

# HWDSB

## Standing Committee

Monday, October 15, 2018

Trustee Board Room

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558

Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

### AGENDA: Immediately following Board Meeting

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

### Reports from Staff:

4. [Effective Communication report](#)
5. Adjournment

Meeting times and locations are subject to change. Please refer to our website for the latest information.

<http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/trustees/meetings/>

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# Executive Summary

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Topic: Effective Communication Report

## Context

HWDSB's Board of Trustees have approved a new Strategic Directions for 2016-20 and staff has developed an Annual Plan for 2018-19. The five priorities are positive culture and well-being, student learning and achievement, *effective communication*, school renewal and partnerships.

**Mission:** We empower students to learn and grown to their full potential in a diverse world.

**Commitment:** We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation

**Priority:** [Effective Communication](#) *We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.*

## Summary

The following report includes:

- The review of the 2017-18 implementation of the HWDSB Annual Plan, *Effective Communication*, and the current implementation of the 2018-19 HWDSB Annual Plan, *Effective Communication*
- Appendix A: Effective Communication Road Map
- Appendix B: 2017-18 Highlights in communication planning using the four-step process: HWDSB Reimagined (All priorities), Welcome to Kindergarten (Effective Communication), Learning Math Together (Student Learning and Achievement), and We Help (Positive Culture and Well-Being)
- Appendix C: 2017-18 Analytics: Websites, Media Exposure, Sentiment Score, Top Sources, and Top Twitter

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, conducted by the National School Public Relations Association \(NSPRA\)](#).

The [Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan](#) serves as the framework for determining communication priorities and driving the work of the department. This plan demonstrates how projects, tasks, and responsibilities align with the strategic direction of HWDSB.

Charting a clear course for current and future communications needs, as well as being responsive to the direction of the Board, will support HWDSB leadership is communicating the right message to the right constituency using the right communication tactics. A comprehensive plan provides transparency and accountability for plan implementation. The Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan is guided by the Four-Step Process of Communications Planning: Research, Planning Implementation and Evaluation.

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 priorities include Leadership, Staff Ambassadors, Student Outreach, Digital Engagement, and Partnerships.

In 2018-19, staff used the Effective Communication Road Map as a guide to connect the annual priorities in the Strategic Directions Board Annual Plan and the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

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# HWDSB Annual Plan Report

**Name of Report:** Effective Communication Report

**Date:** October 2018

**Priority:** Effective Communication 2017-18

We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.

**Goal:** Improve internal and external communications.

**Target:** Implement a research-based strategic communication and engagement plan based on the recommendations of the communication audit.

- Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan
- Communications Audit, conducted by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)

The following strategies supported the Effective Communication Annual Plan in 2017-18. Progress has been made in some areas while others have been embedded into the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan and the 2018-19 Board Annual Plan.

*Strategy: Restructure the roles and responsibilities of the Communications and Community Engagement Team to align work with the Board's five Reimagined priorities.*

A focus on roles and responsibilities for the Communications and Community Engagement team was a priority during the first year of the newly formed department. In addition to several opportunities to engage the department in the process, the mandate, roles and responsibilities as well as the code of ethics for the department were part of the discussions during the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan ad hoc committee.

## MANDATE

The Communications and Community Engagement department will support the strategic directions through timely and consistent communications and engagement with staff and the community.

- Communications is informed by the Four-Step Process endorsed by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA): Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation.
- Engagement work is informed by the Spectrum of Public Participation endorsed by the International Association for Public Participation (iap2): Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower.
- Foundation work is informed by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Corporate Communications:** The portfolio provides a full range of services including strategic communications planning, advice and support, research, and evaluation. Tasks and duties performed by the portfolio include telling the stories of HWDSB, media relations, issue management, social media, website, graphic design, and multi-media. The portfolio works closely with the Director's office. Corporate Communications also includes the mailroom, printing services, and the reception at the Education Centre. Students from the Public Relations Certificate Program from Mohawk College also join the team on occasion.

**Community Engagement:** The Community Engagement portfolio acts as the first point of contact for individuals, groups and organizations interested in developing a relationship or partnership with HWDSB. This may include one-time activities or long-term partnerships that support student achievement and well-being over multiple years. Community Engagement connects and aligns partner opportunities/experiences with identified

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needs in schools. Community Engagement also provides support if challenges arise between partners and HWDSB schools and/or departments. The portfolio also supports system-level parent engagement (Parent Involvement Committee, School Councils and Home and School Associations), volunteers, community use of schools, Focus on Youth programming, and oversees the progress in partnering and engaging in/with the community.

**Trustee Services:** In a collaborative role within the Communications and Community Engagement department, this portfolio provides direct support to the members on the Board with the main priority of effective governance, which directly impacts the public image of the board and external communications. Collaboration may include consultation with the Trustees Services Officer, development of key messages and speaking notes for the Chair and Trustees in response to issues, media inquiries or constituent concerns, preparation of materials for committee and board meetings as well as strategic planning related to trustee priorities.

**Hamilton Foundation for Student Success:** The Hamilton Foundation for Student Success is a registered non-profit charity that raises funds in the private and business communities to help students with access and opportunities to student learning and success. The Foundation supports schools with funding opportunities to enhance current programming or create new and innovative opportunities for student learning.

## CODE OF ETHICS

The following code of ethics provide the foundation for the Communications and Community Engagement department and are set by the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviours and decision-making process.

**ADVOCACY:** We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent. We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

**HONESTY:** We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

**EXPERTISE:** We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience. We advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education. We build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

**INDEPENDENCE:** We provide objective counsel to those we represent. We are accountable for our actions.

**LOYALTY:** We are faithful to those we represent, while honouring our obligation to serve the public interest.

**FAIRNESS:** We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media, and the general public. We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression.

*Strategy: Review and systemically implement communication systems*

Improving internal communications is a stated goal with the Effective Communications priority of the Board's Annual Plan. The communication audit guided our discussions at the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan Ad Hoc Committee. This strategy, found in the 2017-18 Annual Plan, is embedded in the first two priorities of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan: Leadership and Staff Ambassadors.

- 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.
- 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.

*Strategy: Develop and implement an integrated digital engagement strategy*

The communication audit guided our discussions at the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan Ad Hoc Committee related to 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.

Staff **did not meet the target** to implement a research-based strategic communication and engagement plan based on the recommendations of the communications audit.

*\*\*\* The 2017-18 year was a year of transition to restructure and develop the strategic and communication plan.*

Priority: Effective Communication 2018-19

We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.

**Goal:** Improve internal and external communications.

**Target:** Implement year one of the 2018-2021 Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

In 2018-19, staff used the Effective Communication Road Map (Appendix A) as a guide to connect the annual priorities in the Strategic Directions Board Annual Plan and the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

**Strategies:**

1. Mobilize knowledge for staff through a new intranet and staff directory.

*Theory of Action: If we create a new intranet and an easily accessible directory, then we can expect staff will be better able to access information when they need it and how they need it.*

| Program/Initiative/Process | Timeline and Lead  | Monitoring Method  | Expected Outcome            |
|----------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| Implement the new Intranet | Timeline: June 2019<br><br>Leads: Manager of Communications and Community Engagement and Manager of Instructional and Information Technology | Establish an interdepartmental team to understand the platform and deliver the implementation of the new intranet  | Launch the new Intranet     |
| Publish a staff directory  | Timeline: January 2019<br><br>Lead: Manager of Communications and Community Engagement   | Dedicate a staff person to work through the structures/communication pathways to employee announcements and input the data to create an accessible staff directory | Publish the staff directory |

## 2. Standardize digital platforms to improve communication with staff, parents and students

*Theory of Action: If we identify the components of what comprises as a standardized digital tool, then we can make a decision on the best platform for staff, parents and students.*

| <b>Program/Initiative/Process</b>  | <b>Timeline and Lead</b>   | <b>Monitoring Method</b>   | <b>Expected Outcome</b>   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Prepare a digital platforms report | Timeline: Spring 2019<br><br>Leads: Manager of Communications and Community Engagement and Manager of Instructional and Information Technology | Establish an interdepartmental team to prepare a productivity and digital platforms report | Report is completed and presented to Executive Council for decision |

## 3. Implement the Parent Portal for parents, guardians and caregivers in all schools.

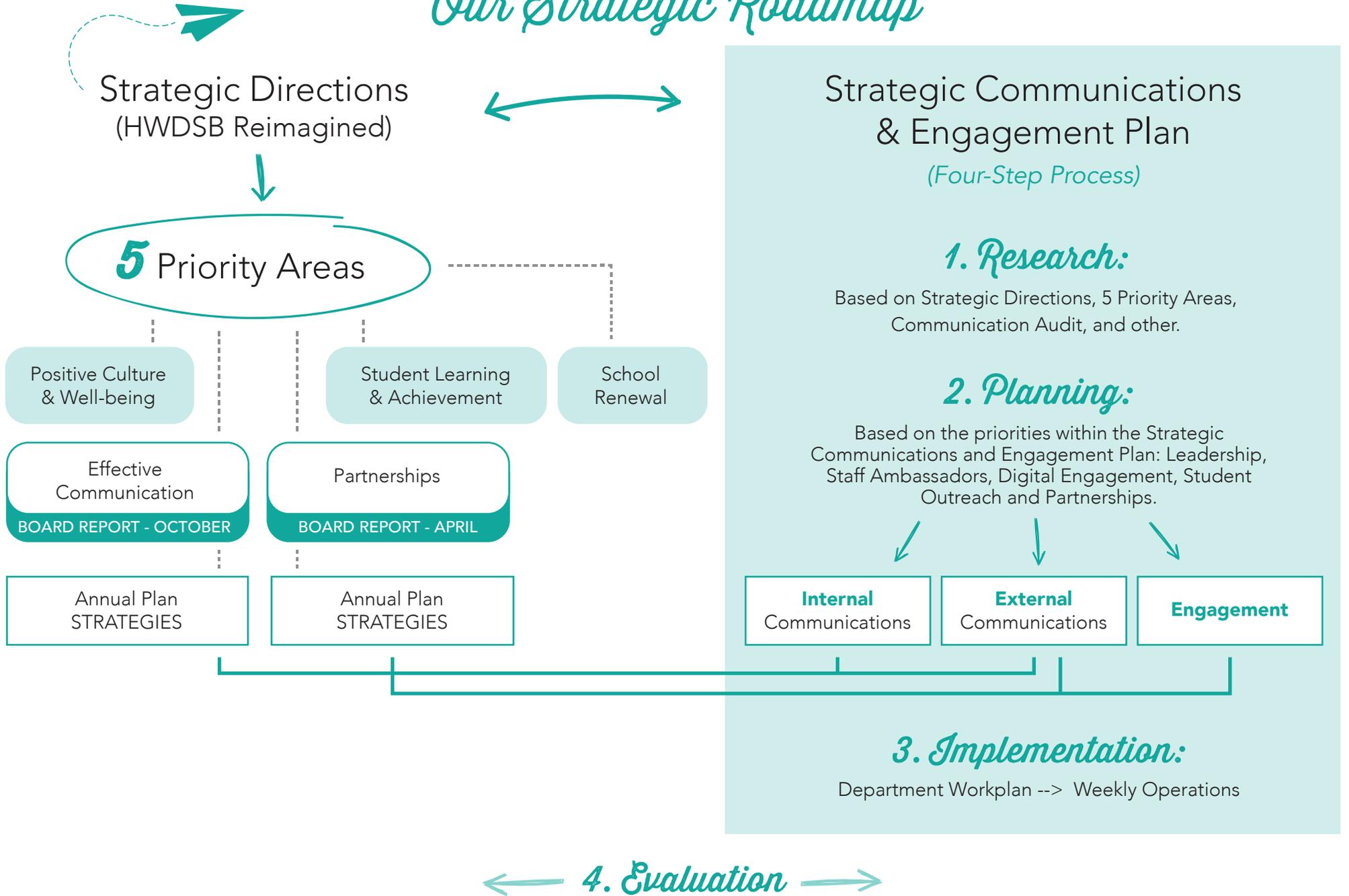
*Theory of Action: If families access the Parent Portal, then they will have provided better opportunities for home-school connections.*

| <b>Program/Initiative/Process</b> | <b>Timeline and Lead</b>  | <b>Monitoring Method</b>                      | <b>Expected Outcome</b>                                     |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Implement the Parent Portal       | Timelines:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Parent Portal at the secondary level has been deployed. An awareness campaign will be conducted in the fall for Secondary parents</li> <li>• The Parent Portal at the elementary level is projected to be launched in March, dependent on the unified classroom rollout in February.</li> </ul><br>Leads: Manager of Communications and Community Engagement and Manager of Instructional and Information Technology | Increased adoption rates in the Parent Portal | Complete the deployment of the Parent Portal in all schools |

Staff are **on target** to implement year one of the 2018-2021 Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

# Effective Communication at **HWDSB**

## *Our Strategic Roadmap*



## 2017-18 HIGHLIGHTS IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: THE FOUR-STEP PROCESS

Public relations planning uses the Four-Step Process, which is often referred to as RPIE (Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation). Public relations planning addresses these four topics:

- Research/analysis of the situation
- Planning, goal/objective setting
- Implementation/execution/communication
- Evaluation

In 2017-18, a number of communication initiatives were produced by the Communications and Community Engagement department. Four communication initiatives, however, were conducted using the Four-Step Process.

1. HWDSB REIMAGINED (All Priorities)
2. WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN (Effective Communication)
3. LEARNING MATH TOGETHER (Student Learning and Achievement)
4. WE HELP (Positive Culture and Well-Being)

### HWDSB Reimagined

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board approved its Strategic Directions in the spring, 2016. The launch of HWDSB Reimagined 2016-20 will set in motion all Annual Plans to further focus the efforts and reach its intended outcomes.

The goal is that all HWDSB audiences will be aware of the new Strategic Directions and its vision guided by Curiosity, Creativity and Possibility. Moving forward, the objectives related to generating awareness are embedded in the Strategic Communications and Community Engagement Plan.

The first strategy was to develop creative products and align the communications program to promote the Strategic Directions. This was part of the work conducted in 2016-17. Activities that continued in 2017-18 included new banners affiliated with the five Priorities, videos, and Director's Breakfast promotion, for example.



Communications supporting the Strategic Directions was also embedded in the 2017 Back to School Campaign. Ads were published, feature stories were posted and Director's messages were shared, as well as a two-week social media campaign. The first day of school visit was held at Ridgemount where we received earned media from CHCH, The Mountain News, and The Spec. The Director was interviewed on CHML and an editorial was submitted to The Hamilton News. The Director also visited students for a video at the school.

The Director of Education and various Superintendents held face-to-face opportunities to engage identified audience groups in the new message of the Strategic Directions.

Engagement opportunities were explored to unite the system in the new Strategic Directions to generate awareness. The Humans of HWDSB by editor Connie Sun, for example, was a strategic initiative to celebrate those who belong to the HWDSB family. For more information, visit [www.humansofhwdsb.on.ca](http://www.humansofhwdsb.on.ca).

Equity and Inclusive Education is a key theme in the Strategic Directions as it reflects the HWDSB community. A number of initiatives focused on celebrating days of significance through social media, such as Black History

Month, Pride Flag raising, Indigenous education and holy days of significance. Staff also launched High Priority Schools Communication, which earned media coverage and a full feature in the Director's Annual Report.

A significant strategy that shaped the operations of the communication program for the 2017-18 school year included an outline of "monthly" highlights of the Strategic Directions priorities. These months focus the communication program around a particular initiative that was highlighted and measured during that timeframe.

Outputs were measured based on various communication operational priorities i.e. social media, event attendance, etc. The evaluation is part of the Strategic Communications and Community Engagement Plan.

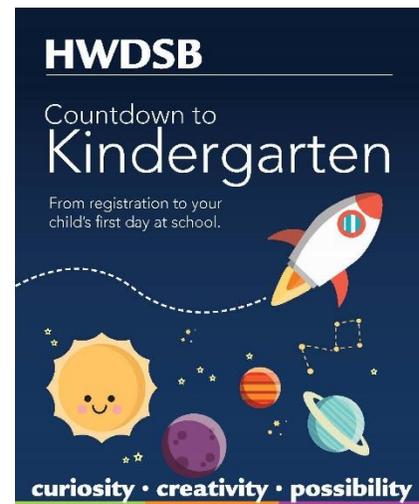
### Welcome to Kindergarten

Kindergarten registration has long been a priority for HWDSB communicators, knowing that this is usually the first contact families have with HWDSB and can set the stage for a positive journey in education.

Our Welcome to Kindergarten campaign has evolved in recent years, inspired by the Grade 8 transition supports that HWDSB has provided. In 2017-18, staff from Communications and Community Engagement worked with Early Years staff to update materials and add a new focus on families not yet in contact with HWDSB schools.

### Revised Booklet

Staff held focus groups at five schools, including several High Priority Schools, to hear from families about ways to improve the previous version of the HWDSB Welcome to Kindergarten booklet, and how a revised version could enhance Kindergarten preparedness. This led to substantial changes to the publication used by our schools when families register students for Kindergarten. The booklet became easier to read. It directly addressed the most common questions families asked at the focus groups. It included resources that staff had not previously considered. The booklet's title explicitly told educators when it should be distributed (at registration).



### New Postcard:

Approaching Kindergarten registration as one step in a longer process, staff drew upon this focus group research to develop a new postcard for families not yet in contact with HWDSB. For example, families in childcare facilities lacked information about how to begin the Kindergarten registration process. Visual depictions of the kindergarten stages were made so that families understood the lead up to their child's first day. (Details on registration were on the back of the postcard.) This postcard was distributed to recreation centres, childcare facilities and elsewhere so that families knew how to enrol in HWDSB schools.



### Suite of Products

The campaign's visual identity remained consistent across a broader suite of Kindergarten materials that included Facebook ads, the introduction of online registration, postcards announcing each student's start date, social media photo cards for the #firstdayHWDSB campaign and more. You can see some of this work on our website at <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/>



Kindergarten enrolment remained stable, when comparing October 2017 actuals to October 2018 projections. Staff are now exploring partnerships with the YMCA Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program to enhance communications with newcomer families, focusing on school routines such as packing lunches, the school-day schedule and more.

### Recognition:

The Welcome to Kindergarten book received a National School Public Relations Association Award of Excellence.



Math scores, as defined by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), have continued to decline at HWDSB for the past three years.

HWDSB's math strategy supports students to build a solid foundation that will enable them to apply their knowledge in the classroom and the real world. It also provides teachers with the skills and tools to implement effective mathematics teaching, which the organization believes will lead to improved student outcomes.

HWDSB's math strategy is focused primarily on supports internally. Therefore, parents, who are a large part of the success of students, are not sure where to turn for help in supporting their child, other than the teacher. A gap exists between the supports available to staff and the supports available for parents.

To gather as much information about this situation as I could, I conducted various research techniques. The methods and findings include:

- In-depth Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Exit Survey
- Online Database
- Media Analysis
- Literature Review

Based on the research conducted and an analysis of identified stakeholders, the audiences for this project included:

- HWDSB Math Facilitators
- Principals at three pilot schools
- Parents of students at the pilot schools

Through the support of my internal audiences, I was able to evaluate my primary external audience in a quantifiable way. This involved developing a survey to measure if parents were aware of the resources and if the resources helped to improve their confidence in helping their child with math at home.

*Twenty-Five per cent of parents in the pilot schools feel more confident in their ability to help their child with math work at home by May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018.*

This objective was achieved, as over 25 per cent of parents in the pilot schools feel more confident in their ability to help their child.

To evaluate this objective, a survey for parents of the pilot schools was given from May 14 to May 25. Overall, there were 78 responses. Of these responses, 39 per cent of parents indicated that they had somewhat more confidence or more confidence in supporting their child at home with math, after reviewing and using the resources available on the web page.

### **HWDSB's We Help Campaign to Build a Culture of Help**

On April 30, 2018, HWDSB launched an extensive well-being campaign to build a culture of help in every school and department.

The [We Help campaign](#) – developed with input from students, staff and families – encourages helping and help-seeking behaviours, knowing that we all need help at times. It also entails classroom discussion and skill-building so that all students know how to help each other.



“We Help supports positive cultures in our schools and departments, so that everyone knows that help exists, that we all have a role in helping and that there are clear pathways to find help,” Director of Education Manny Figueiredo said in the project’s media release.

In 2017-18, We Help involved a poster campaign; videos of students sharing examples of helping behaviour; a rebranded reporting app [HWDSB Helps](#) (formerly TipOff) for anonymously sharing concerns; nearly a dozen presentations to staff and much more. Schools highlighted the We Help by participating in an art exhibit during Mental Health Week (May 7-13, 2018).

Student voice was central in the campaign, and remains so, including contributions from Student Trustees Morghen Jael and Ruby Hye. “Student well-being is so important because when you feel well, you can learn at your best and better enjoy life,” Jael said in her student video. “Helping people doesn’t need to be complicated; something as simple as saying hello to people each day can make a difference,” Hye added.

HWDSB embraces Positive Culture and Well-being as one of its five strategic priorities. We Help supports the goal to have all students and staff feel safe, supported and accepted.

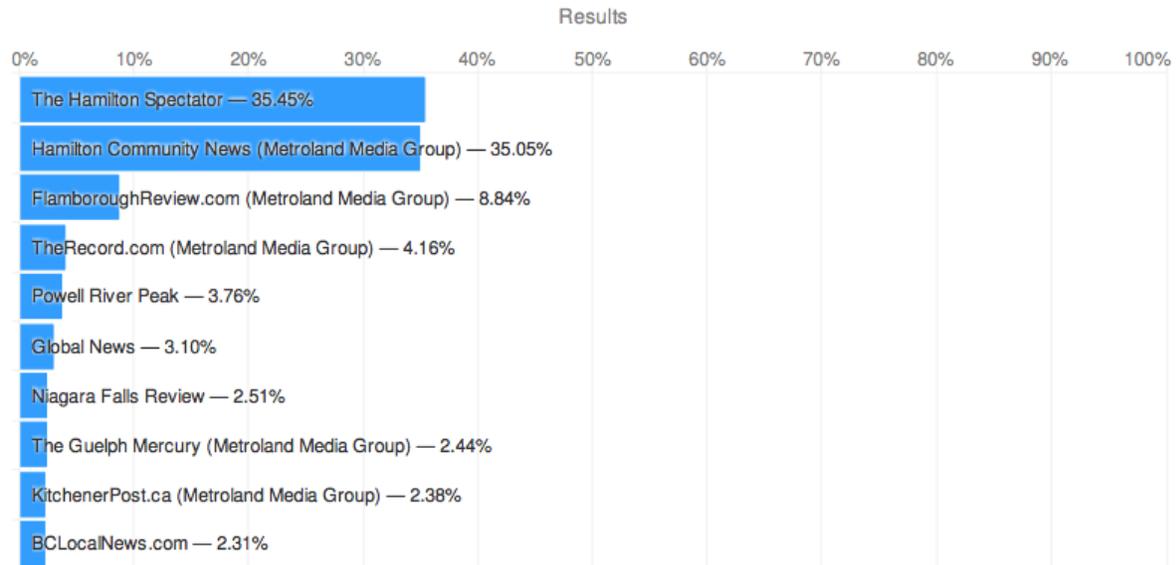
We Help received widespread media attention, focus at professional communications events and remains the central theme for the mental health and well-being strategy at HWDSB.

In terms of evaluation, staff were pleased to see all principals attend a training session about We Help; one-third of mental health reps organize a We Help themed campaign for Mental Health Week; an 11 per cent rise in the use of the rebranded HWDSB Helps app; and awareness levels above 80 per cent when students were surveyed about whether they had heard of the We Help campaign.

## 2017-18 Analytics:

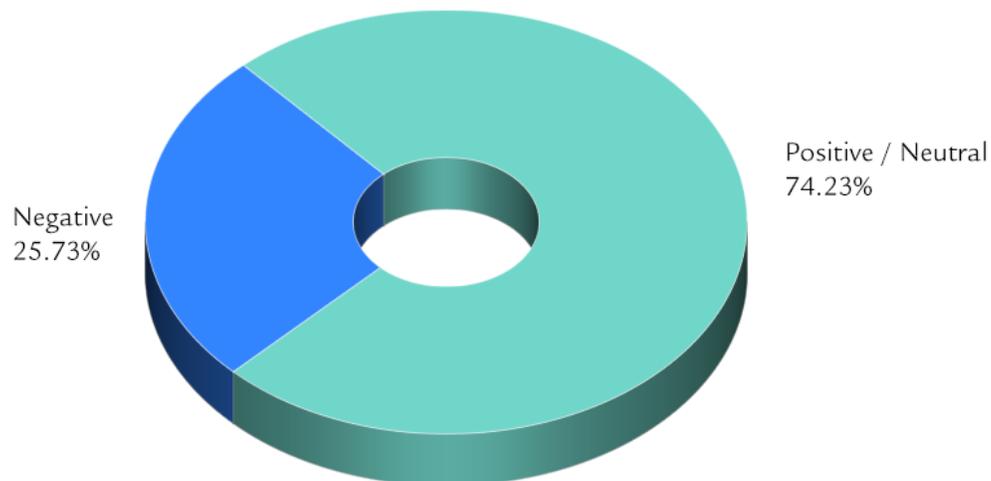
Websites, Media Exposure, Sentiment Score, Top Sources, and Top Twitter

### Top Sources | Editorial



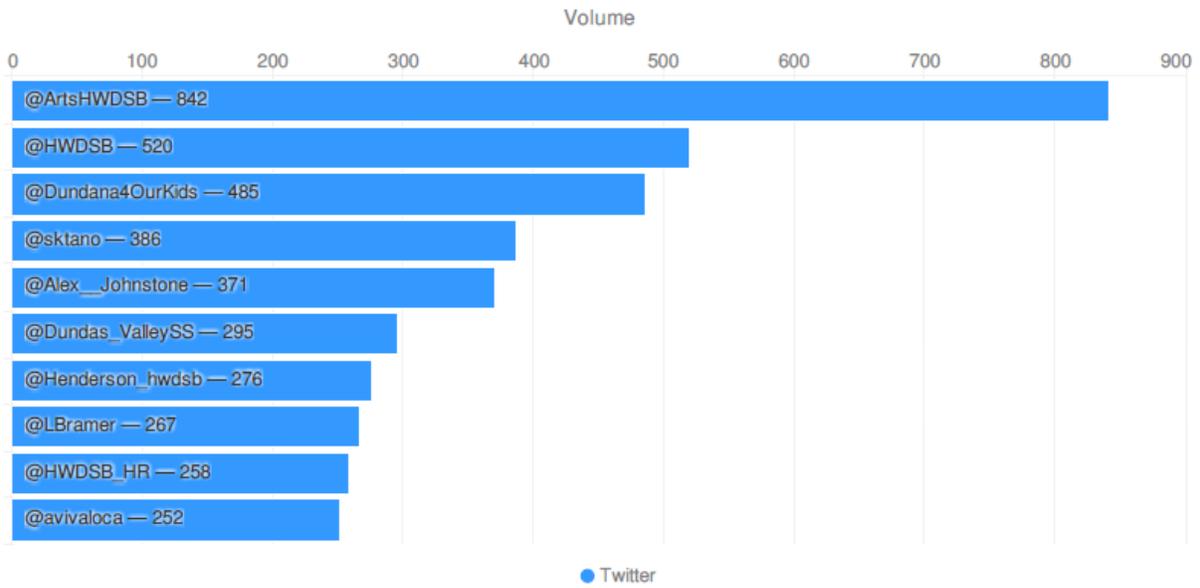
### Sentiment Score

Sept 1, 2017 – Sept 1, 2018

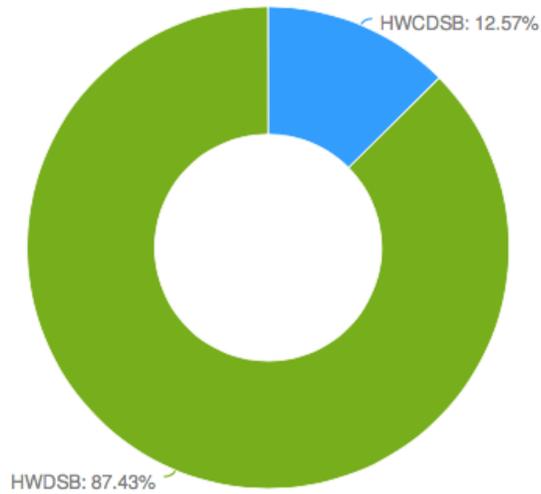


Sep 1, 2017 - Sep 1, 2018

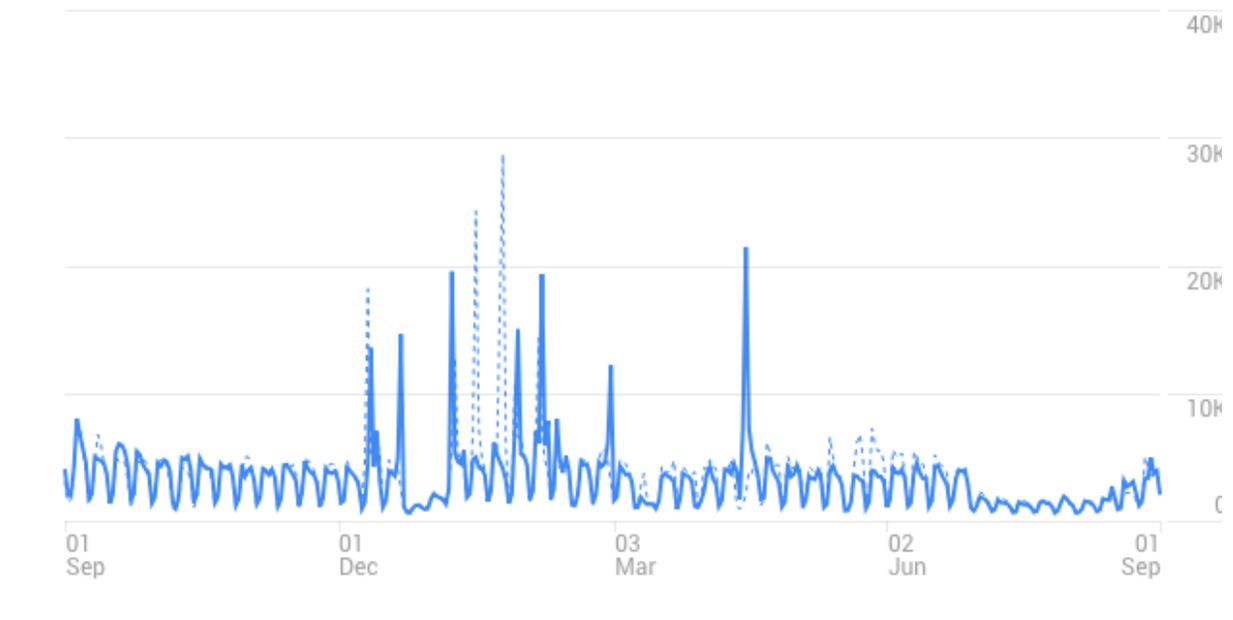
### Top Posters



### Media Exposure | Editorial

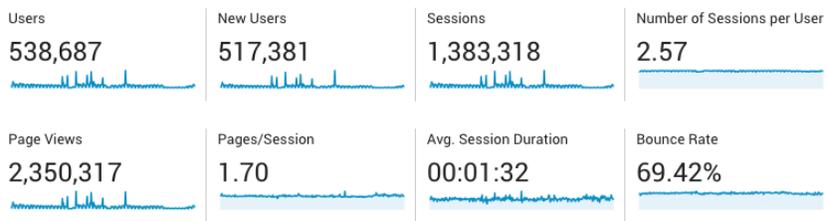


Website data: Audience Overview for year 2017-18

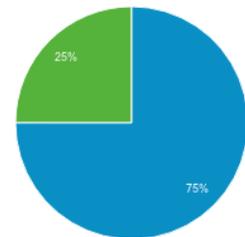


1 Sep 2017 – 1 Sep 2018 ▼

AUDIENCE OVERVIEW ↗



■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor



| Language | Users   | % Users |
|----------|---------|---------|
| 1. en-us | 229,166 | 41.79%  |
| 2. en-ca | 228,295 | 41.63%  |
| 3. en-gb | 81,818  | 14.92%  |
| 4. zh-cn | 2,167   | 0.40%   |
| 5. fr    | 803     | 0.15%   |
| 6. ko-kr | 556     | 0.10%   |
| 7. c     | 509     | 0.09%   |
| 8. en    | 492     | 0.09%   |
| 9. fr-ca | 472     | 0.09%   |
| 10. ko   | 469     | 0.09%   |