

HWDSB

Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan

2018-2021



curiosity • creativity • possibility

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INTRODUCTION

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to improving and expanding its ongoing communication with students, parents, staff, and the community in order that we can work collaboratively to provide the best education possible. This commitment is outlined in our Strategic Directions under the priority, *Effective Communication*.

In August 2017, Executive Council approved the 2017-18 Annual Plan for Effective Communications with a goal to improve internal and external communications and implement a research-based strategic communication and engagement plan based on the recommendations of the communications audit. An ad hoc committee was established and met from February to April, 2018.

Throughout the development of the plan, five priorities emerged to support the goal that HWDSB will create a culture of communications and engagement through the implementation of its strategic directions. The strategies include Leadership, Staff Ambassadors, Student Outreach, Digital Engagement, and Partnerships.

HWDSB's initial Action Plan for High Priority Schools focusses on four key areas: school leadership, resources, learning and community partners. As a priority initiative, a number of strategies embedded within the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan directly support these schools.

Engagement is informed by Spectrum of Public Participation endorsed by the International Association for Public Participation (iap2): Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower. Each opportunity is unique and requires a different level of engagement. The iap2 Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the most appropriate level for the project. Each level of the Spectrum has value and no one is more important than the other.

ABOUT HWDSB

HWDSB is responsible for public education in the City of Hamilton, which include the communities of Ancaster, Flamborough, Stoney Creek, Dundas, and Binbrook.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has a vision in which Curiosity, Creativity and Possibility empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world. The Board employs 5,113 staff. With 104 schools, 89 elementary and 15 secondary schools, the Board accommodates more than 49,551 students.

HWDSB STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

MISSION
We empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.

COMMITMENT
We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation.

PRIORITIES

POSITIVE CULTURE AND WELL-BEING - We will build student and staff well-being through positive climate strategies and supportive relationships.

STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT - We will improve student learning and achievement through effective instructional strategies.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION - We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.

SCHOOL RENEWAL - We will optimize opportunities to invest in improved school facilities.

PARTNERSHIPS - We will strengthen our collaboration with new and existing community partners to enhance opportunities for students.

curiosity **creativity** **possibility**

KEY MESSAGES

- Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has a vision in which Curiosity, Creativity and Possibility empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.
- We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation.
- Our five priorities include: Positive Culture and Well-Being, Student Learning and Achievement, Effective Communications, School Renewal, and Partnerships.
- HWDSB's vision is a public commitment that we are going to improve. We are moving forward in real and measurable ways.
- We are being accountable, purposeful and transparent so that HWDSB becomes a stronger, more effective school board for our students, families and staff.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

VISION

HWDSB honours all voices. HWDSB will foster engagement by building trust, nurturing relationships and maintaining the confidence of the Hamilton community.

GOAL

HWDSB will create a culture of communications and engagement through the implementation of its strategic directions.

AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<p>Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees, Executive Council, Administrators, and Managers • Service department staff (HR, Business Services, IIT, Facilities, Research & Analytics, Communications and Community Engagement) • Learning Services and consultants • Elementary and secondary teachers and Occasional teachers • Executive and Administrative Assistants • Elementary and Secondary Secretaries • Custodians and Caretakers • Elementary and Secondary Educational Assistants • Designated Early Childhood Educators • Paraprofessionals <p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary and Secondary <p>Families (Parents, Guardians and Caregivers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Councils • Home & School Association • Parent Advisory Committees 	<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Leaders • Community and Neighbourhood Groups • New and prospective residents of Hamilton • Elected Officials • Religious Leaders • Residents without children in HWDSB schools • Senior Citizens <p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Post-Secondary Institutions (Mohawk College, McMaster University) <p>Media</p> <p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Professional Organizations (Ontario Public School Boards' Association, Provincial/Council of Directors of Education, OSABO, OPSOA)

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

PRIORITY No. 1 | Leadership

Communications is an essential skill in building strong leaders and navigating changing environments. Leaders build trust within the district and in school communities. Communication excels the vision of an organization, is an influencing factor to help motivate and inspire others, and creates positive environments that value open and two-way communications. Leadership also applies to our involved parents who contribute on school- or district-level councils and committees.

Audiences: Executive Council, Trustees, Administrators, Managers, and Parent Leaders who include School Councils, Home & School Association, and Parent Involvement Committee members.

Objective: Do our leaders have what they need to be effective in the system?

Strategies:

1. Implement face-to-face opportunities for Executive Council, Trustees, Managers, Administrators and parent leaders to enhance their skills in communications and engagement
2. Review and systemically implement communication systems
3. Enhance crisis communication procedures
4. Create resources for Administrators and parent leaders to support communications
5. Develop communications and customer service standards

PRIORITY No. 2 | Staff Ambassadors

Investing in a staff ambassadors program will result in highly engaged staff who know how to access information. In turn, being part of an employee engagement program such as this will create a culture of communications. A staff ambassador priority will improve the way staff share and receive information internally. Staff alignment with the HWDSB's vision and strategic directions is also critical. Through continued research, HWDSB will understand employee needs expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels.

Audiences: Staff

Objective: Do staff know where to find information to be productive?

Strategies:

1. Facilitate opportunities with the Director of Education to communicate and engage staff related to HWDSB Reimagined
2. Offer creative ways to implement knowledge mobilization for internal departments
3. Continue to pursue staff engagement and positive climate opportunities
4. Support the New Employee Orientation program with a resource to highlight communications and engagement

PRIORITY No. 3 | Digital Engagement

The digital engagement priority will help staff identify the value creation opportunities of digital engagement for HWDSB. This includes multiple strategies, tactics, processes, tools and technologies to structurally engage the end-user, which includes the primary audience, parents, to maximize the co-created value. Digital engagement is about understanding our audience through the various platforms, keeping them engaged and telling our stories.

Audiences: Students, parents, staff and community members

Objective: Are you engaging with HWDSB through online opportunities?

Strategies:

1. Increase adoption rates on identified digital platforms to maximize the experience that allows for our audiences to connect with HWDSB
2. Create a structure for story-telling to share the positive experiences of our students, staff and families within our community
3. Enhance digital citizenship resources to enhance learning related to online respect, safety, and privacy
4. Design a mechanism to collect and measure feedback through our digital platforms

PRIORITY No. 4 | Student Outreach

Students have a vested interest in their education and their voice has incredible influence in the communications program at HWDSB. Students shaped the HWDSB vision in which Curiosity, Creativity and Possibility empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world. The Student Outreach priority will keep the communications and community engagement program fresh and tuned into the student voice while undergoing the research to deepen the support for student empowerment.

Audience: All students and students involved in Student Senate or Student Councils/Parliaments

Objectives: Do students feel connected and engaged in school life?

Strategies:

1. Include students as an internal audience in all communication and engagement initiatives
2. Establish a student advisory group structure to co-create communication opportunities and support digital engagement

PRIORITY No. 5 | Partnerships

In the HWDSB's strategic directions, staff identified partnerships as a key priority area. Within this focus, staff will strengthen collaboration with new and existing community partners to enhance opportunities for students and families. Increased communication, recognition and engagement with the identified partners will enhance support and service.

Audiences: Partners

Objectives: Do partners feel engaged and valued while working with HWDSB?

Strategies:

1. Recognize partners through face-to-face opportunities and online partnership profiles
2. Identify partnership opportunities through the High Priority Schools strategy
3. Strengthen the relationship with identified partners by creating a resource that outlines the road map to access and engagement between HWDSB and the organization
4. Leverage the partnership with the Hamilton Foundation for Student Success to enhance student opportunities

EVALUATION

The Communications and Community Engagement department, in collaboration with the Research and Analytics department, will use an evaluation framework to measure the efforts outlined in the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. The evaluation framework will be aligned to support the identified objectives and provide evidence to demonstrate a clear connection between what we did, if we enhanced communication/engagement for identified stakeholders, and if anyone in the HWDSB community is better off as a result of our efforts.

Measuring and monitoring communication outputs and outcomes is part of the evaluation process. The evaluation will be reported to the Board of Trustees in the Effective Communications Report each October as well as the Partnerships Report each April.

Evaluation will also determine the effectiveness of the communications efforts related to HWDSB Reimagined strategic directions. As per Bill 177, an amendment to the Education Act enacted in 2009, trustees of Ontario school boards are required to craft governance documents called Strategic Directions. Evaluating the effectiveness of the communications efforts related to this plan is essential to the district's success.

The measures and methodology will be collected based on a mixed-method approach. This integrates quantitative data (surveys, Twitter scrapes, analytics, data from IT, etc.) and qualitative data (focus groups, case studies, etc.). Monitoring and evaluating activities will include, but are not limited to surveys, focus groups, output objectives, outcome objectives and social media analytics.

CONCLUSION

The strategic plan was developed and approved in the 2017-18 school year and represents communication and engagement priorities beginning 2018-19 to 2020-21. The Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan coincides with the Board's Strategic Directions. Should the Strategic Directions change, this plan will be updated to reflect new priorities.

A Service Department Plan is created annually to support the implementation of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. For more information, contact Shawn McKillop, APR at smckillo@hwdsb.on.ca.

HWDSB

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