2022 National School Public Relations Communications Awards

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District Size - 29,470 students
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Golden Achievement Entry

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SYNOPSIS

Richmond County School System (RCSS) supports families in Georgia’s second largest city, Augusta. Augusta has experienced unprecedented growth in cyber industry with the location and expansion of the U.S. Army Cyber Command Headquarters at Fort Gordon. The school system planned to use sales tax revenue to implement a 1:1 technology initiative over five years to provide every student in the county with a device to support learning in class and for students to use to expand learning and access to resources at home. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the technology disparities in the community were amplified and the challenges presented by the range of technology gaps in the student population made it clear that the school system needed to commit to an accelerated plan for providing technology for every student in the Richmond County School System.

During the course of planning the technology rollout, the Communications Department noted that calling the plan the “1:1 Technology Initiative” limited the scope of communicating about the program long term and worked with Information Technology and Teaching and Learning Department leads to coin the program “PowerUp” since the district was empowering students and teachers with technology to advance instruction through COVID-19 transitions and beyond. The Communications Department was asked to develop a brand for the program.

RESEARCH

The Communications Department used mixed research methods to develop branding for the 1:1 initiative. The team did the following:

- Conducted a review of materials used by other school systems with 1:1 technology programs.

- Held qualitative discussions with internal stakeholders that helped us gather information about how key leaders and staff felt about the program and what was most important for the brand to convey to students, staff, families and our community.

In a community that is home to the Army Cyber Command at Fort Gordon, the cyber economy and technology have led much of the growth and influence in our region. We reviewed some of the logos and work of the cyber companies locating in the area to help us connect and align with the direction and growth of the community.
PLANNING

The Communications Department held a brainstorming session and developed priorities for the PowerUp brand logo, feel and look. We believed this initiative was significant and should have its own identify and feel outside the scope of approved RCSS brand guidelines.

Our priorities were for the PowerUp brand to be bold, contemporary and reflect the infusion of technology. The need for the logo to excite our stakeholders about the technology adoption was also important.

Our graphic designer went to work and developed a logo that we used as the foundation for the PowerUp brand. The Green Power Button is on all electronic devices and a universal symbol for technology use and access. We incorporated it to show we are “on” and using technology access to glow and go forward in our school system. The lightning bolt in the P and the plug shaped U align with our imagery of energy, excitement and embrace of the latest technology.

In July 2021, our department team agreed on a logo design that we shared with the Senior Team, Information Technology Department, and Teaching and Learning Department for feedback. The positive response was overwhelming. From there, we expanded to obtain feedback from a few principals, students, parents and community members. The response was positive. We made a few modifications and were ready to get to work packaging materials to support the PowerUp process.
IMPLEMENTATION

In August, the Information Technology and Teaching and Learning Departments provided the Communications Department with all materials to be branded. We provided high resolution logos for use in presentations and related materials. We also created signage to support device pick up at schools.

The Communications Department built a PowerUp webpage and branded the PowerUp Student Handbook, Course for Parents and RCSS Student Technology Loan Agreement.

The PowerUp webpage contained all information about the initiative and addressed questions about the program and the process. The page features branded banners to indicate page content and materials and branded resources for students, parents, staff and other stakeholders. The department also provided principals and media specialists with PowerUp branded resources and recommended language each month for use on school websites, school social media pages and in school communications consistent with each stage of the rollout process (parent training, agreement signing, student digital citizenship course and device distribution days).

In September, parents and guardians were asked to complete an online course in order for their students to receive a device. The Communications Department used website banners, social media, and direct from school communication to inform families about requirements for device distribution.

In October 2021, the department prepared video featuring the superintendent to support the rollout. The Superintendent’s initial video addressed the importance of PowerUp for creating equitable access to technology for all students, how the school system would use the technology and the importance of community support for the future refresh cycles through educational sales tax programs to sustain the program. The video was also shared with local media and provided opportunity to pitch a school system leader to talk about the significance and expected impact of the program. Since the school system had accelerated plans, this media push enabled us to share strategic messages with the community about our timelines and needs for the program implementation to be a success.

Throughout the implementation, the Communications Department used the resources prepared for the communication campaign.

In February 2022, the Communications Department celebrated the success of the initiative by producing two celebratory videos for PowerUp. We featured a short 30-second video “PowerUp Is...” on social media prior to the Board of Education premiering a longer PowerUp celebratory video to mark the accomplishment of having technology in the hands of every student during its February 2022 Regular Board Meeting. Both videos feature our students and staff sharing their PowerUp experience.

LINKS

- PowerUp Web Page
- Student Handbook
- Course for Parents
- Student Technology & Loan Agreement
- Superintendent’s Video
- “PowerUp Is...” Video
- Celebratory Video
EVALUATION

The PowerUp communications campaign was successful by providing a brand that has excited our community about this new initiative. The campaign connected students, staff and families by creating energy and opportunity to be informed and easily distinguish information about technology from other messages from the school and school system.

The success of the communications program was also measured by engagement and through a series of calls to action. Every social media post, email communication from the school system and web banner posting linked to the PowerUp webpage. We had 57,124 visits to the PowerUp website. Most were visits to the Overview page followed by visitors to the Parents Course. Social media engagement trended 3-5% higher on posts about PowerUp a significant portion of our website traffic was generated through social media link clicks.
Website Graphics

The vision of the Richmond County School System is “to provide an equitable education for all students to prepare them for life beyond the classroom.” Computer literacy is an important part of today’s world: all students need the opportunity to learn to use programs commonly used in the workforce and college. The PowerUp Initiative uses our education sales tax funds to provide a device for every student. These devices will help assignments to be personalized, engaging, and can increase creativity. This initiative can also provide access to knowledge outside of the classroom. The PowerUp Handbook is designed to help our students understand how to care for the device, use it properly, feel help if needed, and to become good digital citizens.

PowerUp is a school-based initiative. Parent orientation and device distribution information will be shared from the school. Stay tuned and get ready to PowerUp!

Social Media Posts

Technology Distribution Week Coming Soon!

Welcome to Parent Orientation Week!

Technology Distribution Week is THIS WEEK!

REMEmber to Complete the POWERUP FOR PARENTS ONLINE COURSE! CLICK THE LINK TO GET STARTED.
Canvas Learning Management System Graphics

Welcome
As Richmond County School it seems like our PowerUp Sign graphics are ready for us to be displayed. This course is designed to assist our parents in getting their students to succeed in using technology. The course is included in Canvas so that you can get an understanding of how it works and use it. Because it's public, we can use many of the Canvas tools that our students will use in class.

Quick Access
This course includes the categories listed below. Select an icon to view more on canvas. These tools help you navigate to the course and its activities.
If you are accessing this course for the first time, please review the following.

Technology Pick-Up Ahead