SHARING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Columbia Public Schools expands community outreach and engagement by highlighting stories of classroom activities.

Current Background Information:
The district operates the CPS website, which previously did not have a dedicated way to showcase classroom activity stories beyond district news and the CPS-TV television channel. During Summer School in June 2021, the Community Relations team created a page titled "In the Classroom" and began purposefully sharing to capture "what everyday learning looks like in CPS classrooms across the district and the ways our teachers impact the lives of Columbia’s scholars while making learning fun." The in-house produced stories are a way for CPS to share behind the scenes information with stakeholders and underscore the learning objectives. CPS identified sharing more classroom stories as a tool for directly communicating with stakeholders and seeks to increase stakeholder perception of communication by focusing on this section of the website between 2019 and 2022.

Research: In 2019, as Columbia Public Schools entered the final year of its current Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), a five-year strategic plan for the school district, it conducted its biannual community perception survey (a telephone survey of 400 randomly selected, registered voters in the district). In the survey, respondents listed "Communication" as the fourth most referenced area of improvement. Research specifically related to Columbia Public Schools website and classroom information: the survey results in 2019 indicated only 25 percent of our stakeholders visited the website at least once per month, compared to 34 percent in 2017. Stories about students’ and teachers’ successes continued to gain momentum in 2019, with 87 percent interest from the respondents (up from 76% in 2017). Other top areas of interest were "Safety and Security" (82%), "Information on curriculum and curriculum changes" (71%), and "Updates on facilities, construction and renovation projects" (57%). Additionally, other than for weather related closings, 85 percent of respondents turn to friends and neighbors for district news, which is up from 80 percent in 2017, but down from a high of 87 percent in 2012. Only 30 percent of respondents visited the district website for news (down from 43 percent in 2017).

Overall Goal (outlined in CSIP and based on survey feedback): Columbia Public Schools will inform and engage stakeholders and increase transparency and support for the district by showcasing student and teacher success stories through the lens of classroom activities and learning objectives. CPS will communicate what day-to-day learning in district classroom looks like through curated stories and visual elements.

Objectives: Starting in June 2021, CPS will increase classroom specific content on the website. Starting in June 2021, CPS will evaluate time spend on target pages to increase by 3 percent month to month while in the initial roll out phase. Increase website visits by stakeholders for district news by 5 percent as measured by the biannual survey. Between 2019 and 2022, CPS will work with stakeholders to move "Communication" from an area of improvement to a graded area in the next stakeholder survey, decrease the number of stakeholders who rely on friends and neighbors for information by 5 percent while increasing the number of stakeholders who visit the the website for district news by 5 percent. Of note, the next survey will be conducted in summer 2022 (delayed one year because of COVID).

Tactics: Create and maintain the "In the Classroom" page by posting a minimum of three stories per month when school is in session. Share "In the Classroom" stories with stakeholders in email communications, CPS owned social media posts and individual school communication and information. CPS will solicit classroom activity information on a monthly basis from principals. Track opens and clicks using a link shortener and tracker combined with Google Analytics. Encourage principals and district leaders to share "In the Classroom" content in school newsletters and ask PTAs to promote "In the Classroom" content in their communications. Share "In the Classroom" stories with real estate agents, civic organizations, CPS families, Chamber of Commerce, Visitors and Convention Center, etc.

Evaluation/Results: Between June 1, 2021 and March 25, 2022, the "In the Classroom" page received 2,949 page views from 2,455 individual visits. Forty-four percent of the traffic to the page came directly from the district home page, which 16 percent came from directly shared links and six percent came from social media and classroom newsletter shares. The average time on the page was 1 minute and 9 seconds. The content on the page includes 45 individual stories and averaged 5 per month with a minimum of 3 in August and November and a maximum of 10 in July. CPS will conduct the next stakeholder survey in summer 2022 (delayed one year because of COVID). However, anecdotal evidence indicates viewership will be up significantly, particularly for classroom features as each building also shared those videos directly with families in newsletters.
1. Stakeholders
   Level 1 Stakeholders (those we exist to serve)
   ▪ Key Customers
     ▪ Students
     ▪ Parents/Guardians
     ▪ Patrons/taxpayers
   ▪ Staff
     ▪ Administrators
     ▪ Support Staff
     ▪ Certified Staff
   ▪ Board of Education
   ▪ Potential Residents
   ▪ Potential Staff

   Level 2 Stakeholders (those that enable us to serve effectively)
   ▪ Collaborators
   ○ Volunteers, higher education, neighboring school districts, professional development networks
   ▪ Partners
     ▪ Parent organizations (PTA, Booster Clubs), higher education, neighboring school districts, area youth organizations (athletics, scouts, etc.) city and county departments and officials, chambers of commerce, economic development councils
   ▪ Suppliers
     ▪ Vendors, business services, legislators, etc.

2. Area of strength include: Student Safety – currently 60% gave an “A” grade, 31% gave a “B” grade. Quality of school facilities – currently 57% gave an “A” grade, 28% gave a “B” grade. The performance of district employees in making you feel welcome when you visit a school or attend a school event – currently 49% gave an “A” grade, 24% gave a “B” grade. Performance of district teachers – currently 29% gave an “A” grade, 62% gave a “B” grade and Offering innovative curriculum and programming for students – currently 33% gave an “A” grade, 39% gave a “B” grade.

Identified areas of improvement from the 2019 Patron Telephone survey of 400 head-of-household, registered voters living with the boundaries of the school district include: “Spend tax dollars wisely/control costs,” “Stress academics over athletics” (51 mentions), and “Communication” (42 mentions).