

Communicating with Stakeholders

Communicating Student Success in Career and Skills Programming

To build capacity for Career and Skills Programs in your district and engage stakeholders, it is important to communicate and report out regularly to stakeholders as to how students gain success by participating in career awareness, exploration and engagement activities and programming.

Stakeholders include students, parents, community, teachers, administrators, trustees, and the Ministry. Each stakeholder contributes to the outcomes of student success.

Communication is a continuous and ongoing process and uses a variety of tactics such as print, web based and social media. It keeps stakeholders informed of progress and areas of focus, and it provides a process for review for many different purposes including:

- a) To educate stakeholders what district offers in the way of "Career Programs"
- b) To improve and update existing Career and Skills Activities and Programming
- c) To increase district capacity for offering more student opportunities
- d) To assist in staff transitions and changes

School-Based Communications

Schools strengthen their capacity for communication and marketing of Career and Skills Activities and Programming by ensuring that students, parents, staff and community have access to current information and have information sharing and feedback opportunities, including:

- Increased frequency of communicating important information sharing to meet external deadlines e.g. course selection, application
- Career staff to present at monthly staff meetings and to the Parent Advisory meetings
- Integrate a few survey questions at key communication opportunities with school stakeholder groups:
 - **Parents** – Survey questions e.g. Reporting; Parent Teacher Interviews; School Transition meetings; Newsletter email fan-out; Open Houses; Course Selection Information Sessions
 - **Students** – Grade targeted questionnaires e.g. Career Interest Survey mail out to new students transitioning to Secondary; Planning 10 classes; Course Selection Sessions all Grade levels; Career Surveys in Applied Program areas
 - **Community** – post information about topics relevant to potential learning partners and integrate survey questions with Career Programs contact information:
 - E-Newsletters to Business and Industry employers
 - What's happening in Career Programs? How to get involved.
 - Local newspaper articles showcasing student success and community participation
 - Local radio shows to promote career programs
 - Create posters showcasing local students

District Communications

The District Career Programs Leader is typically responsible for developing and implementing an overall communication plan and marketing strategies for Career Programs. The District Career Programs Leader would consult with stakeholders and develop a plan in collaboration with District "Careers" team and school administration.

A comprehensive District "Careers" web page links to schools to provide more specific information about the "Careers and Trades" options offered. There would be communications material targeting different audiences including: Careers Newsletters, Presentations, Employer Forums, and Career Events.

In school districts that do not have dedicated district "Careers" staff, the Career Programs teachers, administrators, and counselors typically develop marketing materials about the program options for students, parents, and employers.

To strengthen capacity of Career Programs for all levels, it is "best practice" to check in with stakeholders regularly as to the effectiveness of the communication plan and marketing strategies, e.g. "What's happening in Career Programs in your district?" Even when districts and schools have many communications tools and marketing strategies underway, this is not a certainty that the stakeholders are well informed.

Strategies to assess effectiveness of Communications and Marketing activities may include adaptations and variations of the following:

- Survey different groups to provide you with basic feedback with short queries to guide your communications focus:
 - KWL – Adapt a KWL chart to determine the basics of what stakeholders know and want to know next about Career Programs.

What we K now	What we W ant to know	What we want to L earn ... "more about how to" next
		Provide possible areas to guide discussion and reflection, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Benefits ◦ Positive Impact ◦ Engagement and Recruitment

- Conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to analyze your current Communication and Marketing activities. This is an opportunity to consult and engage District "Careers" Team and identified key stakeholders. The process will result in an action plan to address priorities and gaps.
- Communication plan would include a focus at the School District level for the purpose of sharing student results and progress on program development. This is an opportunity to increase program knowledge and engage participants in several ways:
 - Presentations to the Board and other stakeholders
 - Reports to Board
 - Contribution to District Annual Report
 - Results in District Achievement Contract

Communicating Using Social Media

Social media can be a very effective tool for career coordinators to build professional networks and to share what they're working on. One of the most powerful of these social media channels is **Twitter**. Users have 140 characters maximum to tell their audience what they're working on, ask questions, share resources, etc. The first step in building up your Twitter network is to find people in your community who are already active. Check your email contacts, for example, to see if any of them are on Twitter, and if they are, follow their accounts. Watch for tweets that have to do with your subject area and respond or re-tweet. Mention these people by @username in your tweets and before long, many of them will follow you back. In addition, follow topic-specific hashtags like #skills4bc. You may want to add your Twitter handle to your email signature. Direct message some of your followers to ask them to share specific tweets that you really want to see travel far and wide.

Facebook is another useful tool. If you haven't already done so, you might want to build your own Facebook page promoting your career education program, or get access to post to your existing school page. Again, you want to build an audience, so with Facebook the best way to do it would be to invite people via email, Twitter, etc. to "Like" and "Share" your page.

Another good practice is to build a **website** specifically for your careers program. Here you can post photos, videos, resources, and blogs to share details of your program. This resource would be the centerpiece of your promotion: you could then use Twitter and Facebook status updates to promote what is on your site.