

Bravo! Awards Submission – **COMMUNICATION PROJECT OR PROGRAM**

Prix Bravo! Dossier de candidature – **PROGRAMME OU PROJET DE COMMUNICATIONS**

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Organization/ Organisation	Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools

Communications Projects or Programs are full, complete projects or programs such as the creation of new branding, development of a new awareness campaign, the launch of a new web initiative with multiple components. Provide information below, not exceeding six pages including this page. You may submit an additional five page supplemental or back-up information.

La catégorie « Programme ou projet de communication » regroupe des projets complets qui incluent plusieurs éléments de communication tels que la création et la diffusion d’une nouvelle image de marque, l’élaboration d’une campagne de marketing ou de publicité ou la refonte des plateformes web de votre organisation. Veuillez remplir le gabarit ci-après en prenant soin de respecter la limite de six pages prévue pour cette catégorie. Vous pouvez aussi soumettre un document supplémentaire d’information de cinq pages.

Title / Titre
Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools’ Social Media Strategy
Start Date / Date de début
February 1, 2015 is the date we began to take statistics (knowing that we would need them for our two-year plan)
Completion Date (if applicable) / Date de fin
February 1, 2017
Goal(s) and objective(s) / Buts et objectifs
<p>Purpose and Challenge</p> <p>As two communications professionals new to Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools, our department began taking monthly statistics on the school’s and division social media accounts in February 2015.</p> <p>We noticed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The division had both a Facebook and Twitter account • 12 out of 20 schools were on Facebook • 13 out of 20 school were on Twitter • 0 schools were on Instagram <p>Across the Division, there were 2,855 fans on Facebook and 1,958 followers on Twitter.</p> <p>We noticed that schools were sending out communications materials in inefficient ways and thought that social media would be a better way to communicate with parents, staff, students, the general community, and our media partners. By posting news and photos about daily activities, initiatives and announcements through social media, we would hopefully engage our stakeholders and attract younger parents to enrol their children in our school division. This plan would also allow our schools and the division to build a positive reputation online, and use a modern day approach to public relations.</p>

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Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To develop and increase the online community at each school.

Goal 2: Communicate the types of programs that our schools offer, such as highlighting that St. Martin de Porres is a fine-arts focused school.

Objective 1: Grow our combined social media communities by 50 per cent over two school years.

Objective 2: To have all schools actively using social media on a weekly basis.

Objective 3: Utilize the strengths of our department and not spend money on this project.

Research and situation analysis / Recherche et analyse

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools oversees schools in three counties, including the areas of Blackfalds, Olds, Innisfail, Sylvan Lake, Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House. We serve over 9,500 students in 19 schools including an online school and an outreach school. We also serve approximately 600 students in a home education program and have two new schools opening in September 2017.

Our staff community is made up of approximately 507 teachers and 446 support staff including administration, transportation and maintenance. The division operates a yearly budget of approximately \$84 million.

Due to the large geographic region our school division covers, we found that schools were using old and outdated methods of communication and thought that social media would be an ideal solution for our schools.

An analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools and the division previously had Facebook and/or Twitter accounts. • Our division had some staff who felt empowered to take on social media roles. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools had social media accounts, but were not updating them. • School accounts usernames were not consistent across different platforms. • Our division had some staff who felt that social media was “another item added to their work plate.”
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders are using social media as a means of obtaining school information. • A way to showcase what makes Catholic schools different from other schools. • The communities that we serve are growing and there are always new people to connect online with. • Fr. Tom, our Division Champlain is very active on Twitter. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that no materials (photos/videos) of students are used online if their parents/guardians have not agreed as per the Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act). • Competing with schools in the local area: Chinook's Edge School Division, Red Deer Public School District, Wild Rose School Division and Wolf Creek Public Schools.

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Target Audience / Public cible
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents/Guardians• Staff• Students• General community• Local media
Describe your strategy / Décrivez votre stratégie
<p>Our strategy was to grow and utilize our schools and division’s social media accounts. We wanted to increase our channels of communication, limit ineffective school communications, and find an easy solution for sending information to our stakeholders and the communities we serve.</p> <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To connect with and inform parents, staff, and students about items online• To entice media to come cover our schools and/or division events• To inform our local communities about Catholic education and the programs that we offer <p>When</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• From February 1, 2015 - February 1, 2017 <p>Where</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through our social media platforms (predominantly Facebook and Twitter)
How did you execute the strategy? / Expliquez la mise en œuvre de votre stratégie
<p>Knowing that it would take more than a year to train staff and “sell” the idea to schools, we were strategic in our planning as to not overwhelm staff at our schools with added responsibilities. We actively measured and evaluated this project to ensure our results reflected our efforts.</p> <p>We used a variety of tactics to execute our strategy:</p> <p>Setting up Facebook and Twitter at all schools</p> <p>We set-up all our schools across the division with Facebook and Twitter accounts. We made sure that the each school account name was consistent on both social media platforms for marketing and branding purposes.</p> <p>Administrators at schools selected staff members to run the accounts</p> <p>We asked administration to select a team of staff members to help keep their school social media accounts active. The role of these individuals is to ensure photos and/or videos of activities, initiatives and events in schools were being posted to social media.</p> <p>Training staff on how to use social media</p> <p>Our Communications Department hosted multiple training sessions with staff to teach the best practices on how to use Facebook, Twitter and lightly touched on Instagram.</p> <p>Schools saw the results and wanted Instagram</p> <p>After people saw the benefits of using social media, some schools wanted to have an Instagram account. Therefore, we set those schools up with an account with the same username that is used on Facebook and Twitter.</p> <p>Developing a Social Media Committee</p> <p>For September 2017, there will be a social media representative at each school who is</p>

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responsible for:

- Meeting with the Communications Department twice a year
- Developing a team to assist with photos and posts
- Develop and enhance skills and best practices
- Relaying information (best practices and standards) about social media platforms to their team
- The overall content of their school’s social media channels (including proper spelling, grammar and the content in photos/videos)

How did you evaluate the project? Comment avez-vous évalué le projet ?

There are a number of ways in which we evaluated our division’s social media strategy:

- Feedback from parents trustees
- Feedback from administrators
- Feedback from our media partners and the local community
- Frequency of usage
- Growth rate across various channels

These items will be explored further in the “Describe your results” section.

Resources (human and financial) / Ressources humaines et financières

Setting up social media accounts	\$ Part of Communications duties - no cost
Updating schools websites with new accounts	\$ Part of Communications duties - no cost
Meeting with school administration to select who is part of their social media team	\$ Part of Communications duties - no cost
Training staff	\$ Part of Communications duties - no cost

100% of the social media strategy was done in-house.

Describe the results / Décrivez les résultats obtenus

The results over the two-year social media launch indicate that:

- The division continues to utilize its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, taking the time to share items from school communities and promote the various successes, achievements, events and day-to-day activities
- 22 out of 22 schools are on Facebook
- 22 out of 22 school are on Twitter
- 12 schools are on Instagram

Across the Division, we increased Facebook fans by 5,812 (203% growth) and Twitter followers by 6,157 (314%). As of February 1, 2017 we had 8,667 in combined Facebook “likes” and 8,115 followers on Twitter.

We believe that we met our goals and objectives by helping each school develop social media accounts and provide them with an understanding of the value of these channels as communications tools. Once we began using social media to highlight the programs our schools offer, our two new schools (opening September 2017) wanted to develop accounts to showcase

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building construction and promote student registration. All schools are on social media, and its combined usage is up significantly. Schools are now using their social media channels regularly and feel empowered by the positive results and feedback from their school communities.

Feedback from parents and media partners has indicated that they appreciate seeing and interacting with our division and schools' social media posts. We have enhanced our division's media relations and have become a leader in the community on social media. Our trustees and administrators have also provided positive feedback and now expect to see various events and achievements on our social media channels.

Furthermore, we are pleased to be named one of Canada's Top Ten School Districts on Social Media in April 2017, by Box Clever, a national school website provider.

Additional documentation / Documentation additionnelle (5 pages maximum)

- RDCRS Social Media February 2015-2017 (PDF) – an internal document sent to senior administration and school administrators in February, 2017
- [Canada's Top Ten School Districts](#) (image)

