noted several areas where improvements are needed. For example, the daily email updates they receive were described as not well organized and containing too much information. Trustees also expressed a desire for communications to be more proactive, and for talking points to be more relevant and tailored to the specific communities they represent. Perhaps the single biggest concern expressed by Trustees is that there have been several recent instances where a communication had to be retracted because it was inaccurate. All of these instances have related to topics that are sensitive in nature and/or highly controversial (e.g., school boundaries), so any risk of miscommunication to stakeholders risks damaging the credibility of District leaders and/or the District's brand and image.

Trustees also expressed a concern about the perceived lack of experience in the Communications Department in addressing major communication issues (e.g., Sugarland 95, Hurricane Harvey) directly, with the impact of the Superintendent needing to intervene and manage the communications from that point forward.

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Special Events and Recognition Ceremonies

Special recognition programs organized by the Communications Department are perceived very favorably by all stakeholder groups. The Communications Department is responsible for organizing the following special recognition programs:

- Annual Staff Service Awards Program and Dinner

- New Staff Service Awards Reception

- Annual Teacher of the Year Program and Dinner

- Annual graduation ceremonies (for all FBISD high schools)

- Annual summer graduation ceremony

- New school ground breaking and dedication ceremonies

- Back-to-school events for District staff

- FBISD Board Leadership Academy

Feedback provided by all of the various stakeholder groups interviewed as part of this audit was overwhelmingly positive with regard to their satisfaction with the special events and recognition programs organized by the Department. More than 86 percent of central office and campus administrators that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed with the following statement: "*I am satisfied with the supports provided to my campus/department from the Communications Department for special events and programs*." Also commendable is the fact that the Department routinely solicits feedback via short surveys after most events to assess participant satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.

Digital and Print Publications

The Communications Department produces several digital and print publications to inform stakeholders about the work of the District:

- *FBISD News Magazine* is a quarterly publication that is mailed to more than 130,000 addresses. This publication provides information and updates about Fort Bend ISD's work to inspire and equip students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine. Each edition includes feature articles that highlight this work, as well as the accomplishments of students and staff members. A link to the online version of the news magazine and archived editions is posted on the Fort Bend ISD website on the Department's webpage at: https://www.fortbendisd.com/Domain/61.

- *FBISD ExPress* is a subscription-based electronic community newsletter with approximately 40,000 subscribers. A link to the online newsletter and archived editions is also posted on the Fort Bend ISD website on the Department's webpage (see link above).

- *Checking in with Charles* is the Superintendent's blog and video message, which is posted on the District's website (https://www.fortbendisd.com/domain/149) every month after Board meeting, or more often if needed.

- *The Frequency* is a monthly podcast that gives voice to the District's staff, students and community members. The podcast can be downloaded from various podcast platforms, including Apple, Google and Spotify.

- *FBISD Bravo* is bimonthly digest that shares and promotes good news and the accomplishments and honors of students and staff.

- *Board Recap* provides a summary of Fort Bend ISD Board meetings and is emailed to all District employees.

Figure 14 below shows the percentage of employees that responded to the survey who said they are somewhat or very familiar with a publication, and the percentage of employees who said the publication is somewhat or very informative. *Checking in with Charles* is the publication most familiar to employees (93.9%), while the *Board Recap* is most informative for employees (63.8%). A much smaller percentage of employees reported that they are somewhat or very familiar with the other four publications produced by the Communications Department. There also appears to be a wide gap in the percent of employees who are somewhat/very familiar with a publication and the percent of employees who report that a publication is mostly/very informative.

Figure 14. FBISD Publications
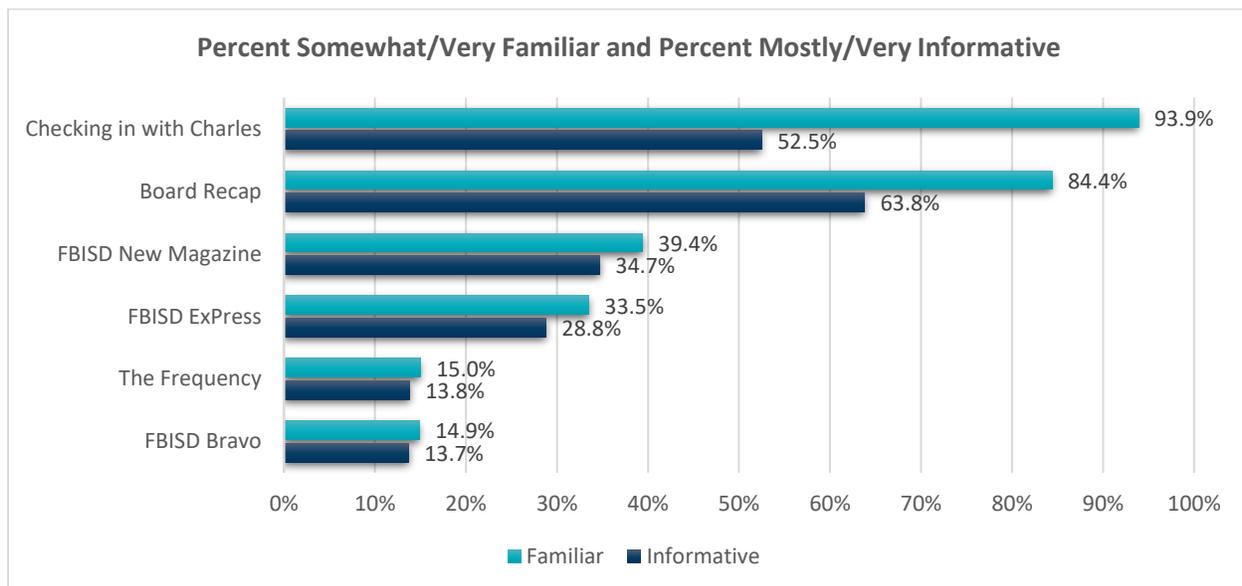
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Figures 15 and 16 below shows the percent of employees by position type that responded to the survey who said they are somewhat/very familiar with *Checking in with Charles* and the *Board Recap*, and the

percent of employees who said these publications are mostly/very informative. In general, District and campus leadership, as well as other staff based in the central office, were more familiar with these publications and also reported that they are more informative than staff in the operational areas of safety/security, facilities and maintenance, child nutrition, and transportation.

Figure 15. *Checking in with Charles*, **by Employee Group**
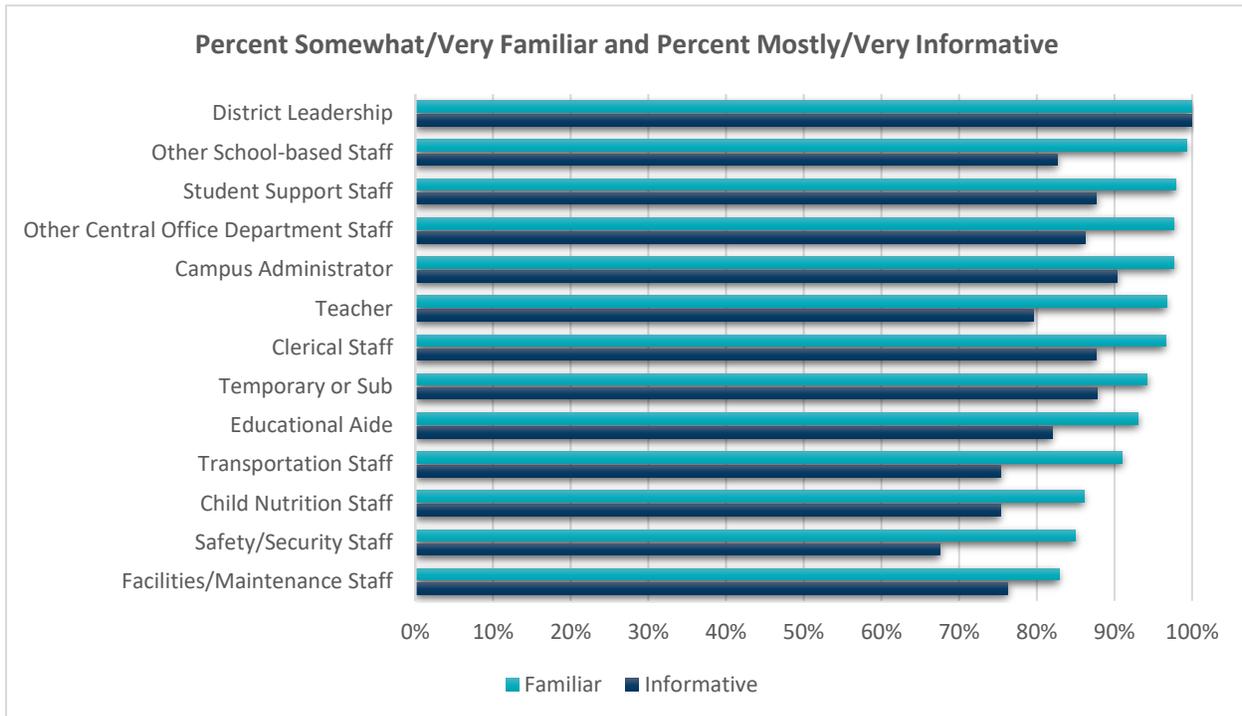
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Figure 16. *Board Recap*, by Employee Group

Percent Somewhat/Very Familiar and Percent Mostly/Very Informative
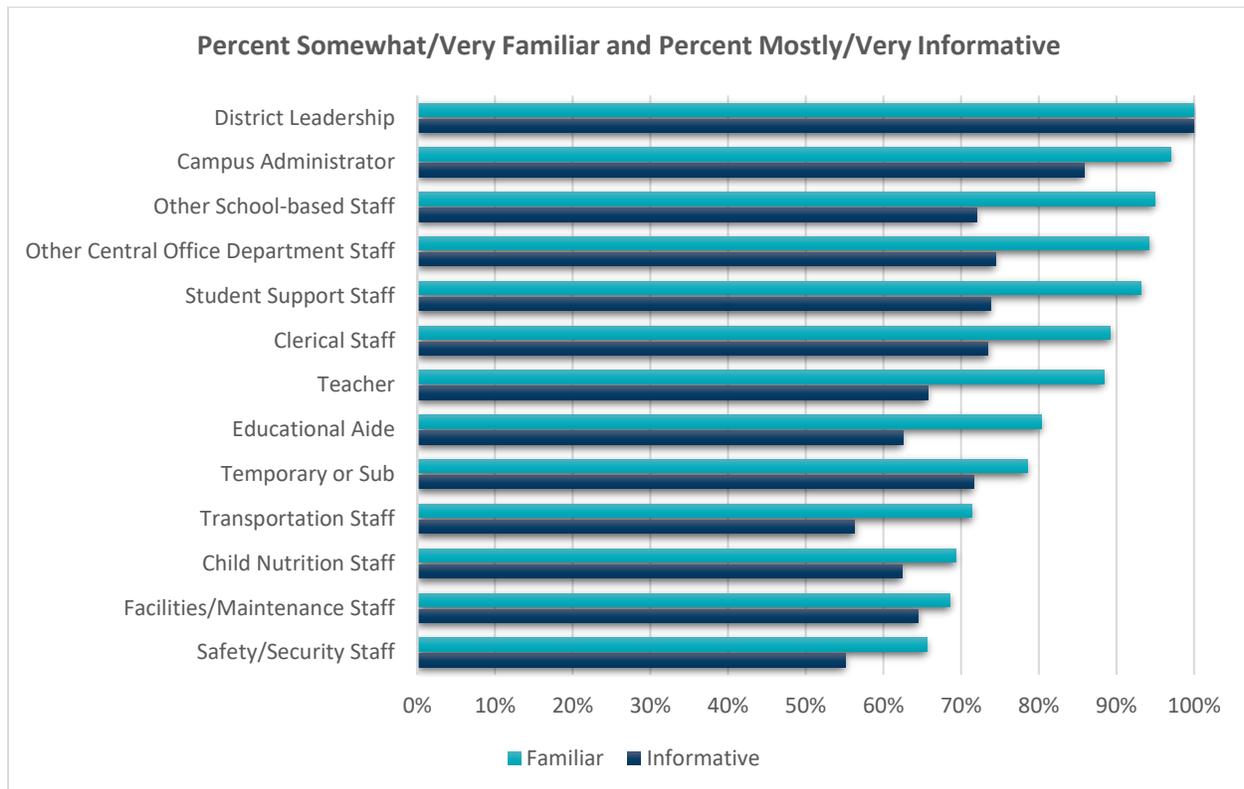
Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

Gibson also specifically surveyed district and campus administrators regarding their overall perceptions of the publications produced by the Communications Department. Fifty-seven (57) percent of staff that responded to the survey disagreed with the following statement: "*The print/digital publications produced by the Communications Department are high quality*." Some additional context provided by administrators during focus groups noted that some publications contain typographical errors. Gibson reviewed the most recent edition of *FBISD Express* (June 25, 2020), and identified two grammatical and two typographical errors, which are highlighted in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17. **Excerpts from *FBISD Express*, June 25, 2020**

Source: Fort Bend ISD and Gibson Consulting Group

When asked in focus groups specifically about these publications, principals noted that they prefer to review the Board agenda packet prior to Board meetings rather than the *Board Recap* that is sent via email after Board meetings. Regarding the *FBISD News Magazine,* principals also suggested having hardcopies of this publication available on campuses, as many staff do not reside within District boundaries.

Parents who participated in focus groups also expressed very positive feedback about the *Checking in with Charles* videos, and several parents noted their appreciation for the fact that all District communications, including videos, are translated into Spanish.

Social Media

In addition to print and digital publications, the Communications Department routinely shares information on the District's social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Content on the District's LinkedIn account is managed by the Human Resources Department. Campus social media is limited to Twitter, which is maintained by campus staff with some oversight and guidance provided by the Communications Department.

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Table 15 below shows the increase in the number of followers for each account from October 2017 to April 2021, which has more than doubled over a three-and-one-half year period. Recent spikes in social media followers are likely due to the rapid increase in the use of social media to push information to the public in response to their demand for information about the COVID-19 pandemic. (A similar trend was observed after Hurricane Harvey in 2017.)

Table 15. Fort Bend ISD Social Media Followers, 2017 to 2021

Social Media Platform	October 2017	January 2020	April 2021	Pct. Change Since 2017
Twitter	19,739	35,230	41,700	111.3%
Facebook	5,788	12,338	16,723	188.9%
YouTube	716	2,460	7,500	947.5%
Instagram	134	3,243	6,750	4,937.3%
LinkedIn	6,359	9,844	11,435	79.8%
Total Followers	**32,736**	**63,115**	**84,108**	**156.9%**

Source: Fort Bend ISD and Gibson Consulting Group

The Department routinely monitors its social media activity and tracks the total number of posts, the total number of impressions (i.e., the total number of times the District's content is displayed, regardless of whether it was clicked or not), average daily impressions, and the total number of engagements (e.g., shares or likes) per post. The Department has determined that the content that generates the most engagement from followers relates to information regarding school closures, student and teacher accolades, and posts that include photo albums recapping an event.

Table 16 below compares the total number of followers for the different social media accounts for Fort Bend ISD and the comparator districts, and the relative reach ratio for each social media account. The relative reach calculation gives some comparative measure of the total number of followers on social media relative to the size (student enrollment) of each district (e.g., a relative reach of 1.0 means that the number of followers is equal to total enrollment). Fort Bend ISD's relative reach (1.08) ranks third out of the six comparator districts. Arlington ISD (2.80) has the highest relative reach, with the total number of social media followers nearly triple its enrollment size.

Table 16. Comparison of Social Media Followers and Relative Reach Ratio, April 2021

Social Media Account	CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS	KATY	FORT BEND	NORTH EAST	ARLINGTON	NORTHSIDE
Total Enrollment	117,120	83,241	77,575	64,215	59,453	107,135
Twitter	30,500	32,600	41,700	18,400	105,900	75,000
Facebook	47,972	37,152	16,723	33,576	28,071	53,306
YouTube	7,800	2,840	7,500	4,550	19,100	4,790
Instagram	24,400	173	6,750	9,011	4,885	12,100
LinkedIn	10,607	10,212	11,435	n/a	8,278	9,942
Total Followers	**121,279**	**82,977**	**84,108**	**65,537**	**166,234**	**155,138**

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Social Media Account	CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS	KATY	FORT BEND	NORTH EAST	ARLINGTON	NORTHSIDE
Relative Reach Ratio						
Twitter	0.26	0.39	0.54	0.29	1.78	0.70
Facebook	0.41	0.45	0.22	0.52	0.47	0.50
YouTube	0.07	0.03	0.10	0.07	0.32	0.04
Instagram	0.21	0.00	0.09	0.14	0.08	0.11
LinkedIn	0.09	0.12	0.15	0	0.14	0.09
Relative Reach Ratio	**1.04**	**1.00**	**1.08**	**1.02**	**2.80**	**1.45**

Source: District social media accounts as of April 2021.

Table 17 below shows the percentage of total followers (duplicated) represented by each social media account, which provides some insight into the different social media strategies employed by each of the comparator districts. For example, Twitter followers account for the highest percentage of social media followers in Fort Bend ISD, followed by Facebook and LinkedIn. In North East ISD, on the other hand, Facebook followers account for the highest percentage of the District's social media followers, followed by Twitter and Instagram. Compared to other districts, Fort Bend has the highest percentage of LinkedIn followers relative to total enrollment (relative reach ratio of 0.15) and relative to the total number of the District's social media followers (13.6%). This is notable because LinkedIn is a widely used platform for reaching prospective employees.

Table 17. Social Media Account Followers as a Percentage of Total Followers, April 2021

Social Media Account	CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS	KATY	FORT BEND	NORTH EAST	ARLINGTON	NORTHSIDE
Twitter	25.1%	39.3%	49.6%	28.1%	63.7%	48.3%
Facebook	39.6%	44.8%	19.9%	51.2%	16.9%	34.4%
YouTube	6.4%	3.4%	8.9%	6.9%	11.5%	3.1%
Instagram	20.1%	0.2%	8.0%	13.7%	2.9%	7.8%
LinkedIn	8.7%	12.3%	13.6%	-	5.0%	6.4%
Total Followers	**121,279**	**82,977**	**84,108**	**65,537**	**166,234**	**155,138**

Source: District social media accounts as of April 2021.

As noted earlier in this Chapter, Fort Bend ISD staff do not heavily rely on District or campus social media as a primary communication channel. Approximately 36 percent of staff that responded to the survey indicated that they rely on District social media quite a bit/very much, while 28 percent of staff indicated that they rely on campus social media (i.e., Twitter) quite a bit/very much. A higher percentage of staff rated the overall quality of District (54.4%) and campus (48.7%) social media as good or very good.

Unlike employees, parents rely on social media to a great extent when seeking out information about the District. In focus groups, parents characterized the information shared on the District's Twitter and Facebook accounts as relevant and timely. Many parents also said that they participate in Facebook discussion groups that relate to a specific area of interest (e.g., special education, athletics). Parents do

not tend to follow the District's Instagram or YouTube accounts, or campus Twitter accounts, as most said that their preferred social media platform is Facebook. Parents also noted that Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and other social media platforms are more popular with their children.

District and Campus Websites

The purpose of the Fort Bend ISD website (www.fortbendisd.com) is to promote the District's mission, while serving as an educational and informative resource for its primary audiences: students, staff, parents, the community, and beyond. Likewise, campus websites must also meet the informational needs of their primary audiences: current and prospective students and their families, and community members. The District's website should serve as a credible source of information for the District's programs, services, and activities. As such, content must be relevant, timely, easy to locate, and compliant with federal accessibility guidelines, Texas House Bill 2819, and Section 508 of the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C's) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA (adopted by the District).

The Communications and Technology Departments work collaboratively to provide overall management of the District's website. The Communications Department provides direction for the message, design, and function of the website, while the Technology Department manages the technical aspects of the website. Each department is responsible for the routine development and maintenance of its own webpage(s), and has assigned a content editor within the department. Likewise, each campus has several designated campus website administrators (CWAs) who are responsible for maintaining the main campus webpage on behalf of their campus. Teachers and other campus staff are responsible for the maintenance of their respective webpages.

The Communications Department has developed a Web Communications Guide that provides current web standards and best design practices. It addresses the following topics:

- Training and Assistance

- General Web Guidelines

- Copyright Issues

- Images and Graphics

- Photo Releases and Permissions

- Writing for the Web

- Employee Use of Electronic Media

- District and Department Web Guidelines

- Campus and Teacher Web Guidelines

- Editorial Style Guide

Seventy percent of Fort Bend ISD staff that responded to the survey rated the quality of the District's website as either good or very good, while 59 percent of staff rated the overall quality of school websites as good or very good. As show in Table 18 below, there is some variation in the perceptions of staff depending on their work location.

Table 18. Percent of Employees Rating Overall Quality of District and Campus Websites as Good/Very Good, by Work Location

Location	District Website	Campus Websites
District Central Office	72.7%	62.9%
Elementary School	72.4%	57.3%
Middle School	69.3%	58.4%
High School	64.8%	56.4%
Other School	81.1%	57.6%
Average	**70.3%**	**59.0%**

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

When asked in focus groups about their perceptions of the overall quality of the District's website, many parents said that they do not always know where to find the information they are looking for. Parents noted that information referenced in the Superintendents blog and video messages is sometimes "10 clicks deep". A specific example cited by parents of secondary students was the inability to easily locate information and forms for requesting student transcripts. Parents also noted that some of the content on the District's website is outdated and should be archived.

With respect to campus websites, most parents in focus groups stated that they generally do not find website content informative or useful. Parents tend to rely on Schoology for teacher and class information, rather than the content posted on individual teacher webpages. One feature of campus websites that many parents rely on is the school calendar; however, some parents remarked that the calendar is not always up-to-date and not all campuses include a calendar on their webpage.

Branding and Marketing

Consistent branding builds support, trust, and confidence in the District's mission. The Fort Bend ISD logo is a symbol of the District's brand and commitment to the staff, students, and community it serves. Guided by its mission "*Fort Bend ISD exists to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine*", the FBISD brand includes the tag line "Inspire • Equip • Imagine".

The Communications Department is responsible for developing and managing the District's branding guidelines to provide staff with ways to correctly brand District materials in order to keep the brand consistent. The Department appears to be doing this effectively, as 94 percent of staff that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed with the following statements: *It is easy for me to recognize communications that come from FBISD* and *It is easy for me to recognize communications that come from my department or campus*. Parents that participated in focus groups also agreed that it is easy for them to recognize communications and materials that come from the District or from their child's campus.

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The Communications Department also collaborates with District leadership to develop strategic marketing campaigns aimed at creating awareness about Fort Bend ISD's mission and keeping the community informed about the District's efforts to provide a quality education that allows all students to reach their full potential. The Department works with the Superintendent and/or the Board President on the shaping of communicated messages with input from legal counsel and other District departments when necessary.

In 2018, Fort Bend ISD voters approved a $996.2 million bond referendum, the largest in the District's history, with 74 percent of voters supporting the proposal. Examples of two ongoing marketing campaigns are:

- The "60 Years of Excellence" campaign celebrates the establishment of Fort Bend ISD on April 18, 1959 and provides a profile of the District through the decades. The campaign communicates the District's everlasting commitment to the education of its students, and that for the next 60 years and beyond, Fort Bend ISD will always exist to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.

- The "Fort Bend ISD Reimagined" campaign was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to communicate how the District is fulfilling its mission during the pandemic through changes to the student learning experience in a reimagined learning environment.

On the employee survey, Gibson asked staff to rate their familiarity with each of these marketing campaigns. More than 84 percent of staff that responded to the survey indicated that they are familiar or very familiar with the "FBISD Reimagined" campaign, while 68 percent indicated that they are familiar or very familiar with the "60 Years of Excellence" campaign. Table 19 below shows how responses varied by employee group.

Table 19. Percent of Employees that are Familiar/Very Familiar with Fort Bend ISD Marketing Campaigns, by Employee Group

Employee Group	"60 Years of Excellence" Campaign	"FBISD Reimagined" Campaign
Campus Administrator	77.1%	95.8%
Child Nutrition Staff	77.5%	75.7%
Clerical Staff	77.1%	86.6%
District Leadership	75.0%	100.0%
Educational Aide	70.8%	81.6%
Facilities/Maintenance Staff	80.4%	77.0%
Other Central Office Staff	76.3%	86.0%
Other School-based Staff	60.8%	82.6%
Safety/Security Staff	70.5%	74.3%
Student Support Staff	65.6%	90.7%
Teacher	62.1%	87.8%
Temporary or Sub	63.1%	78.2%
Transportation Staff	68.9%	70.6%
Average	**68.1%**	**84.4%**

Source: Gibson Consulting Group Employee Survey

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Media Relations

It is important to maintain a proactive media relations program to enhance the District's image on local, state and national levels. In Fort Bend ISD, local media publications and broadcast news stations provide regular coverage of District news and updates, including actions taken by the Board during monthly meetings and workshops. Local media publications include the Houston Chronicle and its sister publication, the Sugar Land Sun, the Fort Bend Star, the Fort Bend Independent, Community Impact, and others. Broadcast news stations include Fox 26, KHOU, KPRC, KTMD Telemundo, and Univision.

The Director of External Communications and Media Relations serves as the official District spokesperson and responds to all media inquiries. The Superintendent speaks to the media, when necessary, regarding critical topics and issues of importance, and the Superintendent's Executive Cabinet serve as the spokespersons for issues related to their departments and operations. The Athletics Department also responds to the media with routine requests.

For some stakeholders, the news media may be the only source of information about the District, so a strategic media plan helps to proactively share positive stories, dispel rumors, and address inaccuracies in reporting. Eighty-six (86) percent of staff that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed with the following statement: *Fort Bend ISD is fairly represented in the local news media*. In focus groups, both parents and staff noted that some newspaper outlets tend to portray more negative coverage of Fort Bend ISD. However, they also noted that they perceive the media coverage of the District to be improving and trending to more favorable.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 7: The Communications Department does not systematically research stakeholder attitudes and expectations regarding District and campus communications.

Internal and external stakeholders have various preferences for which communication channels and what frequency they would like to receive communications from the District, which likely varies depending on the nature of the information that is being shared. With the exception of customer satisfaction surveys administered after special events and/or recognition ceremonies, the Communications Department does not routinely solicit feedback from its diverse stakeholder groups for the specific purpose of understanding their communication preferences and current levels of satisfaction with the frequency and quality of communications they receive from Fort Bend ISD. The results of the employee survey revealed that different employee groups have very different communication preferences and needs, and anecdotal feedback provided during focus groups with other stakeholders corroborates this point. The needs of the Board of Trustees, in particular, are unique.

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Recommendation 7: Collect feedback from all stakeholder groups to assess communications strategies and their effectiveness.

The Communications Department should continue to develop and maintain collaborative relationships with all stakeholders to strengthen support for Fort Bend ISD. One way to do this is to conduct research to determine stakeholder communication preferences for different audiences with respect to the content they are interested in (e.g., program information, school lunch menus), as well as for different communication channels. This includes:

- Conducting focus groups with stakeholders to collect qualitative information.

- Issuing surveys to ascertain stakeholder opinions and to collect quantitative information, and ensuring the results of survey efforts are shared with participants.

- Monitoring social media platforms for feedback from both internal and external stakeholders.

- Tracking the percentage of employees that rely on specific communication channels and vehicles for different types of information/communications.

With respect to the Board of Trustees, the Communications Department (working in collaboration with the Superintendent) should engage Trustees to ensure they have the communications tools and resources needed to support them in their role as District leaders. To address their specific concern regarding recent instances of inaccurate information being widely communicated, it is recommended that the Department develop a framework and establish a process to clarify which communications and topics should be vetted by Trustees prior to being disseminated. The framework should include specific timelines for Trustees to review materials and provide feedback regarding content, accuracy, and tone. This review process will help to ensure messages about politically-sensitive topics are appropriately communicated and timed.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. The department will collaborate with other divisions to find opportunities to garner feedback to help drive process improvements by using methods such as an easy opt-in feedback link embedded in department emails and full-scale debrief/review meetings after large events or campaigns.

Recommendation 8: Conduct biennial reader surveys for each print and digital publication to assess reader satisfaction and expectations.

Feedback provided on the employee survey as well as in focus groups with external stakeholders indicated that many of the District's publications, such as *FBISD Bravo, The Frequency, FBISD News Magazine* and *FBISD Express*, are not connecting effectively with readers. It is therefore recommended that the Communications Department conduct specific reader/user surveys for each of the digital and print publications to determine whether or not reader expectations are being met. This will help the Department determine if some publications need to be more effectively promoted and/or distributed, or if they need to be revised, combined with others, or discontinued altogether.

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Management Response: Management partially agrees with the recommendation. The department would want to work with the other divisions to ensure that the data needed is being collected in such a way that does not over survey the community. In the past, survey fatigue has been an issue with stakeholders and we need to be mindful of how best to garner reader satisfaction and expectations.

Recommendation 9: Expand website and social media analytics.

Website and social media analytics should be assessed monthly to determine the type of stories and messaging that is connecting to and resonating with readers, as well as the specific content areas they are searching for information. The Department should use social media and website analytics to set objectives for increase awareness, reach and interaction with stakeholders.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. This process has already begun and we are working on the timeframe and timeline in which to be able to transition the information. A website refresh plan to address this recommendation is underway.

Finding 8: Fort Bend ISD does not have an employee ambassador program.

One of the responsibilities listed on the job description of the Assistant Director of Internal Communications is to "Lead development and implementation of Bond communication plan for all stakeholder groups, including the Employee Ambassador Program." However, during interviews with Department staff it became evident that the District does not have a formalized employee ambassador program. As described previously, staff can be invaluable as positive representatives of the District and schools, but they can also hurt the District's image if they constantly voice complaints, focus on problems, or repeat inaccurate information. Results of the employee survey found that while a high percentage of staff would recommend Fort Bend ISD as a place to work and/or send their children, this sentiment is not universally shared across all employee groups or school levels. The District routinely administers the *K-12 Insight* survey to measure school culture and leadership practices, but it is not readily apparent how the Communications Department leverages this information to inform communications strategies and key messages for different employee groups.

Recommendation 10: Formalize an employee ambassador program with strategies to promote employee ambassadorship.

District leaders should continually stress the role of all employees as ambassadors for the District and schools, and support them in this effort by providing timely information, clear talking points, and continued training. Implementing a formalized employee ambassador program will help codify strategies for promoting ambassadorship as well as pinpoint employee groups that may serve as potential detractors. Specifically, the District should:

- Recognize that different employee groups have varying perceptions and informational needs and target outreach accordingly.

- Implement differentiated approaches to keep employees informed of key issues in support of their role as ambassadors.

- Provide multiple opportunities for staff to engage with the District and provide input on issues that are important to them.

- Collaborate with other departments and school administrators to ensure that employee on-boarding and orientation programs include a communications/ambassadorship component as well as expectations that staff serve as positive ambassadors for the District/campus.

- Provide training to District and campus administrators on ways to promote and support employees as effective ambassadors.

- Systematically survey staff to asses satisfaction with their job and working conditions, their preparedness and/or willingness to tell others about positive aspects of Fort Bend ISD, and the percent who would recommend Fort Bend ISD as a good place to work, among other things.

- Implement an "Ambassador of the Month" program to formally recognize employees who demonstrate outstanding efforts that reflect service standards established by Fort Bend ISD.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. With the added support of funding specifically for this function, the department would like to launch a program that will foster employee ambassadors. There are some programs and models that are considered best practice.

Finding 9: The Communications Department does not maintain separate email distribution lists for different employee groups.

One of the responsibilities of the Assistant Director of Internal Communications is to collaborate with various departments to disseminate information to the District's twelve thousand employees through an internal communications email account and SharePoint site. The Communications Department, however, does not maintain separate email distribution lists for different employee groups and often sends emails to all District employees that are intended for only a subset of employees (e.g., teachers). This approach over-communicates irrelevant information to employee stakeholders and ultimately risks important information not being received or overlooked by the intended audience.

In focus groups, employees complained of "information overload" with respect to email communications. On the employee survey, the most prevalent theme that emerged from responses to the open-ended question asking "*What one thing could Fort Bend ISD leadership/administration do (more of, or differently) to improve communications with district employees?*" was related to refining communication methods and channels, better targeting communications to specific groups, and reducing the volume of information (see Appendix B).

Recommendation 11: Collaborate with Human Resources to develop and maintain employee email distribution lists.

The Human Resources Department maintains staffing data and employee contact information for all District employees. The Communications Department should collaborate with the Human Resources Department to define a process for developing and maintaining employee email distribution lists so that all email communications from the Communications Department are only sent to the intendent recipients. This will help streamline communications to the District's internal stakeholders.

Management Response: Management agrees with the recommendation. This has been an issue for many years and the challenge is how the data is coded and stored in the system. According to IT, there is currently no way to access the information by job code, this is an area where internal stakeholders have sought improvements across departments. Funding to design a system to support this is needed to move forward.

Appendix A – Interview Roster

Interviews

The audit team conducted telephone interviews with the following Fort Bend ISD leadership, staff, and community members:

- Jason Burdine, Board Member (President)

- Addie Heyliger, Board Member

- Dave Rosenthal, Board Member

- Allison Drew, Board Member

- Jim Rice, Board Member

- Kristin Tassin, Board Member

- Grayle James, Board Member

- Dr. Charles Dupre, Superintendent

- Veronica Sopher, Chief Communications Officer

- Amanda Bubela, Director of External Communications and Media Relations

- Kristoffer Smith, Assistant Director Internal Communications

- Angelique Meyers, Police Public Information Officer

- Kyle Boberg, Multi-media and Video Coordinator

- Tonya Thomas, Internal Communications Coordinator

- Rachel Ross, Campus Communications Coordinator

- Nicole Butler, Social Media Coordinator

- Danish Nelson, Multi-media Intern

- Deanna Duran, Executive Assistant

- Diana Sayavedra, Deputy Superintendent

- Beth Martinez, Chief Academic Officer

- Oscar Perez, Chief Operating Officer

- Long Pham, Chief Information Officer

- Bryan Guinn, Chief Financial Officer

- Anthony Indelicato, Chief of Staff and Collaborative Communities

- Joe Rodriquez, Chief of Schools

- Gwen Touchet, Chief Human Resource Officer

Community Member Interviews

- Keri Schmidt, FBISD Chamber of Commerce

- Brandy Guidry, Member of the Sugarland 95 Advisory Committee

- Michelle De Mora, Board Leadership Academy Alumni

Focus Groups

The audit team conducted virtual (*Zoom*) focus groups with the following stakeholder groups:

- Elementary School Principals

- Secondary School Principals

- Parents of Elementary School Students

- Parents of Secondary School Students

Appendix B – Staff Survey Instrument

The following pages contain the Fort Bend Independent School District Communications survey.

2020 Fort Bend ISD Communications Survey

As part of its continuous improvement process, Fort Bend ISD is undergoing a Communications Management audit to evaluate the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Communications Department. Gibson Consulting Group (Gibson), who serves as the district's internal auditor, is collecting feedback from key stakeholders to assess their level of satisfaction with the district's communications efforts. This survey provides an opportunity for you to share your opinion about the communications you receive from both the district and your school (or if you are not located in a school, your department). Your responses will help to guide efforts to improve district and school communications.

A few important notes about this survey:

- Gibson is administering this survey and collecting responses on behalf of Fort Bend ISD.
- Your responses are voluntary - you do not have to respond, though we hope you will choose to share your feedback.
- Your responses are confidential. Only members of Gibson's research team will have access to individual responses. After all data are collected, the Gibson team will report results to the district in aggregate.
- This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- Your candid input is very important to the district's continuous improvement process, and we hope you choose to respond.
- If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Danial Hoepfner at dhoepfner@gibsonconsult.com.

Clicking the "next" button indicates your consent to participate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated everyone's lives in recent months, from citywide lockdowns to quarantines to extensive planning activities for the 2020-21 school year. This survey will ask for your feedback on a broad range of district communications. Since communications around COVID have likely been the most recent and frequent communications you've been receiving, we start with a few questions specifically about these communications.

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Specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Fort Bend ISD's **communications** in each of the following areas:

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
School re-opening plans	○	○	○	○
Newly required trainings or professional development(s) related to COVID	○	○	○	○
The district's COVID-related policies such as mask wearing and social distancing	○	○	○	○
The district's COVID-related protocols such as health screenings when entering buildings, what to do if you become ill or test positive, etc.	○	○	○	○

Now, in addition to recent and COVID-related communications, please also consider district communications from before the pandemic and those that have been unrelated to COVID.

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Rate each of the following Fort Bend ISD publications in the following TWO areas: (for **each row**, please select one response in **each column** in the table)

	How familiar are you with...				How informative is...				
	Never heard of it	Heard of, but never seen/rea	Have seen/read a few times	Very familiar	N/A - Can't answer - not aware of it	Not at all informative	A little informative	Mostly informative	Very informative
Board Recap	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Checking In with Charles (Superintendent blog and video messages)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Employee Express (sent via email)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
FBISD News Magazine (quarterly publication)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
FBISD ExPress (weekly newsletter)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
FBISD Bravo (bi-monthly publication)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Frequency Podcast (monthly podcast)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Communications From Your School/Department

Rate each of the following communications from **your school** in the following TWO areas. If you are not based at a school, answer about **your district department** (e.g., human resources, finance, operations): (for each row, please select one response in each column in the table)

	How much do you rely on this for receiving important information?				How would you rate the overall quality of information received from each? (Consider how timely and relevant the information is)			
	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	Very much	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good

Personalized communications you receive directly via email from your principal/supervisor	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Automated emails	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Automated phone call	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Automated text messages	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Faculty/staff meetings	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Newsletters/e-newsletters	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Printed materials	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Schoology	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
School website	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Campus social media (Twitter)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Word-of-mouth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Rate the communications you receive from **your school/department** overall in each of the following areas:

	Not at all	A little	Mostly	Very
Accurate	○	○	○	○
Clear/Easy to Understand	○	○	○	○
Informative	○	○	○	○
Proactive	○	○	○	○
Relevant	○	○	○	○
Timely	○	○	○	○
Trustworthy	○	○	○	○

Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of communications you receive from **your school/department**?

- Not at all satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Very satisfied

Communications From Your District Leadership/Administration

Rate each of the following communications from **FBISD's leadership/administration** in the following TWO areas: (for each row, please select one response in each column in the table)

	How much do you rely on this for receiving important information?				How would you rate the overall quality of information received from each? (Consider how timely and relevant the information is)			
	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	Very much	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good

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Automated emails

Automated phone calls

Automated text messages

Board meetings

District-wide staff/department meetings

Newsletters/e-newsletters

Printed materials

Schoology

FBISD website

FBISD social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, You Tube)

Word-of-mouth

Rate the communications you receive from **Fort Bend ISD leadership/administration** overall in each of the following areas:

	Not at all	A little	Mostly	Very
Accurate	○	○	○	○
Clear/Easy to Understand	○	○	○	○
Informative	○	○	○	○
Proactive	○	○	○	○
Relevant	○	○	○	○
Timely	○	○	○	○
Trustworthy	○	○	○	○

Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of communications you receive from **Fort Bend ISD leadership/administration**?

- Not at all satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Very satisfied

Answer the following two questions about communications you receive on each of the following topics: (for each row, please select one response in each column in the table)

	How satisfied are you with the quality of communications about:					How would you describe the frequency of communication about:		
	N/A not received comm. about this	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	I don't get enough	It's just right	I get too much
Changes in district policy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
District finances/stewardship	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bond/tax elections	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Change in academic programming and/or services	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Change in district leadership or central office administration	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Change in school leadership	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Central office reorganizations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inclement weather (e.g., school closure, delayed start)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
School safety/crisis incidents	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
COVID-19 pandemic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Other natural disasters (e.g., hurricane, tornado, flood)

District-level events and programs

Campus-level events and programs

Student successes and achievements

Staff successes and achievements

School successes and achievements

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Q15 How effective is Fort Bend ISD at accomplishing each of the following objectives:

	Not at all effective	Somewhat effective	Mostly effective	Very effective
Creating awareness of FBISD's mission throughout the school system.	○	○	○	○
Creating awareness of FBISD's mission throughout the community.	○	○	○	○
Communicating with stakeholders who **do not** have children currently enrolled in FBISD.	○	○	○	○
Supporting district staff with materials, communications, or tools that help to improve classroom instruction.	○	○	○	○
Building trust among stakeholders.	○	○	○	○
Supporting the development of partnerships between parents and students.	○	○	○	○
Celebrating diversity and inclusion.	○	○	○	○
Educating taxpayers on financial challenges faced by FBISD.	○	○	○	○
Celebrating milestone events (e.g., graduation, convocation, retirement, years of service, Teacher of the Year).	○	○	○	○

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

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Fort Bend ISD:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Inspires and equips all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.	○	○	○	○
Is committed to providing positive and safe learning environments for all students.	○	○	○	○
Is committed to providing positive and safe working environments for all staff.	○	○	○	○
Is committed to developing the whole child in accordance with the Board-adopted Profile of a Graduate.	○	○	○	○
Believes employees are its greatest asset.	○	○	○	○
Is committed to developing and retaining effective staff members.	○	○	○	○
Has proven to be a good steward of taxpayers' investments in public education.	○	○	○	○
Believes in a collaborative community.	○	○	○	○
Is committed to collaboration in all decision-making efforts.	○	○	○	○
Is committed to transparency in all decision-making efforts.	○	○	○	○
Has a strategic framework (including its Mission/Vision, Core Beliefs and Commitments, and Profile of a Graduate) that provides a strong foundation for decision making.	○	○	○	○

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Rate your agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is easy for me to recognize communications that come from FBISD.	○	○	○	○
It is easy for me to recognize communications that come my campus or department.	○	○	○	○
Fort Bend ISD is fairly represented in the local news media.	○	○	○	○
I am familiar with FBISD's "60 Years of Excellence" campaign.	○	○	○	○
I am familiar with the "FBISD Reimagined" campaign.	○	○	○	○
Communications I receive from my school/department enable me to be a good ambassador for FBISD.	○	○	○	○
Communications I receive from my district leadership/administration enable me to be a good ambassador for FBISD.	○	○	○	○

For each question below, indicate your response by moving the slider to a location on the line.

How likely are you to:

	Not at all likely Extremely Likely
	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Recommend Fort Bend ISD schools to friends and family as a place to work? ()	⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯▮⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯
Recommend Fort Bend ISD schools to friends and family as a place to send their children? ()	⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯▮⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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If role = school leader

Rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know who to contact to request public relations support from the Communications Department, if needed.	○	○	○	○
The Communications Department staff are accessible.	○	○	○	○
The Communications Department staff respond to my requests for support in a timely manner	○	○	○	○
I receive the public/media relations support I need from the Communications Department.	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with the supports provided to my campus/department from the Communications Department for special events/programs.	○	○	○	○
The print/digital publications produced by the Communications Department are high quality.	○	○	○	○
The Communications Department provides me with the training I need for my role in the area of media relations/public communications.	○	○	○	○
There are clear communication protocols to follow during an emergency/crisis event.	○	○	○	○
I am familiar with the Communications Department's website maintenance and branding guidelines.	○	○	○	○

Rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

FBISD's communication channels support effective communication:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
From the central office departments to the schools	○	○	○	○
From the schools to the central office	○	○	○	○
Across central office departments	○	○	○	○
Across schools	○	○	○	○

What one thing could your school/department do (more of, or differently) to improve communications with its staff?

☐ _____

☐ _____

What one thing could Fort Bend ISD leadership/administration do (more of, or differently) to improve communications with district employees?

☐ _____

☐ _____

Appendix C – Open-Ended Survey Responses

Coding Process to Identify Emergent Themes

Gibson examined open-ended responses to the following survey question: *What one thing could Fort Bend ISD leadership/administration do (more of, or differently) to improve communications with District employees?*

Over 2,000 FBISD employees provided a response to this question, though approximately 700 were not meaningful or substantive with comments like "I don't know", "nothing", "n/a" or they wrote that everything was fine, no improvements were needed, or they provided a response that did not have to do with communications. For the remaining approximately 1,300 responses, Gibson categorized responses into themes that emerged as the coding process unfolded. This process was inductive, rather than deductive – Gibson had no a prior hypotheses or suppositions about how people might respond but let the categories emerge from employee responses. The categories reflect groupings of comments that shared a core idea, such as "comments about honesty/transparency" or "comments about respecting, acknowledging, and appreciating staff." Labels are designed to characterize the gist of what employees were conveying, but should not be overly interpreted – the words in the labels are not necessarily contained in the employee response but reflect a general category of the type of response.

In some cases, a labeled category or theme included obvious subthemes. We did not code into subthemes, which would be time-consuming, but we note them below when they were clear and consistent. For example, within the theme "Refine communication methods" several subthemes clearly emerged, including "summarize/simplify"; "reduce number of modalities/make information easier to find"; "target specific audiences" and "improve clarity." As another example, the theme "improve consistency of information" included comments about inconsistency across sources, inconsistency across schools, and inconsistency over time. In contrast, some themes were completely about one single idea, such as "Keep us informed of changes" and "inform staff before parents/the public."

When interpreting results, it is important to keep in mind employees were *not* asked "what is best" or "what do you like" about communications in FBISD. As such, an absence of compliments is not a finding. Some responses did indeed include compliments, but they were not coded or examined, only moved to the "n/a" category. Despite this, Gibson note that many compliments were given, particularly for Check in with Charles/Chat with Charles.

Emergent Themes, Prevalence, and Exemplar Quotes

For each theme identified through the coding process described above, Gibson provides the prevalence (the number of individuals who included a comment coded to that theme) and exemplar quotes below. These quotes are examples to illustrate the meaning of the labeled theme, and are not exhaustive. Many

more examples exist in the data for each theme or subtheme presented below. One single response could be coded to multiple themes, so the total sum of codes is greater than the total number of responses. *All quotations are verbatim.*

Table 20. Emergent Themes and Prevalence

Emergent Theme	# of Comments
1. Refine communication methods/channels, better target communications to specific groups, reduce volume of information	269
2. Listen to us. Ask us. Use teacher and staff input in decision-making	232
3. Be honest, be transparent, explain the 'why' behind the decisions	227
4. Improve timeliness of communications/information	194
5. Care about us, respect us, acknowledge us, value us	194
6. General comments about more communication (more in general, more of something already doing, more of something not currently doing)	165
7. Improve the consistency of communications – from different sources, across schools, from top to bottom of the organization	110
8. Equity – communicate equally with all departments, schools, staff types, etc. Treat all schools, departments, role types equally/show they are all of equal value/worth	94
9. Keep us informed of changes	70
10. Something specific to communications in the COVID-pandemic context	67
11. Improve coordination across the organization	48
12. Ensure that staff are informed before parents/before social media	46
13. Improve responsiveness/accessibility of staff and leadership	44
14. Communications should be proactive, not reactive	41
15. Administration/Central office needs to visit schools, visit classrooms, understand what is going on and what is the impact of the decisions they make	37
16. Clarify organizational structure, who is responsible for what, who I call to find certain information	26
17. Website Improvements	22

Emergent Theme	# of Comments

18. Other, less common but still consistent themes:
 	
    Make sure resources are available in Spanish, speak both languages
    Improved training of certain functions/roles
    Work together, more teamwork
    Clarify expectations
    Improve awareness of all these communication mechanisms	

*712 responses coded to 'no comment, no improvements, everything is great, n/a, or completely unrelated to communication (503 of these stated nothing to improve, everything is good, keep up the good work, etc.).

Refine communication methods/channels, better target communications to specific groups, reduce volume of information, improve clarity

- **Summarize, focus, simplify, reduce** – summaries, digests, synopsis, weekly highlights: "It would be nice to use more engaging deliveries of information like infographics, bulleted lists, and pictorial representations to support the message rather than long paragraphs and multiple communications"; ""Less fluff and more stuff."; "…send main bullet points of pertinent information instead of long videos"; "More concise e-mails coming from the district level. The employees are overwhelmed with the amount of information coming in through e-mail and it would be helpful to have just the facts we need to know to get our jobs done successfully."; "There are so many emails and videos. They don't need to be so long."; "short and to the point communication is preferred"; "skip the cutesy stuff"; "less mass communication (it's overload on the emails) but instead fewer communications that are more meaningful", "provide short detailed notes instead of longer emails or long staffing sessions"; "Dial back a little. We get good information in a timely manner, but sometimes it is overwhelming in terms of volume, frequency, and length". "Simplify communications!"; "Simplify communications. You can use list and bullet points, instead of multiple paragraph emails, to convey most information. Yes some does require explanations but keep it simple. Teachers don't have time to keep up."; "I honestly get so much email that it would be nice to have the option to receive some things as a digest or condensed or maybe just post it somewhere for me to access later.. I don't read all the newsletters, too much stuff in my inbox already."; "Less is more"; "Be clear and concise... don't send an essay of how "we're all in this together" and then take 3 paragraphs to explain important events/things coming up. Bullet points would be nice... again just be concise because we are reading so many emails in a day. We don't have time to read through fluff."; "Centralize them in one organized place and reference this location in communications and not have so many different ones, from different media forums, etc. Ends up being tuned out and you miss good info b/c jumble in with the masses of "chatty" information. One place would help you organize- "good- to-knows," "important-to-knows," fun & exciting news, "here's what's happening," accomplishments and celebrations, etc."; "I get an avalanche of emails every day that I need to work my way through. The number of emails that I get can be overwhelming. I would like to spend my time teaching children and preparing for my next class rather than reading meaningless emails."; "With emails that include a video of

information (ex. Checking in with Charles), put bullet points of what information the video includes and an easier access to transcript. I can't always watch a video to get info and so I often pass it up. If there was an outline of the info covered, I'd be more likely to invest time in getting the information that best pertains to me."; "It is all excessively complicated. We expressed these concerns last year already and nothing changed for the better. We need to simplify the communication process. I have to look in too many different places for information (Emails, Schoology, and newsletters, other websites and links). Newsletters and such are too long and overly wordy (over 20 pages sometimes)"; "Please send less emails. Very overwhelming"

- **Stick to one (or fewer) modality(ies), make information easier to find**: "Find one format, then choose that format to share information rather than bombarding with multiple communications.", "Send all needed information to employees through one mode of district communication. Having information as reminders on social media is ok, but if it is something I need for work, I would like it to be through work information"; "Limit communication to one form"; "Communicate the message one way instead of all the different newsletters and/or emails"; "As an educator, it'd be nice to just log into the "Principal's Corner" and see all updated announcements in ONE place. I don't want to login into all social media accounts, Schoology courses, and websites to get ALL the information that I really need for STUDENT success and safety."; "Provide one to three sources of communication and that's it. We receive communication from different title source, those that were mentioned here, on the survey in the beginning."; "Also, don't put information in so many different places where people have to go to look and find out where it is. Information should always be readily available to the employees."; "Have communication in one place. There seems to be too many platforms, some are more difficult to navigate."; "Put all documents in one location. One Drive, Schoology, TEAMS, whatever it is pick a modality and stick with it."; "Make finding information easier. Have one place that is searchable to find the information we might need."; "Perhaps decide on a few methods (maybe 3 at most), of communication and stick with those so that staff is not receiving the same information via multiple methods of communication, for time efficiency."; "Using 1 method for communication, not e-mail and Remind and Telegram, etc. And, keep in mind, some people do not choose to use social media, so there should be equitable access to communication."

- **Target specific audiences**: "Clearly state the intended audience on all district items - employees can choose to read the entire message or jump straight to what directly is for them.", "give the information only to the people that need it", "address specific concerns rather than making global statements"; "consider the audience, all information is not relevant to all teachers"; "Send transparent and clear information that pertains to staff only. Every message sent to staff goes out to parents as well as the community. Staff want to feel or need ongoing communication that pertains to them only."; "Forcing people to go to meetings that have nothing to do with their work is confusing. Forcing people to go to meetings for different departments causes confusion, on who should be doing what. Small group meetings with specific content for each group would go a long way for teacher moral."

- **Improve clarity of information**: "Ensure that information is clearly presented"; "Communications need to be to the point"; "Communicate in a clear and timely manner"; "Be clear and concise"; "Be clear"; "Have all communication of new tasks and dates due on writing and within a fair advanced time to complete those tasks. It is so stressful getting information of what new task to complete without clear communication."; "Clear concise information with essential details"; "Explain their emails more"; "Break information down in layman's terms, so that we actually understand what is being said and asked"; "Information from the district level, as both an employee and parent, is lacking. It is not lacking in the "getting the word out" department, as I get too much of that. It is lacking in the relevance department. The district shares information, just not the right kind of information. I am left still scratching my head many times trying to infer/interpret what the message was meant to entail. Other times, the message is full of words, but no (or not useful) information is shared. This is frustrating as an employee, but more so as a parent."; "Be more clearer in the text of the communication."; "A lot of the information is vague. Providing more explicit information would be helpful."; "Guidance is very important. When employees start to complain its because the guidance isn't very clear to them so they complain. Find out or learn as much as possible so that when information that is given it is accurate…The communication has to be clear…"; "Make key points more clear"; "Communication needs to be clear and trustworthy. In my department, I can look up the legal framework, and when my district's message doesn't match the legal framework and TEA guidance, it makes what rare communication we receive hard to trust"; "They could give clear directions to staff on things such as what happens at a school when students or staff are exposed to Covid."

Listen to us, ask us, use teacher and staff input in decision-making

- **Listen to us, ask us**: "really talk to individuals", "involve and listen to building principals", "include district employees in decision making", "entender sus problemas [understand our problems]", "ask us for our feedback", "listen", "listen to staff concerns", "ask first and really listen"; "Allow district employees a voice"; "invite my voice", "More opportunities for the rank and file (teachers) to be heard and heeded on issues directly related to specific campus needs"; "Reinstitute the employee survey. Ask employees what they think."; "acer mas reuniones y tomar la opinion de los empleados [Hold more meetings and take the opinion of the employees]"; "Escuchar a los empleados [listen to employees]"; "Allowing the empoyees to be heard or voice their concerns in a forum so that they are aware of certain concerns that may need to be addressed fairly."; "We need to know that our voices matter and we are being heard'; "One thing could be reaching out to district employees more often whether it be for feedback or input of opinion. It's easy for voices to go unheard because they can't make it to the location where their voice can be heard."

- **Much of the 'listening' they do is just for show**: "I think that by the time a solicitation comes to the staff on an input on any decision, the general belief is that that decision has already been made. the input is just to fulfil all righteousness and be seen as "doing something." We are all adults and can see through that."; "They offer these feedback sessions where they say they are gathering opinions and feedback, but I believe that they already have made their decisions. It is a

smokescreen to coddle the employees and make us think that we get a say but we really don't".; "When FBISD organizes focus groups for feedback, actually listen to the feedback and take it into consideration… Leadership was not looking for feedback from teachers, they created the teacher focus group to say they had one. They had their own agenda and pushed it."; "The district needs to take heart what the teachers are saying by giving us a voice and actually listening instead of dismissing. I feel that we are given ways to discuss topics, but its all skirted around in ways that don't seem to matter."; "Actually listen to, and implement the suggestions they ask staff members to share. We chat with Charles and have all these meetings, only for the board to totally disregard the suggestions and do what they want to do, anyway."

- **Actually make changes in response**: "There is a tendency for leadership to hold forums and hear from the staff, but I don't feel that they take that communication and follow-through on it. Sometimes it feels as if they have already made their decision, they just want us to feel as if we have a say."; "Be more transparent and inclusive of input from teachers and actually implementing ideas based on that feedback."; "You listen, but you do not always act on the feedback you get. It is not enough to listen, when people bring valid concerns and suggestions you need to explain why you are not moving forward with them."; "Take teacher opinion, professionalism, and experience and actually use it to make decisions instead of "hearing" their employees and then not changing anything that is wrong. Simply making more work for us instead."; "Survey employees more often and utilize the feedback."

- **Decisions should reflect our input:** "Include teacher input in the decision-making process", "I would like to see FB truly include all stakeholders when making decisions. The decisions made during COVID seem to really cater to those who are not in the classroom. Furthermore, I seems to my colleagues and I that decisions were made by people who haven't served on a campus in a while. I feel that people who are in the trenches and dealing with our amazing students each day may sometimes be overlooked when decisions are made for the district. For example, were the counselors asked their opinion about the best way to complete schedule changes? Was their expertise utilized when making decisions about scheduling?"; "truly include all stakeholders when making decisions."; "Speak with and listen to employees that are affected by the decisions being made. They are the ones experiencing what is happening."; "Work more with Campuses in decision making"; "Produce more surveys or opportunities to hear teacher feedback/opinions on certain topics before making a decision for the district."; "Make sure that the information includes Staff input especially teachers input before decisions are made"

Be honest, be transparent, explain the "why" behind the decisions

- **Transparent**: "Be transparent"; "Be more transparent when making big decisions", "A higher level of transparency and honesty would be appreciated"; "Transparency is a big deal. Maybe look at being more transparent with details behind decisions"; "Be more transparent with decisions"; "Be more open about the rationale behind decisions that are being made."; "We need to understand the "why" behind things." "When you take feedback on issues - calendar - plans for COVID – etc.

- relay reasons to us that you did NOT go in a certain direction of feedback. It is commonly felt that we give our input then the district goes the opposite way. I'm sure some staff gave input that let to that decision - but those that felt differently feel ignored and unheard. An explanation as to why that course was not taken would validate staff and their input."; "Give the full scope of the decision-making process to ensure clarity and full understanding."; "Be more transparent in surveys that are conducted to staff members, for example, emailing results of said survey, and why the district went for or against the majority of the survey results."

- **Honesty**: "Be honest"; "Be honest and transparent about all situations. Don't say one thing in front of the school board and then do something different behind everyone's back"; "Just tell the truth, no sugar coating"; "Tell it like it really is and stop putting a positive spin on negative situations"; "Be straightforward about troubling topics"; "Even though some things are "communicated" to the FB employees and public, it does not seem like full information is disclosed"; "Just be honest". "Be honest and open with staff."; "Be truthful, stop spinning the facts."; "They can tell us the truth from the get go."; "Don't hide or sugar coat things because you don't want bad publicity or don't want to get caught doing something wrong. Be open and honest with staff, students and the community."; "Be completely honest and not lie to employees."; "Be more realistic when setting expectation about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ability to social distance/class sizes, the size of F2F and online classes, the expectation of teachers to teach multiple preps in multiple modalities (online & F2F) simultaneously. Hearing the "hopeful" expectations that never came be is more disheartening than faces the facts up front."; "Don't lie about Covid 19 numbers."; "Be a bit more honest about positive cases found within the school."

- **Specifically about COVID**: "Be open and honest about the COVID numbers in the district."; "I don't think the prevalence and numbers (both tested positive and exposed) of COVID-19 cases is being truthfully related to employees."; "Also, on the campus we know the positive COVID cases, but the district website always has a lower number which looks very dishonest. The buses are doubled up. Most parents are under a false assumption that their children are safe on campus. I know this is about improving communications with employees, but a lot of us chose to return to campus because we were told there would be strict COVID guidelines."; "Some positive Covid cases in school are not being disclosed, putting all staff on risk. Send us online."

Improve timeliness of communications/information

- **More timely information**: "Provide accurate and timely information", "Don't wait until the last minute", "more timely emails", "send communication out earlier"; "Not so last-minute information"; "be more timely". "Timeliness seems to be an issue lately. Teachers were asked on Thursday afternoon (before Thanksgiving break) to upload seating charts by noon on Friday to facilitate contact tracing. Teachers were notified before Thanksgiving break of a T-TESS refresher course that had to be completed prior to January. We found out about this via a notification that we had been enrolled in a course. There was no communication prior to this and many had questions about what the email was about. As an aside, this came after our summer PD was

cancelled in order to take something off teacher's plates. Upon returning from Thanksgiving, we were notified that we would be offering students the opportunity for grade repair with several steps that would need to be taken. Keep in mind, we had less than 3 weeks before the end of the semester to do this. Couldn't this process have begun at the beginning of November rather than the beginning of December? If the district is committed to supporting teachers, every effort should be made to avoid "last minute" directives"; "Do not send emails out making request at the last minute teachers are inundated with work."

- **Particularly related to school closings**: "Communicate as early as possible"; "I think they do a good job, except for bad weather, when we have to wait until 5 or 6 am to know what to do", "Inform us the night before not call at 6:30 am when there is no school it causes chaos"; "Probably a bit of improvement with regard to inclement weather", "we need to be informed as soon as possible. For example school closings the first one at the buildings are the lead custodians and they need to be informed before they get to the schools, the leads do not know about any school closing until after their shift starts. if the school is to be closed, we need to know the night before not the day of."

- **Because of late notice, there is an urgency to everything/allow us more time**: "The communication needs to be sent in a timely manner not last minute and then everything is urgent and needed right away"; "Provide information to staff in a timely manner that will allow more than a 24-48 hours turn for major changes."; "More than a 7-14 days notice on big changes, life effecting events like renewing the ADA accommodations. Don't tell us we have 14 days but some of those days are over a holiday"; "Communicate AS EARLY AS POSSIBLY any changes, additions, or deletions to policies or procedures"; "Have all communication of new tasks and dates due on writing and within a fair advanced time to complete those tasks"; "Give us more time to consider options and propose solutions"

Care about us, respect us, acknowledge us, value us

- **Be caring and considerate, value us, be supportive:** "Support and communicate with more concern for and attention to the individual."; "Take more consideration of their employees especially now in the pandemic"; "More frequent communication about showing appreciation for and truly supporting staff."; "Value the employees and their family like they value the students"; "Darle valor a los trabajadore [Give value to workers]"; It is evident that staff are not valued with this District, and Human Resources does not focus on building a strong culture in the District. The one thing that could be done to improve communication with employees is realizing that this is a school district and not a for-profit business."; "Foster personal relationships between FBISD leadership and employees"; ""Send out positive and encouraging things" ; "tener mas amigable comunicacion [Have more friendly communication]"; "please give us more encouragement for our accomplishments."; "Support and communicate with more concern for and attention to the individual."; "Talk to the employees and let them know that they care about them because we are the heart of transportation and let us know that they care about us"; "Ask us how we are

doing"; "que valoren el trabajo que hacen cada uno de los empleados [value the work that each of the employees does"; "They could realize how low morale is and that there are people on staff that are really going through a hard time but are not being offered the same care or grace that we are being asked to give our students. Communication needs to be geared with this in mind."

- **Celebrate successes, recognize efforts, acknowledge staff**: "create a link to show all employees of FBISD who retire each semester"; "Make sure everyone is noticed to what is done in their field"; "Celebrate teachers for their dedication of services years at the campuses they work"; "Recognized our Paraprofessionals more! Why can't we be part of the Teacher of the year awards or just something! We work with these students everyday just like the Teachers do, if not more! We sacrifice a lot as well."; "Just be genuine in the level of compassion for staff. Some who have served, do not feel that they are recognized enough. Last semester, due to COVID, there were no service awards and there was no mention to do them later, not even virtually. That was a bomber for many people who look forward to those milestones."; "I think a newsletter that highlights district employees and the things that they do even on the small scale would be encouraging and help morale within the district. I think there should be a newsletter based only for district employees that does not include student achievements but only employee achievements and this newsletter should be available in print as well as online on a monthly basis that highlights district employee experiences success. And I definitely believe it should largely include Transportation because we play very important role as district employees."; "Show appreciation us better than just saying "I appreciate you."

- **Take care of us, particularly given COVID, protect us**: "Help us feel safe in a pandemic. We are bending over backwards for the students and don't feel supported by the district admin, our school admin is run into the ground. We are all tired and just trying to get through this. We need more understanding and less uncertainty"; "Do a better job of keeping our students and employee's safe with regards to Covid -19 issues..."; "Have a clear and concise COVID response. Having gone through quarantine and having a family member who works for the district come down with Covid-19 and the incompetence and poor management of their exposure clearly shows that FBISD does not give a damn about their employees."; "With the COVID-19 pandemic it seems that the Superintendent and Board Members are more interested in numbers than the employee's health."

- **Be respectful, deal with supervisors who are disrespectful**: "Be compassionate and understanding of all cultures and climates"; "The tone of the newsletters and emails from the principal is so overly strict, much is lost at the scolding of us needing to exert more control and us needing to do our jobs better and more correctly. A friendly communication in a way all can understand that faces the acceptance of the true reality, instead of the kind of threatening you do it this way or else."; "Respect. It will improve the relation and create a more positive environment."; "hablar con los supervisors de algunas escuelas parake no sean tan malos cn los empleados [talk to the supervisors of some schools so they are not so mean to the employees]; "respect from supervisors, it's starting to feel like they are abusing their power". "They need to

respect the workers, we are not kids and want to be spoken to like a grown up"; "Treat teachers more with respect and as professionals."; "Some teachers are intimidated by their administrators and they do not know who to go to when they feel their administrator is not hearing them. It would be helpful to know the next person to contact without feeling like we are overstepping our administrator or seeking to get our admin "in trouble."; "Craftsman leadership should stop harassing other departments and communicate with their issues."

General comments about more communication

- **General**: "more communication", "communicate with staff", "communicate more"

- **More of something**: "more texts", "more email", "more meetings", "keep the updates coming", "more communication through a Smore or weekly email", "continue to use all social media platforms", "send text reminders"; "have more q & a sessions that are live"; "Dupre's video updates are the best communication I receive about what's going on in the district."; "Continue to do more of feedback groups"; "More of the feeder pattern meetings/open forums where staff can ask the superintendent, assistant sups, board members, etc... anything they want. I think that opportunity was well received by our staff."; "The daily and weekly bulletin has become a resource for all of us and other support staff in the district, keep it coming!"; "Offer more Q&A sessions"; "Have more staff meeting"; "Continue to send out the automated messages."; "send out a summary of upcoming district initiatives", "weekly updates" ; "leave a suggestion box in the teacher lounge", "leverage an application, such as Microsoft's Yammer", for districtwide communications, news, updates, shout-outs, etc.", "create a synopsis of weekly information in a "news" video posted on YouTube or Vimeo.; "Use more email links directly to information and stop relying on employees to go on their own to access information."; "More video communication like Checking in with Charles from other executive leadership aside from Dr. Dupre."; "Perhaps having a principal's corner where information is easily posted and all employees or parents can go to view reminders from the principal?"; "Open discussion boards so teachers can provide suggestions or comments and communicate possible ideas would be beneficial"; "Reminders of board meetings so that we can participate would be nice. Send forms out to employees so that we can send correspondence letters to board members and meetings."; "Attach videos of what is going on with the district from the district communication's manager. Just like we have Checking in with Charles, it would be excellent to see that from other departments."; "Communicate more about Board Policy. Board Policy governs all actions of the District, yet most District employees do not even know where to find it."

Improve the consistency of communications - from different sources, across schools, from top to bottom of the organization

- **Inconsistent information across different sources**: "Be consistent with the message. We shouldn't be told one thing by one person and then told something different by another. The message should be the same"; "I am hearing so many complaints from co-workers that

information is conflicting and not agreed upon on how to enter data or do things on campus. One person says one thing and another says something totally different"; "Have departments communicate with each other more so there is consistency in messaging."; "Create congruency between departments. There are many times when one department gives a different answer than another department on the same question."; "Communications need to be better aligned between departments and what gets communicated to staff and parents."; "Let the right hand know what the left hand is doing. Too many contradictory emails"; "somewhere the communication/information becomes distorted\District says one thing, the school reports another"; "Different people are getting different answers to the same questions."; "Stop sending mixed communication"; "I know sometimes employees feel they hear one thing at their meetings and the principals hear something else on the same topic."; "The right hand does not know what the left hand is doing!"; "Make sure all levels of admin are on the same page."; "Make sure that changes/policies/information is communicated consistently across departments - for example, principals hearing something different than CCCs, which is also different from what Special Ed teachers hear from their program specialists"; "We sometimes get contradictory information, or someone heard one thing at town hall but the check in with Charles is different. I think it would be beneficial if something has changed to begin the changed conversation by saying it is a change."

- **Inconsistency in information across schools:** "Ensure all campuses receive the same information"; "It would be helpful to have all principals consistently provide their campus with accurate and timely information… Many principals do a great job of communicating with their campus…We usually find out weeks later."; "Send out principal/DSL information to be disseminated to ALL EMAIL USERS… I receive nothing from SPED leadership about district news. Even campus leadership determines what they send out as some campuses receive more info than others. ONE EMAIL with all pertinent info should go out to ALL EMPLOYEES with information."; "It seems that it is being left up to each school as to how to handle communication and one school gets most of the information while other schools get very little."; ""Please stop putting COVID-related liability decisions off onto staff members on the campus level - make the decisions on the district level and pass along the information instead of leaving so much up to interpretation. There has been a lot of conflicting information coming from various points of contact - everyone needs to be on the same page and doing the same thing when it comes to pandemic response."

- **Consistency over time/Commit to decisions**: "Be consistent. Not pivot and change/delay decision or course of action at the last minute."; "Consistency. I receive an email one week stating that I need to accomplish a certain task, then I receive another email rescinding the information asking me to do something completely different."; "Leadership communications are often reactive, untimely, and can change from day to day which makes campus staff look incompetent."; "Make a decision and stick with it."; "When you communicate something, stick to it. Do not change the plans every day." "Make a decision and stick with it."; "Stop changing pace and direction so often.

Find a simple, yet comprehensive path for the district, follow it, trust in it, and do all that you can to not amend it."

Equity – communicate equally with all departments, schools, staff types, etc. Treat all schools, departments, role types, individuals equally/ they are all of equal value/worth

- **Treat us equally**: "Spotlight more on all departments instead of a chosen few; "Treat all teachers the same"; "Be fair across the Hwy 6 divide"; "Have the same rules for everyone in the district"; "Think of the cafeteria specialist when you are in a meeting"; "Be fair, honest, and considerate of CTE teachers"; "I know we are a school district and children are out goal, but when most of the praise and support is directed at teachers, its like the support staff is just there."; "You must treat the bus driver with the same respect and common courtesy as you do the teachers and administration "; "Give more importance to transportation department"; "I am sad, though, that a district that recognizes teach of the year, new teacher of the year, principal of the year, does NOT recognize the heart of many schools - the counselor." "… no hay igualdad sobre todo en estos momentos de pandemia x k muchas están trabajando más hard k otras y eso no se me hace justo…[…there is no equality, especially in these pandemic times many are working harder than others and that does not seem fair to me]"; "I understand that Dr. Dupre allow his administrations to have the autonomy to adjust rules but adjustments should apply to all employees on campus not certain workers get certain privileges"; "Treat all employees equally. Bus drivers and monitors are just as important as teachers."; "Be in the middle of this pandemic with us. Meetings should be f2f, we as teachers, students, cafeteria specialist, and janitorial services are on the front line."

- **Communicate with us similarly**: "Keep lower performing campuses in mind"; "Be more inclusive of all departments, even though teachers are the top priority", "Communicate with those in lower pay grades"; "Even the small departments"; "Only the higher performing schools or teachers that teach AP/GT are asked"; "Communicate to substitutes"; "District leadership should have frequent town hall meetings with other support staff which does not include teaching staff. I feel that often times the focus is greater when it comes to teachers and retaining them and not so much on support staff. I recognize the value of teaching staff however there are many support staff that also support and engage in the academic success of students. These support staff should also be recognized for their role in the success of students. I feel this is often forgotten and not practiced."; "At times, the supervisors give very important information to only a few people and others are left to figure out things on their own."; "Oftentimes, I feel like MRW staff does not always get the information that is disseminated to campuses."; "Don't forget departments outside of campuses that are affected by decisions."; "make sure Paraprofessionals are included in the information"; "CTE leadership/admin gives 0 communication. We have not got an update email since schools reopened. Providing communication with their employees makes them feel valued and respected and I feel like that is the key to a happy work environment."

Keep us informed of changes

- "Let people know what is going on through the department"; "More communication regarding department changes or information and not just campus information"; "Make sure we keep everyone informed of any changes that are made"; "Fort Bend ISD leadership can make sure to keep employees informed of all necessary changes"; "Update department about important things".; "Another way to improve communication with employees would be to inform employees when updates are made in the curriculum. For example, letting teachers know if/when changes are made to the scope and sequence, minilessons, or instructional resources."; "There are so many changes throughout the year and the updates are buried in Schoology or in one of the emails that come across. There needs to be a tangible way for serious changes to curriculum, grades, and all other important items to be communicated to the employees. This information is given to principals and the department heads and the district relies on them to give out the information. They are human and often forget or filter the information. What may seem unimportant to share may be quite different to the employee it effects."; "Policy/procedure changes between departments are not adequately communicated. Departments make changes and do not share those changes outside their department."

Something specific to communications in the COVID-pandemic context (Note: Comments were coded elsewhere if COVID was secondary (e.g., conflicting messages from various sources about COVID was coded to "Improve consistency of communication")

- **Dissatisfaction with how cases are communicated**: "There has been no communication in regards to people who are out sick with COVID. People that have been around those are out have not been contacted. We are not being taken care of. THERE IS NO COMMUNICATION "; "I would like a running tally of how many people have Covid and what percentage it takes to shut down. Just getting another diagnosis letter from the principal every day or two is unnerving. It does not permit us to see the big picture."; "I don't think the prevalence and numbers (both tested positive and exposed) of COVID-19 cases is being truthfully related to employees."; "I did not receive any contact from HR nor did my employee about a class needing to be quarantined after Thanksgiving break."; "Keep Covid dashboard up to date with accurate numbers"; "Let teachers/staff know when someone in their class has Covid."; "I'm always irritated by the COVID dashboard that doesn't update daily... Also, I think when a staff member fall ill, we should be told something more than the generic "A case has been reported" email that we get."; "Be more open about Covid-19 cases."; "update the COVID dashboard regularly...like at the same time every day. It is so wildly inconsistent and it is really suspicious when we get a campus email but the numbers aren't reflected in the dashboard"; "Communicate to staff what room number a COVID case came from so that staff members will know if they have been in the room."; "When someone tests positive for COVID, on the email that is already sent, can they put on there the department or grade of the student?"

- **COVID-related information is constantly changing**: "Information has constantly changed. Administrators were not told about the need for letters from the County for clearance from HR. I am not receiving the same report that my nurse receives."; "During COVID there was a great deal of anxiety due to being told something was going to happen then all of the sudden we need to

pivot to something different."; "Be honest and explain district changes especially when it pertains to teaching assignments. Going from online and back to face to face. Assignments change with no clear explanations."; "Be consistent in what they are requesting and requiring of staff during Covid. It seems they change the rules and protocols frequently with no regard of how it effects the staff on the campuses."

▪ **Dissatisfaction with campus/district COVID mitigation strategies/handling of safety measures**: "I also think the daily screening check-in process is a joke. Temperatures don't really show anything and many employees and students lie on the screening app."; "I feel that the FBISD is not doing enough to communicate contact tracing with the teachers and staff. Teachers are losing faith in the district and not trusting the leadership."; "I would appreciate for all kids to have temperatures checks daily while COVID is still a problem."; "Do a better job of keeping our students and employee's safe with regards to Covid -19 issues. I understand that we are following guidelines recommended by the CDC, however those are just recommendations. For example; 1. When a student test positive for Covid, the entire class should quarantine, not just 2-3 students that hang around the student. 2. It was my understanding that students were not supposed to be allowed on the bus without face masks? It happens all the time on our campus. Bus drivers say that they don't have PPE. I believe that we can do better than this."; "tomar en cuenta la integridad de cada employee, y sobre todo hoy en dia con lo del COVID 19, se tome mas encuenta la seguridad de cada employee, para mantenernos seguros en nuestro trabajo, y continuar con los protocolos requeridos, designados por la Administracion de FBISD. [Take into account the integrity of each employee, and especially today, with COVID 19, the safety of each employee is taken into account more, to keep us safe in our work, and continue with the required protocols designated by the FBISD administration."; "With the COVID-19 pandemic it seems that the Superintendent and Board Members are more interested in numbers than the employee's health."

Improve coordination of messaging across the organization

▪ **Across departments**: "Core departments interact more with teachers in that department"; "District level admin being active in department-level meetings occasionally"; "Improve the relay of information from top down"; "Come and visit with all faculty/staff. Some of us don't even know who our leaders are in the district."; "We often have items delivered that we didn't know were coming and we don't know what they are for. Generally, communications between departments is poor. It seems that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing most of the time. At times, multiple departments seem to be offering the same service so that there is overlap and it is confusing to teachers and students."; "speak directly to us, and not through department heads."; "Don't rely on principals to deliver messages to teachers; they don't always do it."; "FBISD is a huge district...As teachers, we receive conflicting information because the departments at the district level make decisions without consulting each other...We have departments who have asked for specific things from other departments...the conflicting communication causes, what seems like small misunderstandings, but in reality, these details are extremely important to those

who have to interpret student data and make recommendations based on data collected. This is just one example of how the leadership of FBISD a has become top heavy, and is causing communication to be watered down through the process of 'passing on'. Maybe looking down from the top it doesn't look as though there is a problem, but I believe that if you started asking teachers, principals, department leaders, and others outside of the Top Tier of FBISD, you will find a great deal of issues with the lack of reliable information that we receive."; "Ensure stronger communication across different departments. Employees have said for many years that "one hand does not talk to the other" in reference to central leadership.; "The district is so large with so many moving parts that it sometimes feels like we work on islands. I feel like I get good communication on things relevant to our specific department, but we lack communication on changes within other district departments/leadership/initiatives as a whole if you don't directly work under that department."

- **From top down**: "More speaking directly to the school staff. When information filters down through school leadership and department leadership, it also filters through their perspective on the information."; "Clearly communicate changes from the boardroom, down"; "More involvement from upper admin staff in direct communications rather than mass produced communications to all staff"; "Answer: Use a tree type of communication system. Faculty and staff are not always on their phones or emails are open so if there is a lead person who is being notified of the news and can pass it along."; "Ensuring that the campus level admin teams are armed with the most up to date information so they can keep the teachers and other staff members informed and aware."; "Ensure the information is being filtered down from the Executive/Leadership levels to all employees."; "Reconsider how information is shared from leadership to minimize rumors or misinformation."

Ensure that staff are informed before parents/before social media

- "Share information with staff before sharing with parents"; "Letting us the faculty know things before they are made public…None of us wants to be blindsided by a parent."; "Don't send out information to staff minutes before you send out to the rest of the community. Let us have more forewarning of things."; "We should never learn about policy from a tweet or community announcement".; "Give us information in advance. I learn most of what I know from the Facebook page FBISD concerns. As a teacher in the district, I would expect to know more than the parents but we find out last."; "send info to teachers/staff before it shows up on social media (even a 15 min heads up would make a difference sometimes)."; "When sending out communications to parents/guardians regarding severe weather the campuses should be informed first and then the parents so we will be able to respond to parent/guardian questions when the phones start ringing. Many times when we are on campus we find out that the district is closing when a parent comes onto campus since they have already received the information but we are notified by email after they communicate with the parents/guardians"; "Share information, when possible, with employees before releasing the information out to the public through social media."; "Email staff about important decisions/information before it is released to the public."; "Keep staff informed before you send out the information to parents."; "We are also usually communicated with either

at the same time or, most of the time, after parents and students. It puts me in a bad spot as an educator when parents and students ask me questions about new information and I cannot answer because I got it at the same time or have not even received it."; "I feel like a lot of news happens first on Twitter before we know about it as staff. I would just hope to have the information hit the emails of the staff well before Twitter. In my opinion, it establishes trust as a stakeholder between admin and teachers. It feels like we're an afterthought sometimes. (There are emails, but it needs to be better or easier to access.)"; "Get information to us before we find out from the public media. I find out things from relatives before I hear it from the district."

Improve responsiveness/accessibility of staff and leadership

- **Be responsive**: "Acknowledge concerns"; "follow up", "reply to any and all emails sent to them'; "…return phone calls within 24 hours"; "That the response time is within 8 hours from the time received message"; "answer our questions"; "Answer emails that I sent with direct questions I've sent to and had no replies"; "To be given more clarification on questions that most people are asking."; "return emails"; "follow through with answers and actions"; "Have the appropriate number of staff members in each department to handle the communication needs; sometimes there are too few people working in one department and emails go unanswered for days or weeks or sometimes never get responded too. I have emails that I sent over a month ago that I still have not received a response from."; "Admin could reply to emails."

- **Be available**: "The availability of staff to answer calls from campuses throughout the day"; "Leadership needs to be better about being available, answering phones, VM or email messages on a timely basis"; "More 'office hours' with superintendent"; "Open up lines of communication where employees don't feel like it takes an act of Congress to speak too someone in an administrative capacity."; "It is very difficult to gain access to the superintendent without feeling like you are intruding, or infringing upon his secret privacy. It is like trying to gain entrance to Fort Knox."; "Provide good contact numbers or chat services"

Communications should be proactive, not reactive

- "Stay proactive instead of after the fact communications"; "Proactive instead of reactive"; "Leadership communications are often reactive, untimely, and can change from day to day which makes campus staff look incompetent"; "Become more proactive when disseminating information"; "Be more proactive and not so reactive with plans for district goals." "Communications need to be proactive, not reactive."; "Be prompt and proactive- it almost appears as if they do not have a plan in place"; "Being proactive and keeping a big picture."; "Be proactive"; "Be more proactive than reactive."; "Also more proactive planning about potential changes."

Central office needs to visit schools, visit classrooms, understand what is going on "in the trenches" and what is the impact of the decisions they make

- "Visit the classroom more. The administrator need to visit more"; "Have the superintendent make more visits to the campuses"; "It would be nice for the east end of FBISD to see more leadership on campus for an extended visit (at least an hour)"; "visit campus more often"; "Have short visit by the district admin to individual school and meet and greet with school staff"; "come to each campus and let us see you and talk to you about our concerns regarding our specific campus"; "FBISD leadership and administration need to spend time in classrooms covering classes. I think if they did, they would realize some of the unrealistic things that we are asked to do especially when it comes to one teacher giving modifications and accommodations to ELLs, SPED and 504 students with no additional help in the classroom"; "Office staff can come to schools to see how we really work on a regular day"; "visitar los campus por lo menos una bes al ano, y de que los empleados cesientan que los liderz los toman encuenta [Visit the campuses at least once per year and let employees let the leaders take them into account]."; "I never see the asst. superintendents at my school. It would be nice if they communicated with us."; "I would like for administration to take the time out of their day to get to know our sped students. What our job titles and our duties entail. We do not sit and color all day. I would like for admin to walk to SPED not resource and spend a day there instead of your office. Please sit and lend a hand and see what it is to actually work with our students. Instead of assuming help is not needed and that everything is easy and you are able to pull a staff member away to cover another area or to help with clerical duties."

Clarify organizational structure, who is responsible for what, who I call to find certain information

- "Where it sometimes fails is in unified, clear messaging about organizational structure changes. I've been around for several of those, as I've worked in different capacities throughout the district over many years, and have noticed a marked lack of transparency/communication when it comes to things like newly revised organizational charts. This leaves staff unsure of whom to contact, and even in doubt as to the chain of command in some cases. While some of this may be necessary during the decision-making period regarding such changes, it too often persists long after those changes should be generally available knowledge"; "provide a weekly/regular column introducing all the different departments at Admin building. Listing things each department can do to help or inform teachers and students. Or just describe the function of each unit in a lighthearted fun way. Everyone has a job at Admin, but it's a mystery what each person's job entails."; "You do not know who to contact at Central Administration. The department titles change on a weekly basis without a clear job description."; "Provide an updated list of people in each organization/central office and their title."; "Communicate about changes in organization especially reorganizations and missions of each department."; "Provide employees a spotlight for Admin office members who are new to our district or have been moved into new positions. Yearly, I don't know who to contact because there has been movement and we are not told. Give us a description of what each department does."; "Although it's not a direct communication, I (and many others with whom I have talked) GREATLY miss our internal phone book. Yes, it's on-line IF you know the person's name or their department. But it is often faster to pick up a little book and flip through it to find the individual or department. Departments have transitioned into different divisions and have completely different names than just a few short years ago. Stopping the printed publication was a savings to the District - which I understand and appreciate. However, the amount of time I have

spent trying to find someone (like the current director or executive assistant) or the new name of a department, on several occasions, could have paid for a directory for everyone in H.R. Plus, I/we could make notes of personnel adds, changes, deletes or who was the right contact for "X", "Y" or "Z", etc. It's definitely an INFORMATION piece that would be a great asset." ; "Be more transparent about personnel moves and reorganizations at the central office that directly affect school-based personnel."; "make it clear who to contact for specific topics. The district has a lot of positions at the top, but as a teacher, I do not know what everyone does and how they can help me and my students. Finding the "right" person to help is tedious and time consuming."; "visibility on reorganizations, creation of new departments, etc."

Website Improvements

- "The district website also needs to have clearer links on who to contact"; "Update website according to what's been sent to parents"; "Sometimes FIBSD website is difficult to navigate and locate information. Within some administrative departments information is not updated enough to help the end user"; "Update information on website. Remove outdated information from website"; "Make it easier on the website to navigate to all communications"; "All information should be easy to find. IF I do a search for something on our site, I usually have a very difficult time finding it or the search doesn't work."; "Make their website easier to navigate and find information"

Other consistent topics, but less prevalent

- **Make resources available in Spanish**: **"**Make sure newsletters are also in Spanish", "Explicar en espanol [Explain in Spanish]", "Spanish options for communications". "Mi opinion personal es que siempre que el distrito mande algo importante al personal ma¡s que todo alos custodian ..que son parte importante del campus ..que tambian lo traduscan al espanol somos parte esencial y se nesecita con claridad entender mejor cuando esta traducido al espanol tomenlo encuenta ..hay muchas personas que no leemos ingles y si lo hablamos..pero mas hoy que nesecitamos estar alertas por lo del covid 19 nesecitamos seguir todos los protocolos y sugerencias del distrito gracias asÃ mismo hoy que esta encuesta llegÃ³ traducida al espaÃ±ol se me iso mÃ¡s clara y eficiente ami personal mente sin pedir alluda para completarla gracias [My personal opinion is that whenever the district sends something important to all the custodians, who are an important part of the campus, to also translate it into Spanish. We are an essential part and it is necessary to clearly understand, understand better when it is translated into Spanish. Take into account that there are many people who do not read English and we do speak it…but more today that we need to be alert for COVID 19 to follow all the protocols and suggestions of the district. Thank you. Even today that this survey arrived translated into Spanish, it became clearer and more efficient for me personally without asking for any help to complete it. Thank you."; "dar entrenamientos a los travajadores en todos los idiomas" [More availability of communications in Spanish, since many of our employees do not speak English. Same when communicating with our community]"

- **Improve training**: "Hire employees who have the experience and skills of good leadership and management. There are too many employees who are not qualified to do a job efficiently and

effectively."; "We need to build off of our leaderships' strengths and provide more effective trainings that specialize in the areas needed."; "Better personnel training"; "tener mas personal capacitado en administracion, porque muchas veces ocupan gente recomendada pero no se toman el tiempo para checar si tienen capacidad para ocupar ese puesto [Have more personnel trained in administration, because many times they employ recommended people but they do not take the time to check if they have the capacity to occupy the position]"; "Some supervisors need diversity training to be able to effectively communicate with members of the team that are from various cultures and backgrounds. This will help with communication. Some supervisors say culturally insensitive statements to their employees."

- **Work together**: "work together as a team"; "llevarse bien [get along]"; "Help each other out"; "Trabajar en equipo [teamwork]"; "Establish and maintain rapport. Our campus lacks school culture and teamwork"; "Work better with different departments"; "Collaborate more before making a decision"; "Consistently recognize that we are all in it together. When one wins we all win!"; "Collaboration."; "Collaborative decisions with staff"; "We are Team \ One for all and all for one"; "more team effort"

Variation of Patterns by Staff Role/Location

In the sections above, we showed the prevalence of each theme overall, across all respondents. However, it is informative to examine whether the tendency for an employee to mention a particular topic is related to their staff role, job location, or other characteristic of their employment. For example, it may be that teachers more commonly desire certain improvements, while central office staff more commonly desire different improvements.

In the section below, we compared the prevalence of each theme within two different employee categorizations: teachers versus non-teachers and district staff versus campus-based staff. As an example, if half of the respondents providing open-ended data are teachers, but 90% of comments about timeliness of communication are coming from teachers, then it tells us that teachers are disproportionately experiencing frustration with the timeliness of communications, or in other words, that issues with communication timeliness are concentrated among teachers.

Among employees who provided an open-ended response:

- 77% are school-based staff (including teachers and non-teachers) while 23% are district office/central office staff

- 48% are teachers while 52% are non-teachers.

Below we show the prevalence of each theme by these two job characteristics. There were clear patterns depending upon whether the respondent was school-based or not. Ten topics were more commonly mentioned among school-based staff including COVID-related communications, about ensuring that employees are informed about things before parents and the general community, about the timeliness of

communications, about the consistency of communications, asked for refining communications (shorter, more succinct, summarized, less volume), and for increased responsiveness of central office. They also disproportionately, though to a lesser extent, spoke of wanting to be listened to and heard, for the district to be more honest/transparent, for central office/administration to visit schools, and for website improvements. Conversely, six themes were raised more often among central-office staff including concerns about equity of communications, keeping staff informed of changes, being cared about and acknowledged, generally wanting more communication, improving coordination, and wanting proactive communication. Only one theme, clarifying organizational structure, was similarly raised regardless of employee location.

Table 21. Emergent Themes by Employee Location

Emergent Theme	School-based 77% of sample	Central office 23% of sample
Themes that did not vary based on Employee Location (within 3 percentage points)		
Clarify organizational structure, who is responsible for what, who I call to find certain information	80%	20%
Themes that were disproportionately driven by school-based staff		
Something specific to communications in the COVID-pandemic context	93%	7%
Ensure that staff are informed before parents/before social media	89%	11%
Improve timeliness of communications/information	88%	12%
Improve the consistency of communications - from different sources, across schools, from top to bottom of the organization.	86%	14%
Refine communication methods/channels, better target communications to specific groups, reduce volume of information	85%	15%
Improve responsiveness/accessibility of staff and leadership	85%	15%
Listen to us. Ask us. Use teacher and staff input in decision making.	83%	17%
Be honest, be transparent, be truthful	83%	17%
Administration/Central office needs to visit schools, visit classrooms, understand what is going on and what is the impact of the decisions they make	83%	17%
Website Improvements	82%	18%
Themes that were disproportionately driven by central-office based staff		
Equity – communicate equally with all departments, schools, staff types, etc. Treat all schools, departments, role types equally/ show they are all of equal value/worth	52%	48%
Keep us informed of changes	67%	33%

Emergent Theme	School-based 77% of sample	Central office 23% of sample
Care about us, respect us, acknowledge us, value us	70%	30%
General comments about more communication (more in general, more of something already doing, more of something not currently doing)	70%	30%
Improve coordination across the organization	71%	29%
Communications should be proactive, not reactive	73%	28%

When examining the prevalence of theme by employee type – teacher or not – there were fewer differences than by employee location. Seven themes were not disproportionately mentioned by one type of employee or another. Teachers did, however, disproportionately mention something specific about COVID communications, a desire for staff to be informed before parents/public, desire improved timeliness of communications, refining communications, being listened to, honesty/transparency, improved consistency and website improvements. On the other hand, non-teachers disproportionately mentioned equity of communications and wanting communication to be more proactive. Notably, though not reported as a standalone theme in the overall analysis, 100% of comments about wanting more materials in Spanish were from non-teachers.

Table 22. Emergent Themes by Teacher or Non-Teacher

Emergent Theme	Teachers 48% of sample	Non-teachers 52% of sample
Themes that did not vary based on employee type (within 3 percentage points)		
Keep us informed of changes	48%	52%
Improve coordination across the organization	48%	52%
Administration/central office needs to visit schools, visit classrooms, understand what is going on and what is the impact of the decisions they make	47%	53%
General comments (more communication, more emails, more texts, more meetings)	46%	54%
Improve responsiveness/accessibility of staff and leadership	45%	55%
Care about us, respect us, acknowledge us, value us	45%	55%
Clarify organizational structure, who is responsible for what, who do I call to find certain information	44%	56%
Themes that were disproportionately driven by teachers		
Something specific to communications in the COVID-pandemic context	71%	29%
Ensure that staff are informed before parents/before social media	67%	33%
Improve timeliness of communications/information	62%	38%

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Emergent Theme	Teachers 48% of sample	Non-teachers 52% of sample
Refine communication methods/channels, better target communications to specific groups, reduce volume of information	61%	39%
Listen to us. Ask us. Use teacher/staff input in decision making	61%	39%
Be honest, be transparent, be truthful	59%	41%
Improve the consistency of communications – from different sources, across schools, from top to bottom of the organization.	53%	47%
Website improvements	52%	48%
Themes that were disproportionately driven by non-teachers		
More materials in Spanish	0%	100%
Equity – community equally with all departments, schools, staff types, etc. Treat all schools, departments, role types equally/show they are of equal value/worth	20%	80%
Communications should be proactive, not reactive	42%	58%

Tangible/Actionable Suggestions

Some responses were particularly actionable suggestions. These comments cut across the themes presented above, and are highlighted here given the extent to which they are tangible, actionable, simple, or novel. Again, this is not an exhaustive list of actionable suggestions, but a sampling. All responses are verbatim.

- "Provide more information to staff who are out (absent, on leave, part-time). Not currently aware of upcoming plans."

- "Stop sending out communications after business hours via e-mails for important matters as these get lost in the hundreds of junk emails that flood the inbox overnight."

- "Use FAQ format in *Chat with Charles*."

- "Send the weekly emails at a set time\day so district employees can be on the lookout for."

- "Avoid educational jargon, use less "buzz" words and phrases."

- "Publicize campus leader meeting notes."

- "Place a copy of all publications in each school's teacher lounge."

- "Maybe set up a subscription based on topic so I can choose which emails I most want to receive."

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- "Send more personalized communication from time to time instead of always blanket form letters."

- "Newsletter with happenings around the district, spotlighting work of different schools in different parts of the district. Not familiar if the district already has something like that."

- "Provide a yearly calendar or a semester calendar with events and meetings already on it at the beginning of the school year."

- "When they send an email make sure to include a phone number not just a website to communicate."

- "Have a deadline calendar regarding when and how to submit paperwork."

- "Maybe each HS starts a once per week local in-house newsletter that is sent to other district employees including staff at other high schools."

- "Add apps to the One Link for staff to access FBISD newsletters and other communications. The One Link is very user friendly and the presentation is easier to navigate."

- "Find a way to limit the amount of third-party promotional emails that get sent to us daily. It is overwhelming to read through those in addition to the actual district communication, especially since I did not submit my email to receive emails from those third party sites/vendors."

- "Printable directions of how we are supposed to do/implement a procedure or policy. Effective decision trees."

- "Have newsletters by departments from around the district, A bi-weekly bulletin/newsletter update that shows all of the news/information from various departments rather than multiple emails from various departments."

- "Make sure we are celebrating our teachers and hiring or promoting from within."

- "Consolidate to one form of newsletter for teachers and staff (kind of like the admin newsletter). Provide a link to the newsletter in staff links. That way the leaders can see the information that flows to the teachers. Have a consolidated district calendar so there are no clashes and leaders/teachers are not double/triple booked. Have a consolidated list of department points of contact for campuses."

- "I think as FBISD experiences many employees who choose to retire as early as possible, the district should make an effort to HEAR from those exiting. THAT is where communication could be most fruitful. LISTEN to the people in the trenches. Make every effort to improve conditions; otherwise, you face an ever-growing shortage in your classrooms."

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- "If the *Checking in with Charles* came only as a video, I wouldn't watch it. It is way too long. As I can scan the transcript, I do so and it gives me an idea of concerns and initiatives at the district level.\ The only thing I really like about the automated phone messages are messages regarding school closings - then I have no ambiguity. As a parent, I did appreciate messages about my children and meetings, because that was the surest way to get info. If I were a parent now, I'd rather receive those as a text because the phone calls always took too long to get to the point. The website is so, so difficult to navigate. I can rarely find what I am looking for unless I have the direct webpage to go to. A search brings me out-of-date information. After years, I am finally learning where to look for some things."