

• POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
• PUBLIC RELATIONS & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
• COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
• 2020/2021



**POLK COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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ABOUT THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships performs numerous critical functions but pursues a singular mission: Tell the stories of Polk County Public Schools.

Members of this dynamic team have decades of experience in journalism, graphic design, web design and management, media production, community relations, and event planning – and they are honored to put their expertise to work for PCPS.

Every day, the employees and students of PCPS are accomplishing incredible things and making a difference for our community. By telling their inspiring stories, the Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnership supports Goal 5 of the School Board’s Strategic Plan: improve public perception.

**COMMUNICATING
TRANSPARENTLY AND
PROMPTLY**

TELLING OUR STORY

Telling the stories of Polk County Public Schools is achieved by communicating transparently and promptly, creating and curating original content, building strong relationships with members of the media, and providing marketing support to schools and departments throughout the district.

KEY FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships is the first point of contact for members of the media. The team fosters strong relationships with the media by anticipating their needs, responding to their requests, scheduling and coordinating media events, and issuing news releases and media advisories.

On average, the public relations team issues 10 media advisories, press releases and story pitches per month.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

During crisis situations, the Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships collaborates with school and district administrators, local law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers, local municipalities and a variety of other community organizations to provide stakeholders with accurate and up-to-date information. The PR team recognizes that communicating transparently and promptly during crisis situations builds trust in the school district, which contributes to an improved public image.

Communications methods during crisis situations include:

- Providing on-site assistance and support to school and district administrators.
- Serving as the primary point of contact for journalists.
- Issuing timely and accurate information to parents and guardians via SchoolMessenger, the district's automated phone and email system.
- Informing the broader community through web and social media.



PROVIDE STAKEHOLDERS WITH ACCURATE AND UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

CONTENT CREATION AND CURATION

Polk County Public Schools is brimming with stories that need to be told, and the Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships aims to be the leading source for school district news. This is done by creating original content and curating content from schools and departments.

Created and curated content is posted to the school district’s website and official social media channels (@ Polk County Public Schools on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and @PolkSchoolsNews on Twitter), aired on PCPSTV, and included in the monthly *Good News @ PCPS* newsletter (60,000+ circulation, May 2020). Content is also pitched to journalists as story ideas.

Good stories are found throughout the school district. Story ideas should be submitted to news@polk-fl.net.

Making PCPS News Go “Viral”



Scott Lake Elementary students recreate famous works of art. PCPS Facebook post reached more than 44,500 people and received more than 1,000 likes (2020). Story was picked up by News Channel 8.



Tattoo studio and teachers paint custom art in the restrooms at Medulla Elementary (2019). PCPS Facebook post reached more than 8,500 people and received more than 200 likes. Story was picked up by Fox 13.

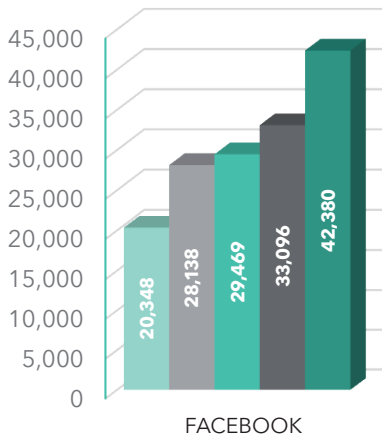


Combee Academy of Design & Engineering installs indoor observation beehive (2019). PCPS Facebook post reached more than 18,000 people and received more than 250 likes. Story was picked up by ABC Action News.

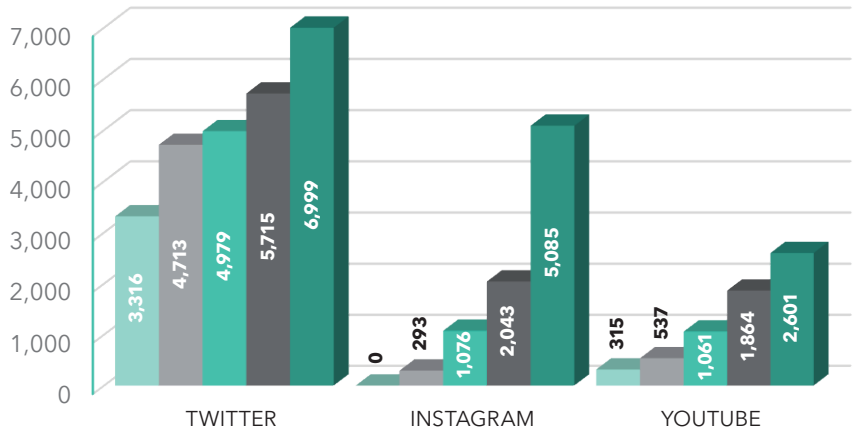


Griffin Elementary creates sensory path for students (2019). PCPS Facebook post reached more than 19,000 people and received more than 500 likes. Story was picked up by Bay News 9.

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS



OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS



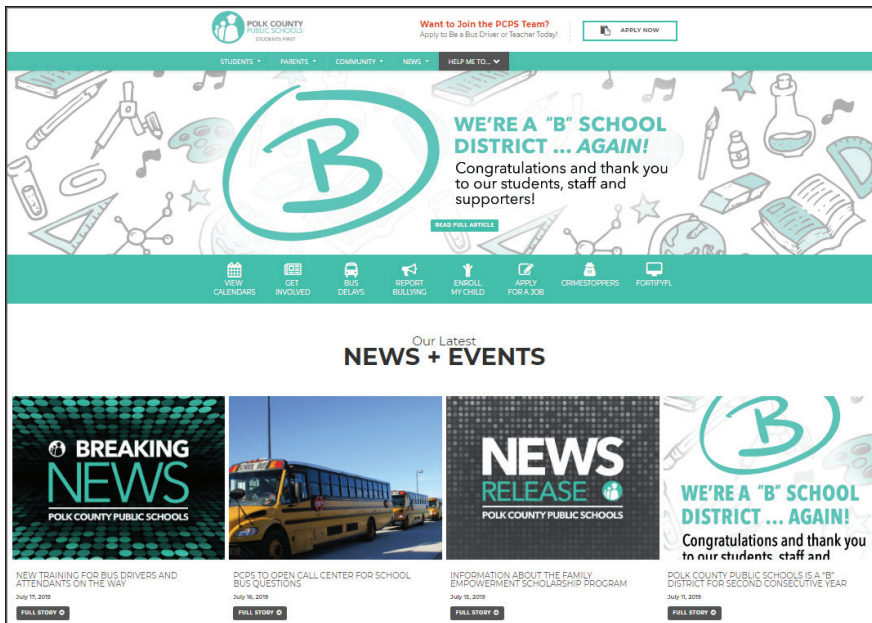
■ AUG 2017

■ APR 2018

■ SEP 2018

■ JUL 2019

■ MAY 2020



OVERSIGHT OF DISTRICT AND SCHOOL WEBSITES

In a digital world, the internet is the most powerful storytelling tool that exists. That’s why the Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships manages the district website, polkschoolsfl.com, and more than 150 school websites.

In 2018, the PR team unveiled a redesigned polkschoolsfl.com, which features streamlined content; menus built based on focus groups conducted with students, parents and staff members; and a prominent news section to highlight recent headlines. The PR team is now in the process of redesigning and standardizing school websites to facilitate improved communication throughout the district.

As part of its oversight, the PR team is working to bring all official district websites into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

BRAND BUILDING AND STEWARDSHIP

A brand is essentially the story an organization tells about itself. In 2018, the Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships oversaw the rebranding of the school district. Student teams collaborated with area marketing professionals to develop a new logo and tagline. Auburndale High School won with its now-iconic teal circle and the guiding motto: Students First.

The Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships reinforces the PCPS brand with every story it tells. PCPS puts students first at the individual, classroom and district level – and “Students First” is the thesis of every story we post and pitch.

To build brand identity and awareness throughout the district, the PR team offers a suite of services to schools, including: logo refreshes and redesign, website design, copywriting, graphic design, creation of marketing collateral, and assistance with establishing and maintaining a social media presence.

FACILITATE IMPROVED COMMUNICATION THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT





INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND STAFF SUPPORT

The Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships supports schools and departments throughout the district by developing internal and external communications, including print stories, social media posts and videos. The PR team also serves as the districtwide point of contact for media.

In 2020, the Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships conducted its *PCPS 2020: Focused on Excellence* campaign to celebrate the contributions every each employee group makes to our students' education.

"I appreciate this special gift. Thank you for this kind recognition. I'm glad to be part of the PCSB family."

Edgar Diaz
Network Manager
Crystal Lake Elementary

COMMUNICATION
WITH MORE THAN
13,000 EMPLOYEES AND
100,000 PARENTS AND
GUARDIANS

TELEPHONE AND EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS

The PR team uses SchoolMessenger to communicate with more than 13,000 employees and 100,000 parents and guardians. The PR team drafts and disseminates messages and assists school administrators in using this tool to communicate with their audiences. Messages are translated into Spanish to better serve our diverse community.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

EVENT PLANNING

The Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships coordinates several events each year that recognize the achievements of our staff and students. These include: Teacher and School Related Employee of the Year, the About-Face Awards, the Volunteer of the Year Awards, Superintendent's Scholars, and the Hall of Fame and Honor Graduates Banquet.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

In 2020, PCPS had more than 20,000 volunteers who logged more than 182,000 hours of service. The Office of Public Relations & Strategic Partnerships manages approval of volunteer applications, ensures adherence with volunteer-related policies and procedures, and uses its communications channels to highlight volunteer contributions.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOALS

Support Goal 5 of the School Board's Strategic Plan:
Improve public perception

Broaden and facilitate internal and external communications.

Continue to build trust in PCPS.

Continue to provide marketing support.

STRATEGIES

Provide transparent, accurate information that builds trust in the school district. Tell the inspiring stories happening every day within our district. Build strong relationships with members of the media.

Redesign polkschoolsfl.com to streamline content and emphasize storytelling. (*Achieved 2018*).

Redesign school websites to streamline content and emphasize storytelling. (*In progress*).

Send weekly internal news blasts to help inform employees.

Increase distribution list of *Good News @ PCPS*.

Increase social media audiences.

Expand utilization of PCPSTV.

Support crisis communications.

Collaborate with schools and departments to demystify areas of the district not well understood by the public (finance, ESE, for example).

Provide media relations support to departments and schools.

Assist schools with rebrandings, web redesigns, and development of marketing materials.



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INTERNAL AUDIENCES

- Students
- Parents/guardians
- School principals, faculty and staff
- School Board





EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

- Taxpayers
- News media
- Elected officials
- Civic leaders
- Business community

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

- Email
- SchoolMessenger
- *Good News @ PCPS*
- Polkschoolsfl.com
- School websites
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- PCPSTV
- Media releases, advisories, story pitches
- Flyers, brochures, posters

polkschoolsfl.com

-  /polkcountypublicschools
-  /polkschoolsnews
-  /polkcountypublicschools
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