



Arlington
Public
Schools

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

BRIEFING REPORT

JUNE 2017





SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Department of School and Community Relations' (SCR) primary focus is to enhance communications within Arlington Public Schools (APS) and between schools and the Arlington community. The department's mission is to ensure that students, staff, families and the community are informed about the news, activities, and positive contributions of public schools in Arlington; and that they have access to school news, opportunities and choices. SCR ensures that the community is invited to become involved in APS initiatives, get engaged in APS governance issues, and provide input on planning processes.

Major Services

- Facilitate community engagement through outreach and face-to-face communications with community leaders, key influencers, and organizational partners.
- Foster effective media relations by planning and executing media outreach, and coordinating responses to media requests.
- Manage the central content of the APS website, deliver training and provide oversight for school webmaster liaisons.
- Produce videos for AETV that showcase school instruction, learning activities, and opportunities for students.
- Provide school news and information to constituents by planning, promoting, and executing countywide celebrations, recognitions and information sessions.

- Manage APS's volunteer and partnership resources by recruiting, screening, and placing volunteers and partnership resources to support schools and instruction.
- Inform the community about important APS news through electronic communications that includes email, voicemail, and text messages to more than 40,000 APS families and staff.
- Highlight helpful news and engage with the community through conversations on APS social media pages, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Periscope.
- Manage emergency communications, utilizing effective strategies to inform the APS community about changes in operations due to local, regional, national or weather emergencies.

Bright Spots

Community Engagement and Outreach

A new Community Engagement Coordinator joined SCR and connected with more than 500 community leaders, strengthening connections with civic associations, churches, ethnic and cultural advocacy groups, advisory council groups, and nonprofits supporting families and youth in Arlington.

SCR also launched the new "Engage with Us" web subsite in February that provides an overview and sections for all of the current APS community engagement processes. Opportunities for feedback include an easy-to-use "Engage with Us" online form, as well as email, phone, meetings and community



conversations listed on a calendar. The subsite has helped to solicit feedback on a variety of conversations this year including:

- Options and Transfer Policy
- New High School Site Options
- Drew Visioning
- K-12 Instructional Vision
- Curriculum Resource Adoptions
- Personalized Learning
- One-to-One Device Initiative
- APS 3 to 5 Year Action Plan

The “Engage” site will continue to evolve as APS works to solicit feedback from stakeholders, providing a central repository for the upcoming conversations related to Boundary Refinements, the Strategic Plan, the CIP and other deliberations.

SCR also provides communications support to the Whole Child Committee, Aspire2Excellence Committee, College and Career Night, and the Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month Planning Committees. Additionally, SCR supports the Color of Leadership conferences, the Whole Child conference, and the Dream, Explore, Create Your Own Path events each year.

Launch of a New Website

On July 1, 2016, APS successfully transitioned to a new website platform, utilizing open-source software that supports a flexible format for future site development and expansion. The new platform is easier for teachers and webmasters to add and update content online, and supports improved video livestreaming, social media integration, and mobile-friendly access and navigation. Since July 1, the website has generated more than 5.9 million page views, averaging 580,000 views per month. Approximately 31% of website views occurred on a mobile device.

School-Based Liaisons for Public Relations (PR), Website, and Partners & Volunteers

Now in their third year, the PR liaisons have continued to support shared messaging and promote positive news consistently. A weekly editorial calendar and annual events calendar are shared, along with suggested news and hashtags for social media. New this year, Webmaster liaisons and Volunteer Liaisons were added at each school. Webmaster liaisons maintain the school’s main website and keep it updated with news on a monthly basis. Volunteer liaisons have recruited, screened and trained more than 900 volunteers, and highlight the positive contributions of volunteers and partners on social media, the monthly newsletter and the Partners in Action video series.

What We Learned

Implementing the APS 3-5 Year Plan and the community processes that are necessary to support it require extensive time and effort dedicated to engagement and outreach. The Community Engagement Coordinator has been an essential addition to our team as the school division grows, and the addition

of the Engage website and livestreaming broadcast of many community meetings and events has expanded our reach into the community. Robust and aggressive outreach has improved the input and feedback from a variety of community groups, and it is both needed and valued as the School Board considers the important decisions being made to address multifaceted issues related to increasing enrollment.

Working closely with other departments to develop a coordinated and systematic approach to strategic communications planning is also a necessary part of achieving successful outcomes. This year, SCR closely partnered with the Office of Planning and Evaluation on engagement and communications for the high school boundary refinements. The lessons learned from that work informed our planning for revision of the Enrollment and Transfer Policy so that the community was involved early and often with multiple ways to engage and provide feedback. The High School Site Options process was also aligned with the Enrollment and Transfer Policy review so that we minimized “engagement fatigue” from the community. Because the Board will be making decisions on multiple issues related to the 3-5 Year Plan in the coming year, maintaining this coordinated effort will be critical to ensuring sustained community involvement and feedback for similar decision-making efforts in the near future.

Moving Forward

SCR will continue to focus on communications and engagement for the APS 3-5 Year Plan as implementation continues. Development of a formal community engagement framework is a high priority so that thorough feedback is received from a broad variety of stakeholders when important policy choices are considered by the School Board. Additionally, a new Strategic Plan, the next Capital Improvement Plan, and multiple boundary processes will require careful thought and intentional planning to ensure constituent feedback is heard and the needs of students remain central to community processes.

The necessity for student experiential learning before graduation is also a growing need, and SCR has a critical role in recruiting and screening new partners to provide internship opportunities and work experience. Volunteer liaisons in schools will be crucial in supporting that goal, and expanding the scope of work and providing additional training is essential.

Continuing to inform and promote the value that APS provides will remain an important objective for the department. Leveraging multiple digital platforms, mobile-friendly communications using audio and visual messages, and fostering two-way engagement online are important strategies for expanding our reach beyond traditional communications. These tools can be used effectively to reach deeper into the community to showcase our efforts to challenge and engage all students, engage the whole child, and provide multiple supports that ensure their success.



DATA THAT PROVIDES INSIGHT

ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

- More than 500 community and civic leaders receive biweekly updates and regular contact with the new APS Community Engagement Coordinator.
- From Oct. 2016 – May 2017, the Community Engagement Coordinator has participated in over 90 events and community meetings to dialogue and receive feedback from constituents.
- The “Engage with Us” web page has been viewed 12,000+ times since its launch in Feb. 2017.
- Livestreaming, launched Feb. 2017, has drawn in over 3,500 viewers to watch livestreamed work sessions and community meetings.



SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

- #APSBack2School was a top Twitter hashtag through the D.C. region on first day of school.



Facebook
7,500+ likes



Instagram
1,200+ followers



Twitter
10,500+ followers

#APSiSAwesome

- 2,500+ tweets
- 1,400+ accounts
- nearly 1.2 million impressions

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERSHIPS

- Database of over 1,000 active volunteers
- Over 600 partners who represent businesses, non-profits, civic and government agencies that support our schools and programs



PEACHJAR E-FLYER DELIVERY

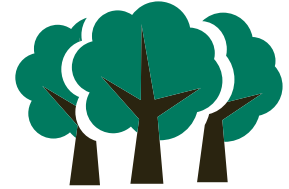


4 million sheets of paper eliminated

475+ trees saved



\$2.1 million cost savings



AETV ONLINE VIEWERSHIP

AETV videos have received 45,000+ views from Sept. 2016– May 2017. More than half of these videos were viewed on a mobile device. Here's what was watched most:



45,000+ views Sept-May

- “Living Legends” in Arlington’s African-American community were profiled throughout Black History Month, with 659 views of their interviews online and on social media.
- “Historical Markers” – a new, 10-episode summer series for student learning about Arlington’s history, garnered nearly 5,000 views.



659 Views during Black History Month

FAMILIES ARE STAYING INFORMED

- College and Career Night: 1,500 attendees
- Middle School Information Night: 850 attendees +230 online views
- High School Information Night: 650 attendees + 120 online views
- Kindergarten Information Night: 900 attendees + 220 online views + 1,500 Facebook Live views
- Summer Activities Fair: 1,200 attendees
- 12,180 APS Mobile App downloads; 1,728 new users since Aug. 1, 2016.

% Satisfaction with Information Nights (for Kindergarten, Middle School, and High School)

