

**Florida Department of Education  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications Plan**

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**Department Mission**

The mission of the Florida Department of Education is to increase the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system, by providing them with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through learning prospects and research valued by students, parents, and communities, and to maintain an accountability system that measures student progress.

**Department Strategic Vision**

Through the implementation of the Department of Education's Next Generation Strategic Plan, the Department is poised to meet this mission and change the culture of our schools from PreK to postsecondary. Each of the strategies contained within the Department's Next Generation Strategic Plan and subsequent initiatives are aimed at raising the ceiling and the floor in order to better enable students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Communications Mission**

The mission of the Department's Office of Communications is to support the successful execution and communication of the Department's mission, vision and strategic initiatives. The Office of Communications is responsible for assisting Department leadership and all Department division/program staff in providing clear, consistent and effective communication to all stakeholders (internal and external) related to Department services, functions, initiatives and successes.

**Communications Capacity**

In order to accomplish its mission, the Office of Communications performs various functions including media relations, coordination of internal communication, Web site administration and maintenance, event planning and coordination and the administration of the Department's correspondence tracking and response system.

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### Background

Florida's education system has long been regarded as one of the most progressive systems in the country. For more than a decade, Florida has worked to strengthen its education infrastructure through the advancement of education policy reforms while simultaneously boosting student achievement. The results have been staggering:

**Student participation in rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) courses has jumped 64% in Florida since 2005. The percentage of students earning passing scores (3 or higher) has increased 48% since 2001.**

- College Board

**The number of Black students participating in the AP program in Florida has grown 136.9% since 2005 and the number of Hispanic students participating has increased 69.9%.**

- College Board

**Florida was one of only four states in the nation to improve significantly in both fourth and eighth grade reading according to the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).**

- National Assessment of Education Progress

**Nationally, Florida has the second greatest number of Hispanic students and fourth greatest number of African-American students scoring at at or above proficiency on the NAEP writing assessment.**

- National Assessment of Education Progress

**Florida is one of only three states in the nation to close the long-term achievement gap between Black and White fourth-graders in reading and one of only 15 to close it in math.**

- National Center for Educational Statistics

**Since 2001, the percentage of all Florida students (grades 3-10) performing at or above grade level in reading has climbed from 47% to 61%.**

- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

**Since 2001, the percentage of all Florida students (grades 3-10) performing at or above grade level in reading has climbed from 50% to 67%.**

- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

With the adoption of the Next Generation Strategic Plan, the Florida Department of Education has laid the groundwork to ensure the state's march toward achievement will undoubtedly continue.

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### **Challenge**

Even with Florida's climbing student achievement and nationally-recognized reform efforts, constant misrepresentations of Florida's educational successes remain. The Department's challenge is to develop a clear, consistent and universally-employed communications model that utilizes creative, engaging and interactive outreach efforts by all staff, leadership and partner organizations in order to combat misinformation and communicate the true successes of Florida's continuously improving education system.

### **Goal**

Position Florida's education system and the Florida Department of Education as the premiere administrative education entity in the country

### **Objectives**

1. Enhance communication delivery methods
2. Improve consistency and saturation of Department messaging
3. Combat misinformation

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**Strategies**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies/Tactics</b>
<p><b>Enhance communication delivery methods</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of existing Department communication delivery methods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and prioritize target audiences</li> <li>• Solicit input from target audiences regarding improvements to Department’s message platforms (focus on integrating interactive exchanges into existing formats)</li> <li>• Revise existing communication methods to meet the needs of these priority users</li> <li>• Increase frequency, immediacy and consistency of stakeholder updates and notifications across all program areas</li> <li>• Conduct periodic constituent surveys to determine potential changes and updates to communications methods</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Explore new Department delivery options integrating compatible technologies into outreach activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore and field test existing social networking/notification platforms for use by Department staff/programs</li> <li>• Create new interactive Department Web portals/resources to encourage the continual, successful exchange of information and ideas</li> <li>• Integrate interactive technology platforms into Department’s Web site</li> <li>• Develop supporting content (videos, audio, print) for dissemination and discussion via Department communication methods</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Improve consistency and saturation of Department messaging</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Identify and communicate the characteristics, impact and value of the Department</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create plain language explanation of Department’s key initiatives and goals of the Next Generation Strategic plan</li> <li>• Integrate revised messaging in all program areas; clearly illustrate ties to the Next Generation Strategic Plan and key Department initiatives throughout Department programs</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Identify all platforms that can carry our message forward</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Department messaging through all available public platforms including the Department’s Web site, publications, general email from staff, listserv notices, social networking and new media resources, as well as existing Department newsletters, program presentations, legislative presentations, and general media relations activities</li> <li>• Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of Department staff in the successful communication of all Department messaging</li> <li>• Increase and encourage stakeholder involvement in communicating and supporting the Department’s messaging</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Further individualize key messages and communication methods based on target audiences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with target audiences based on their preferred methods of exchange</li> <li>• Create message maps to clearly illustrate the ties between the Department’s strategic goals and the goals of our target audiences including parents, teachers, the business community, local government, legislators, etc.</li> <li>• Provide collateral materials on the Department’s key initiatives and Next Generation Strategic Plan that speak directly to the concerns and needs of specific audiences</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

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<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies/Tactics</b>
<b>Combat misinformation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Aggressively pursue the correction of misinformation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to media and stakeholders immediately when misinformation is circulated and provide clarification i.e. - "the real story;" consider use of new media platforms for this immediate notification method</li> <li>• Utilize Department Web site to display corrections to misinformation</li> <li>• Strengthen relationships with news media editors and Web site editors to ensure corrections are immediately reflected on media Web sites</li> <li>• Continuously supply news updates to stakeholders regarding the revisions of misinformation so they can be a part of the process</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Establish and capitalize on network of stakeholder and partner organizations that support the Department's message</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage stakeholders to conduct media outreach on behalf of Department initiatives and goals they support</li> <li>• Encourage stakeholders to be vigilant in pursuing information corrections themselves; provide guidance on who to contact and how to pursue corrections</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Continue to bolster effective media relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase story pitching and editorial board visits by Commissioner</li> <li>• Regionalize Department news to keep education specific stories local and relevant to media market coverage areas</li> <li>• Develop and strengthen relationships with top education bloggers and online communities</li> <li>• Target specific beat reporters outside of education for coverage from varying angles</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

**Benchmarks**

In order to ensure the effective and efficient execution of the Department's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications Plan, tactical benchmarks will be created, tracked and documented via the strategic plan. These benchmarks will vary based on the nature of the objective, strategies and tactics to which they correlate. Example benchmarks will include but are not limited to the following measures:

- Timely execution and completion of specific tasks
- Media impressions generated
- Consumer surveys
- Consumer usage and patterns
- Stakeholder feedback

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