

Superintendent's Office
Communications Department

Annual Report
2019-2020

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**Rich Township High School District 227
Mission & Vision Statement**

Vision Statement: We envision a culturally relevant, innovative school district that provides a foundation of opportunities for our students to thrive.

Mission Statement: The mission of Rich Township High School District 227 is to sustain a focus on students and on student success.

**Communications Department
Mission & Vision Statement**

Vision Statement: We envision clear, concise, consistent and transparent communication that effectively supports and focuses on students and student success.

Mission Statement: The mission of the Communications Department is to develop and implement clear, consistent, and modern strategies that enhance the public understanding of Rich Township High School District, its students, its staff, its programmatic activities, and its value to the community and society.

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General Information

The Communications Department at Rich Township High School District 227 strives to promote the academic reputation of the District and tell the stories of Rich Central, Rich East, and Rich South to all audiences through traditional media, social media, print publications, video, and web. The primary goal is to actively communicate news about great things happening in the District and its schools, along with its vision and initiatives to enhance student learning.

The Communications Department facilitates all District-wide strategic communications; print publication writing, design and editing; media relations and publicity; website design, development, information architecture, and content management system integration; photographic and video services; identity and brand management; media event coordination; special event project management; alumni relations and other duties as assigned.

The District is in partnership with the Donovan Group and Global 360 Marketing for communications and marketing consulting services. The Donovan Group mainly supports the communication planning, crisis communication, and graphic design needs of the District. The District collaborates with Global 360 Marketing for video services, communications support, content development, brand management, campaign implementation, media placement and local market insight.

The main focus for the Communications Department is to communicate informative, quality, cohesive content to our students and stakeholders. In order to effectively do so, the Department works closely with other District departments to ensure it fully understands the information it needs to communicate.

Fundamentally, the Communications is student-focused and committed to highlighting the many successes of students. The Department regularly collaborates with all district departments to effectively execute the mission and vision of Rich Township High School District 227, consistently promoting the values that support an innovative environment for students to thrive.

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Current Department Make-Up

Campus Photographer (stipend)	3
Campus Webmaster (stipend)	2
Campus Publicity (stipend)	2
Coordinator	1
	<hr/>
Total:	6

- Each school has one (1) Campus Photographer to visually capture day-to-day campus life and assist in the production of multimedia for promotional or informational use of the District.
- Rich Central and Rich East each have one (1) Campus Publicity personnel, which manages social media marketing campaigns and day-to-day activities including: create, curate, and manage all published content; design, create and manage promotions and social ad campaigns, being sure to integrate with the District's overall marketing campaign plan and channels; monitor, listen and respond to users to promote brand identity and other duties as assigned.
- Rich Central and Rich East each have one (1) Campus Webmaster to perform all day-to-day maintenance of web pages, assuring pages and changes are made to accurately reflect current information
- The Coordinator is responsible for duties at District Office and assists at all three campuses.

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Strategic Communications

The Communications Department follows a Communications Guide prepared by the Donovan Group in an effort to improve the District's communication and stakeholder engagement. In March 2019, Rich Township High School District 227 conducted a survey made available to all faculty and staff to take an inventory of existing communications efforts. The data from this survey found important trends that would help inform the district's communications planning efforts.

The guide determined several different communication goals for the District and identified multiple tactics the District must implement to reach its stakeholders. Additionally, the Department outlined all distribution channels available to the District to reach its stakeholders. The District's print and digital marketing channels include:

- District and campus websites
- District and campus social media profiles (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat)
- Email
- Text messaging and robocalls
- Mobile app
- District and campus marquee
- Newsletter (print and digital)
- Press releases

As positive news, upcoming events or new district initiatives are shared with the Communications Department, the Coordinator takes a multi-tiered approach in deciding the best method of distribution, which will allow the District to reach the maximum amount of people and communicate the desired message. The correct mix of these communication methods will increase the District's ability to rebrand, inform and update students, parents, staff and stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

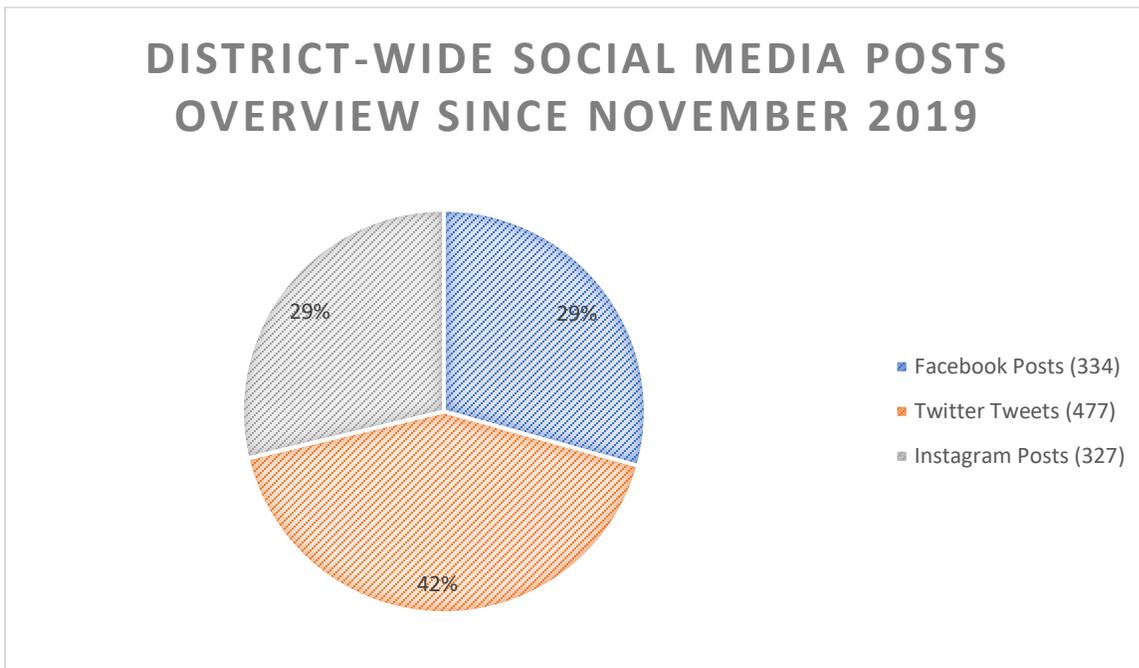
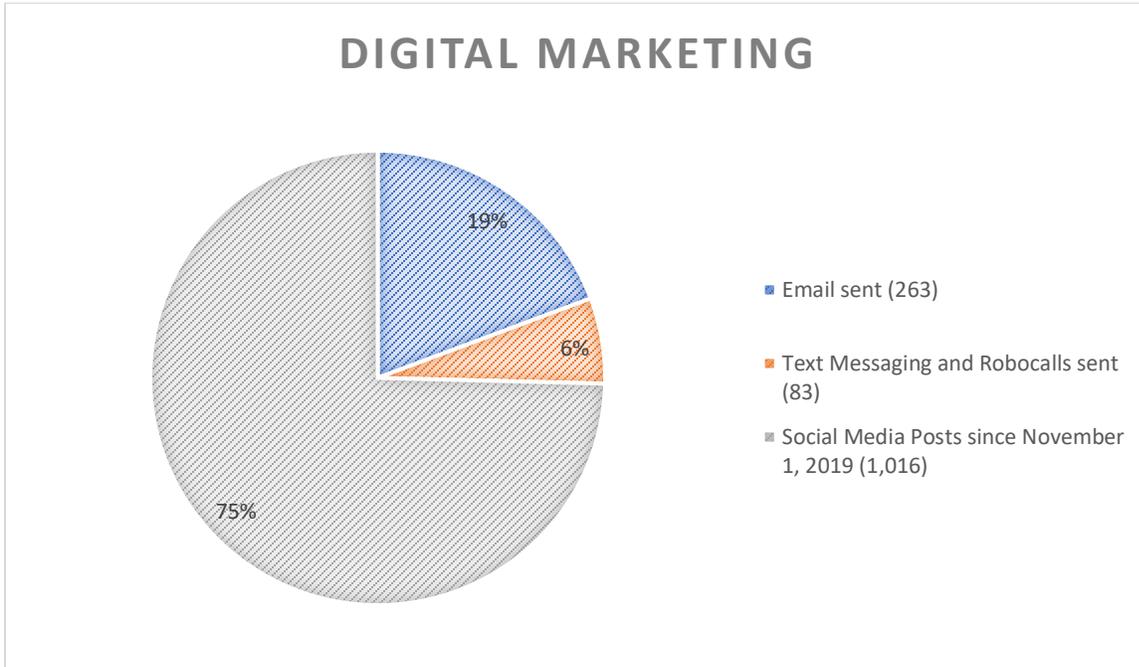
In November 2019, the Department integrated its social media accounts with Hootsuite, a social media management hub, that helps build and scale the organization through post scheduling, detailed analytics, and cross-channel synchronicity. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram Insights and analytics also assist in guiding the Department's social media marketing efforts.

As of April 2020, the District and campus Facebook pages have reached over 141,000 people through organic posts. The District and campus Twitter accounts earned nearly 413,000 impressions over a twelve-month period. An impression is the number of times a user saw a tweet on Twitter. In November 2019, the Department began monitoring Instagram campaign effectiveness. The primary metrics used to gauge effectiveness are new followers. As of April 2020, the District-wide Instagram follower count has grown from 1,067 to 1,244, an increase of 16.6 percent.

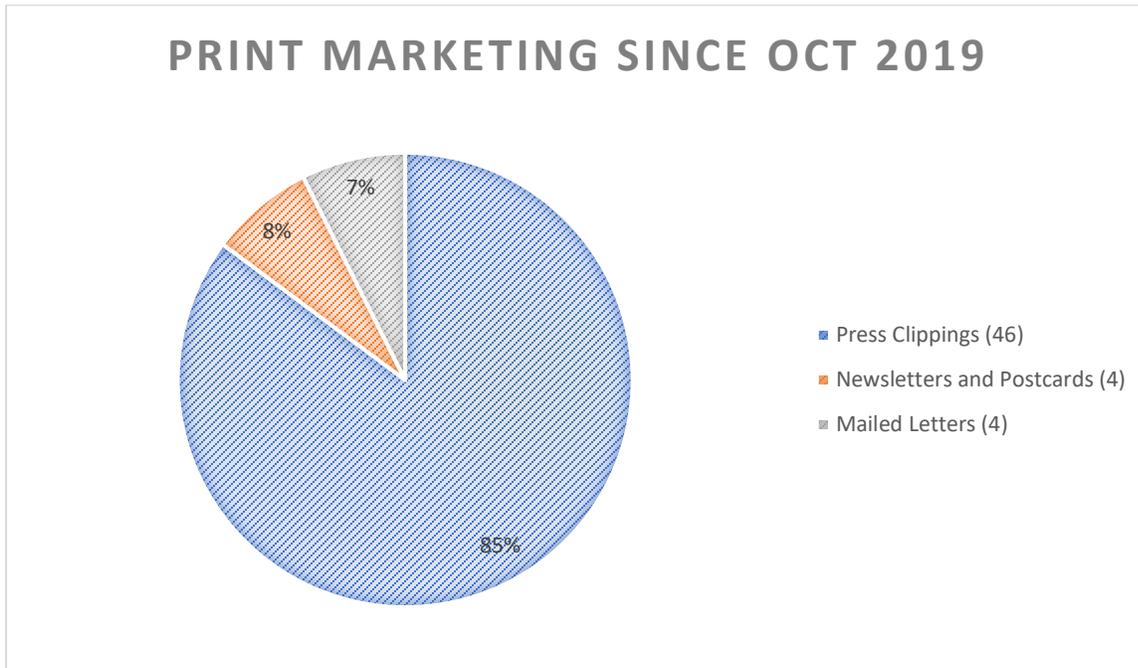
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Communications Composition

The following chart displays the composition of the Communications Department's print and digital outreach efforts since April 2019, unless stated otherwise:



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Methods of Communication

The Communications Department is responsible for staying abreast to communications best practices and ensuring the information that is distributed from the District reaches its stakeholders. The following are some of the major methods of communications the Department uses to reach our stakeholders.

Digital Marketing

Email

The Communications Department uses Constant Contact and Blackboard Connect for bulk email services. At the beginning of each school year, updated contact lists of parents, staff, faculty, community members, and other groups as requested are uploaded to each of our email service providers. Blackboard Connect is integrated with PowerSchool, the District's online learning management system, which imports parent, staff and faculty contact information. Community member contact information is not stored in Blackboard Connect. Additionally, Blackboard Connect offers the ability to create targeted contact lists, which can be segmented based on grade level, campus, language, gender, and type of stakeholder. This program is primarily used for crisis communication purposes or to communicate educational information to parents.

As parent communication is sent via Blackboard Connect, an additional email is sent via Constant Contact to ensure parents are receiving the District's messages. The District maintains an updated contact list of all District parents in Constant Contact as well; however, Constant Contact allows the District to maintain a targeted contact list of

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community members, segmented by the Village, school community, and other relevant factors. This email service provider is primarily used to share District e- newsletters with the community, conduct surveys, and ensure parents are receiving relevant information.

At the conclusion of the 2019-20 academic year, the Department will review contact lists stored in Blackboard Connect and Constant Contact to ensure outdated contact information is removed and new contact information is added. Additionally, stakeholders can “opt-in” to District emails on both platforms to subscribe to District notifications at any time.

Text Messaging and Robocalls

Blackboard Connect offers mass text messaging and robocall services to the District and its parents, staff, faculty and administration. As previously stated, Blackboard Connect is integrated with PowerSchool. This integration allows for the District to import the phone numbers of parents and District staff. Text alerts and robocalls are primarily used to notify stakeholders of upcoming deadlines, share positive news, and emergency communication, and is accompanied by one of the other methods mentioned in this report. At the beginning of each school year, parents, staff and faculty will be required to sign up for text alerts.

Website

The District and campus websites are updated on a consistent basis to share current information and initiatives. The District’s current web developer and content management system (CMS) service provider is eSchoolview. The Department’s goal remains to design a student-focused website that tell the story of Rich Township High Schools through an engaging and user-friendly layout. This will help create the positive brand identity and reputation of quality and academic excellence.

Social Media and Mobile App

The District and campus social media accounts are regularly updated. The Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages focus on positive news and events, important milestones and key initiatives for student achievement. High quality HD videos are also shared in an effort to properly communicate to students, parents and the community. The updates are also distributed via the District app. Social media marketing provides a cost-effective way for the District and its schools to build brand recognition throughout the Rich Township community, also allowing for two-way communication with our stakeholders. Further, which platform the Department chooses to share content depends on the target audience. For example, it can be deduced based on Facebook Insights that the platform is best optimized to reach parents and grandparents. Conversely, Instagram, a visual content sharing platform, appeals primarily to younger parents (40 and under) and students. The largest demographic group of Twitter users are between the ages of 18 and 29 years old.

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Print Marketing

Direct Mail

Newsletters, postcards and direct mail remain effective communication methods for the Communications Department. The use of photos and condensed text allows recipients the opportunity to receive the information and review it quickly. A quarterly print newsletter is distributed to ensure the community receives the positive news on a periodic basis. The newsletter is also available in digital format for anyone outside the district that would like to review it. Targeted postcards containing important deadlines or other key information are distributed to families on an as-needed basis. Direct letters that share new district initiatives or highly relevant, important information are also mailed home to our families, as needed, to ensure our stakeholders are receiving the communication. Mailed letters are also always available on the District website or via email.

Press Clippings

Evaluating the District's brand performance in the media is one of the key tools in analyzing the effectiveness of the Department's efforts. The Department occasionally purchases ad space to promote upcoming events in local print newspapers. Additionally, the Coordinator frequently distributes news releases to a growing media contact list. The Department uses Google Alerts to track which news sites our stories are reaching. Since October 2019, the District has been covered in 46 digital and print media publications.

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Future Initiatives

As we approach the end of fiscal year 2020, the Communications Department is planning and continuing to execute the needs for the upcoming transition into 2020-21 academic year, as well as responding to the needs of our stakeholders amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Communications Department is working closely with the Office of Educational Services, Office of Business and Operations, Office of Human Resources, the Donovan Group and Global 360 Marketing to ensure a seamless transition for our students, parents, and community as a whole, and also provide them with key information that guarantees Rich Township High School as their choice school. Additionally, the Department is identifying options to celebrate our senior students and retirees should mass public gatherings be canceled throughout the end of summer 2020 due to COVID-19. The following is a list of projects the Communications Department will undertake in planning and implementing for the consolidation and in response to COVID-19:

- Website and Mobile App Redesign
 - This project will consist of content migration, digital rebranding, user-experience optimization, and A/B testing
 - The new website and app will launch July 1, 2020

- Video Campaign
 - The Department will produce promotional and marketing video content for the upcoming 2020-21 school year that introduce stakeholders to District facilities, boundaries, instructional opportunities and activities.
 - The Department will launch a video campaign with the theme “District 227 Stories.” The monthly series will feature interviews with current students, alumni, staff, and business and community leaders to demonstrate the district’s core values in action.

- Print Marketing
 - The Department will create a four-panel booklet detailing the District’s core values, academic initiatives and extracurricular opportunities. This booklet will be distributed to local businesses, real estate agents, and community partners.

- Events
 - The Department will create events that highlight the District positively and attract media coverage. In the event social distancing guidelines are still in place by June 2020, the Department, in collaboration with Educational Services, will hold alternate or virtual end-of-year and consolidation activities for incoming students, graduating seniors, retirees, current students, staff, families and community members.