Mental Health Awareness Alumni Video Series

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS)
Ashburn, VA

Target Audience: This campaign was produced for a general audience of students, staff, parents and community members.

Campaign Summary: Student mental health was a top concern for Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) as students returned to the classroom for in-person instruction for the first time in nearly two years. While Superintendent Scott Ziegler was convening a mental health task force to identify needs following the extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic, the Communications and Community Engagement Office sought ways to convey mental health awareness messages to our school community. These messages would cover topics like handling stress, resiliency, asking for help and finding support. They also would highlight the resources available at school for our students. When it came time to determine who should be the spokesperson to deliver these messages, we keyed in on high-profile alumni from our school division. The series is continuing as this application is being submitted, but, so far, we have featured:

- Two NFL players
- A professional ballerina
- A female software engineer with Google
- A professional lacrosse player
- A female chess grandmaster

RPIE

Research

Educators intuitively knew that students were facing hardships as a result of losing the “protective effects of connection with school” during lockdowns, but research is now validating that intuition. *JAMA Pediatrics* published an article on January 18, 2022, identifying the impacts of lockdown on children and students around the world. Their findings indicated that students have increased symptoms of anxiety and depression, perhaps linked to:

- Increased screen time and social media use;
- reduced access to services delivered in schools, including meals, health services and the provision of supplies;
- Less physical activity; and
- Fewer adult supports.
Planning

The project began with brainstorming to identify alumni who might be interested in participating in this project. We started with Jonathan Allen because he was local and the NFL season was underway. Communications and Community Engagement staff drafted talking points to guide Allen’s remarks. Allen’s remarks were recorded by the Washington Commanders (then Washington Football Team) and shared with us. (The Ravens also provided us with footage of Trace McSorley, but the other participants were either recorded entirely in our studio or remotely by our inhouse video team, depending on their location.) Communications staff then reached out to the alumni subjects, their family members, their professional organizations and their high school or college archives to identify photos and video that could serve as B-roll to cover the interviews. To accompany all installments when shared on social media, a hashtag—#lcpstrongertogether—was created.

Implementation

The videos were released on a monthly basis throughout the school year. They were shared to Vimeo, the LCPS website and all social media channels. They also were shared on the TV monitors in the lobby of our administration building. Principals were made aware of the series so they could include the installments in their school’s morning announcements or share in digital newsletters to help spread the message about mental health support available to our students.

Evaluation

The Kendrick Umstadtt video received 6,930 views on Facebook and 934 on Vimeo. The Trace McSorley video received 12,536 views on Facebook and 214 on Vimeo. The Kevin Rogers video received 7,325 views on Facebook and 282 on Vimeo. The Jonathan Allen video received 5,914 views on Facebook and 687 on Vimeo. A web page hosting the entire video series has been visited 184 times. Visitors to the page spent an average of 1:49 viewing the videos.

The Marissa Stark and Jennifer Yu videos have not yet been released but are scheduled during Women’s History Month.

This video series also prompted several positive comments on Facebook. In the video about Kevin Rogers, Kevin speaks about being challenged by dyslexia. One follower wrote, “Thank you so much for this inspirational video. I will show it to my granddaughter who is dyslexic. LCPS provided my children with an excellent education, and now my grands are benefiting as well.” Another follower wrote, “Please keep these videos coming. When I watch something like this, it renews my faith in the younger generation.” In response to the Kendrick Umstattd video, a follower wrote, “Thank you, Kendrick Umstattd, for the great advice you import in this video.” In the case of Trace McSorley, community members also took the opportunity to cheer for the alumni, “Proud of that guy and grateful for LCPS schools and our community.” Even the Loudoun
County Public Library got in on the feedback for Jonathan Allen: “Love this! Thanks, Jonathan Allen.”

**Supporting Materials:**

Here are the links to the videos created for this campaign:

- [Jonathan Allen](#), Washington Commanders
- [Trace McSorley](#), Baltimore Ravens
- [Kevin Rogers](#), Premier Lacrosse League Chrome
- [Kendrick Umstadtt](#), Google Software Engineer
- [Marissa Stark](#), Ballerina with Nashville Ballet