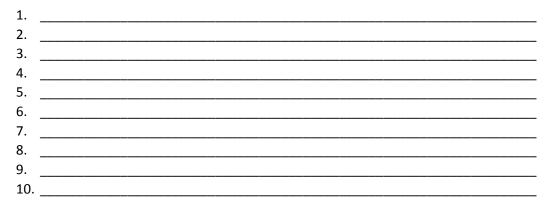# School Website Internal Review Checklist

Considering a redesign for your school's websites? Getting ready to post an RFP for a website provider? Then be sure to complete a pre-planning checklist before you even talk to a website developer. It is important to discover what YOUR school website visitors need before someone talks you into something they don't.

☐ List the 10 most commonly asked questions your front office staff receives during the year.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

You should assure that you answer each of the most frequently asked questions on your school's website. Let your site visitors see that your school's website is a trustworthy resource for the information they frequently need. Answering these questions is a great place to begin.

☐ List the top five reasons you believe site visitors come to your school's website. Consider all of your audiences. If you have a district or business office website as well as individual school websites, list the top five reasons for each site (as these can vary considerably by target audience). If you aren't sure why site visitors go to your websites, **survey your audience** and find out what they expect to find there.*

District or Main Website

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

School Website(s)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

☐ Do you have Google Analytics on your current website? If not, add it to your site, and review the results.

    a. Review your Google Search Console. List the terms used to find your school's website.
    b. Make note of what devices your audience uses most, which browsers they use most, and which of your website pages they visit most often.
    c. Note the inbound links to individual pages (during the redesign you won't want to eliminate something that drives traffic to popular pages).

☐ Select and coordinate with subject matter experts on your staff (or consultants):

    a. Who determines what content should be available on the website?
    b. Who will help determine content placement and navigational structure?
    c. Who will write the content for the website?
    d. Will there be different people managing different areas of the website?
    e. If there are different people involved, who will edit and proof all the content to assure consistency in tone, style, and accuracy?
    f. Who or what will determine style and tone for your school's website (style guide)?
    g. Who is responsible for creating or editing any graphics or photos for the website redesign or for ongoing updates? Will these be stock photos (legally obtained) or will you have someone take photos on site?
    h. Who will be responsible for updating the content on the website?
    i. Who will provide training to staff for ongoing website management?
    j. What will training cover (data collection, content management system training, grammar/punctuation, and tone style guide, etc.)?
    k. How much time do you estimate this will take (annually, semi-annually, etc.)?

☐ Write down the primary goals you would like the school website to accomplish. Include as many as are applicable. This information is important for your web developer to know—especially if they will be assisting with copywriting, social media, or SEO strategies.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The process of gathering the above information will help you be better prepared, with some key information at hand, to begin your school's website redesign project. The real value of a school website isn't primarily the design or technology but the content and how you present your organization to your intended audience.

REMEMBER THIS:

1. **It's about the customer.**
   The functions of a school website are not the same as that of a business or an e-commerce site, and trying to copy the strategy for one of those sites will fail to deliver what your audience wants. Don't sacrifice customer needs for the latest design fad. Focus on function first.

2. **You serve many masters.**
   A school website serves several customers' needs, and you should attempt to serve them all well. Consider the different audience needs when planning your content strategy.

   a. Your **business office or district office website** is typically designed for marketing to prospective parents, attracting qualified staff, and having a place to do the business side of running a school (posting board meetings, notices, enrollment forms, emergency information, applications, contacts, hours and locations, alumni info, etc.). Like a business website, visitors expect to find essential information about the district.
   Priorities: intuitive, accurate, and professional

   b. Your **school websites** should be designed to meet the needs of your students and their parents. Parents want to see what is going on in their child's life, events, activities, successes, and evidence that those at the school are dedicated to teaching and caring for their children. If you don't update these sites and keep them current, it creates an impression that there isn't anything good happening or that people at the school are disorganized or just don't care. All of which we know just isn't true.
   Priorities: inviting and welcoming tone, engaging stories, up-to-date information, and easy access

If you need an example of a survey to determine your school's website needs, based on your audience and not assumptions, e-mail us and request a copy of our "parent website needs survey."

Now, raise your right hand and commit to the following: "I will base my school's web redesign project on a content strategy and not on just the look of the home page." Remember, your school's website purpose is to improve communication to all of your audiences—that means having a strategic plan that includes all of your communication channels.