



# **Communications Guidebook**

Jarrell Independent School District  
Department of Communications  
504 N. 5th Street, Jarrell, TX 76537  
(512) 746-2124

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# Jarrell Independent School District

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## **District Mission**

The Jarrell Community  
Empowers future-ready citizens, provides opportunities, inspires excellence, and cultivates  
innovation for all.

## **Vision**

Jarrell ISD  
For the benefit of our students, we are one community.

# Department of Communications

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## **Purpose**

The Communications Department aims:

- To serve students, parents, staff and community members by building public trust, celebrating staff and students success, and supporting learning and community partnerships.
- Facilitating clear communication within the district, to our families and stakeholders in order to raise awareness and understanding of Jarrell ISD.

## **Goals**

The Director of Communications will develop, plan, and manage news and communication that informs, engages, and connects our staff, parents, students, and stakeholders with both informative and uplifting news.

Our focus:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Celebrating innovative teaching               | Transparent communication                |
| Student achievement                           | Supporting community partnerships        |
| Athletic/Fine arts accomplishments            | Building public trust                    |
| Career and Technical educational advancements | Engage constituents through social media |

|                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ Office of Public Information | ➤ News and Communication |
| ➤ Media Relations              | ➤ Crisis Communications  |
| ➤ Marketing and Branding       | ➤ Social Media           |
| ➤ Digital Media                | ➤ Website Management     |

Additional priorities include employees and students take pride and ownership in their work; encourage and foster student success; model respect and understanding toward their colleagues and peers.

## **Responsibilities**

|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| ➤ Office of Public Information |
| ➤ News and Communication       |
| ➤ Media Relations              |
| ➤ Crisis Communications        |
| ➤ Marketing and Branding       |
| ➤ Social Media                 |
| ➤ Digital Media                |
| ➤ Website Management           |

## **Public Information**

Requests for public information (open records) are handled in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act (PIA), Texas Government Code 552. The PIA gives the public the right to request access to government information. The PIA does not require the district to create new information, perform legal searches, or answer general questions.

All requests should be submitted:

**Email:** [openrecords@jarrellisd.org](mailto:openrecords@jarrellisd.org)

**Mail:** Communications Department, 504 N. 5th Street, Jarrell, Texas 76537

**Fax:** 512-746-2518

Requests will be produced within ten business days, staff will notify the requestor in writing of the date and time when it will be available. If a request for copies of information exceeds 50 pages, the District may charge ten cents per copy and charge \$15 per hour for labor costs associated with processing the request.

Jarrell ISD will release requested information that is not confidential by law. If the information requested falls under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the district will withhold that information.

For information the district withholds, a ruling will be requested from the Office of the Attorney General if applicable. The requestor will be sent a copy of that communication. If information requested falls under the opinion if deemed that it violates student privacy information.

NOTE: Jarrell ISD social media sites, including those created and managed by employees as part of their professional duties, are subject to open records laws. Any content posted/written in a social media format related to school district business, including communication posted by an employee of the district and communication received from citizens, is a public record.

## **Electronic Media**

Staff Use of electronic media (including social media) is outlined in policy DH (Electronic Communication Policy) in the Employee Handbook.

Jarrell ISD supports the use of social media by its campuses and staff as a way to facilitate communication and parent/community engagement. Jarrell ISD encourages faculty or administrators to submit campus news to the Communications Department so that it may be posted on the Jarrell ISD Facebook page, Twitter feed, Instagram page and website.

Jarrell ISD social media sites, including those created and managed by employees as part of their professional duties are subject to open records laws. Any content posted/written in a social media format related to school district business, including communication posted by an employee of the district (including substitute teachers and substitute employees) and communication received from citizens is a public record.

The Communications Department is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for social media content.

- All Jarrell ISD social media accounts must be authorized by the Communications Office.
- Social media behavior should reflect the same standards of what is published in the current Jarrell ISD Employee Handbook.

- Any existing sites or pages that represent Jarrell ISD are subject to review by campus and district administrators and may be amended or, when necessary, removed.
- A staff member who has the responsibility to post news for a club, department, campus, etc. must have the social media account linked to a Jarrell ISD email address. Any images/videos/names of students posted in connection with a club, department, campus, etc. must be authorized through a media release.
- Staff members using personal social media accounts should not use a Jarrell ISD email address and should not post ANY images/videos/names of students on their personal social media accounts.
- Content that is illegal, obscene, pornographic, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity, inhospitable to a reasonable work environment, or otherwise injurious or objectionable is unacceptable and shall be removed.

**Although a disclaimer stating that the information is representative of personal views and opinions and not the views and opinions of Jarrell ISD may be included, it does not necessarily prevent Jarrell ISD from exercising its discretion over content.**

- Online content associated with the social media account should be consistently updated with an employee's work at Jarrell ISD. Dormant accounts will be removed.
- FERPA prohibits the release of private student information such as grades, discipline, attendance and test scores.
- Staff may not post an image/video/name of a student whose parent has not given permission and signed a Media Release in the registration system.
- Staff must respect copyright and fair use guidelines. See U.S. Copyright Office - Fair Use.
- Staff must adhere to accepted standards and practices for accessibility for individuals with disabilities including the use of Alt Text, captioning, and transcripts when appropriate.

#### Substitute Employees

Substitute employees are expected to abide by the same requirements and guidelines as regular staff as it relates to district communication protocols.

#### Responding/Participating in Conversations on Social Media

Navigating social media is an ongoing challenge for a school district. The Communications Office is responsible for sharing news and information on social media as well as responding appropriately to any issues or questions that may arise. In some cases, employees may feel a desire or responsibility to respond to a particular situation on social media that relates to the school district; however, staff is cautioned about doing so. An employee can be perceived as speaking on behalf of the district even when he or she is expressing a personal

opinion. This can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunications, or fuel a controversy. The Communications Office is available to provide guidance and assistance to any employee as it relates to social media communication, parent communication, or otherwise.

Reminder: Any content posted/written in a social media format related to school district business, including communication posted by an employee of the district and communication received from citizens, is a public record.

## **Crisis Communication**

During a crisis, it is important to provide timely and accurate information to all internal and external audiences. Especially during this time, openness and transparency are key to building trust and maintain the district's reputation. They are also key to influencing media coverage to reflect in the best interests of the district.

### **School Closing or Delay**

The decision to delay or cancel classes is one that is not taken lightly, as the district understands that changing the time school starts or closing schools altogether disrupts not only district operations, but also the normal routine of parents. In the event of inclement weather conditions such as flooding or ice, district officials will determine if it is in the best interest of students and staff to either delay or cancel school. District officials coordinate and communicate with county, city and other school officials on weather patterns and their effects on area roads and bridges. District officials also travel area roads and bridges to evaluate their condition. If conditions are questionable, the Director of Transportation will contact the Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendents, and district administrators will be briefed and a decision will be made as early as possible to either delay the opening of schools or cancel classes. A delayed opening typically means classes will start 2 hours later.

Any decision made will be relayed to the District's Communications Office who will then contact local TV and radio stations. It also will be communicated on the district website and social media platforms. Parents will be notified using the district's mass notification system.



### Emergency Information Sources

In the event of circumstances which may require cancellation of classes or early release, the following media outlets are notified by the District and will have that information available.

#### Television

- KVUE 24 – ABC Austin
- KTBC Fox 7 – Austin
- KEYE 42 – CBS- Austin/Telemundo
- KXAN 36 – NBC Austin
- KABB – TV Univision 62
- Spectrum News

#### Radio

- BOB-FM 103.5
- KISS 96.7 FM
- KUT 90.5 NPR
- KVET 98.1 FM

In the event of an emergency, Jarrell ISD will follow the [Standard Response Protocol \(SRP\)](#). The SRP focuses on five specific actions that can be taken during an emergency.

- Hold
- Secure
- Lockdown
- Evacuate
- Shelter

Jarrell ISD has a detailed crisis communications/response plan. Our priority is staff and student safety. During an emergency the district is prepared to provide a safe learning environment at every campus. Parents will be notified of emergency situations through automated phone/email messaging, district websites and social media channels.

### **Media Relations**

Jarrell ISD will communicate with the press in numerous ways, including press releases, sharing digital media, assisting reporters with one-on-one story development and arrange access to students, teachers, and administrators as necessary.

Building and maintaining a partnership with media outlets provides several benefits for the district:

1. Shows students and staff achievement
2. Amplifies the district's message about student learning, educational opportunities, and the district's decision making.

All media inquiries must go through the Department of Communications. Contacting administrators or campuses directly via phone, email or otherwise is not allowed and will delay deadlines journalists may need to do their job. Reporters may contact the Department of Communications at (512) 746-2124 x 1005.

*Under no circumstances is media allowed on campuses or in buildings without an authorization from or the presence of the Director of Communications.* We do not allow spontaneous interviews with students, staff or parents on school property without prior approval. Student/parent interviews can be obtained from any public place other than a Jarrell ISD campus. These guidelines extend to school buses or other forms of district transportation. Even though a Jarrell ISD bus may not be located on our campus, the media is not allowed to board a bus or vehicle to talk with students, staff or parents without prior authorization.

In the event that the Director of Communications cannot be reached, all media inquiries should be directed to the Assistant Superintendent, Laura Buckley at (512) 746-2124.

For marketing and branding information, please view our Brand Standards and Trademark Style Guidebook.