Research: As she assumed her first year in the role of Superintendent, Dr. Michelle Hubbard requested the Communications Team take the lead in a reading promotional program. She hoped for a program that would broadly engage the community in a celebration of reading. She also shared that she would like for the program to honor the district strategic plan belief that “Every individual has inherent worth and deserves to be valued and celebrated.” Working directly with district librarians and educators across the district, Dr. Hubbard and the Communication Team looked to the National Education Association’s Read Across America program as a model. Each month, NEA features a theme, book titles, and lesson plans for elementary, middle, and high school students. NEA’s program is designed to “create and celebrate a nation of diverse readers,” which supports the district’s strategic plan belief. Shawnee Mission’s engagement program, hosted in partnership with our local NEA chapter, is now called “Read Across SMSD.” The goal each month is for every school across the district to engage with books centered around the monthly theme. A secondary goal is to engage the extended community in supporting Read Across SMSD in schools.

Analysis/planning: Working with librarians and administrators, the Communications Team developed a plan to engage every school in Read Across SMSD. Principals, librarians, and educators served as the initial audience to help students and families get engaged. The department also determined a plan to raise awareness in the extended community, a secondary audience, about Read Across SMSD. All work would be done in the scope of the work of the Communication Team. The team first worked with librarians who developed reading lists for additional title suggestions related to each theme. They created a one-sheet, with ideas, encouraging engagement at all schools for principals and educators. Then, the district began promoting the program and engaging staff, students, and the community on a monthly basis. The team graphic designer created a brand to promote “Read Across SMSD” through all platforms in a uniform and recognizable manner.

Communication/Implementation: To further promote the program across the district, the team featured the program on the district website, social media, publicized it in the district’s magazine delivered to all residents (100,000+), published a column in a hyper local newspaper, and built a webpage for more information. As the school year began, the team hosted a video launching the program that was published on all platforms listed previously. The team has continued to produce a video each month featuring the theme, an administrator as a host, and SMSD students. Everyone in the community is encouraged to engage on social media using the hashtag: #ReadAcrossSMSD.

Evaluation: The monthly videos have featured students from every district feeder pattern and students in Pre-K through 12th grade. Principals report strong participation. Though every school has engaged differently, every school has engaged in some way. Some have used the program to create library displays featuring the monthly titles. Some have used the videos in classroom lessons. The launch video drew 7,491 impressions on Twitter and 17 retweets. On Facebook it reached 4.8 thousand individuals. The subsequent videos have garnered similar activity online. The YouTube video gained 680 views. The actual viewership is much higher because librarians have confirmed they play the videos in their classrooms for students in all grade levels and that the videos support classroom discussions and lessons. As both evidence of larger-scale support from the community, the Shawnee Mission Area Council PTA (SMAC PTA), an organization that includes all district PTAs, helped fund the purchase of monthly titles to ensure student access in SMSD schools. Several community members have also donated books and served as guest readers in the classroom. The Superintendent and Board of Education have requested the program continue into a second year. There currently is a waiting list of district leaders hoping to serve as video hosts for the program. Members of the NEA chapter have also thanked district leaders for the ongoing partnership.
Promotional Materials
One Sheet for Principals, Educators Website
Monthly theme website example
Inside Magazine, Fall Issue
Delivered to 100,000 residents
Featured on the cover and pages 6 and 7

Inside Magazine, Summer 2021 Issue
First promotion
Delivered to 100,000 residents
Included on page 13

Shawnee Mission Post Column - Sample of column from February theme launch
Monthly column included in this hyper-local, digital newspaper
Examples of Community Participation

Maggie Vallette @MrsV_SMSD - Jan 13
Written on these snowflakes are some of the many new things @THTigers512 readers want to try in 2022. From learning new languages to trying new foods, there are bound to be many adventures this year.
#readacrosssmsd

Mill Creek Library @MCLibrarySMSD - Sep 23, 2021
I’ve read this book to every Mill Creek class this week! We have had some great conversations about embracing new beginning and how to handle being scared/worried. Such a cute book! (And El Cucuy is adorable!) #ReadAcrossSMSD

Jonathan Ferrell @jonathanferrell - Sep 22, 2021
Ms. Amos (@MCLibrarySMSD) and our first-grade students enjoyed reading El Cucuy is Scared Too! by @MichelQuiroga this week in our library.
We are celebrating #ReadAcrossSMSD at @MCLibrarySMSD and enjoying this month’s theme of “Embrace New Beginnings.”
Read on Mustangs!

Katy Penland (she/her) @KatyPenland - Nov 1, 2021
#readacrosssmsd November Theme - Ancestry & Identity @shawanoehi staff can take advantage of these great books and get their students talking about their ancestors and who THEY are! @theSMSD

East Antioch Elementary @EastAntiochSMSD - Feb 28
Feb. #ReadAcrossSMSD
Theme: Explore Families & History Book; "Electric Slide and Kai," By Kelly J. Baptista
Students made self-portraits w/ @miscudikart in library, students listened to Mrs. Flynn Read "Electric Slide and Kai" and wrote a "Where I Am From" poem. @theSMSD

Bluejacket-Flint512 @BThunderbirds - Feb 24
Thank you Dr. Jones @jariusj for reading to our Thunderbirds!!! @theSMSD @kellyiswrite @akasorority1908