



Pascack Valley Regional High School Board of Education
Communication Plan

Innovation. Inquiry. Individuality.

2021

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Executive Summary

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District is recognized on the local, county, state, and national levels as a high performing public school district. Our students consistently achieve both in and out of the classroom. Our faculty demonstrates outstanding professionalism as educators, as recognized not only by our community, but their peers throughout the country. Our administration is relied upon as a resource for countless educators seeking to improve their school districts in the areas of leadership, financial responsibility, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and co-curricular activities. Our Board of Education is recognized as visionaries, seeking to encourage, support, and help improvement throughout all levels of district operation.

Frequent communication from the Board of Education is essential to maintaining a strong connection with the community. With the Board's goal of improving communication, results from the last two communication surveys conducted by the district, and research provided through the National School Public Relations Association, we are presenting a multi-faceted approach to communicating with the community.

This Board of Education Communication Plan has been developed using the R.A.C.E. model, which is endorsed by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). The R.A.C.E. model follows the tenets of:

- **Research:** Solicit the input of the audience in an effort to determine what is currently working, what is in need of improvement, and suggestions on how to improve.
- **Analysis:** Analyze all input and information collected during the research phase, and report the information so that the community attains a comprehensive understanding of each audience's position.
- **Communication Plan:** Based on the analysis, establish goals and objectives that best meet the needs of the district.
- **Evaluation:** As the PVRHSD Board of Education works toward the goals and objectives, solicit feedback and evaluate progress being made.

The Technology and Communication Office (further referred to as the Communication Office) will oversee the Board of Education's efforts as it relates to the Communication Plan, under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. P. Erik Gundersen.

Research

As times are changing, so are the needs of the community. To determine the current needs, research was done for each individual aspect of communication.

1. Social Media

According to a recent report on social media in 2020, the average time spent on social networking was projected as 144 minutes per day. 42% of the world's population use social media. As of September 2020, The Pascack Valley Regional High School District social media presence consisted of a YouTube channel and a Twitter profile. In addition to the social media platforms already in place, Instagram and Facebook were both researched as well.

Each social media platform was looked into to determine what needed to be established and used to its potential. This recent report, as mentioned above, was studied and used for the statistical analysis of social media.

- YouTube
 - As of September 30, the present YouTube channel had nearly 100 subscribers.
 - YouTube is noted as having over 5 billion videos watched per day, with the average user spending 40 minutes at a time on YouTube.
 - There are about 30 million daily active users.
- Twitter
 - As of September 30, the present district Twitter profile had nearly 1,100 followers.
 - Twitter is noted as having over 140 million published tweets per day, with the average user spending 1 minute at a time on Twitter.
 - There are about 100 million daily active users.
- Facebook
 - As of September 30, the district had no current Facebook presence.
 - Facebook is noted as having over 8 billion videos and 300 million photos per day, with the average user spending 58 minutes at a time on Facebook.
 - There are about 1.4 billion daily active users.
- Instagram

- As of September 30, the district had no Instagram presence.
- Instagram is noted as having over 95 million photos and 250 million stories daily, with the average user spending 53 minutes at a time on Instagram.
- There are about 500 million daily active users.

To see where the specific audience would be, and who we would be mainly reaching on each platform, this different [report](#) of 2020 social media age demographics was reported below.

Social Media Age Demographics:

- Youtube
 - 81% of people ages 15-25 use YouTube
 - 71% of people ages 26-35 use YouTube
 - 67% of people ages 36-45 use YouTube
 - 66% of people ages 46-55 use YouTube
 - 58% of people that are 56+ years old use YouTube
- Twitter
 - 38% of people ages 18-29 use Twitter
 - 26% of people ages 30-49 use Twitter
 - 17% of people ages 50-64 use Twitter
 - 7% of people that are 65+ years old use Twitter
- Facebook
 - 86% of people ages 18-29 use Facebook
 - 77% of people ages 30-49 use Facebook
 - 51% of people ages 50-65 use Facebook
 - 34% of people that are 65+ years old use Facebook
- Instagram
 - 67% of people ages 18-29 use Instagram
 - 47% of people ages 30-49 use Instagram
 - 23% of people ages 50-64 use Instagram
 - 8% of people that are 65+ years old use Instagram

For the following “larger” communication methods, the research comes as a result of the [Communication Survey](#) the district performed in 2018. The communication survey was “sent to all 2,044 students (number of students at the time of the survey), their respective parents/guardians (2,879 messages in total, with the understanding one message went to parents who have multiple children in the district), all 296 staff members (including faculty, support staff, and administration), and all nine Board members.”

1. Email

The chart below displays the percentage of people who chose email as a preferred method of receiving information.

Students	95%
Parents	96%
Staff	93%

In addition, the chart below illustrates the effectiveness of the district email as a form of communication.

Students	96%
Parents	96%
Staff	99%

2. Website

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District website can be found here:

<https://www.pascack.org/>

The chart below illustrates the effectiveness of the district website as a form of communication.

Students	63%
Parents	70%
Staff	80%

2. "The Report"

"The Report" is a large packet that, in past years, has been mailed to community members homes three times a year. The packet contained a letter from the President of the Board of Education, teacher and student accomplishments, initiatives, pictures, and more information. In the past, "The Report" cost to design, print, and mail all three per year is \$33,020.

The chart below illustrates the preference of how people prefer to stay informed as it relates to “The Report.”

Students	9%
Parents	20%
Staff	12%

Analysis

The Communication Office performed an extensive analysis of the research and data collected.

While understanding our social media presence is a good start, in today's world where most of the information consumed is through Social Media, improving social media presence has been a crucial step. This starts with better promoting the existing YouTube and Twitter presences, but also establishing a presence on Facebook and Instagram. Facebook is a primary method of communication for our parents, while Instagram is a primary method for our students. Implementing these presences, planned and carefully, will address finding our community "where they are (Magette, 4)."

YouTube and Twitter

YouTube is largely used as a repository for recordings of Board meetings, but also contains some promotional and informational materials. As of September 30, the YouTube channel had nearly 100 subscribers. As for Twitter, this is used to communicate districtwide updates, with an average of a Tweet or two per day, with nearly 1,100 followers, most of which are staff, students, parents, and other educators. Having these social media platforms forces us to reach two completely different areas, as YouTube allows us to provide longer, more engaged content; contrastingly, Twitter allows us to post short, quick tweets with efficient updates. YouTube should be used as needed and taken advantage of, seeing the mass amount of time people spend on YouTube per day. Meanwhile, Twitter should be used more frequently, as people spend a very short amount of time on the app, simply for quick information. With YouTube having more informational and in-depth videos and Twitter having quick photos and a 280 character limit, a balance has to be found. This is where Facebook and Instagram play an important role.

Facebook and Instagram

Based on the research conducted and feedback, we knew that Facebook and Instagram presences were needed in order to reach the majority of our audience, with easy access to information about the Pascack Valley Regional High School District and recent updates. To test what would work, we created pages for each with the handle "PVRHSD", and the Superintendent's News Brief was the account's first promotion (October 2nd). In a month, the new Instagram presence has gained 172 followers and Facebook has gained 282 followers. The numbers continue to rise. With the ability to check the insights for both accounts, we can track

the growth and what area of content is the most appealing for the followers. From October 19 to November 15, the Facebook page has reached 568 people. From November 2nd to November 8th, one week, Instagram reached 180 accounts. Viewing this information, and looking at the research from the report, we will continue to tailor our content to our audience's needs and preferences.

Overall with social media, in reviewing the research and what has been beneficial, the key is consistency. The only way that this plan will work effectively is if The Communication Office remains constant in providing up to date information. More detail will be provided in the Communication Plan section.

Other methods of communication:

Email

The effectiveness and preferred method of email is ranked incredibly high as seen in the above table.

Email has always been a constant source of communication for the district. Whenever there is an important update or information that needs to be put out, it is able to be sent directly to the students, parents, and staff, which allows them to get their news efficiently. Email is also the most interactive method of communication for the district; not only is the district able to connect and send information to people through email, but community members can also use email themselves to communicate with us in return.

The Report

For 25 years, the Board of Education has mailed "The Report" to the community, three times per year. While this has been a helpful tool for reaching all residents, in the Communication Survey conducted, students, parents, and staff indicated that this is not a preferred method for staying informed (page 10).

Balancing the need to reach all residents, while recognizing this may not be the most effective way to keep our primary audiences of students, parents, and staff informed, the Board should consider cutting down The Report to a smaller type of packet or postcard.

The cost to design, print, and mail all three "Reports" is \$33,020. The cost for one large scale edition would be an estimated \$15,000. Discussion with the Board and their recommendation will be discussed in more detail in the Communication Plan section.

Website

The website is the central repository of all information. Social Media is an outstanding vehicle for attracting the attention of our community, but with the website as the main hub, information is always available and organized. While the numbers were average regarding the effectiveness of the website (other than the staff's input), all other forms of communication will be leveraged to direct people to our website for official and complete information.

Communication Plan

Goals and Objectives

Based on the research, board and district goals, and suggestions made by those in the community, the goals and objectives of this Pascack Valley Regional High School District Board of Education Communication Plan are as follows:

1. Establish a Board of Education communications committee.
 - 1.1. Frequent meetings for updates on what has been accomplished, what is currently being done, and plans for improvement.
 - 1.2. Continuously assess methods of communication, those being utilized by the district and others that are available, to assure we are communicating with the PVRHSD community in the best ways possible.
2. Improve and establish a strong social media presence on multiple platforms.
 - 2.1. Social media will be used to provide information on student achievements, Board meeting information, district photos and updates, as well as information pertaining to Pascack Hills High School, Pascack Valley High School, and the school district as a whole.
 - 2.2. Reach the target audiences on multiple social media levels, including parents, staff, students, and other members of the community, or any of those interested in what is going on in the district.
 - 2.2.1. Instagram presence is intended to reach younger audiences and students, with updates and information in daily posts.
 - 2.2.2. Twitter presence is intended to communicate districtwide updates, with an average of a Tweet or two per day.
 - 2.2.3. YouTube presence is intended as a repository for recordings of Board meetings, but also provides some announcements, updates, and informational materials.
 - 2.2.4. Facebook presence is intended as a primary method of communication for the demographics of our parents, with updates and information in daily posts.
3. Website will continue to be a central hub of general information, requiring minimal navigation, and being responsive to modern devices.
 - 3.1. Always available and organized information in an easy to access location.

- 3.2. Determine and assure most accessed information is at the top level of the website.
 - 3.3. Continue to check the website for updated information, making sure it remains current.
4. Improve communication surrounding Board meetings.
 - 4.1. Prior to the Board of Education meeting, a list of Agenda highlights available to the public with a link to the full agenda.
 - 4.1.1. This information will be sent out two days prior to the Board meeting.
 - 4.1.2. Agenda highlights will include the most important discussion topics intended to appeal to the majority of the public.
 - 4.1.3. Agenda highlights will be posted and provided in the Superintendent's News Brief (sent through email), as well as social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook).
 - 4.2. After a Board of Education meeting, a "Highlight Reel" video of the Board meeting will be available to the public post-meeting.
 - 4.2.1. Highlight Reel will include the most important topics discussed, and will be organized for anyone to locate specific areas.
 - 4.2.2. Titles and descriptions will be provided in order for someone to easily locate specific areas of discussion or certain moments in the meeting.
 - 4.2.3. The Highlight Reel will always be on the PVRHSD YouTube, with promotions on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.
 - 4.2.4. The legally required full meeting will continue to be promoted and posted, and the Highlight Reel will provide a link to it as well.
5. Communicate with the public in alternate methods that provide higher level overviews, including recent achievements, current initiatives, and future projects.
 - 5.1. Seasonal videos will be posted on the district YouTube channel, hosted by the superintendent of schools and/or Board of Education president.
 - 5.1.1. The video will be a 5-7 minute recap of the most important events happening within the district.
 - 5.1.2. At a minimum, there will be a fall, winter, spring, and summer (year-ending) video for the first year.

- 5.2. A District postcard will be sent with the intention of promoting all social media platforms, conveying two or three districtwide highlights, and encouraging community members to visit the website for more details. This will replace “The Report” as a more cost effective community postal mailing.
 - 5.2.1. Postcard will be two-sided, full-color.
 - 5.2.2. Postcards sent to community members 2-3 times per year.

- 5.3. Each year, the district will develop and distribute an annual prospectus, with the purpose of giving community members and prospective community members an overview of the district from an instructional, cultural, and operations perspective.
 - 5.3.1. The prospectus would be distributed to:
 - 5.3.1.1. 8th grade students from the sending districts.
 - 5.3.1.2. Municipal offices, for those considering moving into one of our towns.
 - 5.3.1.3. School offices, for when new parents inquire about our schools.
 - 5.3.2. Local realtors will have an opportunity to purchase copies for their prospective clients, at the district cost.

- 5.4. A subscribe feature will be pushed to the public through SchoolMessenger. This will allow parents, students, and community members to choose what information they would like to receive email. Instructions on how to do this will be emailed to the community through the municipalities existing email lists.

Current Progress

The district has already made progress toward the Goals and Objectives noted above in an effort to improve communications. Below is a synopsis of the progress made as of the time this plan was written:

1. The draft Communication Plan was presented by the Communication Office at the October 12, 2020, Board of Education Meeting.
2. Social Media accounts have been created for Instagram and Facebook, with improvements to Twitter and YouTube.
 - a. There have been daily posts with important updates, news, announcements and more to Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, making use of the “Highlights” feature for quick posts. Longer videos and projects have been added to YouTube.
3. “Board Meeting Agenda Highlights” are posted across all social media prior to meetings. This includes the topics that will be discussed during the meeting that the public will most likely be interested in.
4. News Brief continues to be sent by email to all staff, students, and parents by the superintendent two days prior to the meeting, including the Board Meeting Agenda Highlights.
5. “Board Meeting in Brief” posted to YouTube after the Board meeting, with the link to access the full meeting included. Scrubbing features on YouTube allows the audience to view exactly what they are interested in during the meeting, making it more interactive.
6. The fall seasonal video narrated by the Board president and superintendent was posted on YouTube.
7. Request for Proposal of the District Prospectus and Seasonal Postcards is in progress.
8. The website continues to be the central repository of all information.
9. Released option for subscription to emails on December 9, 2020. This is available with the link: pascack.org/subscribe

Evaluation

The goal of the plan is to increase the number of people who our platforms reach, and assure we are interacting with the community. We are confident that this frequent communication from the Board will not only allow efficient access to information, but it will be essential to maintaining a strong connection with the community. The Communication Office, under the direction and supervision of the superintendent of schools, will analyze all feedback to determine success and next steps for future school years with recommendation.

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