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School District over
25,000

Entry Category:

Marketing
Communications

Communication
Staff Size: 5

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Yes, Omaha Public Schools. You Do Have a Brand! **#OPSProud Brand Launch**



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Yes, Omaha Public Schools. You Do Have a Brand!

#OPSProud Brand Launch

SYNOPSIS

Branding is the foundation of any organization's reputation. However, branding a public school district is a relatively new concept. As the largest public school system in Nebraska, serving more than 53,000 students, image and reputation is vital for Omaha Public Schools (OPS). The District had a logo for years but didn't have a brand that lived the mission. In a time of shrinking budgets, test score scrutiny and an array of choices in parochial, private and charter schools, a positive reputation is integral.

In the five years leading toward the brand launch, the district had experienced turmoil in many areas of the organization, including the highest level of leadership. Media stories were almost always negative. Research showed that parents no longer had trust in the district and staff morale was plummeting.

In the fall of 2016, OPS began rolling out its first-ever formal brand in a phased approach. Over the course of six months, OPS spent time sharing what branding is, the importance of it and what the benefits for OPS could be. The OPS brand launch included access for all staff to branded materials via the OPS Brand portal: www.opsbrand.org. Staff no longer needed permission to get access to brand logos and templates. They had them available at their fingertips. The launch also included a week-long community celebration of OPS (#OPSProud Week), ambient branding, new internal communication channels and a number of staff recognition programs. Integral to the success of the program was the identification of brand ambassadors at every building and department throughout the district (nearly 120).

The results have helped produce increased staff morale, increased organizational pride, increased social media engagement, shifted a predominately negative media conversation to a more positive one and created a consistent look and feel for district materials. The brand has become something more than a conversation piece for OPS. It is embedded into the culture. #OPSProud can be found everywhere throughout the district and it isn't just coming from the district office anymore.



BACKGROUND

Omaha Public Schools is the largest pre-k-12 public school system in Nebraska, serving more than 53,000 students, nearly one out of every five students in the state. The district is also one of the largest employers with more than 10,000 full and part-time employees. With an annual total budget of more than \$600 million and a \$421 million bond, the district impacts the local economy immensely. Therefore, when the district experiences challenges, the impact reverberates.

In the five years leading up to the Omaha Public Schools brand launch, the district faced a number of public image crises. The district had experienced turmoil in all areas of the organization, including the highest level of leadership. The long-time [superintendent retired from the district with an unexpected and unprecedented \\$1 million payout](#), drawing public scrutiny and major criticism. The [superintendent hired to replace him was fired before ever starting](#) the job due to inappropriate explicit emails discovered just weeks before she was scheduled to start. In the aftermath of the scandal, an interim leader was appointed for a year. The Board of Education, which oversees the district policies, experienced years of political turmoil. Public meetings were hostile with members sometimes raising their voices at one another other across

RESEARCH

Omaha Public Schools regularly conducts a variety of primary research to collect feedback from stakeholder groups to help improve projects and programs. This feedback was used for assessment to better understand the pulse of the district; it was also used to substantiate the recommendation for a district brand and to develop a plan that would meet the needs of all audiences. The following research was used to determine the need for a brand launch.

In December 2013, a [needs analysis](#) was conducted by a third party consultant. The findings were directly related to the organization and operation of the district but they did shed light on the fact that a large number of students were leaving the school district and seeking educational opportunities with other districts.

The first of two NSPRA communication audits was conducted in 2013. The first audit gave the previous communications team a starting point for how to implement an effective communications program. In order for new leadership to best gauge strides made in the areas of communication, a second communication audit was conducted in 2016. [The 2016 audit](#) also included SCoPE surveys of parents, staff and community. Recommendations from the audits included to repair broken trust, create internal communication channels, OPS needs to be primary source of info, minimize negative media coverage, implement branding strategies, facilitate employee engagement opportunities and celebrating employee success.

In 2014, Omaha Public Schools finalized a [strategic plan](#). The plan was developed through feedback from staff, parents and community. Feedback was collected through formal interviews, emails, phone calls, surveys, focus groups and community forums. The plan outlined seven guiding principles for the district to focus on for the next five years. Principle 7 was accessible, transparent and two-way communication. The plan called for improving internal and

the table. The media covered the district frequently but it was almost always a negative story, overshadowing the hard work of students and staff.

In addition, there was a lack of transparency. Decisions were often cited as having been made by top administration without feedback from families or staff. Those decisions were then never clearly communicated prior to their implementation. This left staff, parents and the community feeling untrusting of the district. Many also didn't want to provide feedback or get behind new initiatives because of how previous initiatives had been implemented.

Parents new to the community were persuaded not to enroll their kids in OPS by neighbors and community members due to the turmoil.

In early 2016, Omaha Public Schools was in a unique position. The district had a relatively new superintendent, new communications leadership was on-boarded and the district was making strides with test scores, graduation rates and the achievement gap; however, the district's reputation was still plagued with volatility. The transition provided an opportunity to restore trust with the community, change perception, engage staff and change the conversation from negative to positive.

external communication with stakeholders.

Each year the OPS research department conducts climate surveys for the district and individual buildings. The OPS communication team spent time reviewing and analyzing the data from several years prior.

Knowing that the media conversation was perceived as largely negative, a media analysis was done during the research phase. Analysis results found that in 2015-16, there were more than 750 local traditional media articles, which referenced Omaha Public Schools. In those articles, OPS officials were cited 27.3 percent of the time and 17.6 percent of the articles had a negative sentiment.

In addition to research of the current state of the District, the OPS team also looked for examples outside the district. Branding is seen as a relatively new concept for pre-k-12 public education; however there are several districts that have applied the principles of branding. The OPS communication team engaged in phone conversations with four school districts from across the country who had recently conducted brand launches to gather feedback, insights and lessons learned.

The team also reviewed case studies of how businesses, non-profits and universities rebranded their organizations. The research indicated that business organizations and universities who rebranded typically saw immediate results in their bottom line and/or enrollment. However, these organizations spent upwards of \$100,000-\$500,000 on their rebranding initiatives. For some organizations, this included reprinting of branding materials, while for others it was just the cost of research and developing the campaign launch.

After months of extensive research, the need for a formal brand naturally emerged from the data. It was clear that audiences knew what the current reputation of Omaha Public Schools was and there was a desire for an improved reputation.

ANALYSIS/PLANNING

In spring 2016, the district communications team developed a strategic communication department plan that aligned with the district strategic plan. The in-house communication team consists of five people. After spending several months reviewing and conducting extensive research, the team determined that the district needed to define their brand, set guidelines and live the mission through the brand. There were great things happening, but the story wasn't being told.

Knowing that branding is a fairly new concept for pre-k-12 education, the communications team recognized that educating others about what branding was and the importance of it had to be an integral part of the brand launch. The more stakeholders knew and understood about the importance of branding, the more likely the implementation was to be successful. Reviewing the primary research, there was strong evidence that OPS staff had to be brought along in the process early on in order for them to support the effort.

Recognizing that the district had implemented initiatives too quickly in the past and without staff input, the plan had to adequately prepare for the proper timing of roll-out. Therefore, the communications team planned a phased approach for roll-out. The planned phases were: (1) Administrators and building leaders (2) Brand ambassadors (3) All staff and (4) Parents and community. Tactics were planned for each phase of the rollout, tailored to meeting the needs of the identified audience. The communications team hoped that by rolling out in a phased approach, they could gather feedback from each group and if adjustments needed to be made to later phases, they could be implemented before entering the next phase.

Business Case Developed

The first step of the planned phases called for developing a business case to get buy-in from key district leaders. The business case shared the importance of branding and what it could mean for OPS. The communications team shared the business case with OPS leadership and Board leaders, after which each group provided input and offered their buy-in.

Goals

The launch plan outlined four primary goals. They were: (1) Shift negative media conversation (2) Increase organizational pride (3) Stabilize the image and story and (4) Create a cohesive look and feel.

Objectives

The goals would be met through the following measurable objectives:

- **Shift Media Conversation:** Decrease the negative sentiment of local media stories by 5 percent during the 2016-17 school year. **Current status:** Sentiment of local media stories was 17.6 percent negative during the 2015-16 school year.
- **Increase Organizational Pride:** Achieve 75 percent of OPS staff members citing they are proud to work in OPS following brand launch and #OPSProud Week in May 2017. Increase the staff and community organizational pride score on climate surveys by 0.05 (2015-2016 v 2016-17). **Current status:** Qualitative data showed that many staff were not proud of where they work.
- **Increase Social Media Engagement where brand is**

displayed for top-of-mind awareness: Increase the number of followers on social media platforms by 50 percent by January 2018. **Current status:** In August 2016, OPS had 5,382 followers on Facebook and 5,243 on Twitter.

- **Create Consistency with District Produced Materials:** By October 2017, 100 percent of OPS created external materials would include the district brand. **Current status:** No consistency prior to launch.
- **Increase and Maintain Public Trust and Confidence:** Increase trust with OPS parents by 10 percent by May 2017. **Current status:** Qualitative data shows that trust is broken for OPS.
- **Bring OPS Mission to Life:** Achieve 75 percent staff participation in one or more #OPSProud Week activity during April 2017. Achieve 50 percent of staff using district branded materials by May 2017.

Audiences

The five target audiences identified were OPS employees, OPS families (parents and students), OPS Board of Education members, the larger community and members of the news media. Strategies and tactics were designed specifically for each audience.

Key Messages

The communications team developed four key messages that were used throughout the launch.

The messages were:

1. Branding is the marketing process of creating a unique name, image and message through internal and external campaigns with a consistent theme.
2. Developing clear, cohesive and consistent messaging and marketing materials increases our brand awareness in the community, helps bring our mission to life and increases audience engagement and organizational pride.
3. At Omaha Public Schools, we strive to be innovative and offer great opportunities, quality education, caring teachers and staff - and ultimately - to be the best district in the region.
4. Brand standards are guidelines that detail the colors, graphics, logo specifications and fonts that comprise our brand identity. Please refer to the official guide at www.opsbrand.org to familiarize yourself with our logos, color palette, fonts, and other graphical elements. You will find instructions and examples for usage, as well as templates and artwork available for download.

Budget

At a time when many school districts, including Omaha Public Schools, are operating on a very small increase in budget each year, the communications team knew they had to be very deliberate regarding spending. If the effort cost too much money, the odds of success could decrease because audiences would focus on the tax dollars spent. If too little was spent, the program may not be successful at all due to underfunding. The communications team decided on a budget of less than \$23,000 (excluding in-house labor). The budget included development of design materials, the initial framework of the launch and central office signage. The communications team then created additional branded materials and enhanced the launch plan in-house, as needed. Actual expenses came in under budget (see page 6).

IMPLEMENTATION

Based on research, Omaha Public Schools knew it was important to gather staff feedback and bring staff along in the process. They also had to be “taught” what branding was and the importance of it. Therefore a phased soft roll-out of the brand launch made the most sense. The rollout began by presenting the business case to key district leaders in September and October of 2016. Next, on November 18, 2016, OPS held a press conference to announce that students had achieved the highest test scores in district history. As part of this press conference, a local credit union co-branded a city bus with the OPS brand. Students then signed the bus with reasons why they were #OPSProud. This good news was positioned to kick-off the idea of sharing the OPS story with others and building up the OPS reputation.

Two days later, the communications team presented the OPS brand to principals and administrators. This presentation, as well as all of them, included information explaining the role and purpose of branding, its importance for OPS, as well as the impact it would have. Principals also were shown what the new brand materials looked like. Principals and administrators liked the concept of sharing the OPS story with the community, but there were concerns that it was one more thing to do on an already full plate. Some even believed the effort was designed to “mask” the issues playing out in the media.

Brand Ambassadors

Each principal or administrator was asked to designate an individual to be a brand ambassador for their building/department. This brand ambassador would take on the bulk of planning brand activities for each building. They attend once-a-month meetings and are tasked with staying up-to-date on branding efforts and share those with their building. They were also charged with ensuring their buildings printed materials complied with the brand standards. The brand ambassadors are asked to provide regular feedback to the communications team on branding activities and other initiatives that are implemented throughout the district. These 100+ employees were instrumental in bringing #OPSProud to life.

Roll-out Timing

While the district communications team was working behind the scenes on a variety of launch items, they began implementing the new branding logo and colors on documents in the fall/winter of 2016. Doing this discretely was key to the success of the program.

In a time where districts are continually being asked to cut budgets, these items could have been viewed as “fluff” by those who didn’t understand their reputational value. The original plan was to roll-out the branding to brand ambassadors and all staff as they returned from winter break. However, prior to launch the current superintendent announced his retirement, which created an internal and external stir. In the process of hiring a new superintendent several months later, all finalist candidates withdrew. In addition, the Board was reported as not working well together. Therefore, the communications team continually made plans to launch, then kept pushing it back. Timing of the information was very important, and the team tried to remain cognizant of the timing.

The communications team held their first meeting with Brand Ambassadors on Feb. 2, 2017. Brand Ambassadors

were given sponsor-donated goodie bags with donated swag items to help show their support of brand launch efforts with others. The team then rolled out the branding with all staff in March. They introduced the branding, brand ambassadors and emphasized a path moving forward.

The roll-out email included the launch of the brand portal at: opsbrand.org. The brand portal was created to ensure that all staff throughout the district had access to branding materials. The portal outlines the brand guidelines, displays the district color palette and shows dos and don'ts of using branded materials. Staff can also download logos in various colors and formats, templates, graphic elements and more. The launch email also included an [OPS Brand Video](#) that was shared with all staff, families and on social media.

#OPSPROUD Week

In early April, the brand was introduced to the community through the announcement of #OPSProud Week, which took place April 24-28, 2017. The goal of #OPSProud Week is to provide a time for students, staff, families and the community to come together to celebrate the great things happening every day. Each day during #OPSProud Week students, staff and the community had an opportunity to display their support for Omaha Public Schools. The Mayor of Omaha Jean Stothert proclaimed that week for #OPSProud and a local skyscraper turned their [building blue and gold with lights to show their support](#). At least a dozen other companies helped support the efforts by providing goodies, giveaways or discounts for staff, including a local non-profit, Nebraska Loves Public Schools which offered free I Love Public Schools t-shirts to staff. Staff were also invited to a high school stadium to take a [photo spelling out “OPS.”](#)

As a way to engage all staff and students together, each student and staff member was given a card that said [I'm #OPSProud because...](#) Teachers and students then filled out or could draw a picture of why they were #OPSProud. The cards were then displayed in each building and shared on social media. It was incredibly impactful to have 62,000+ staff members and students coming together to share unity behind the district.

It is likely the most impactful media piece during #OPSProud Week was a high school [teacher's OpEd](#), which was published in the Omaha World-Herald, the largest newspaper in the state. She wrote about enrolling her child in an OPS school for kindergarten. Friends and neighbors tried to convince her to send her children to another school district, but she resisted and shared she doesn't regret it. The experiences she and her child have had with the school have been outstanding and she encourages others to come take a look.

To build on this teacher's message, a local credit union offered to pay for co-branded advertising to promote parents coming to take a look at what OPS schools have to offer. They financed seven different local, [30-second spot TV commercials](#) that ran over 200 times during high school and middle school open enrollment.

Something To Tout About

In the summer of 2017, OPS introduced the “Something to Tout About” poster series. Ten acrylic frames and posters were hung in high-traffic areas throughout the District offices with positive, gee whiz facts about the district

successes. As a public building, there are frequently staff, parents and community members in the building. Therefore, it was a great opportunity to highlight some of the great things people don't realize about OPS. These posters will be changed out annually. In addition, several central office departments and buildings are currently undergoing renovations. As those renovations take place, they are implementing aspects of the branding, including ambient colors and logos.

#30 WAYS TO SAY YAY!

The research determined that one of the areas OPS needed to work on most was staff engagement and morale. The communications team knew they couldn't just implement a recognition program if staff weren't happy with where they work. Therefore, implementing the branding before a recognition program was strategic. Once the branding was in place and the culture had started to shift, OPS implemented a program, #30 Ways to Say Yay! in January 2018. This recognition program provides an outline for district leadership to recognize at least one staff member a week (per site) but gives them enough control that the program can be tailored to the individual school building culture. Recognized staff then receive a gift card or #OPSProud swag item donated from local businesses.

#OPSProud Spotlight and #OPSProud Principal Spotlight

At each Board of Education meeting, a group of students and/or staff member are recognized for outstanding work. At each principal meeting, a principal is also recognized for their outstanding work. A [video is then created to highlight each principal's efforts](#). The video is shared with colleagues as they are recognized and then it is shared with the OPS community on social media. Each recognized #OPSProud Spotlight individual is then provided with an #OPSProud lapel pin to wear.

Board Digest

The [Board Digest](#) was one of the first steps the OPS communications team took to increase internal communications. While still planning the branding efforts, the Board Digest was one of the first subtle places the new brand logo and colors was displayed. The Board Digest was created to keep staff informed about actions happening at Board of Education meetings. The e-newsletter is emailed to all 10,000 staff the day following each board meeting. This publication is also linked from

the district website for access by community members. It averages an open rate of more than 50 percent.

Inside OPS

The [Inside OPS](#) is a once a month publication provided electronically to all staff and families throughout the district. It is also available online for community members. It highlights new initiatives; shares students and staff awards and gives parents an inside look at the things happening day-to-day. It was previously done in paper format and distributed to less than 300 people. It now reaches roughly 63,000 people each month and averages an open rate of 55 percent.

Timeline Of Major Activities

Activity	Date
Business Case Presentations	September-October 2016
Board Digest Launches	October 2016
Test Scores Press Conference	November 18, 2016
Co-branded bus runs through Omaha Metro	November 2016 - March 2017
Launch with Principals	November 21, 2016
First Brand Ambassador Meeting	February 2, 2017
Email to All Staff from Superintendent	March 27, 2017 at 10 a.m.
Email to All Staff with Launch Information from District Communications	March 27, 2017 at 2 p.m.
#OPSProud Week	April 24-28, 2017
Ambient Branding at District Offices	July 2017
"Something to Tout About" Series	
#OPSProud Principal Spotlights Begin	August 2017
"Come Take a Look" co-branded TV Advertisements	November 2017 - January 2018
OPSSpiritDay! Kicks off	December 2017
Inside OPS re-launched online	December 2017
Launch of #30 Ways to Say Yay	January 17, 2018

EVALUATION

Branding is an ongoing endeavor and an organization is never going to check it off the list as complete. It should constantly be top of mind and embedded into the everyday practices of an organization. In fact, a solid brand should be so embedded in the culture that people do not even realize it is branding – it is just part of the organizational culture. Omaha Public Schools is on the way to accomplishing this.

The OPS brand launch has had tremendous impact on the district and community. Some of these impacts are measurable and some are not. The number of followers on social media has increased, the sentiment of local media stories is more positive, staff are more engaged and the culture within is beginning to change. Although hard to measure, brand ambassadors have shared that the culture just "feels" different. They have shared that staff are more

positive and more excited to come to work every day to support the OPS mission. Staff and community members alike have taken the time to mention the changes they have noticed with district communications staff.

In order to measure the success of the brand launch, Omaha Public Schools evaluated the objectives outlined in the plan. They also took an in-depth review of social media trends, news media sentiment, results from brand ambassador surveys, results from climate surveys and more. The results can be found below:

- **Shift Media Conversation:** Decrease the negative sentiment of local media stories by 5 percent during the 2016-17 school year. **Results:** During 2016-17, the media sentiment of negative news stories decreased by 6.9 percent over the 2015-16 school year (from

17.6 percent to 10.7 percent). In a branding survey (May 2017), 32 percent of staff said they had seen an increase in positive media stories.

- Increase Organizational Pride:** Achieve 75 percent of OPS staff citing they are proud to work in OPS following brand launch and #OPSProud Week in May 2017. Qualitative data showed that many staff were not proud of where they work. Increase the staff and community organizational pride score by 0.05 (2015-2016 v 2016-17). Climate survey asks parents and staff to rate how proud they are of their school on a 5-point Likert scale. **Results:** In a branding survey, 95 percent of staff members said they were just as proud if not more proud to work in OPS since the launch of the brand. In a climate survey, the number of staff who said their pride increased rose from 3.83 (2015-16) to 3.94 (2016-17) on a 5 point Likert scale. The number of parents who said they noticed more pride amongst adults (community) rose from 4.31 (2015-16) to 4.38 (2016-17). Results exceeded the 0.05 goal.
- Increase Social Media Engagement where brand is displayed for top-of-mind awareness:** Increase the number of followers on social media platforms by 50 percent by January 2018. **Results:** From August 2016 to January 2018, OPS more than doubled the number of Facebook followers from 5,382 to 11,567. Twitter followers increased by 60 percent jumping from 5,243 to a total of 8,409 in January 2018.
- Create Consistency with District Produced Materials:** By October 2017, 100 percent of OPS created external materials would include the district brand. **Results:** In October 2017, 100 percent of district external documents produced by OPS were branded. Brand ambassadors ensure brand requirements are followed at the school building level.
- Increase and Maintain Public Trust and Confidence:** Increase trust with OPS parents by 10 percent by May 2017. **Results:** In a branding survey (May 2017), 12 percent of OPS staff said they noticed an increased positive perception among parents and community. The District communications team noticed a significant reduction in the number of complaints and comments regarding lack of trust.
- Bring OPS Mission to Life:** Achieve 75 percent staff participation in one or more #OPSProud Week activities during April 2017. Achieve 50 percent of staff using district branded materials by May 2017. **Results:** In a branding survey, 78 percent of staff said they participated in at least one #OPSProud Week activity in April 2017. Fifty-two (52) percent of staff used the new branding materials or planned to soon (several documents only printed once a year) on a branding survey (May 2017).

One year following the launch, these culture building efforts are ostensible and a residual cultural impact has echoed the strategic, coordinated efforts of the district communications team. The efforts continue to exceed campaign goals. As a top 100 urban school district and emerging leader in urban education around the country, OPS is reaping some of the benefits of building a positive reputation and is poised to continue building its brand, reputation, culture and the value proposition offered to the community of Omaha and the state of Nebraska.

It isn't just the OPS community that is noticing the changes. National research companies like Hanover Research, have

looked to the OPS Communication team for insights on how they launched branding efforts successfully. Due to the success of the campaign, local chapter professional associations like PRSA and National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) have also asked the communications team to present the district's branding efforts as a case study.

Brand Launch Expenses

Omaha Public Schools paid \$19,675 for the brand development, launch framework, and central office signage. That was \$3,325 less than originally budgeted. The OPS communications team has since developed additional materials in-house and expanded the brand launch framework.

Brand Development	\$11,900
Brand Launch	\$5,000
Central Office Signage	\$2,775
Total:	\$19,675

The team estimated that an additional 100 hours was spent enhancing the framework. A private sector estimate for 10 hours of work is \$1,500. This resulted in a huge cost savings for the district. The OPS Brand launch would not have been as successful without the support of community partners. It is estimated that they spent \$28,500 enhancing the brand launch through support of giveaway items, purchase of #OPSProud branded swag, co-advertising and ambient branding materials. These expenses are far less than many of the case studies the team reviewed when researching branding efforts. Many of those organizations spent approximately \$100,000 - \$500,000 on their branding initiatives.

Challenges

The communications team took great efforts to ensure that staff were brought along in the process and had an understanding of what branding was, but some staff still thought of branding as just "fluff." However, these comments from individuals were few and far between.

In addition, some staff were concerned about the amount of money that was spent on the rebranding efforts. The communications team tried to dispel any rumors about cost by communicating to principals and brand ambassadors where the money came from and that a majority of what staff saw came from business sponsorships.

At the beginning of the launch, some staff expressed they didn't appreciate the timing of the launch. Due to the ongoing issues that were happening, the communications team kept delaying the release and finally could not delay any longer. The team tried to respond to concerned individuals one-on-one to reiterate the importance of the branding and explain that it had been in the works for some time.

None of the challenges OPS experienced derailed the plan, but they did provide quality feedback that was used to enhance the continued efforts of the program.

NSPRA Audit SCoPE Surveys

NSPRA Audit

OPS had communication audits performed by NSPRA in 2013 and 2016. The auditors spent time reviewing current communication efforts, completing 19 focus groups that represented a variety of internal and external audiences and held interviews with OPS leaders and staff.

The findings from 2014 identified several categories as needing improvement. They included: broken trust, OPS itself was not the primary source of information, internal communication was lacking, negative media coverage, local politics had a major impact on OPS and audiences didn't feel they had opportunities for input.

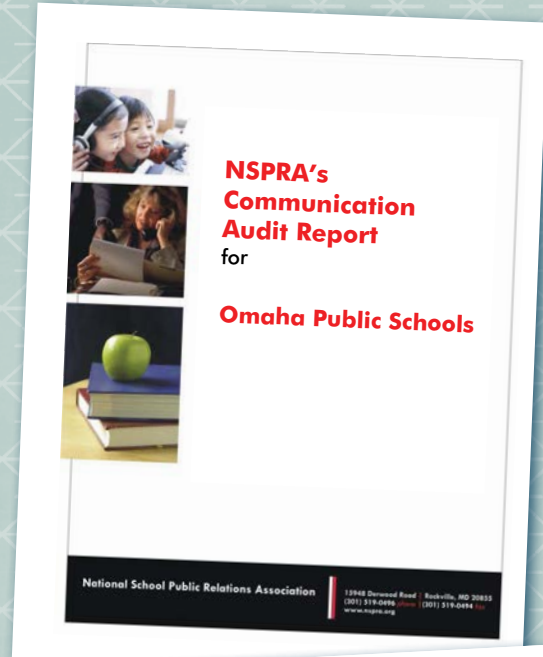
A second audit was conducted in 2016, when new communication leadership onboarded to see what strides had been made in implementing the communication audit recommendations. The auditors found that some improvements had been made but many of the previous identified issues were still lingering including broken trust, negative media coverage and a need for enhanced branding.


SCoPE Surveys

The audit in 2016 also included SCoPE surveys of community, parents and staff. The overall satisfaction of communication from the three groups was (on a 5 point scale)...

- Staff 3.4
- Parents 3.8
- Community 3.4

Among the most significant issues noted were transparency, timely communication and honesty. The areas of allowing opportunities for feedback, sharing the district mission and reputation management also received low scores. The data gave Omaha Public Schools good insight into the areas of communication that were working well and identified areas that needed work.





SCoPE Faculty/Staff Results

Lower Scoring Areas (Average Rating 1-5)

Communication from Worksite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely 3.9 • Open and transparent 3.9
Communication from District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and transparent 3.3 • Trustworthy 3.4 • Timely 3.5
Communication in Key Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District finances and related issues 2.5 • Makes me feel valued as an employee 2.7 • Board of education decisions and actions 2.8 • How I can deliver effective customer service 2.9 • School/district leader decisions 2.9
Engagement and Two-Way Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District has good reputation for handling staff questions/complaints concerns 2.7 • Questions/complaints/concerns resolved to my satisfaction 3.0 • Input and opinion are welcome and valued 3.1

Recommendation – 5A

Continue to enhance branding as #OPSProud and expand marketing efforts.

Along with a strategic communication plan, a comprehensive branding/marketing plan is needed to ensure that both internal and external audiences are continually exposed to OPS' wide variety of program offerings and can communicate the value of its brand. District Communications has made brand perception and reputation management one of its six focus areas. A branding guide and portal have been created to support the #OPSProud and OPS logo and tagline. Brand Ambassadors have been assigned to each school building to support the effort and ensure consistent practices. Integrating brand components into all OPS communications will be key to positioning OPS strongly in an increasingly competitive education market.

There are two key components in developing and reinforcing a brand: the brand promise and the resulting brand experience. District Communications has established a clear brand promise that is being incorporated cross-platform. The brand experience is the actual interaction that customers have with OPS, for example, the mission delivery in schools, student academic experiences, customer service, and quality of facilities.

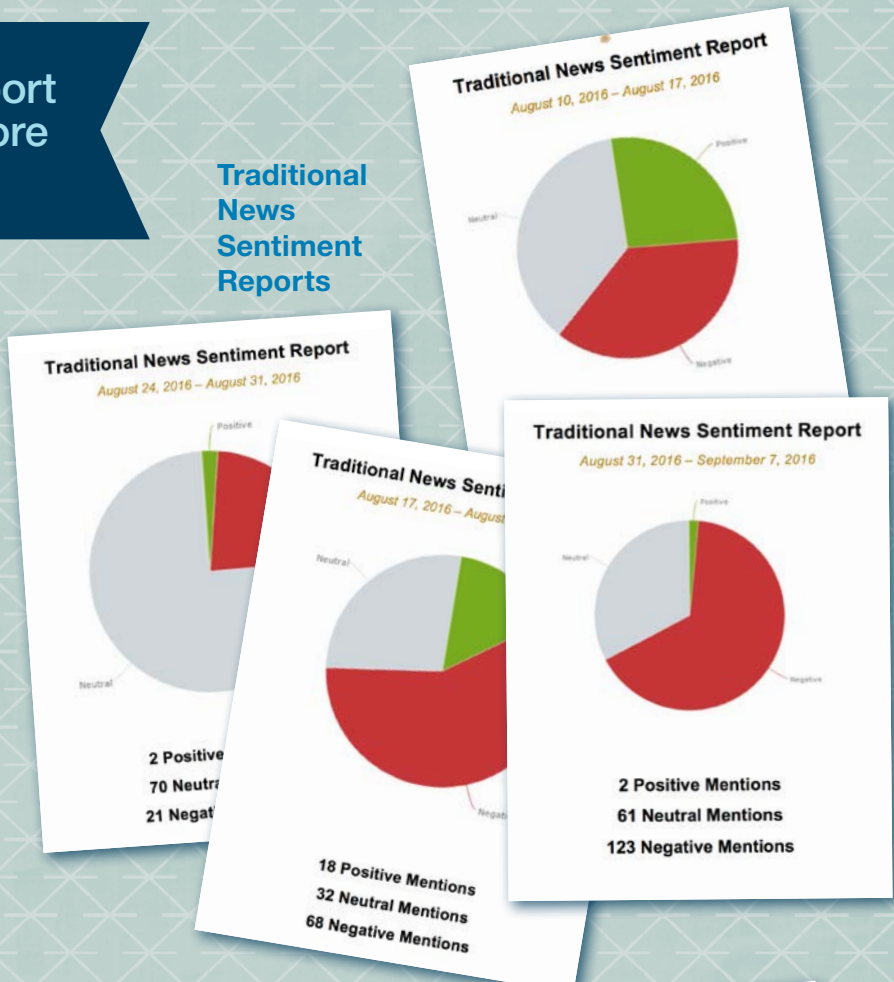
Media Analysis Report and Sentiment Before Brand Launch

Traditional News Sentiment Reports

The communication team conducted an analysis of media articles about Omaha Public Schools and surrounding school districts for the previous five years. Article reviews provided valuable insight into the issues the district faced, as well as the tone and sentiment from traditional media coverage. The team also evaluated the sentiment of stories on a weekly basis and the negative far outweighed the positive or neutral coverage.

The communications team contracted with an outside organization to conduct a media analysis report on past media stories from 2014 to 2016. The report assessed the balance of news coverage, sentiment, influential reporters, topics most often covered and whether OPS provided a statement, interview or was cited in the story.

The report found that in 2015-16, there were more than 750 local traditional media articles that referenced Omaha Public Schools. In those articles, OPS officials were cited 27.3 percent of the time and 17.6 percent of the articles had a negative sentiment.

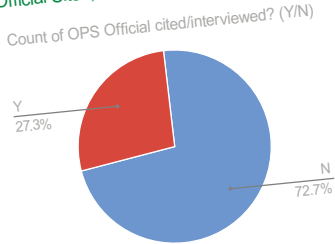


2 Positive
70 Neutral
21 Negative

18 Positive Mentions
32 Neutral Mentions
68 Negative Mentions

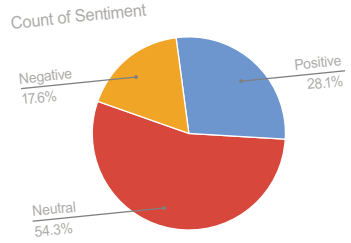
2 Positive Mentions
61 Neutral Mentions
123 Negative Mentions

Number of articles from 2015-2016 with an OPS Official Cited; Statement; Interview (Y or N):
72.7% DID NOT have an OPS official cited.



MEDIA ANALYSIS NOTES/TRENDS

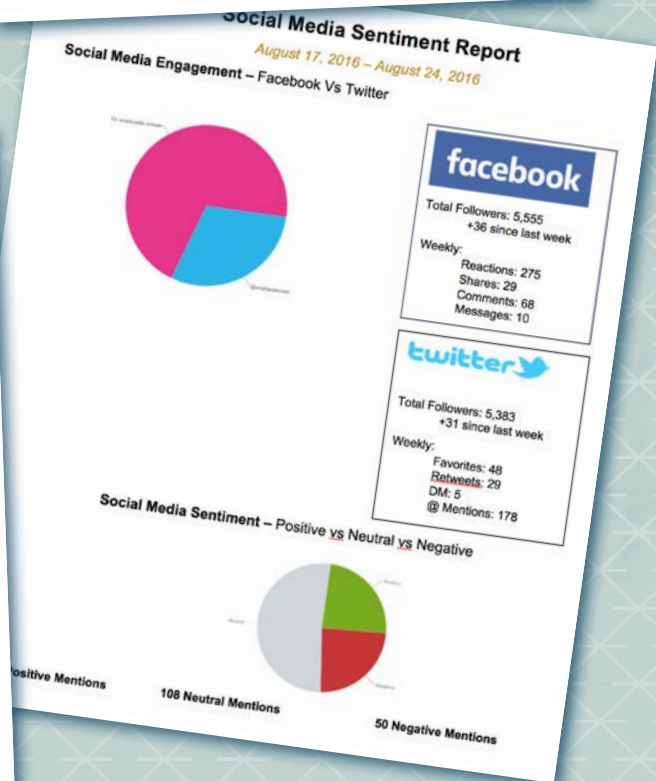
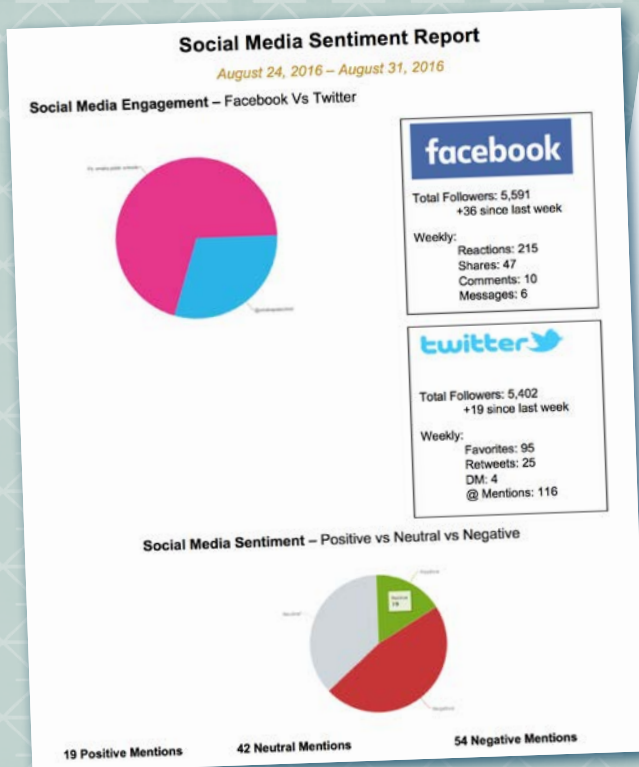
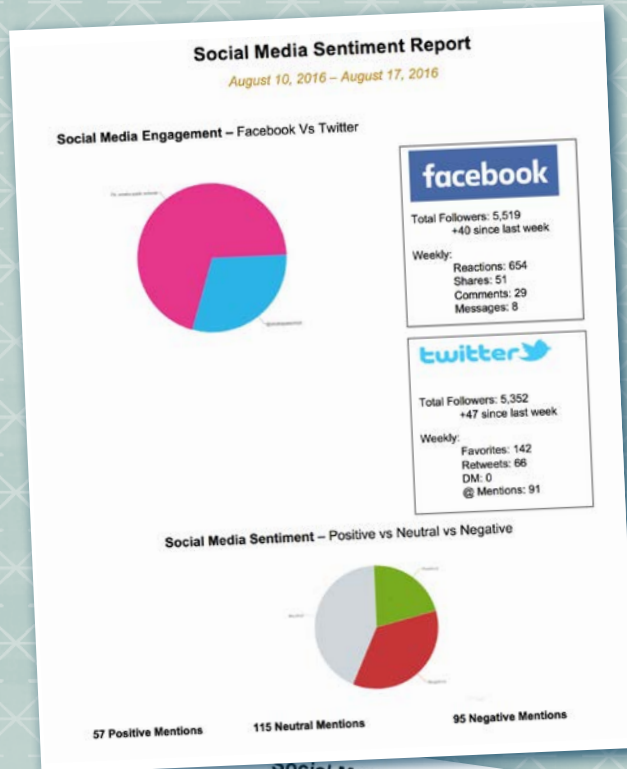
Over 400 articles with Neutral Tone (54.3% of articles); Approximately 28.1% of articles have Positive Tone; 17.6% of articles have a Negative Tone;



Media Analysis Report 2014-2016

Social Media Sentiment Before Brand Launch

In early 2016, OPS was present on social media. However, the content was not strategic and there was a small number of followers. OPS spent time reviewing past content and engagement. OPS communications team recognized that they needed to include social media tactics in their branding roll-out to help increase followers and engagement, as well as decrease the number of negative comments.



Business Case Study

Once the communications team determined that a brand launch was needed, they developed a business case. The business case was used to get buy-in from key district leaders on the importance of branding and what it could mean for the school district. The goal of the business case was to garner support from leadership and throughout the organization in order to move forward with the brand initiative.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BRANDING BUSINESS CASE

CURRENT OPS LOGO

- Can document current logo back to 1988
 - Unsure of original implementation date- believed to be 60s or 70s
- No brand cohesiveness
 - Mismatch of fonts, colors, language, logo and graphic imagery
- Departments have to tried to brand themselves
- Discrepancy in positioning of logo
 - Straight vs slanted

IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING

...the school's/districts mission to life⁶

...ates a consistent and professional visual identity for the school⁶

...es expectations, experiences and a vision for moving forward⁶

Branding and School Enrollment

- With sixty percent of surveyed homebuyers making moves based on school districts -- reputation and brand plays a pivotal roll in district enrollment and success.¹¹

“ Your brand is the single most important investment you can make in your business.”

- Steve Forbes

RECOMMENDATIONS

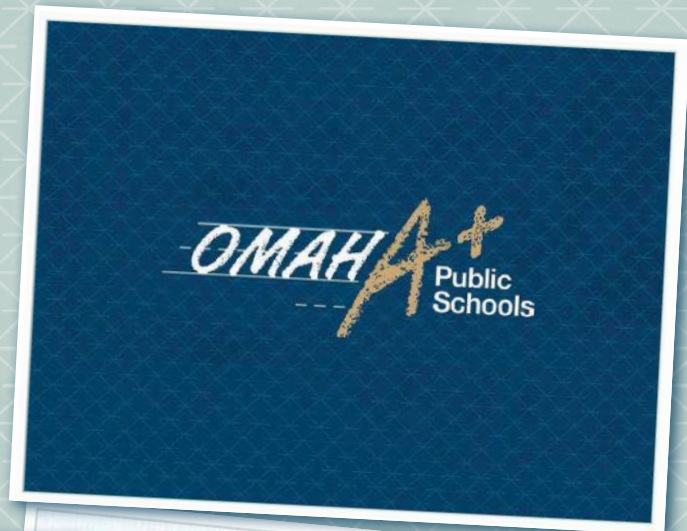
- OPS invests in rebranding project.**
 - Develop a branding committee to oversee the work.
 - Contract with outside agency to help develop/refresh OPS brand.¹²
 - Develop website redesign parallel to rebranding work for integration at deployment.

WHAT DO PEOPLE SAY ABOUT OPS?

Value Program and Opportunities	Too top heavy	Trust is Broken	Too big, less personal
OPS needs to be better at telling story	Great education	Big and complex	Disconnected
Gotten away from fun activities for kids	Unfairly criticized	Aren't sharing enough good stories	Media Fuels Negative Perceptions
	Parents happy with their child's school but wouldn't want to go to other schools in	Diversity	

OPS Brand Presentation Roadshow

The OPS Brand Presentation Roadshow was used to share the brand roll-out with various audiences. The presentation was shared more than 20 times. It was emailed to all staff through the launch email and principals/department leaders were asked to share the presentation in-person with their staff at over 100 locations so that they had a thorough understanding of what the new brand meant.



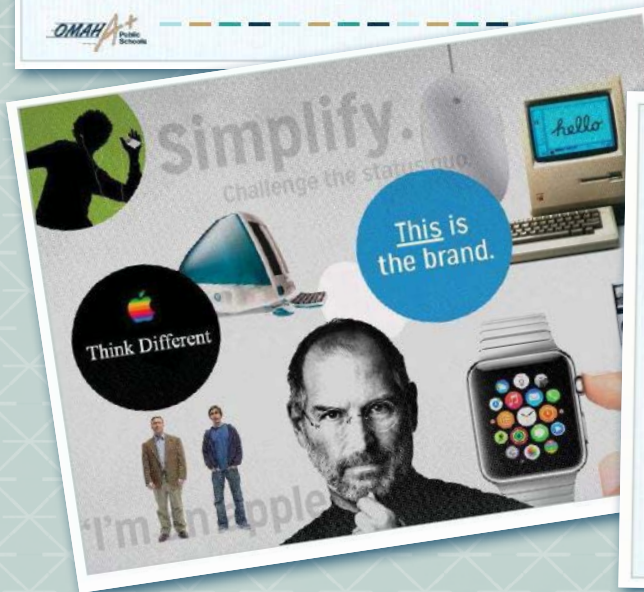
Internal Impact of Branding

- **Organizational Pride**
 - People want to be a part of something big. Give them a way to express and display what they believe in.
- **Cultural Identity**
 - If we know the mission and intent of our brand (aligned with strategic plan), it can be the compass that navigates every single action and decision.
- **Recruitment and Retention**
 - One of the most important factors of a successful brand launch is a company and it's employees who live the brand day-in and day-out.⁴
 - Happy employees recruit others to work for their organization.



Brand Guidelines

- Brand Book
- Define Brand platform and personality
 - Adjusted logo (use from November 2016 on)
 - Defined District colors
 - Define Typography
 - Samples of brand usage
 - Design elements
 - (backgrounds, textures and icons)
 - Dedicated brand website (online portal) to download visual elements and logos
 - Templates of publication materials
 - PowerPoint
 - Stationery (business card, letterhead, cover sheet, thank you card and envelopes)
 - Publication templates (bi-fold brochure, flyers, posters, folder etc.)
 - Email Signature template



What is a Logo?

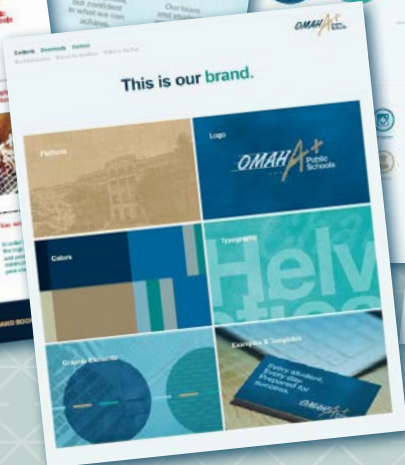
- Graphical depiction of what a company represents
 - Used for easy identification
 - Brand identity is embedded in logo
- Important component of brand but not brand entirety.
- "Highly recognizable logo is among a school district's most powerful assets because it communicates so much in an instant."³



Brand Book and Portal

The brand launch included a refreshed logo and development of first-ever brand guidelines. Departments that had previously created their own logos were now asked to follow a standard department logo.

The district also launched the Brand Portal at www.opsbrand.org. The brand portal was created to ensure that all staff, throughout the district, had access to branding materials. The portal outlines the brand guidelines, displays the district color palette and shows dos and don'ts of using branded materials. Staff can also download logos in various colors and formats, templates, graphic elements and more. The communications team continually updates the information found here based on requests from staff. The site averages over 400 hits a month.



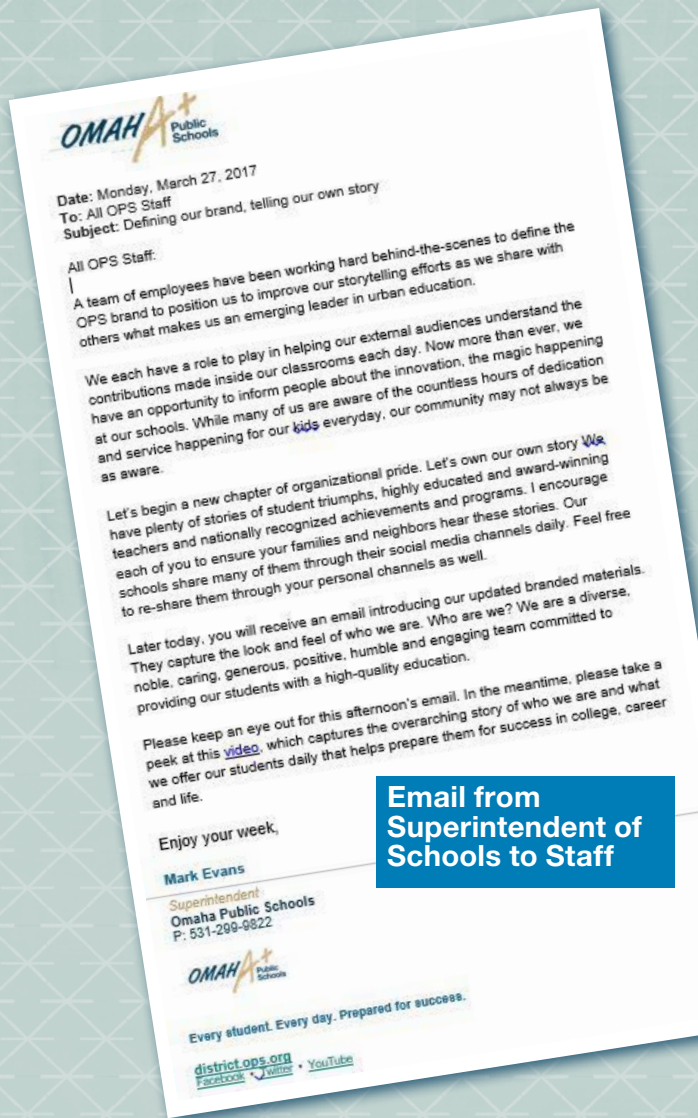
OPS Press Conference and Bus Wrap Help to Launch OPS Brand

In November 2016, OPS held a press conference to announce that students had achieved the highest test scores in district history. As part of this press conference, a local credit union co-branded a city bus with the OPS brand. Students then signed the bus with reasons why they were #OPSProud. This good news was positioned to kick-off the idea of sharing the OPS story with others and building up the OPS reputation through branding. This event garnered 11 positive news stories that reached more than 1.6 million people.

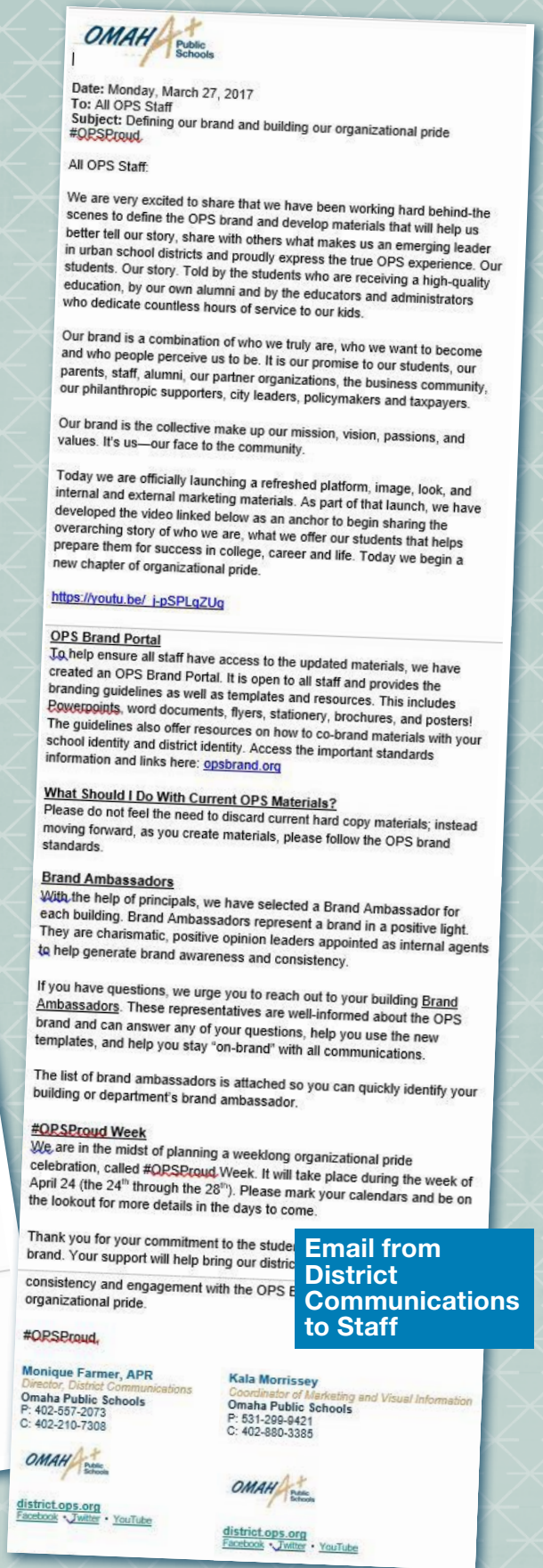


Launch Emails with Staff

To launch the brand with all staff, the Superintendent sent an email to all staff sharing the opportunity OPS had to define its brand and tell its own story. The district communications team then sent detailed information about what branding was, and introduced brand ambassadors, the brand portal and #OPSProud Week 2017.



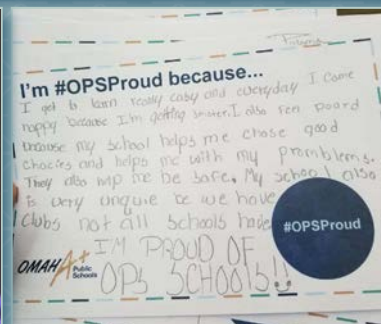
Email from Superintendent of Schools to Staff



Email from District Communications to Staff

#OPSProud Week 2017

The goal of #OPSProud Week is for students, staff, families and community to come together to celebrate the great things happening every day. Staff throughout the district celebrated the inaugural #OPSProud Week 2017 from April 24-28, 2017. The mayor signed a proclamation and a local skyscraper changed their colors lighting the building blue and gold to show support. Activities were held each day throughout the week for staff and community to show their support. In addition, each staff member and student was given an "I'm #OPSProud because..." card to fill out. The cards were then displayed throughout each building and on social media. This event will continue each year.

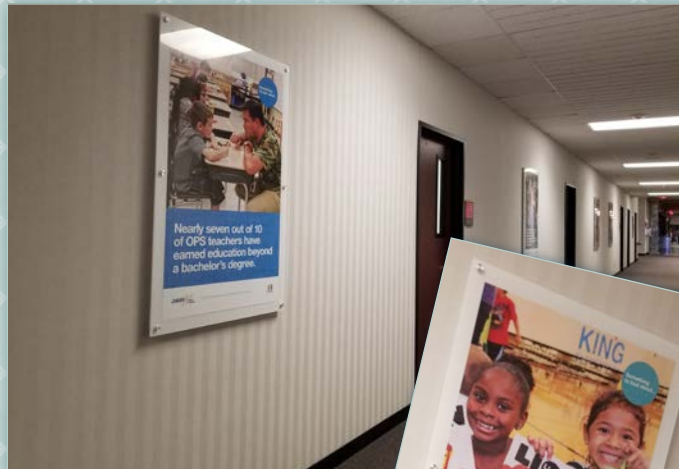


Something to Tout About

Ambient Branding

As part of the branding, the signage at the central office outside the superintendent's office and in the board room had to be updated. In addition, several departments and buildings are currently undergoing renovations. As those renovations take place, they are implementing aspects of the branding, including ambient colors and logos.

In the summer of 2017, OPS introduced the "Something to Tout About" poster series. Ten acrylic frames and posters were hung throughout the District offices with positive, gee whiz facts about the district successes. As a public building, there are frequently staff, parents and community members in the building. Therefore, it was a great opportunity to highlight some of the things people don't realize about OPS. The posters will be changed out annually.



Ambient Branding

Superintendent/B.O.E.

3D shapes, "OMAH" and "A+" would need to be simplified to allow for clean cutting.

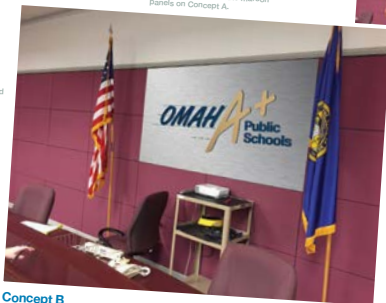


Current Environment



Conference Room

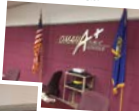
3D shapes, "OMAH" and "A+" would need to be simplified to allow for clean cutting.



Concept B

Stainless steel background added to give logo contrast. Dark blue doesn't work as well against the maroon panels on Concept A.

Current Environment



OPS Printed Materials

As of October 2017, all OPS printed materials follow the brand guidelines. The district partners with the in-house printing and publication team to ensure that all materials align with the guidelines. All logos, templates and graphic elements are also available on the brand portal at www.opsbrand.org which helps ensure that brand ambassadors are using the correct materials in each building

OPS Points of Pride

Omaha Public Schools Points of Pride

Consistent Growth in Nebraska State Accountability Test Scores

In 2015-16 OPS Students had the highest state test scores in district history.

Using the District's Academic Action Plan, students have consistently improved test scores on their Nebraska State Assessment (NSA) tests over the last four years.

Special features of instruction include the following components, which are used only in each classroom: modeled, shared, guided and independent.

Components of the Action Plan include: 1) Instructional Framework, which includes 11 instructional frameworks, graphic organizers, and learning strategies across the content areas, and 2) coaching and co-teaching.

Subject	Grade	2010-2016 Increase
Reading	Elem (Gr 3-6)	14% Increase
	MS (Gr 7-8)	18% Increase
	HS (Gr 11)	12% Increase
Math	Elem (Gr 3-6)	14% Increase
	MS (Gr 7-8)	14% Increase
	HS (Gr 11)	11% Increase
Writing	Elem (Gr 4)	4% Increase
	MS (Gr 8)	1% Increase
	HS (Gr 11)	10% Increase

In 2016, an Omaha Public Schools school was recognized with the U.S. Department of Education Great Ribbon Award. OPS has received eight Great Ribbon Awards since 2012.

5 National AP Scholars in 2016

More Diverse Education Opportunities:

- Career Academy Programs:** focusing on Transportation, Construction and Logistics, Urban Agriculture and Natural Science, Air and Space Technology, Communications, Construction, Business, Health, Finance, Info Technology, and Professional Management.
- Magnet Schools:** focused on STEM, Engineering & Health, Visual Performing Arts, Information Technology, Global Studies, Medicine, Law, Government, Business, Communications, College and International, Dual Language Programs, and International University Partners.
- Learning Community Focus Programs:** at Westwood School, Lu & Clark Middle School, and Burke High School.
- Unique program: International Baccalaureate:** Central High and Lewis and Clark Middle School.

Connect With Us: @omahapublicschools

District Theme Poster

Omaha Public Schools

Every student. Every day. Prepared for success.

Did you know?

- OPS graduates earned \$66.6 million in scholarships in 2017.
- In 2016, OPS opened the first public virtual school in Nebraska.
- OPS offers 12 career academies for students.

#OPSProud

Omaha Public Schools prepares all students to excel in college, career, and life.

CONNECT WITH US: @omahapublicschools

Annual Report

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

Aug. 2017

Bring on tomorrow.

an honor on his family to... common hand to... our... This year we continue to... progress and will... Our goals are... the... As you like... changes... efforts to... standards... and the... at these... district... about... no... great... report... What...

#omps17

Curriculum Brochure

OMAHA Public Schools

MTSS-B

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior

Curriculum and Instruction Support

Linda Hulsey
Supervisor of Music Education K-12
district.ops.org

531-299-9474
531-299-2489
lhulsey@ops.org

Curriculum and Instruction Support
3215 Cuming Street
Omaha, NE 68131-2024

Bond Issue Q&A

Q&A

About the Omaha Public Schools Phase 2 Bond Issue

Superintendent Mark A. Evans

Every student. Every day. Prepared for success.

Phase 2 Bond Issue

Connect With Us: @omahapublicschools

Business Cards

Linda Hulsey
Supervisor of Music Education K-12
district.ops.org

531-299-9474
531-299-2489
lhulsey@ops.org

Curriculum and Instruction Support
3215 Cuming Street
Omaha, NE 68131-2024

Monique Farmer, APR
Director, District Communications
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monique.farmer@ops.org

3215 Cuming Street - Omaha, NE 68131

Every student. Every day. Prepared for success.

omahaPublicSchools
OmahaPubSchool
OmahaPubSchool

OMAHA Public Schools

#OPSProud Spotlights

Staff and student recognition was a key recommendation that came from both communication audits. Prior to the launch of a district-wide staff recognition program, the OPS Communications team introduced #OPSProud Spotlight at Board of Education meetings. At each Board of Education meeting, a group of students or staff member are recognized for outstanding work. Each individual is given an #OPSProud lapel pin to wear.

In addition, two principals are highlighted at each principal meeting for their outstanding work. A video is created to highlight each principal's efforts. The video is shared as they are recognized and then it is shared with the OPS community on social media. Each recognized principal receives an #OPSProud lapel pin. [Click here](#) to see a sample video.

#OPSProud Spotlight at OPS Board of Education Meeting

#OPSProud Spotlight - Omaha North High Varsity Football Team

Congratulations to the North High football varsity team. The North High Vikings defeated the Kearney Bearcats 27-20 in the Class A state championship game on Tuesday, Nov. 21 in Lincoln at Memorial Stadium.

One of the team members, Milton Sargbah, was also recognized as an Esmark All American student-athlete for football in 2017. This award recognizes outstanding athletic, educational and community service achievements by high school student-athletes across the United States. The organization wrote a letter to congratulate Milton stating: "This achievement is the result of not only hard work and dedication but is also balanced by the adversity and obstacles that come with perseverance."



#OPSProud Principal Spotlight



PRINCIPAL FULLENKAMP FEATURE

#30 Ways to Say Yay!

#30 Ways to Say Yay! is a program that provides an outline for district leadership to recognize at least one staff member a week (per site) throughout 2018 but gives them enough control that the program can be tailored to the individual school building culture. Each staff member that is recognized gets either a gift card to a local business or an #OPSProud swag item. Staff can submit [peer-nominations](#) to their principal each week for a winner to be selected. All items included were donated through local business sponsorship. Brand ambassadors share the winners in their school newsletters, via e-mail with all building staff and on social media.

30 Ways to Say Yay! Guidelines

#OPSProud

- Announce program to teachers/employees.
 - Discuss program in staff meeting or at your discretion.
- Recognize one employee in some way every week throughout 2018 (spring and fall semester).
- Use the 30 Ways to Say Yay! Poster as a guideline for ideas on rewards and showing appreciation.
- Communicate the recognition of employees in team meetings, newsletters and/or team emails.
- Encourage staff to nominate peers for recognition
 - Refer to online nomination form on www.opsbrand.org
 - Call for nominations at the beginning of every month
 - Ask Brand Ambassadors to encourage staff to submit nomination forms
- Each semester, we will ask for feedback from you and your brand ambassador regarding the program.
- District Communications will work to replenish your swag items each January through donations and sponsorship dollars.

Questions?

Contact: Kala Morrissey
kamorrissey@ops.org or (531) 299-9421



30 Ways to Say Yay!

#OPSProud

NOMINATION FORM

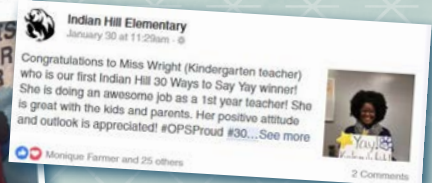
Your Name:

Who would you like to nominate to be recognized?

What is the person's role/position title?

Why should this person receive recognition?

Please email the completed nomination form to your principal/supervisor and brand ambassador.



DC Output Poster

The District Communications Output Poster highlights the work done by the communications team during the 2016-17 school year. Most of the outputs tie directly into branding goals and objectives.



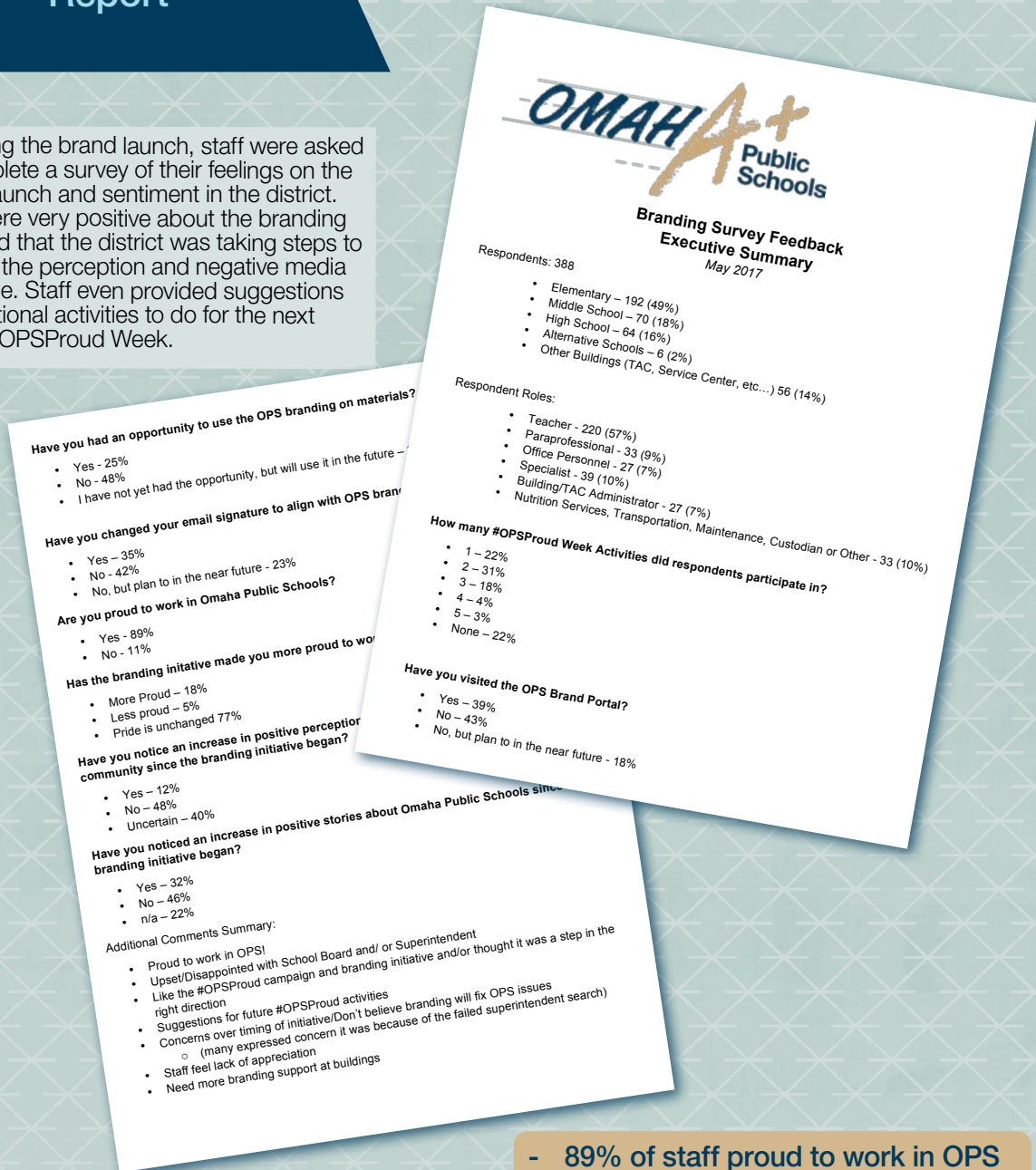
District Communications 2016-17

Awards won by D.C. in the past year: 5	<small>PRSA NEBRASKA PAPER ANVIL AWARD: Reaching Homeschool Families NSPRA GOLDEN ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Reaching Homeschool Families with OVS NSPRA GOLDEN ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Increasing Engagement on OPS Social Media NSPRA PUBLICATION AWARDS: OPS Board Digest e-newsletter NSPRA PUBLICATION AWARDS: Brand Launch/Brand Image Package</small>	
Media tracking, reactive: 50+ queries a month.	Positive story ideas from staff, shared with media: 290	
Number of news releases sent: 131	Superintendent podcasts: 5	
Videos created to tell our story: 118	Press conferences organized: 10	
Results of #OPSProud week survey:	<small>57% of respondents visited the portal or planned to visit it since the launch 52% of respondents had used or planned to use branding materials in the near future 89% of respondents said they are "proud to work in OPS" 32% noticed an increase in positive stories since the launch of #OPSProud</small>	
Ribbon Cutting: 1	Groundbreakings: 5	Topping Out Ceremonies: 3
Number of complains developed to support district, departments & priorities: 25		
Social media campaigns run: 12	Facebook followers: 8,768 <small>(as of July 14, 2017)</small>	
Twitter followers: 6,717 <small>(as of July 14, 2017)</small>	YouTube subscribers: 336	
Social media posts: 2,500+	Social media impressions: 150,000+ <small>per month</small>	
Traditional media reach: 180 million per month <small>(on average)</small>	Quarterly newsletters: 4	
Board digests: 24	Daily digests: 204	

Created July 24, 2017

Branding Survey Report

Following the brand launch, staff were asked to complete a survey of their feelings on the brand launch and sentiment in the district. Staff were very positive about the branding and liked that the district was taking steps to change the perception and negative media coverage. Staff even provided suggestions on additional activities to do for the next year's #OPSProud Week.

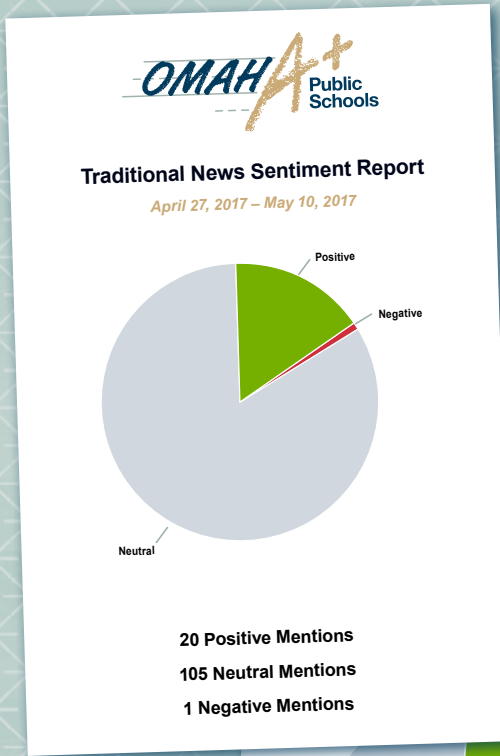


- 89% of staff proud to work in OPS
- 95% of staff just as proud or more proud to work in OPS since Brand Launch
- 12% of staff noticed an increase in positive perception among parents, students and community

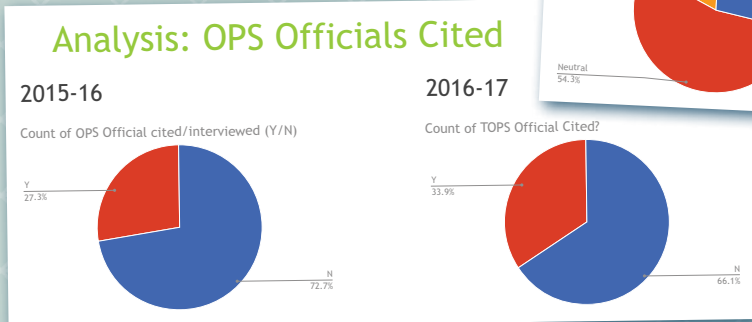
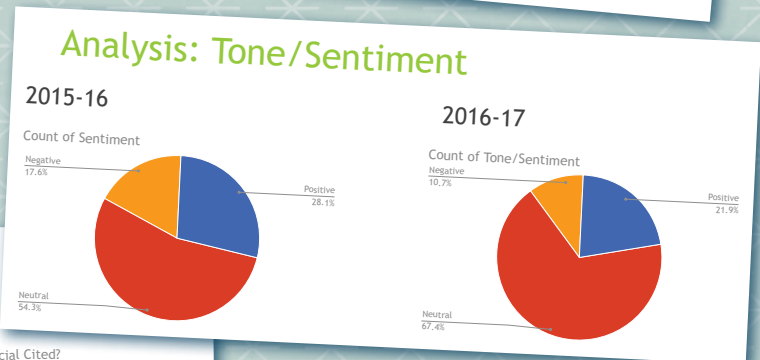
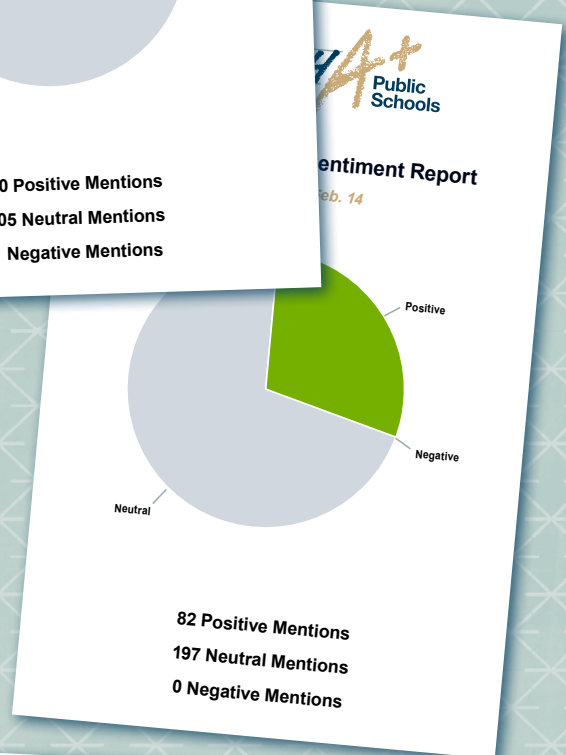
Media Sentiment and Analysis After Launch

The tone and coverage of media has shifted for Omaha Public Schools. In an analysis done by an outside organization, it was found that OPS dropped the negative media coverage by nearly 7 percent. That's higher than their goal of a 5 percent drop. The analysis also determined that an OPS official was cited in stories 6.9 percent more in 2016-17 than in the year prior. The OPS communication team puts together a weekly sentiment report of media. Although the year-over-year analysis for 2017-18 won't be completed until July 2018, the team has seen a significant drop in the negative stories in the weekly report. Staff also shared that their perception of negative media stories decrease on a branding survey.

The OPS communications team attributes some of this to building relationships with local media. They have developed an [online media request form](#) for media to submit when they have a query that involves Omaha Public Schools. The team also created an [online form for OPS employees to submit story ideas](#) to. Submitted story ideas are then sent to media twice a week. Local media now rely on these media releases for ideas of positive stories to cover. Additional releases are sent on an as needed basis.



Post Launch Media Sentiment Reports



Post Launch Media Analysis

Climate Survey Data – Before and After Launch

During the research phase, the district communications team reviewed climate surveys from several years prior. The climate survey is given annually to all OPS parents, students and staff. Participants are asked to answer each question on a 5-point Likert scale. This research and evaluation was conducted by the OPS research division. The findings gave the district communications team a solid understanding of the current sentiment staff had about OPS, the district leadership and the Board of Education. Scores in most categories decreased from 2014-15 to 2015-16. This showed a declining trust and pride in the school district for parents, students and staff.

After the launch of the brand scores are once again increasing. When asked how proud staff members are of the school, both staff and parents scores increased from 2015-16 to 2016-17 as well. The OPS communication team will continue to monitor yearly data to assess the effectiveness of the brand buy-in.

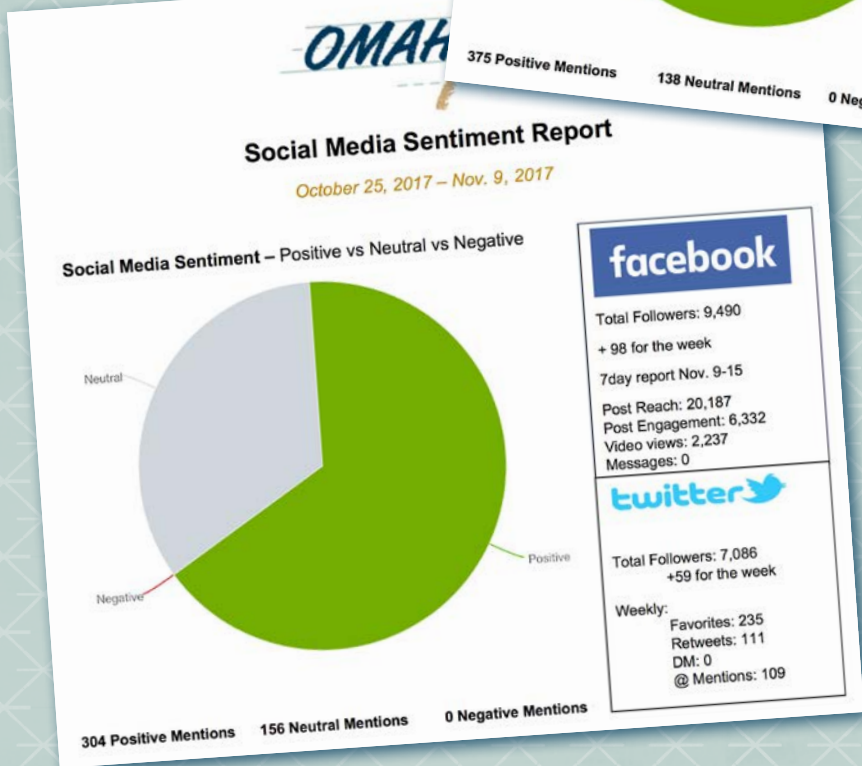
**Omaha Public Schools
Climate Survey
Omaha Public Schools, All Grades**

Statement	2015-16			2016-17			Change (+/-) 15-16 to 16-17		
	Staff	Student	Parent	Staff	Student	Parent	Staff	Student	Parent
Number of Participants									
School Climate	3291	17928	869	2793	17281	4898	-498	-647	4029
The atmosphere of this school is positive.									
Students are proud of the school. (Staff, Parent)	3.70	3.41	4.32	3.80	3.32	4.37	0.10	-0.09	0.04
Adults are proud of this school. (Student)									
Staff members are proud of this school.	3.80	3.80	4.31	3.90	3.72	4.38	0.11	-0.08	0.07
Staff members at this school demonstrate their care and concern for students. (Staff, Parent)	3.83		4.31	3.94		4.36	0.11		0.05
Adults at this school openly show that they care about me. (Student)									
Students value the opinions of the adults at this school. (Staff, Parent)	4.42	3.80	4.42	4.43	3.64	4.41	0.01	-0.16	-0.01
I value the opinions of the adults at this school. (Student)									
Staff and administration value the opinions of students at this school. (Staff, Parent)	3.64	3.67	4.23	3.68	3.65	4.24	0.04	-0.03	0.01
Adults at this school value my opinions. (Student)									
Students at this school show respect for one another. (Staff)	4.10	3.42	4.22	4.11	3.40	4.21	0.01	-0.02	-0.01
Students at this school treat one another with respect. (Student, Parent)									
Staff members exhibit a sense of trust and acceptance among themselves.	3.39	2.92	3.91	3.45	2.97	4.01	0.06	0.04	0.10
Parents and visitors are welcomed when they visit the school.	3.75			3.81			0.06		
Staff members are well respected in the community.	4.36		4.49	4.33		4.41	-0.02		-0.08
Staff at this school encourage parents and community members to express concerns or make suggestions.			4.32			4.27			-0.05
			4.28			4.25			0.03

**Pride is increasing
among staff and parents!**

Social Media Sentiment After Launch

Social media had a huge impact on the brand launch. It gave the community an opportunity to express their support and provide feedback to the organization. Through the brand launch, the OPS social media channels saw tremendous growth. The number of followers on Facebook more than doubled and Twitter saw a 60 percent growth from August 2016 to January 2018. During the 2016-17 school year (August 2016-July 2017), OPS averaged more than 150,000 impressions a month on social media.



	Facebook	Twitter
Number of Followers January 2018	11,567 (Up 6,185 followers)	8,409 (up 3,166 followers)
Number of Followers August 2016	5,382	5,243