School District of Clayton • NSPRA 2022 Golden Achievement Award Submission • 
claytonschools.net Website Redesign

Background
The last time the School District of Clayton completed a comprehensive redesign of its website (and six school websites) was February 2015. In addition to a new overall look and feel, feedback over the past few years indicated the redesign needed to include an objective review of Clayton’s overall content strategy. The District partnered with CESO Communications to help with content strategy and implementation (rollover) of the new site since the transition would have to be done live. Clayton uses Blackboard Web Community Manager for its website Content Management System.

Research
We conducted both qualitative and quantitative research for the website redesign. For the qualitative research, we used the digital engagement platform ThoughtExchange to ask students, families, staff and community members the question: “As we update our website (claytonschools.net) to better inform and meet the needs of current and potential students, families and staff, what features do you feel are most important? What kind of information do you need? What other ideas do you have for improving the website?” There were 245 total participants who submitted 257 thoughts, with 60% of participants exploring thoughts from other participants and 69% rating ideas. In all, 4,539 ratings were accumulated. Our quantitative research came from a deep dive into Google Analytics data for all of our websites, and looked at bounce rates, top pages visited, session duration and how users are accessing the site, just to name a few.

Planning
Based on the data gathered from our research, we identified a number of key considerations for the website redesign. Navigation needed to be improved and simplified. The search function needed to be more easily accessible and more robust. The current calendar solution was not meeting user needs. Content also needed to be clearer and more consistent across the site(s). Visuals and white space needed to be used more throughout the sites. We then developed user personas (experiences) for current/prospective families, current/prospective staff, students and community members based on these overall goals as well as feedback, filtered by group, from the ThoughtExchange. These new user personas guided the development of new and reorganized navigation on all sites (District and schools). They also were used to help select a new template (from the Blackboard template library) to serve as the basis for the redesign.

Implementation
With a new template selected, the District worked with Blackboard to customize a number of different aspects of the design. We had been communicating internally (with teachers and administrators) about the changes coming to the website for two months before implementation. Since the design, navigation and content changes needed to be applied to the live sites, we selected a four-day weekend in February as the transition date, knowing that if things didn’t go as planned, there would be ample time to recover. We sent out teaser communications 14 and seven days before the transition and had a “pardon our mess” pop-up present on all pages of the site during the transition. With the help of our partners at CESO, 95% of the transition to the new site was completed on Friday (the first day of the transition), with the rest being finished over the weekend before students and staff returned on Tuesday.

Evaluation
Anecdotal feedback on the new design of the website has been mostly positive. In order to more effectively evaluate the redesign, a pop up survey was put on the front page of the website. At the time of this awards submission, the survey had only been completed by 51 respondents. The survey asked for feedback on the overall design of the website as well as some specific items. The data, which reflects mostly student (29) and parent (8) responses, shows that the redesign has been well-received by most people but also points to some areas where further evaluation, via focus groups or other qualitative means, could provide additional insight and identify some areas for further refinement. Results included:

- Overall, how well does our website meet your needs? 73% of respondents feel the website meets their needs somewhat/very/extremely well
- How easy was it to find what you were looking for on our website? 61% of respondents feel it’s somewhat/very/extremely easy to find
- Did it take you more or less time than you expected to find what you were looking for on our website? 57% of respondents found information in about the time expected or more quickly
- How satisfied are you with the new website calendar, which now integrates with Google calendar? 85% of respondents are somewhat/very/extremely satisfied with the new calendar
- How satisfied are you with the look and feel of this website? 67% of respondents are somewhat/very/extremely satisfied with the new look/feel
- How much do you trust the information on our website? 90% of respondents trust the information a moderate amount/a lot/a great deal

Even though visitors to the website trust the information they find and are pleased with the new calendar (a key issue that needed to be addressed), comments in the survey, combined with “finding information” being one of the lowest-rated responses, indicate there is still room for refinement. Given that a qualitative tool (ThoughtExchange) was used to do the initial research, staff will plan to also do some qualitative research to follow up on the new design and explore some of the comments and lower data points received thus far from the quantitative evaluation data. We also recognize that change is hard and will plan to offer the popup survey again, for comparative purposes, in another few months once visitors have had more time to use the new site.