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Loudoun County School Board, Communications & Outreach Committee, Monday, September 11, 2023

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[00:00:01] Good evening. It is 5 p.m. and I call to order the September 11th, 2023 meeting of the Communications and Outreach Committee. I'm Tiffany Polifko, chair of the CNO committee, and I have Harris Mahadevi and Jeff Morse here with me tonight. The next order on the business agenda tonight is a public comment 2.01, and I believe we do not have any public comment this evening.

[00:00:24] So since we don't have any speakers, we will move on to the next order of business, which is 3.01, approval of the draft minutes from the May 1st, 2023 meeting. Do I have a motion to approve the minutes? Thank you, Mr. Morse.

[00:00:40] I move to approve the draft minutes from the May 1st, 2023 meeting. Is there a second? Any discussion on that? All those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. That motion will pass unanimously with all board members present.

[00:00:56] Okay. And we'll go ahead then and move on to our information items for this evening. Our next item on the agenda is 4. 01. And we have the FY23 year-end communications report. I will go ahead now and turn it over to Joan Sahlgren, Director of Communications and Community Engagement Office. Thank you.

[00:01:18] Thank you so much Chair Polifko. We are as always grounded in all of our work and led by the strategic goals of the strategic plan that's been in place now over a year. So empowering students, exemplary staff, enriched division and engaged community guide all of our decision-making and communications. We wanted to bring you a final year-end report of all the metrics and activity that we have done. We'll make it brief but we'll show you lots of examples along

[00:01:47] the way one CPS we are one LCPS one LCPS always puts me in a good mood that

[00:04:05] video it performed very well as you can see it wants to run again the video generated initial public and staff awareness and helped roll out the school board's commitment to the plan the first video garnered 1119 impressions and a hundred and ninety thousand impressions on the home page we ran that on the home page to kick off the strategic plan the landing page to highlight the strategic plan received five thousand and fifteen page views so Just to let you know, that strategic plan is well underway, and in survey results, we

[00:04:42] saw within the first few months over 60 percent awareness, and it's continued to grow since then. So it's been nearly a year now, or over a year. So we wanted to show you some of the successful campaign packages and report on their success. Each campaign package, as you may remember, includes a news release, sharing that good news, a website article, blackboard messaging oftentimes, social media posts.

[00:05:06] It may include a video or other visuals, like photos. So when we measure a campaign package, we want to remind ourselves that impressions are the number of times the content is displayed for an audience, reaches the number of unique people who see that audience, who see that content.

[00:05:22] So one of our most successful campaigns is graduation, it performs well every year. This year we did a full campaign rollout. In year one, when I was here, that's two years ago, we created individual high school stories, but we wondered how many people read them.

[00:05:41] So last year, we did, or that first year, we added an Instagram photo gallery, and we saw a tremendous uptick in performance and engagement with content, and people in the community saw, remarked, celebrated with our students for graduation. This year, we featured all of our high schools in two short videos with speeches from our principals and the students.

[00:06:00] The videos were posted across all channels rather than doing an individual gallery, photo gallery approach. And the videos were featured in the operational update, in family and staff newsletters, a media release, the stories were featured on social media, and we saw a 37% increase in engagement on our own properties.

[00:06:20] So we took that simple idea of let's write a story about graduation, added galleries over time measured the data, improved on the process. Last year made more improvements, and this year the video really drove eyeballs and celebration of this good news within our community.

[00:06:36] So just to give you an example of how that, you know, we don't do this in a vacuum. It really is based on data and with continuous improvement and process in mind. Another successful series was our special education series. We've shown you all these videos in the board meetings. I don't think you've seen the third one, though, the United Sound. That one was a recent creation. You want to play that one Kim? United Sound is a mentorship project for band and orchestra students to have the opportunity to mentor and team up with our

[00:07:14] special education department and they teach an instrument to the special needs students and we introduced all the instruments and then within each group the students pick and it's a year-long project of teaching them. The instruments and the mentors go through a process of adapting the music for their mentee, and it's really awesome to see it all get put together. I've always loved working with kids, and I also have family members that have different special needs, so I thought this was like the perfect opportunity to teach them music, something that I love, to teach them music

[00:07:49] and have a good time with them. I think music is just a great way to bring everybody together, even a way of communication. I think it's really important to remove barriers because a lot of the times kids with special needs have the same interests and have a lot in common with everyone else and music is just a really great way to break down that barrier and connect on something new and it's a really great way to express yourself and it's a lot of fun.

[00:08:18] I like to spend time with my three best friends and plus my teachers. I'm really excited for the part of Unified Sound and I'm going to take it next year. These students are high school students just like anyone else here.

[00:08:36] People sometimes, I think, forget that. So, like, having this program, like, helps show that awareness. It works in music ways and in friendship ways, I guess. The United Sound Organization has done a great job of pairing and introducing us to students that we don't necessarily have in our every class or our day-to-day classes we're able to just start

[00:09:00] new friendships that wouldn't have necessarily just fallen into place the concert is tonight tonight's our concert and we are so proud of everybody's hard work and how far they've come we're excited to see what we have to show we get everyone together and we participate with the

[00:09:35] other band students at Stonebridge and we all come together and work on what we've been learning throughout the whole year. It all comes together really nicely and it's a lot of fun. The opening act is our United Sound chapter playing two pieces of music. One is called Snarl by John Mackey and it was specifically written for the United Sound organization and Richard Sosito also wrote a piece called Celebrating My Three Best Friends, honoring the new

[00:10:04] friendships in their mentor groups. I love to play music. Music is really good for me. Thank you, and again.

[00:10:34] So usually we show you a short version of the video, but I wanted to put this one in perspective. You might remember that early in January we did a static post about our special ed programs and students. You know, budget was special education services were a hot topic during the budget season, and we thought, what can we do to support awareness of these programs? So started then made a video that performed really really well so the traffic for the mini video series campaign that first month received 382 positive interactions and over 7,000 video views

[00:11:09] it exceeded our average social media post response by more than 282 percent so we made some more videos this unified the sport unified sports video which is the second one there received 1,774 views and 300 engagements. And just so you know, this longer form version received over 425 video views immediately, and an average organic post video views for a short form is 500. So people watched this video and they were highly interested in this. So we'll continue with our special education series. We're really pleased with how it's turned out and supported all the

[00:11:47] programs at the various schools. But again, database decision making based on how the content performed and what is resonating with the community. Just a little bit more about our strategic plan. Just to remind you, we did an initial rollout of the strategic plan with a full brand toolkit.

[00:12:04] This became a model for successful other toolkits that we did later for some major campaigns. To give you the exact numbers that I alluded to earlier, in the initial months of the strategic plan rollout, so six and a half months into the rollout of the plan, the stakeholder survey indicated that already about 47% of school-based staff were aware of the strategic plan and 37% of families were in active agreement that they were aware.

[00:12:29] So it had started early and those numbers continue to increase. Six months in we refreshed the video assets. We'll skip this video for you. So we did another video for each of the strategic plan goal. Of these 11,500 people saw the videos and that had 27% engagement. So we rolled out the empowered students video in June just around graduation time strategically we rolled exemplary staff video the second one out in May for teacher appreciation month goal three ran in August for enriched division just as back to school time hit and we've just started running the engaged community video

[00:13:08] now that school's back in session some quick hits on other successful content and then I'll put this in a little bit of perspective for you you all have seen this campaign before Black History is my story. It won an award this year, so we wanted to share that with you. An outstanding campaign created to support Black History Month. It ran the entire month of February. Each Friday and one Wednesday we featured a photo or video of students and staff members throughout the month. The campaign consisted of eight social media posts, two quote cards, and six videos across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. And there you see the outstanding results. Again, strategically supporting

[00:13:47] a school board proclamation and initiative in the school. Next we have support for our dual language program, here we go. I think I told you in an earlier meeting that we had started to experiment and had good luck piloting ads for our community in social media, so we wanted to give you some results here.

[00:14:10] For the dual language immersion program, we expanded the audience, expanded our reach to English and Spanish speaking audience through social ads, Facebook events, and Facebook posts in English and Spanish. We've since done this in English and Spanish for the mobile health clinic, for summer meal program, face events, and immunizations. We ran the dual language immersion program ads in both languages, targeting all Loudoun County residents who could possibly have a student upcoming in kindergarten. We spent only a total of \$210 for this ad campaign, so \$105 for Spanish, \$105 for English, and in a little more than two reach, we reached 12,302 members of our

[00:14:49] school community and generated 744 reactions many of the people who comment negatively on our Facebook page are from out of state but the most vocal residents were our in-state and in Loudoun County residents who appreciated this our mental health and wellness conference was another targeted campaign that we ran in support of strategic goals of the school system the communications office created a strategy for outreach on the mental health and Wellness Conference, and this won a gold achievement award at the National School Public Relations

[00:15:25] Association Conference. This campaign led to a 41% increase in attendance at the Mental Health and Wellness Conference. The campaign used all communications tools, including social media, newsletters, press releases. At this annual conference, the Office of Communications has begun

conversations with mental health services to plan for next year's conference. It's coming up quickly this winter and to improve further attendance and outreach so we helped with visuals helped with and generate those results the teacher cadet series you all are very familiar with our teacher cadets this is one of the

[00:16:01] ways we support our exemplary staff and we help HRTD with recruiting normally Erin would be here to cover she's our liaison for HRTD but she had a family emergency and had to go home so we understand that she needed to do that And I'm sorry you're stuck with me for all the slides tonight, most of them.

[00:16:19] But she was very disappointed she had to go home. So Erin works with each of these departments in HRTD to help with recruiting. She promotes teacher morale, and we ran social media campaigns on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram about our returning teacher cadets beginning in September to kick off the school year through end of December last year.

[00:16:39] The social media posts included photos of the returning teacher cadet and a quote with why they chose to come back and work for LCPS. One Facebook post generated 119 positive reactions. We tied this campaign package into our One LCPS strategic plan online with the hashtag WeAreOneLCPS, and this series generated an overwhelming number of online impressions, 89,421, and 1,460 positive reactions.

[00:17:07] Our other recruitment series, WeAreLoudon, supporting recruitment efforts. We created one-page flyers, one for each level of employment. So this is interesting. We did a flyer to recruit those coming out of college. We did a flyer to recruit those mid-level folks and a flyer to recruit tenured folks.

[00:17:28] So we really tried to support HRTD as they reached into all those communities to build the staff and lower those open seats, those open FTEs. They included all the benefits and great things about working at LCPS. They're located on the website as well.

[00:17:44] We created eight recruitment videos. In addition to that, we included recent college graduates and teacher cadets. And these 12 recruitment videos that include staff, support staff, sharing why they chose to work for LCPS. All of these videos are used on the HRTD recruiting website during recruitment fairs and on social media.

[00:18:04] And this is what we've shown you this video before, so we won't show it tonight. but it's one of our ASL teachers talking about how he enjoys his work here at LCPS. It's really important that we, as we strive, support that strategic goal of exemplary staff and becoming an employer of choice, that we really stand toe-to-toe with those other world-class brands.

[00:18:25] You know, we're recruiting teachers and career switchers and tenured folks from other divisions and from around the country, right? So we want to stand there and be able to really present buttoned-up assets that really make us competitive with any other large school system out there with that hometown feel.

[00:18:46] We also placed social ads for HRTD. We ran LinkedIn ads, which is a perfect place. So from March 21st to April 19th at the cost of \$500, we ran two targeted LinkedIn video ads. one ad used a fun instagram style tiktok style video and the other one used one of the we are lcp one lcps college graduates video montage we ran those two ads to see how they did but tested the videos to see what worked best the we are one lcps was the winner it outperformed the other one the target demographic for these ads were west virginia virginia north carolina maryland

[00:19:25] Pennsylvania, D.C., New Jersey, and Delaware. We targeted people ages 20 to 55 with an education of college level or graduate, graduate school. The industry we targeted was education and libraries. So just to give you an idea of how we can really make sure that money is well spent if we're in the recruiting space. The next campaign update, another video with support staff, targeted video ran for one week at the cost of \$60 from March 24th through 31st, featuring the HRTD recruiting team. This did really well. And just to give you how this all, what this all

[00:20:04] resulted in, we compared applications, licensed applications during the same time period year over year. We increased our licensed applications from 3,452 applications to 5,400 applications.

[00:20:20] So the ads, we believe, supported a 1,948 increased number of applications. Though we can't really directly you know attribute it we didn't have a checkbox we really feel strongly that this was really uh an outstanding test and learn and we were happy to see those results finally in the hr space uh just to show you uh results of the we are one lcps college graduates those weeks that i mentioned the actual results and reach and click-through rate we've also just to give you a

[00:20:57] one note we've used boosted events so when you place a facebook ad that may go that may be delivered as an ad but we also use Facebook events to drive traffic to things like the mental health conference so we did one of those boosted event for LCPS's third annual career and apprenticeship fair which took place in April with \$12 we generated 48 visits to the website and attendance received a boost in numbers totaling 312 students from both TJ and Bishop O'Connell and with our students and TJ and Bishop O'Connell responding so we were able to get that community involvement So just to let you know that, and now I'll turn it over to Christina.

[00:21:35] Okay, our Thankful Thursday campaign. As you know, school-community partnerships are crucial in fostering a supportive and enriched educational environment. Our Community Connections department has really worked tirelessly to include businesses throughout LCPS and meet them where they are.

[00:21:57] And what we've done with this campaign is really take a moment out each week to thank a business who has enriched learning opportunities, whether it's experts or speakers, mentors, whatever that may be, provide resources and support, social-emotional development with students to navigate challenges, promote cultural diversity and inclusion through inclusive engagements, and really engage in that two-way learning.

[00:22:25] The Thankful Thursday shines a light on school community partnerships and how they create a synergy that benefits students, educators, families, and the broader community. The campaign shows how leveraging the strengths and resources of schools and community partnerships lead to a vibrant and effective learning environment for all involved.

[00:22:45] The campaign started in the fall. I think we started actually, I think, in August, July, August, and we'll run until we're done. So we're doing it every Thursday, and this month we're doing small business Thursdays.

[00:23:04] We couldn't do a Saturday, but yeah, so it's been really well received. The partners get really excited. We don't have full numbers yet because it's a new campaign, but we're excited to see how that's coming about. It does very well on LinkedIn. Thank you.

[00:23:25] So we'll move on really quickly. That was the most visual content, so we wanted to take some time with that, but we'll give you some other results here, and then I'll put some of this in perspective. Our media release strategy, we have doubled the rate of distribution of our media releases that focus on the board and division news as well as positive stories.

[00:23:42] We've increased communication through media outlets tenfold and improved media relations and continue to build professional relationships. I'll give you an example of the, and this is not from this year-end report, but just last week we scheduled a press conference to talk about the ANOVA concussion awareness support and the support that ANOVA has worked with LCPS to provide to our student athletes.

[00:24:07] We scheduled an individual press conference with them. It was picked up quite well. You'll see it in this week's report. So we have the time now and the focus to do those sorts of things to share the good news. And with some targeted efforts and time now, we can also do things like expand that media list. So when we sent out the concussion press conference information, we sent it to Sports Illustrated.

[00:24:32] We sent it around to a number of people who had written about concussions to try to get that good news to spread even wider. So we're really approaching these things really strategically to see if we can get LCPS in the news across the nation in a positive way.

[00:24:48] So that's just a recent example that you'll see. We often include a photograph now with the releases. And we have focused a lot on our local outlets as well to build those relationships. Just a couple of data points here.

[00:25:04] So total media stories, you can see in that, and the year we're talking about, of course, is July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, right? So we measure share of voice, total stories, and sentiment.

[00:25:23] And you can see that the sentiment has gone, positive sentiment has gone up there at the bottom this year, over last year. Share of voice has gone down. That's really good news because that means we're not in national stories, maybe where we don't have any business being, which is nice, you know.

[00:25:38] And total media stories, you can see, also has gone down. And again, we attribute that to less syndicated news on some of those national outlets that are not as important to our local folks. All right, next slide. Oops, I think, there we go.

[00:25:56] So our top news outlets have shifted, as you can see. So the previous year, Yahoo News, Fox News, and Patch. This year, MSN, Loudon Times Mirror, and ABC7. Really positive shift to see that that Yahoo News, which is really a four-second hit on a home page of a scroll, right, that adds up to those numbers that it's not really meaningful news.

[00:26:17] Nice to see there that our ABC7 and Loudon Times Mirror, our local folks, have risen to the top through this year's local news efforts. All right, next slide. And again, just another graph showing you the results here. While the peak reach in FY21-22 was higher, here we see that the strategies are resulting in more consistent coverage and again with our local affiliates instead of national online media.

[00:26:43] So reaching our local community on a more consistent basis, sharing our positive news and increasing positive sentiment is our goal. Just a few web stats. We were able to pull these. Our web traffic is essentially flat from last year.

[00:27:00] It was around 3-7, I think, last year, in Unique Visitors. It's 3-4 this year. Website sessions total about 9 million, and average time on page is longer at 2.5. I think last time I reported it, and I'd have to

look, it was about 1.9 minutes. We've brought the division and school board news front and center.

[00:27:17] We added dedicated, added that to the homepage under announcements, and information that's important to the community is found there. And we've standardized a lot of things on the website. The school websites, we push division initiatives to the schools directly so the community can find them consistently.

[00:27:39] And if you have an elementary, middle, and high schooler, you can find the same news on the same spot on the website, no matter which school site you go to. So you can see here screenshots of when we pushed out the school mental health team that you can have access to, mental health services, first day information, return to school planning.

[00:27:55] All those are buttons that we push and standardize for our schools. And you may have noticed at the top of the web page, there's a tab that says families, students, staff. When you click the families page, you get what you see there on the right now.

[00:28:11] So you now get a visual. You get the most important stories that we're concentrating on instead of just a laundry list of resources. So we've made some standardization for that. The family and parent information page has received over 30,008 unique page views, and time on page is about a minute. Staff communications, just to hit on those.

[00:28:32] We still do the twice-a-month newsletters for staff. those go on Tuesdays after the school board meeting you can see here the numbers are really good we're able to measure that result about an hour and then a day after the newsletter goes out it gets an average rate open rate of 80% in that first day the most popular edition this year was the May 11th newsletter which had a 100% open rate this issue celebrated teacher appreciation week no surprise there we work with departments to make sure their

[00:29:07] news is in this newsletter and then our CCO liaison program as you all will recall we've been working hard over the past two years to implement recommended measures from the initial communications audit that took place in 2020 and part of that recommendation was to embed our CCO staff coordinators into departments so we could really directly liaise and advise those departments on these full campaigns some of which we've shown you so as a result of that things like school links that got pushed out, the mobile health clinic, let's talk, the pre- international baccalaureate and dual language immersion programs, fentanyl information sessions, and school listening tours have all been extensively

[00:29:45] supported and coordinated communications campaigns through those liaisons with talking with and being embedded in those departments. So gone are the days of sort of a one-and-done blackboard message that you kind of don't know what to do with as a parent. We're really trying to make sense of it for folks to include news where they can find it. The family newsletter, again, this one goes in the week that there's not a board meeting, so that we have a board meeting on Tuesday, the staff newsletter goes Thursday, the following Thursday the family newsletter goes. It again includes some of that highlighted good news. You can see the inaugural edition was highly viewed at 130,000 views or a

[00:30:24] 72% open rate, and the average newsletter gets about 65% open rate. We're really trying to drive people to this newsletter as a source of information and minimize the clutter in their inbox so it's a start it's been in place for several months and we're getting really good results we continue to refine and here are some testimonials people really do like it it's not just us saying so and peach jar is still a tool at our disposal we still send out flyers rather

[00:31:01] than distribute paper flyers we distributed 1174 flyers in this year that we're talking about and the average open rate is 40%. To refresh your memory, Peach Jar Flyers are distributed for nonprofits and government entities.

[00:31:20] We also do include our own LCPS Flyers. All right, Let's Talk, as you know, has been slowly rolling out into the division. Here is what it looks like on the side of the website.

[00:31:36] You can now use Let's Talk to ask the superintendent. You can provide policy feedback through policy review forms. You can review instructional materials, fill out your VHSL waiver. We've had a division-wide rollout for every department.

[00:31:52] And a request for communications and listening tour feedback are also launching this month. So as the superintendent embarks on his listening tour in the community, we'll be using Let's Talk to aggregate that feedback and those concerns and those compliments and analyze them on the back end.

[00:32:08] So very pleased with that rollout. All right. Next we're going to cover just Freedom of Information Act results here. This continues to take quite a bit of staff time in the communications department so we do always report out to you. We have improved the standardization of FOIA processes, including the types of way we close out FOIAs and any charge of fees or estimates.

[00:32:34] We've developed a standard operating procedure along our continuous improvement line for the strategic plan. We've increased the use of our GovQA platform, which handles our FOIA requests, and include now the tracking of fees and estimates of charges are provided through that system. We overhauled the FOIA webpage.

[00:32:51] I know we talked about that at a previous meeting. That happened in this school year that we're talking about, and in hopes of decreasing non-release responses and conform to any legal updates. And the plans for this year are to add an online payment platform so we can take more payments through that platform, and researching public-facing requests to increase transparency and decrease repeated requests.

[00:33:19] So on the next slide, you just see a chart of total FOIA requests, and I know it's kind of hard to read. There it is. So closed with full release, you can see that in FY223, the number's 405, and in FY2122, 602, excuse me, those are the total numbers, and there you see the percentages.

[00:33:40] So we do receive about 10% of inquiries that are not really a FOIA request, but we work with the requester to see if what they're asking is publicly available or if they should submit it in the form of a FOIA. In other words, if you said, where are the lunch menus, that's really not a FOIA.

[00:33:57] You've asked a question, so we will coach you to find the lunch menus or if you have a FOIA about it, we'll get you to, we'll coach you, work with you. Some information is exempt, sometimes no records exist, sometimes it's a partial release and sometimes people withdraw the request and often that's because what they want is publicly available and they just didn't know it, so we're sending them to the right information.

[00:34:20] So our strategic opportunities, we continue to put student and family first approach. We use that, we do that with visuals, we do that as we consider our strategic plan, we We do that with the community engagement goals in mind.

[00:34:44] Goal two, we expanded and tailored retention and recruitment marketing this year. Goal three, we supported through introducing the superintendent. We also led the search, the publicity around the search for the superintendent and the design challenge that we held in the spring.

[00:35:06] Our goal -- to support goal three and four, we've really pushed the training and adoption of Let's Talk to create and expand a culture of customer service. And goal four, increased access to translations. We've been working hard on that access through the website, the format of things posted, taking a mobile-first approach as we post content.

[00:35:28] So we are continuing to work on all of our content with the strategic plan in mind. I just wanted to let you know, when we put this together in August, we were still pulling together some year-end numbers, and I wanted to put a bow on some of all this content that we produced and saw for you. So across all our networks and social media, we produced 1,100 posts, so three a day-ish, four.

[00:35:53] They produced 6.6 million impressions for our brand. They reached 3.9 million users, and the average post engagement rate was 5.87%. so i wanted to put that in perspective for you so i pulled some numbers when i hear that because i know we always talk about we did this activity but people did something with it they reacted they liked they shared they saw right so they engaged with our content and that's what we're after because that means our brand is sticky it means people are paying attention to our brand so to put that average engagement rate that we were able to drive for the brand over the last

[00:36:30] year, 5.87% across all social. The average education benchmark for post engagement is 2.03% in education. So we have almost tripled the industry benchmark with our engagement numbers here in Loudoun County with our positive approach to visual content and our data-based choices.

[00:36:52] When we talk about reach, we say our posts reach 3.9 million users. The average education benchmark across social is 273,000 people a month so if you do the math which I did 3.9 million users divided by 12 months is 325,000 per month so we exceed that education benchmark by about 50,000 so we're really those these are strong indicators that our our content is resonating with people we're changing the sentiment we're changing some of the dialogue out there and anecdotally I will report

[00:37:28] that our sentiment numbers in social are overall much more positive than they were. We're seeing a lot of positive comments in social, and if we do get what they call in social trolls commenting on a social post, right, or people who are sort of off topic or trying to take people away from our post or even sometimes make a comment that's not really related to the post where the student is being celebrated or the teacher is being celebrated, our community is really correcting that dialogue now for us.

[00:37:58] People are highly engaged in the positive news that we have to share. So it's really heartening to see. So just wanted to let you know that at year end, we really take a hard look at this. The data informs our way forward for next year and what we're able to create. And just wanted to share the good news with you. So that's the end of my report.

[00:38:15] Thank you very much. Thank you, Ms. Salgren. I'm so sorry. I didn't know if you had anything to add. So I didn't want to overstep. Thank you very much for that information this evening.

[00:38:31] Board members, are there any comments or questions on that very detailed report that we just heard? Mr. Morse. Thank you, Madam Chair. It is good news. It absolutely, you know, the workload has been incredible, and I think you and your staff have done a wonderful job of getting the positive aspects out to the community, and I hope that continues.

[00:38:52] A couple comments. You were talking about targeted audience. Do we have a specific targeting for career switchers as well? You mentioned them briefly, but I don't know if any of the campaigns were directed, and I wondered if they were, how we're getting that word out to people we would consider career switchers.

[00:39:14] You know, I'll check on that. I interpreted the tenured as career switchers, as I'm coming into it late, but maybe that wasn't the correct interpretation, so I'll ask about that for sure. I think in expanding beyond career switchers, retired folks as well, and they're probably one in the same in a lot of respects, but I don't know if you target them differently at all, but if your staff could look into that, that would be helpful. I also noticed that some of the stuff that we've been putting out from a Dulles district perspective is not showing up yet on

[00:39:52] on this web page, on the Dulles District web page. So if we could get back to school night and videos and newsletters posted to each of the individuals that publish those and attach it to their individual sites for each of the districts, that would be helpful.

[00:40:11] You're talking about the newsletter on the board members' websites? Yes. Yes. Sorry about that. Yeah, I missed the first part of the sentence. Yes, we'll absolutely take care of that. Okay. And lastly, and I think this needs to be worked through HRTD. you talked about the number of people that are responding, and I believe you said something about 5,000 applications that were started. Does that ring a bell? I think that was part of the presentation. Well, I think that's great news, and it's great news that it's increasing over last year. I think what we need to do is work with HRTD as well to take from applications to completed

[00:40:46] applications, to qualified applicants, to offered and to accepted, so that we know what that development looks like, and it can help us understand why we have shortages that we have today. So I think that's a good first step, and I think that's the communication step, but we need to take it through HRTD to get the rest of it.

[00:41:07] Absolutely. I can take that back. Thank you. Any other questions or comments from any board members? Yes, Mr. Medevi. Thank you, Chair. So I have a couple of questions, Ms. Saugreen. I think, well, it's always exciting to hear, I think as Mr. Morris mentioned, about all the positive work that's being done with the staff.

[00:41:32] Somebody who has been sort of championing since day one about adding resources, I think we added about four additional staff in the communication department in the last two, three years, and then obviously the passion about Let's Talk. So I think it's always good to see those two coming around. My question is on staff communication improvements.

[00:41:53] I think you touched a little bit about the newsletters. And I think we do the year-end survey. So what's, are we, and again, maybe I'm not sure you have the answers to this particular evening, but are we tracking how we're improving?

[00:42:11] I mean, again, newsletter, just one aspect, I know, of how we're engaging our staff. what what are we like what is the mechanism for us to gauge how how better we improve in the communication with the staff because i think a lot of things we saw was outward communication but newsletter was one thing you touched on so that's just kind of if you can share us you know what things that we are perhaps doing but how do we what's the feedback loop to make sure that we are improving i mean that's because one of

the things that we want to do yeah i appreciate that question I think internal communications is is a huge opportunity for us to improve the the

[00:42:50] newsletter from a sort of public facing communications approach is is sort of a it's one tactic right HRTD has lots of emails and communications with staff but I would say there's there's definite room for improvement with a I don't know if we need an internal communications coordinator I know they have a new HR recognition person right who can help recognize employees and pull that sort of into one umbrella, but Loudoun County as a whole, we've focused really on that reputation and trust gap that exists with our public and our students.

[00:43:25] We've done some for the staff, but that communications effort could definitely, we need to take a hard look at that as a next step. There's tremendous opportunity to help streamline and improve our internal communications, and just to piggyback or to add one thought to that I know we've talked a few times about how to improve the website and the intranet and I do think that that's sort of been unattended as we try to work with the system that we've got and I do think a new intranet approach whether we can get that knowledge base through let's talk or through a change in vendor at some point or a new approach would would be something we would

[00:44:04] want to take a hard look at to make sure that that it becomes a valuable tool for employees Sure, because I think that's something, you know, again, it's one of the areas I think we still hear that there needs to be a good feedback loop in place.

[00:44:20] So I don't know, it's more broader than HR, I'll just say. It's not just HR items, it's just how we're doing as a division part of it. So that's one. And second, you know, going back to the FOIA, so it looks like we have seen a decrease of FOIA requests from 21, 22 to 22 or 23 here.

[00:44:39] That's good. I think from the closed and full release, is there something, I don't know, maybe you don't have the data tonight, but what are the buckets, big bucket items that are being requested from the FOIA?

[00:44:55] So are they asking for student data, like I said, test scores? Like what are the tag clouds? Like if you were to put all the FOIA requests into a tag cloud, what are the big bucket items? Because I think one of the things, I think we shared this, I think we need to figure out a way that the data, the common data that's being requested, we should just make it a part of our process to just share the data before we get FOIA for it.

[00:45:26] And that's the reason I'm asking that. So I think that would be really helpful to share with us whenever you have that, saying here's what the big bucket items of what the FOIA requests are. So those are my couple questions. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mehedivi.

[00:45:44] I just have a few things. number one i did really enjoy the uh the unified music video that was excellent and i have a request a bit of a plug for the broad run district if i may for broad run high school they uh they have a unified theater arts program over there um that started this year and i was fortunate enough to be able to watch it in action on its maiden voyage more of a sort of a baseline at the end of the last school year when i visited uh broad run high and i think it would be a really good opportunity for you all to get in there and highlight what they are doing with that unified

[00:46:19] program as well. So I would love to see something like that at some point this year. Number two, I just wanted to make a brief comment about the peach jar flyers. I am, I'm a parent who receives

those. And sometimes I find that they can be extremely cumbersome. There's, and there's a lot of information in them. And I even overlook some of the most important things that I might need to see. I think some of it is just that we're so saturated with information all the time. There's such a high flow of information coming through our inboxes every single day with all of the emails

[00:46:56] that we receive. And I see that there's a 40% open rate based on what you were explaining. Have you all ever received feedback about Peach Jar? Am I the only board member slash parent commenting on this you are not alone and it is definitely um uh an area for uh improvement i do think that people it's it's a separate email stream that does include some separate valuable information but it's not intuitive and it's another email to open so uh in the i i appreciate the value of a one-stop

[00:47:32] shop for flyers so principals also don't have the burden of or or the pta or whoever's in the school Xeroxing flyers, sending them home in backpacks. I appreciate that the system streamlines that for parents, but I agree there's room for improvement. We've been on the phone a number of times with Peach Jar this year to look at some of their data and how we can improve with them, and I can certainly come back to this committee with a report on that. Okay, thank you. Yeah, because part of what I'm wondering is if the open rate has declined over time, if that has anything to do with just a general dismissal from parents i will freely admit that i am one that has gotten

[00:48:09] to the point where i get the email and i'm like oh it's peach jar again but sometimes there's important information in there so it would be interesting to find out behaviorally what it what it is and psychologically what it is that's that may be contributing to a lack of the open rate but additionally i do want to ask if there's any information on whether or not our school student surveys happen to ever pop up in those peach jar flyers personally I've always received that information from the school itself but I do but I have seen information out there that that in some cases not specifically in LCPS but in some school systems those surveys that are

[00:48:49] being given to students happen to come through on a peach jar flyer and if a parent doesn't see that then they don't know that they should be or that they do have the opportunity to opt their child out and so I wondered if you could just share any information with me on that thank you I can so when we do work with the research and survey department those communications go through blackboard through our official channels and often they involve dedicated links directly to a parent so we're very careful with that now we might whether we would publicize the idea that you can go take the survey through peach jar I don't think we've done that either but the links and the official

[00:49:28] communication come through our official channels for sure thank you yeah i would just like to just since i'm sitting here i would reiterate that um i i would certainly hope that we would not put that information in a peach jar flyer just because parents miss it and um and i think it's obviously best if it goes through the school directly itself um i think that's all i have actually one more one more comment slash question on the engagement information the statistics that you had um i think you said the average engagement for the, I think it was education posts is a little bit over 2%,

[00:50:01] and then ours is over 5%, which is excellent. Did you all happen to compare across environments that match or that are similar to ours in terms of population, access to internet? I guess what I'm wondering is, are there certain areas of the country that just simply wouldn't have as much engagement simply because people don't have as much access to technology or because the population

isn't as large it's just a it's just a question that i have on on the comparison of statistics um the answer is no not to specific others this is the general hootsuite national benchmark um i

[00:50:41] would say because social media is self-selected right that even if you had a similar population either demographic wise or school system size it might not be apples to apples so i think the the national benchmark may be as close as we can get though I can check into it I was careful though to pull education benchmarks for k-12 not higher education those would be different thank you very much board members are there any other questions or comments before we move on to the next information item okay with that we will briefly move on to 4.02 this is revising public comment and I brought

[00:51:20] this to the committee because I felt like maybe this was the most appropriate place to bring it because public comment is about communication and outreach and I bring this up not because there is any specific policy that this is stated in but I know that this is something that was changed within the last few years at general board meetings which in which speakers are coming forward to provide their public comment and the camera is no longer facing them the camera is facing us the board members and so I bring this forward because to me I believe that the person who's speaking should have that camera faced on them. The camera should not be facing us because

[00:51:57] we should be providing the dignity and respect to whoever it is that's coming forward to the podium to speak to us at board meetings. These individuals are taking time out of their day. They're taking time away from their family to come and speak about something that's very important to them, and I think we owe it to them to provide them with that respect. So I would like to, if board members are interested in entertaining a discussion about that, I would love to hear from you now.

[00:52:22] Mr. Morse. Thank you, Madam Chair. So looking back on the history of what transpired, traditionally, you're correct, the camera was on the individual speakers. What started to occur was people would be coming to speak to be, not to speak to the board, but to be seen. And it became a visual tool for them to use, whether they wanted to be on local news or they wanted to

[00:52:53] take a clip of that and put it on social media, but it wasn't intended. Their face and their presentation often wasn't intended as feedback to the school board as much as it was an attempt to take advantage of the prominence of the school board and the prominence of the community input to put a message out to other people. And that's not the intent of public

[00:53:26] comment. So it became challenging for us because a lot of this was people attempting to just to get their 15 minutes of fame. And it was very obvious to all of us on the board that it was becoming a problem. So we backed out of that and we started to say, okay, well, we're not going to zoom in on the individual because truly the people that they're speaking to are primarily up on the dais.

[00:53:51] The community certainly wants to hear the voices and the concerns, but I don't think seeing the individual's face up there is the most prominent feature of the public comment period. It's the comment itself. And I mean, we broadcast the comments. We have the most liberal public comment period in Northern Virginia and probably in the state, I would guess. We do not turn anyone away.

[00:54:21] We do not give anyone limits on how many times they can come in or anything like that. So I find that there are advantages and disadvantages to the way that the board is currently operating. I think that maybe sometime in the future that maybe we could go back to a visualization where we could zoom in on the individual and leave it like that and that may be one once again acceptable are we there i i really

don't know and i don't know how we measure whether we think we are there but i i think it's good for discussion for the board thank you mr morse any other comments from

[00:54:58] board members mr mehedavi thank you i'll make this brief i i agree everything mr morse said i mean he articulated better than i could and i think um you know i think where the yes the camera was on the public comment speaker, but I think it's, again, the whole idea was to addressing the board versus, I mean, not 15 minutes, but two minutes, and so, you know, everything Mr. Morse said, I agree with that.

[00:55:25] That's all. I appreciate the feedback from the board members on this committee. I think that what I would recommend moving forward is that we go ahead and take this information item, bring it back as action at our next committee meeting so that we can potentially bring this forward to the full board to discuss as a group in a board meeting.

[00:55:50] The other alternative is that we could vote to suspend the rules this evening and make it an action item right now to move forward. But I think that if we don't put a date on it, then this might just be another issue that gets lost in the abyss of things that we want to discuss.

[00:56:10] So I would go ahead and recommend that we bring this forward at the next communications and outreach meeting next month for an action item. I think that's a good idea. I also think that you could reach out to the board chairman because as board chairman, I reached out to the board and we would have board operations updates where we would discuss the issues such as how we were setting up the room and what the limitations were that we were placing.

[00:56:41] And so that way we could have that dialogue, and that was part of the board meetings. You know, the first 15 minutes of a board meeting was an operational discussion for board members and administrative things like how are we going to, you know, once upon a time we had the podium all the way back here, and since then we've moved that back forward, and so we've taken away a lot of the restrictions and kind of eased back into more of a traditional way of us holding public comments.

[00:57:10] So you could reach out to the board chairman and let him know that as well, and he may want to just open that dialogue, and we wouldn't even have to go through an action item at the committee level. You know, that might just be something that the board could discuss during an operational discussion.

[00:57:27] Thank you, Mr. Morris. I like that idea. I think I am all for efficiency and getting things done. So if we can, we could potentially look at that option. I like that suggestion. Thank you for your discussion this evening. on this topic. Are there any more questions or comments before we move forward? Okay. Thank you.

[00:57:46] With that, we will move on to new business. Before we break this evening, does anyone have any new business to share with the committee? All right. If not, the business portion of our meeting has concluded and the next meeting is set for Monday, the first Monday of October. And I don't have that date in front of me. First Monday of October at 5 p.m. in this room. The second. Thank you. October 2nd. So with that, we are adjourned. Thank you so much for your participation this evening and the meeting is now adjourned.



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