



MEMORANDUM

May 24, 2022
Regular Board Meeting

TO	Board of Trustees
FROM	Shauna Boyce, Superintendent
ORIGINATOR	Mark Francis, Deputy Superintendent
RESOURCE	Jordi Weidman, Director, Strategic Communications
GOVERNANCE POLICY	Board Policy 2: Role of the Board
ADDITIONAL REFERENCE	BP 2: Stakeholder Engagement and Communication BP12: Section 8. Communications and Community Relations AP 600: Communications Principles AP 604: Media Relations AP 640: Social Media
SUBJECT	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT REPORT (2021-2022)

PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

BACKGROUND

The Superintendent is committed to the principle of open, two-way communication with the Division's internal and external stakeholders. In accordance with this commitment, the Superintendent employs a Director to be responsible for Strategic Communications with a primary purpose of establishing and maintaining effective Division and school communication. The attached report is in support of this commitment.

REPORT SUMMARY

The Strategic Communications Department Report highlights the work of the department in 2021-2022 including a website rebrand and relaunch, a statistical analysis of the Division's media channels, and summaries of engagement and strategic communications carried out throughout the school year.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

MF:jw



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT REPORT

MAY 2022

Presented to the Board of Trustees, May 24, 2022

Mark Francis, Deputy Superintendent

Resource: Jordi Weidman, Director, Strategic Communications

Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.

BACKGROUND

The 2021-2022 school year saw the gradual shift from global COVID-19 pandemic response to regular operations that come with any school year. Communications played a key role in the annual student information verification and bus registration process for the 2022-2023 school year. Being the Division's public voice in other emergencies or active social media issues always requires a degree of skillful navigation.

As far as the pandemic response goes, the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year marked the return of students to classrooms after their extended time in virtual learning the year prior.

Brand integrity remains a priority, and the department continued to highlight work by our teaching staff and students using PSD's various tools for storytelling including the Division's YouTube channel, social media streams, and websites.

Engagement shifted to a virtual setting but remained important when it comes to the Assurance Model of education planning and reporting. Parkland School Division is proud of the work accomplished in the Communications portfolio during the 2020-2021 school year.

The department serves PSD's Executive and Board of Trustees on all internal and external communications matters with careful attention to maximizing the exposure and reach of key messages across the jurisdiction and to targeted stakeholder audiences.

The following summary will address the communications activities outlined in the previous Board Communications Plan: Brand Awareness, General Community Engagement, Strategic Communications and Specific Community Engagement. This report will also provide a snapshot of work involved with emergent issues like website hosting/content management and Parkland School Division Programs support.

REPORT / TOPIC

Reviewing analytics from the previous calendar year resulted in expected reduced numbers with less social media use and video story-telling happening while schools followed health measures allowing only essential visitors. Also, the majority of communication involved direct emailing parents/guardians with important information related to COVID-19 response and school re-entry procedures.

- Enhanced our web presence with division website and social media platforms
 - PSD Public Websites (Schools & Division Site) – Sessions 1,200,346 (+18.6%)
 - PSD Public Websites (Schools & Division Site) – Users – 463,293 (+12.0%)
 - PSD Public Websites (Schools & Division Site) – Pageviews 2,611,583 (+6.7%)
 - Twitter – 2,774 Followers (+6.5%)
 - Twitter – 178,855 Tweet Impressions (-25.7%). Impression = a tweet has been delivered to the Twitter stream of a particular account via retweets, like, etc.
 - Facebook – 4,170 ‘Likes’ (+10.7%)
 - Facebook – 4,434 ‘Page Followers’ (+7.9%)

Website stats from April 16, 2021 - April 16, 2022 (Both Breeze and Rally stats counted on July 27, 2021, when the website migration from psd70.ab.ca to psd.ca was completed)

Twitter stats from April 19, 2021 - April 19, 2022

Facebook stats from April 18, 2021 - April 18, 2022

- Maintained production of video content on YouTube Channel (Stats listed from April 19, 2021– April 19, 2022)
 - 651,544 Views (+103.3%)
 - 29,767 Estimated hours watched (+95.3%)
 - 2:44 Average View Duration (-4.1%)
 - 14,579 Subscribers (+91.0%)
- Developed 2022 Community Report
- Effectively leveraged corporate print editorial via the Reporter/Examiner to celebrate special education-related occasions, outline division-wide program information, and also to communicate general information on important topics to our stakeholders including the advertisement of upcoming Board of Trustees regular meetings.

General Community Engagement

- Began the new practice of livestreaming Regular Board Meetings on the Division’s YouTube Channel.
- Continued the practice of distributing the Board Meeting Highlights PDF for circulation to the division’s stakeholders as a way to share news generated from regular board meetings.
- Worked in collaboration with members of Parkland School Division’s Executive to complete 2021-2022 Education Plan as well as the Annual Education Results Report.
- Continued our journey with the provincial Assurance Model of planning and reporting.
- Initiated 2021-22 ThoughtExchange process to engage students, staff and parents
- Coverage of Education Planning day at Stony Plain’s Heritage Pavilion on April 7, 2022.
- Monitored local social media for trends and issues related to the school board and responded accordingly.

- Organized online resources for stakeholders - lists of community resources for those in need, as well as supplementary educational resources for students and parents.

Strategic Communications

- Prior to the start of the new school year, the PSD Communications team was excited to continue the work of the Division re-brand by following up the unveiling of the new PSD logo at the end of the 2020-2021 school year with the successful launch of the Division and school websites with the new domain psd.ca.
- On January 12, 2021, the Board of Trustees directed administration to conduct an attendance area review of all schools in Parkland School Division (PSD) in order to facilitate long-term planning and the effective use of our school facilities. On January 18, 2022, the Board of Trustees received the Student Attendance Area Study conducted by Edmonton Public Schools, Infrastructure Planning. This study outlined a number of potential options for the Board to consider. Subsequently, the Board of Trustees directed administration with the assistance of all PSD departments, to further explore a number for the recommendations for review of the Board of Trustees. The Communications department role involved extensive engagement and compilation of data and research to be presented to the Board in order to prior to its making a decision.
- A quick glance at the COVID Resources section of the PSD website will illustrate the volume of internal documents that needed to be produced to help guide the school re-entry process after six months without students in classrooms. These were also shared with other jurisdictions throughout the province.
- With an emphasis on promoting choices in public education, the Communications Department was able to assist Connections for Learning with their online presence and promotion of various programs at CFL. New microsites have been or are currently being developed for some of PSD's programs-of-choice under the CFL umbrella. An example of this is the site created for the Parkland Student Athlete Academy:
<https://psaa.schoolsites.ca/>
- Other targeted, strategic communications efforts included:
 - Election coverage in September 2021
 - NEW – National Day for Truth & Reconciliation (September 30th)
 - COVID-19 health measure changes
 - Mental Health Week (Hats on for Mental Health)
 - Regular promotion of the Strong Families series. Parkland School Division is proud to partner with Alberta Parenting for The Future to present free information sessions for local families tackling topics like Mental Health Awareness, Supporting Emotional Regulation with Children on the Autism Spectrum, Self-Regulation Through an Occupational Therapy Lens and Teen Mental Health
 - The return of the 6th Annual Try-Me Try-Athlon

- Continued to build relationships with the local newspaper reporter and editor to maintain a steady stream of editorial content in weekly editions of the Stony Plain Reporter/Spruce Grove Examiner

Crisis Communications

- When called upon, the Communications department will work closely with the Deputy Superintendent and the Office of the Superintendent to manage strategic communications concerning any and all incidents that surface throughout the school year when it comes to crisis communications, trauma response and sometimes Violent Threat Risk Assessment support.

Internal Communications

- Continued the practice of email communication to all PSD staff from the Superintendent regarding significant emerging issues
- In September, 2021, The Division launched its new 'intranet' *The Compass*, a Google Site intended to replace the Chalkboard as a source of internal information including links to forms and documents that schools or Centre for Education staff may need to access for day-to-day operations.

Programs & Department Support

- Additional department support was lent to the Learning Services in the development of an Early Education & Kindergarten Program Guide and other program collateral.
- A lot of work went into producing informational material and videos featuring Transportation Services public service announcements. Topics covered included a behind-the-scenes look when it comes to what's behind a decision to cancel buses in the Regional Transportation system, the difference between 'funded' and 'unfunded' riders and the need for Transportation Fees, as well as driver shortages in PSD which has led to a number of routes being cancelled on any given day which those who utilize PSD transportation are not accustomed to.
- The Communications team also provided support for the French Immersion and Christian programs by way of promotional videos as well.
- Assisted the Learning Services department and our Community Support Worker in the advertising and promotion of the Strong Families series in partnership with Alberta Parenting For The Future (APFA).