

HWDSB

Standing Committee
Monday, December 19, 2022
Trustee Board Room/MS Teams

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558
Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

AGENDA: Immediately following Board Meeting

1. Call to Order
2. Meeting Roll Call
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Reports from Staff:

5. [Effective Communications Report](#)
 6. [Transportation Report](#)
-
7. Adjournment

Executive Summary

Topic: Effective Communication Report

Context

HWDSB's Board of Trustees approved the Strategic Directions for 2016-22 and staff has developed an Annual Plan for 2022. The five priorities are Positive Culture and Well-being, Student Learning and Achievement, *Effective Communication*, School Renewal and Partnerships.

Mission: We empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.

Commitment: We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation

Priority: [Effective Communication](#) – *We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.*

Summary

The Effective Communication Report includes highlights of the implementation of the 2022 HWDSB Annual Plan, *Effective Communication*.

- Appendix A: Effective Communication Road Map
- Appendix B: Communication Standards
- Appendix C: 2022 Analytics: Website, Social Media and Media Exposure
- Appendix D: HWDSB App

Strategies outlined in the 2022 Board Annual Plan are taken from the priorities in the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan, adopted in June 2018, and based on the recommendations from the Communications Audit completed in 2017. Links to the two publications are provided below for reference:

- [Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan](#)
- [Communications Audit, conducted by the National School Public Relations Association \(NSPRA\)](#)

The Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan outlines five priorities: Leadership, Staff Ambassador, Digital Engagement, Student Outreach, and Partnerships. Highlights from the priority areas are reflected in the 2022 Board Annual Plan, *Effective Communication*. An update on the *Partnerships* priority is shared with the Program Committee in the spring, 2023.

The vision for communications and engagement is clear: HWDSB honours all voices. In addition, staff will foster engagement by building trust, nurturing relationships and maintaining the confidence of the Hamilton community. The goal of the plan is to create a culture of communications and engagement through the implementation of its Strategic Directions.

This year represents a conclusion to this version of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. Highlights and progress over the course of the plan is outlined. In addition, the implementation of the 2022 Board Annual Plan strategies is provided, including standardizing platforms and a storytelling strategy.

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HWDSB Annual Plan Report

Name of Report: Effective Communication Report (Annual Plan Year 2022)

Date: December 19, 2022

Priority: Effective Communication: We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.

Goal: Improve internal and external communications.

Target: Implement year three of the 2018-2022 Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan

Overview

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to improving and expanding its ongoing communication with students, parents, staff, and the community in order that we can work collaboratively to provide the best education possible. This commitment is outlined in its Strategic Directions under the priority, Effective Communication.

In August 2017, Executive Council approved the 2017-18 Annual Plan for Effective Communications with a goal to improve internal and external communications and implement a research-based strategic communication and engagement plan based on the recommendations of the communications audit. An ad hoc committee was established and met from February to April 2018.

Throughout the development of the plan, five priorities emerged to support the goal that HWDSB will create a culture of communications and engagement through the implementation of its strategic directions. The strategies include **Leadership, Staff Ambassadors, Student Outreach, Digital Engagement, and Partnerships**.

Engagement is informed by Spectrum of Public Participation endorsed by the International Association for Public Participation (iap2): Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower. Each opportunity is unique and requires a different level of engagement. The iap2 Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the most appropriate level for the project. Each level of the Spectrum has value, and no one is more important than the other.

Status of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan: The Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan has completed its mandate within this timeframe. The plan is in transition in its final year. As the Board of Trustees approve a new Strategic Direction in the spring 2022, a new Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan will be created.

There is much to celebrate as staff reflect on the gains made over the course of implementation of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

Priority No. 1: Leadership

Communications is an essential skill in building strong leaders and navigating changing environments. Leaders build trust within the district and in school communities. Communication excels the vision of an

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organization, is an influencing factor to help motivate and inspire others and creates positive environments that value open and two-way communications. Leadership also applies to our involved parents who contribute on school- or district level councils and committees.

- **Sessions for leaders** (Executive Council, Trustees, Administrators, Managers, and Parent Leaders who include members from School Councils, Home & School Association, and the Parent Involvement Committee):
 - *Learning with Leaders*: Participation in various Principal/Vice-Principal learning (formerly called Organizational Leadership Meetings/OLMs) on communication topics. As well, various presentations and participation from Communications and Community Engagement staff at Service and System Leaders' Meetings each year was a priority.
 - *Executive Council Clinics*: Learning session with Dr. Terry Flynn, Associate Professor of Communications Management in the Department of Communication Studies & Multimedia, and Media Training for Executive Council members.
 - *Trustees Information Sessions*: These gatherings included topics such as strategic communications and engagement, and communication practices.
 - *Communicate HWDSB*: The Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) recently celebrated its fifth School Council Start-Up Session to support parent leaders acting as School Council and Home & School Association chairs and members. Prior to the pandemic, from 2018-early 2020, the Manager of Communications and Community Engagement held focus groups with School Councils. In 2022-23, the Chair and Vice-Chair of PIC are hosting *PIC Connects*, which are sessions to connect with School Council members and chairs for support and learning.
- **Revised Weekly Memos**: Prepared guidelines, working with Hamilton-Wentworth Principals' Council (HWPC), on memo service to Service Leaders to create efficiencies in how information flows from Executive Council to HWDSB leaders.
- **Create a System Calendar**: Three system calendars at HWDSB emerged. An internal calendar for all staff, a calendar for the public, and a calendar for system leaders were created. These supportive calendars reflect the support and coordination required in a large system. Each calendar has a unique criterion. The School-Year Calendar informs these calendars, which include the Communications & Community Engagement's Days of Significance calendar and the Holy Faith Days calendar, which is supported by the Equity team.
- **Crisis Communication Plan**: Led by Associate Director, Learning Services, a School Crisis Response Protocol was developed and launched in the spring, 2022. Included in that plan is a specific Crisis Communication Plan that outlines the procedures for the coordination of crisis response for HWDSB in the event of a crisis that could significantly impact the Board. This Crisis Communications Plan is designed to be used in conjunction with other internal protocols for incident management, such as workplace violence and lockdown procedures.
- **Create Communications Standards**: See detail in Strategy No. 2 below in the report.
- **Refine the Principals' Communication Guide**: An internal folder is available for Principals and Vice-Principals to access information related to support material for communications. Working with the Hamilton-Wentworth Principals' Council, the Principals Communication Guide was relaunched in August 2022. Included in this guide is supportive resources that Vice-Principals and Principals can use related to the Communications Standards and guidance on direct communication on expected and additional topics as defined by the Communication Standards.

Priority No. 2: Staff Ambassador (Internal Communications)

Investing in a staff ambassadors program will result in highly engaged staff who know how to access information. In turn, being part of an employee engagement program such as this will create a culture of communications. A staff ambassador priority improves the way staff share and receive information internally. Staff alignment with the HWDSB's vision and strategic directions is also critical. Through continued research, HWDSB will understand employee needs expectations, opinions, attitudes and knowledge levels.

- **Reinvented the Quick Finder:** Guidelines were created to announce identified employees in HWDSB. The Employee Announcement process supports the development of the Quick Finder, which was reintroduced in 2018.
- **Staff Intranet (myHWDSB):** The staff intranet, myHWDSB, was updated in September 2021. Using the latest version of SharePoint, staff in Information and Instructional Technology created a more stable platform, with more features and a longer shelf life as the site improves with each Microsoft update. The update was accompanied by new design improvements including a more visual System Wide News feed.
- **Director's Email Messages:** Improving myHWDSB helps refine HWDSB's approach to internal communications. A new process was established to reserve all-staff emails from the Director for strategic and urgent matters such as Labour Contingency or Public Health information. More information about various days of significance, for example, will be featured on the staff intranet. Also, on occasion, all-staff messages will be shared by the Superintendents or departments responsible for that portfolio rather than from the Director's email account.
- **Email Guidelines:** In December 2020, Email Guidelines were shared with HWDSB staff to enhance the efficiency and clarity of electronic communication across the organization. Email is a useful business tool that, when managed correctly, can provide value. However, the volume of email that individuals send or receive poses unique challenges. When individuals are aware of best practices that promote the effective capture, management, and retention of email, it supports the efficient and appropriate use of email for HWDSB business.
- **Social Media Guidelines:** Social Media Guidelines were launched in August 2021 to help all staff, and those representing accounts affiliated with HWDSB, use social media responsibly and successfully. HWDSB values social media as an effective tool to communicate, connect and engage with students, parents, staff, and the community. Social media fosters engaging, two-way conversations that meet our communities where they are today. Also, individual social media accounts contribute to the collective narrative of HWDSB and tell its stories to the community. Posts must be respectful and in accordance with principles of Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion. How a user conducts themselves online reflects how we represent the values of the HWDSB.
- **Create a Governance Model for public website and intranet:** A Governance Model is being created through a collaborative structure comprised of staff members from the Information and Instructional Technology (IIT) and Communications and Community Engagement (C&CE) departments. This structure will create workflows, and support content navigation for various platforms, including the public website and staff intranet. This will begin in the 2022-23 school year within the IIT/C&CE Collaboration Meeting structure.

Priority No. 3: Digital Engagement

The digital engagement priority will help staff identify the value creation opportunities of digital engagement for HWDSB. This includes multiple strategies, tactics, processes, tools and technologies to structurally engage the end-user, which includes the primary audience, parents, to maximize the co-created value. Digital engagement is about understanding our audience through the various platforms, keeping them engaged and telling our stories.

1. *Increase adoption rates on identified **digital platforms** to maximize the experience that allows for our audiences to connect with HWDSB.*

From 2018-2020, significant work went into standardizing communications platforms at HWDSB. The pandemic accelerated this portfolio and standardized platforms were confirmed. Executive Council approved 15 platforms to date. Approved platforms include:

1. MS Teams: Microsoft Teams is a unified communications/collaboration tool
2. The HUB: Learning Management System
3. Power School: Student Information System and Powerteacher Pro
4. Parent Portal: Parent communication
5. Safe Arrival: A student absence reporting system
6. School Messenger: A notification system that allows phone calls home to families
7. Hour Republic: Tracking Community Involvement Hours
8. Career Cruising: Career exploration, planning, and option sheets platform
9. Gigit Marketplace: Volunteer opportunities platform
10. School Website: Digital storefront for school
11. Microsoft O365: Email, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.
12. Intranet: HWDSB hosts a restricted communications network for employees only
13. Intranet (Team sites): Platform for accessing shared content
14. HWDSB App
15. EngageHWDSB

A collection of HWDSB platforms and channels have been created for staff, caregivers, and students to reference and available as landing pages:

- Staff can visit the myHWDSB Staff Intranet to see the platforms listed on its homepage.
- Students can visit the Student tab on the Board's website.
- Caregivers can visit the Parent tab on the Board's website or visit the Parent Portal.

Online registration for Kindergarten and French Immersion emerged as a viable option for families.

In 2022-23, IIT is working to support the final chapter in this phase of work by introducing the ability for educators to connect with parents. Strengthening the classroom-home connection is a priority. A pilot to introduce Microsoft Teams launching of a Parent Connection feature will allow educators to connect with parents via chat.

2. *Create a structure for **storytelling** to share the positive experiences of our students, staff and families within our community.*

A commitment to implement the storytelling strategy was provided by Executive Council on March 10, 2020. Staff have established a structure for creating and sharing positive experiences of students, staff and families within the community. Storytelling will include various forms of communication such as video and written articles to highlight students, partners, schools, programs and staff. All the stories will be done through an equity lens.

The areas and reason are as follows:

- Students – because students influence students for success
- Partners – because recognition will maintain relationships
- Schools – because this is the entry to a family experience
- Programs – because this is key to graduation
- Staff – because staff morale is critical to everything we do

Refer to Strategy No. 3 for further details and progress in 2022.

3. *Enhance **digital citizenship** resources to enhance learning related to online respect, safety, and privacy.*

In February, 2019, HWDSB's Digital Citizenship program was celebrated across the Board. #HWDSBDigitalCitizen is part of the online campaign accessed through social media and from the Board's website that provides information about how students and parents can engage in positive online behaviour. This campaign laid the foundation for digital engagement in the context of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. Developed and supported by the Program division in HWDSB, areas of learning include Respect, Purpose, Organization, and Identity.

4. *Design a mechanism to collect and measure **feedback** through our digital platforms.*

- **ThoughtExchange:** HWDSB uses the online engagement tool Thoughtexchange to have meaningful and productive online conversations. A Thoughtexchange is a way to crowdsource a community's answers to one question, in real time. You can respond, consider, and assign stars to the ideas shared by others and we can all learn what is important to the group.
- **Engage HWDSB:** HWDSB will be launching a new and interactive platform to deliver on its commitment to community participation, collaboration and involvement in support of student success and well-being. [Engage HWDSB](#) is an online place where students, families, staff and communities can learn more about work at HWDSB, share their voice, and engage throughout a project. Visitors to www.engagehwdsb.ca will see an expanding list of projects, policies and initiatives in the weeks ahead.

Priority No. 4: Student Outreach

Students have a vested interest in their education and their voice has incredible influence in the communications program at HWDSB. Students shaped the HWDSB vision in which Curiosity, Creativity and Possibility empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world. The Student Outreach priority will keep the communications and community engagement program fresh and tuned into the student voice while undergoing the research to deepen the support for student empowerment.

- **Awards and Bursaries:** HWDSB created an Awards page, and an internal practice to help our community communicate award opportunities for students. This includes scholarships, bursaries and awards of distinction. Awards may or may not include a financial reward. This is supported by the Hamilton Foundation for Student Success and in collaboration with Finance and Program divisions, who have defined a procedure for year-end awards and bursaries to students.
- **Commencement:** Assisted in the communication of commencements and celebrated in-person ceremonies. Lawn signs were distributed to commencing students and their families as well as information related to the change from the term graduation to commencement with an equity focus. A video was produced to celebrate the Class of 2022. As well, a video to celebrate the Graduation Coach program for Black Students was produced.
- **Student Voice Committees:** Support for various committees of HWDSB that reflect various student groups and portfolios. For example, Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Student Engagement portfolio.
- **Student Trustees Communication:** Supported Student Trustees with new Instagram account and newsletter. In addition, Student Trustees participated in several videos to connect with other students. Videos include Student Trustee introductions, graduation stories, Student Voice Survey reels, and more.
- **Student Voice Survey (Mental Health):** Under the leadership of Student Trustees, Deema Abdel Hafeez and Aisha Mahmoud, and Student Senate, a student voice survey has been created to give all grade 7 to 12 students a platform "to share their voice on the issues that matter to us."

- **Student Census and Middle-Years Development Instrument (MDI):** Communication to students related to important topics that seek direct student voice.
- **Eco Summit:** Student leaders from eight secondary schools participated in the 2022 Eco Summit in October 2022. Support from communications and engagement staff supported the event.
- **Social Media:** Student Trustees supported these social media guidelines with a presentation to the Student Senate. Valuable student voice feedback was collected at that time.
- **Focused Recruitment:** *We belong at HWDSB* video to support focused recruitment through Human Resource Services. Students participated in the video and engaged in providing their voice and experience into how they belong at HWDSB.

Note: Priority No. 5 Partnerships will be shared in the Partnerships Report

2022 Strategies:

1. Complete implementation of the Parent Portal to improve communications with our parents, guardians and caregivers.

A system strategy to support schools with enrolment and registration began in summer 2022. Although there were some challenges, parents and caregivers were when school starts. A continued focus on data collection and attention to customer service builds greater confidence among our parent/caregiver population and strengthen internal practices for departments including, but not limited to Business Services, Information and Instructional Technology as well as for schools.

A message to families was shared on Monday, August 29 to inform parents that the Parent Portal was open and that access to student's educators and timetables were available.

More than 56,000 families accessed the Parent Portal this year. This is an increase from the previous year, which was at 20,000. These numbers include families with multiple students in the system.

HWDSB continues to review the platform and improve accessibility, language and literacy, navigation, data integrity, including contact information updates. Further guidance for administrators and office administrators is available.

2. Standardize communications, including digital platforms, to improve communication with staff and students, especially during COVID-19.

COVID-19 Communications

In 2022, staff in Communications and Community Engagement transitioned from being directly involved in COVID-19 communications (Case management, Covid-19 Updates, etc.) to a plan that is recovering from, and leading into the future beyond the pandemic. This recovery plan maintains the HWDSB's commitment to effective communication with families.

This transition includes the removal of more than 2.5 years of COVID-19 content from school and board websites. In addition, this recovery plan includes the review of lessons learned and feedback from the communication effort during the pandemic. For example, the *COVID-19 Update to Families* was a positive method of communications. Staff are exploring ways to include this summary of Board news in its communications offering/program.

Public health measures continue to be an important topic to communicate. While the frequency of information has changed, this year, staff need to adapt to new health priorities such as respiratory illness prevention.

The transition also includes supporting a new Director of Education, the new Strategic Directions process, responding to collective bargaining and labour contingency, and the development of a new Strategic Communications and Community Engagement Plan.

Communications Standards

As mentioned in the report, HWDSB has confirmed its digital platforms. The inventory listing is displayed as a landing page for staff, parents, and students. The next phase was to standardize communications.

Throughout the 2021-22 school year, staff in Communications and Community Engagement department engaged in research to determine what minimum standards of communication can be articulated for families. For example, when there is a Secure Schools incident, caregivers can expect to receive a consistent response, regardless of which school their child/ren attend. In June 2022, Executive Council approved the Communications Standards.

HWDSB's Communication Standards were introduced internally to Principals and Vice-Principals in August 2022 and shared with the community in October. Communication Standards builds on the strategy that promotes standardized digital platforms and connects with a positive customer service experience for families.

Effective communication builds positive relationships with parents, guardians, and caregivers. Staff want families to be well informed and know what to expect. HWDSB wants staff to know how, what and when to communicate. *This is HWDSB's communications commitment to families.*

Staff continue to prioritize the implementation of Communication Standards, including offering support to platform users, to improve consistent communications with parents, guardians and caregivers.

An overview of the Communication Standards is provided in Appendix B and below:

Direct Communication for Expected Topics

Families will receive communication on expected topics. Expected communication topics always meet the criteria for direct communication with parents, guardians, and caregivers because the topics uphold a mutual value shared between families and staff. Emergency communications may occur after hours.

Expected communication will be provided to families in the form of telephone, email, or mail.

Examples of Expected Topics

Student Progress	School closures	Student attendance	Injury or harm	Specialized Services
Safe Schools reporting	Secure School response	Class relocation	New educator or principal	Major construction

Additional Communication

Families may receive communication on additional topics. Additional Communications can range from information that is available to a parent, guardian, or caregiver but not always shared directly with families.

Additional communication will be provided to families in the form of websites, Parent Portal, MS Teams, and social media, to list a few examples.

Examples of additional topics

Accessibility disruptions	Transportation delays	Power outages	Routine fire alarm
Phone and internet down	Cold and heat alerts	Program transitions	And so much more!

Message to Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers: As partners in education, parents, guardians, and caregivers can support Communication Standards. They can:

- Ensure your phone number, email and home address is current at your school
- Secure passwords for HWDSB Platforms
- Frequently visit platforms to learn what is new
- Provide feedback at the class, school, or district levels
- Navigate general and Human Rights concerns using Addressing Concerns @HWDSB resources.

HWDSB's Response to Inquiries

- Responses will occur within two business days during working hours.
- Staff follow the Right to Disconnect Procedure to maintain healthy work life boundaries
- HWDSB is committed to listening and establishing clear, fair, effective processes which fulfil our duty to foster an environment where Human Rights are protected.

Next Steps: A communications plan will continue for the 2022-23 school year to raise awareness about the Communication Standards. This plan moves from research and planning to implementation and evaluation. Key audiences to reach are Principals/Vice-Principals, Executive Council, Executive Assistants, Office Administrators, union partners, and parent leaders and parents/guardians/caregivers at-large.

Examples of communication activity include:

- Monthly memo to Principals/Vice-Principals
- Presence at Principal/Vice-Principal Learning Session (Booths)
- Attendance at PIC Connects series to share Communication Standards
- Director's Annual Report, 2022
- And more!

3. *Enhance digital engagement for external audiences through a storytelling strategy*

As part of HWDSB's digital storytelling strategy, staff profiles stories about students, partners, schools, programs and staff. The framework is based on the audience or program profiled. The stories are collected and shared on social media. All the stories are done through an equity lens. This digital storytelling strategy allows human-interest stories to be shared, while maintaining a presence for audiences to consume content related to corporate, Board or ministry news.

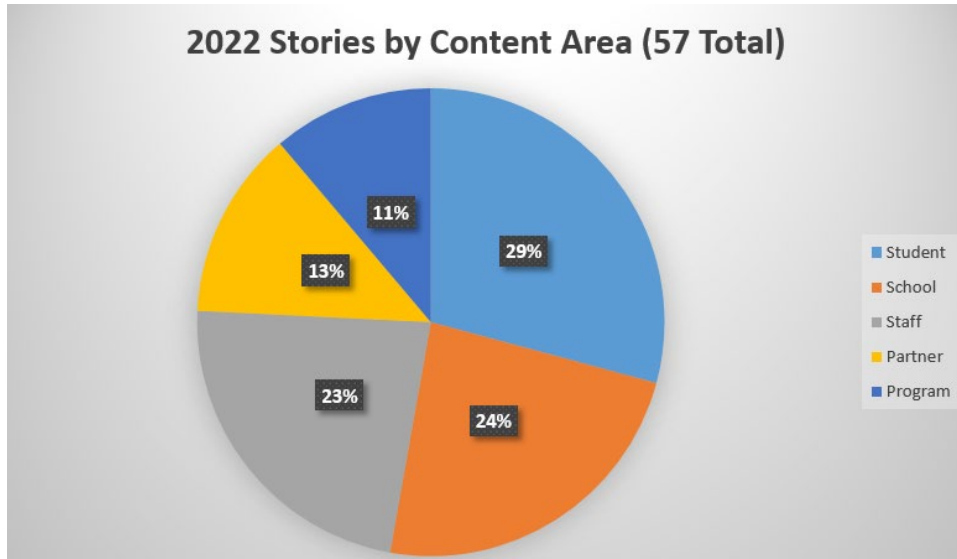
Storytelling includes various forms of communication such as video and written articles. The content areas feature students, partners, schools, programs, and staff. The storytelling connections to Strategic Directions include positive culture, achievement, well-being, partnerships, learning and school renewal.

The following charts provide an overview of the 2022 storytelling strategy. This is based on the Communication and Community Engagement Story Tracker/Scorecard that prioritizes content and Strategic Direction priorities.

Examples of the stories/videos include:

- Indigenous student group CC:ROSE raises awareness with Every Child Matters Initiative
- Emotion Coaching at HWDSB
- Hamilton Women of Distinction YWCA (From HWDSB: Mary Ann Starcevic, Jessica Compton, and Vandana Verma)
- Staff plan snow and ice removal on asphalt play areas at schools in winter 2022-23
- HWDSB Students and Staff Recognized by BASEF at 2022 Event

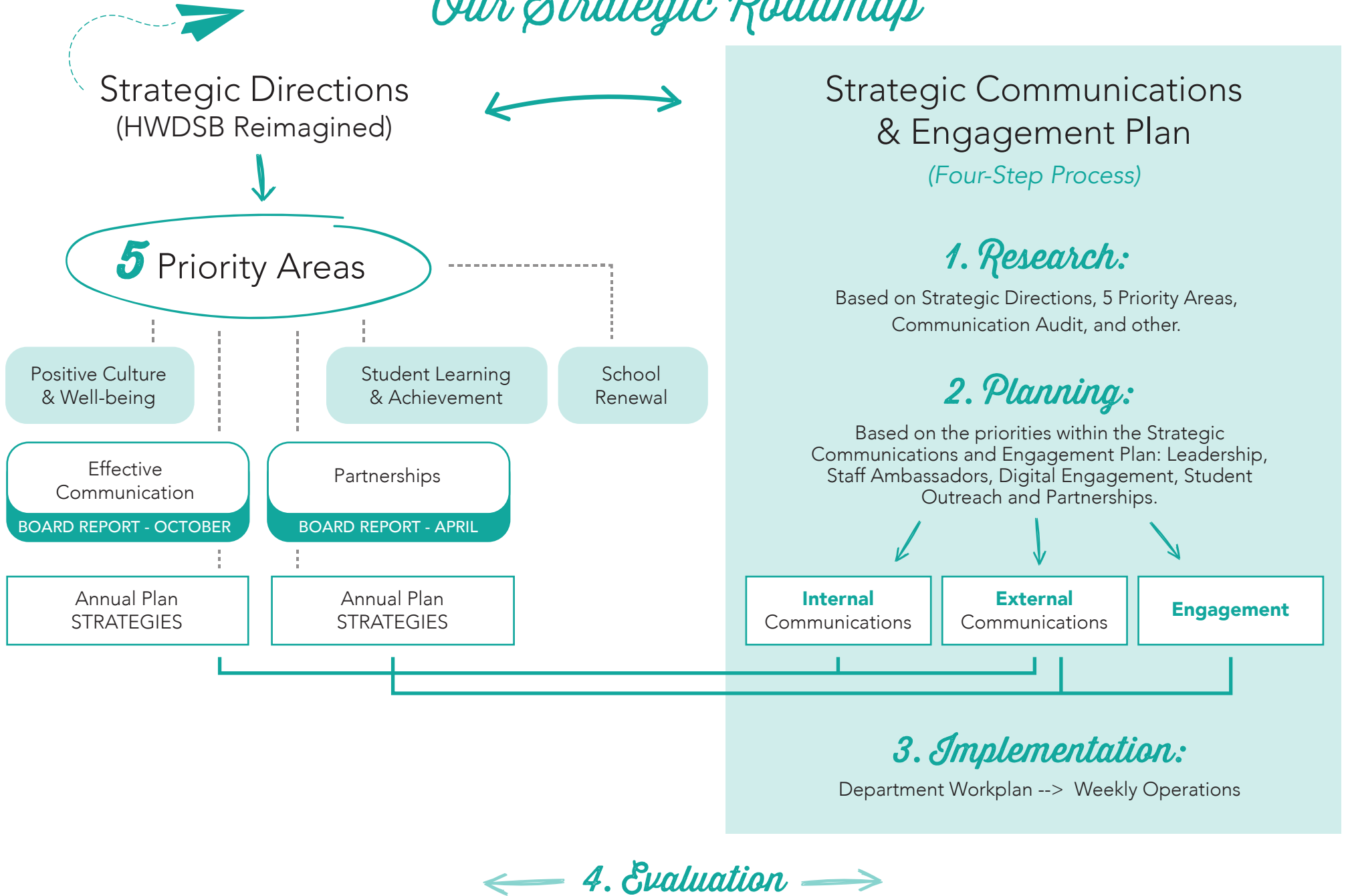
- HWDSB Students Praised for Community Contributions at 2022 John C. Holland Awards
- Innovative upcoming programs are putting the 'why' in SHSM
- 100-years-young Isabel Mallon receives Honorary Diploma from HWDSB
- Amazon Gifts LEGO STEM Lego Kits to Viola Desmond
- Reimagining Wellness 2.0 - Preparing for a New School Year
- HWDSB Athletes and Coaches Honoured at Ticats Night of Champions Dinner



Staff is on target to complete the 2018-2022 Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan.

Effective Communication at **HWDSB**

Our Strategic Roadmap



HWDSB Communication Standards

Communication builds positive relationships with parents, guardians, and caregivers.

We want you to be well informed and knowing what to expect.

We want staff to know how, what and when to communicate.











HWDSB's Communication Standards Apply to all Schools

HWDSB is committed to fostering a culture of human rights, equity and inclusion. We offer learning and working environments that are welcoming, respectful, and free from discrimination and harassment.

Expected Topics and Examples






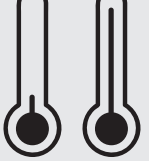


You will receive communication on **expected topics**. *How?* Telephone, email, or mail.

Emergency communications may occur after hours.

 Student progress	 School closures	 Student attendance	 Injury or harm	 Specialized Services
 Safe Schools reporting	 Secure School response	 Class relocation	 New educator or principal	 Major construction

Additional Topics and Examples

You may receive communication on **additional topics**. *Where?* Websites, Parent Portal, MS Teams, or on social media.

 Accessibility disruptions	 Transportation delays	 Power outages	 Routine fire alarm	 Phone and internet down
 Cold and heat alerts	 Program transitions	 And so much more!	Learn more at www.hwdsb.on.ca	

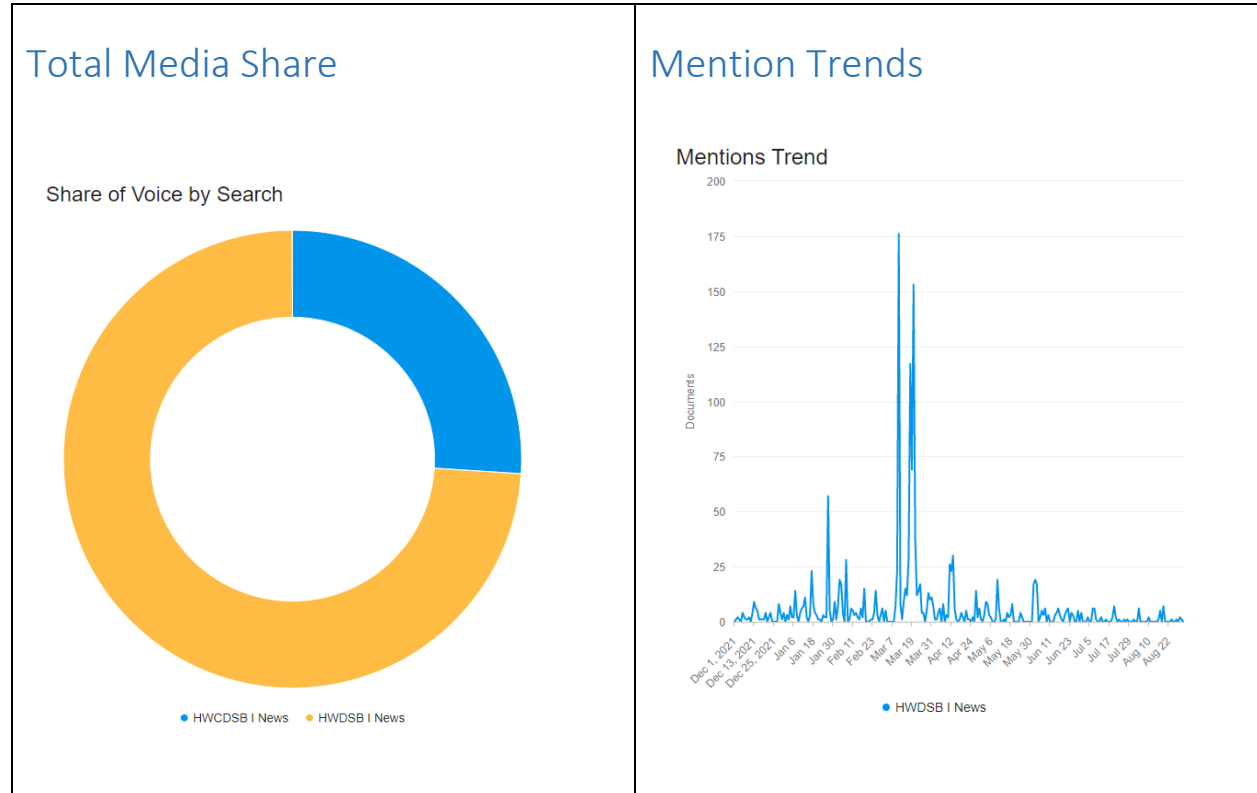
HWDSB's Response to Inquiries

- Responses will be communicated within 2 business days during working hours
- Staff follow the Right to Disconnect procedure to maintain healthy work life boundaries
- HWDSB is committed to listening and establishing clear, fair, and effective processes to build an environment where human rights are upheld

How you can support Communication Standards:

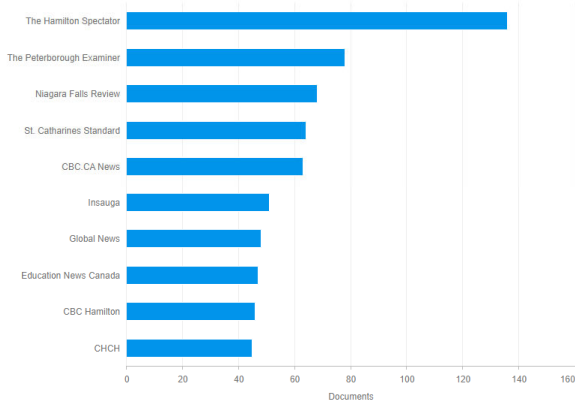
- Ensure phone number and email is current at your school
- Secure passwords for HWDSB Platforms
- Frequently visit platforms to learn what is new
- Provide feedback at the class, school or board levels
- Navigate general and Human Rights concerns using Addressing Concerns @HWDSB resources

2022 Analytics

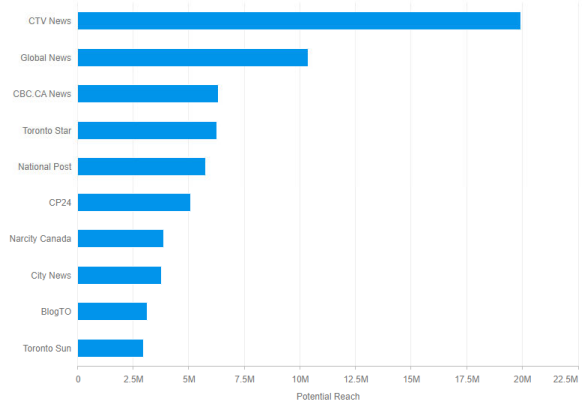


Top Sources | HWDSB News

Top Publications by Volume



Top Publications by Reach

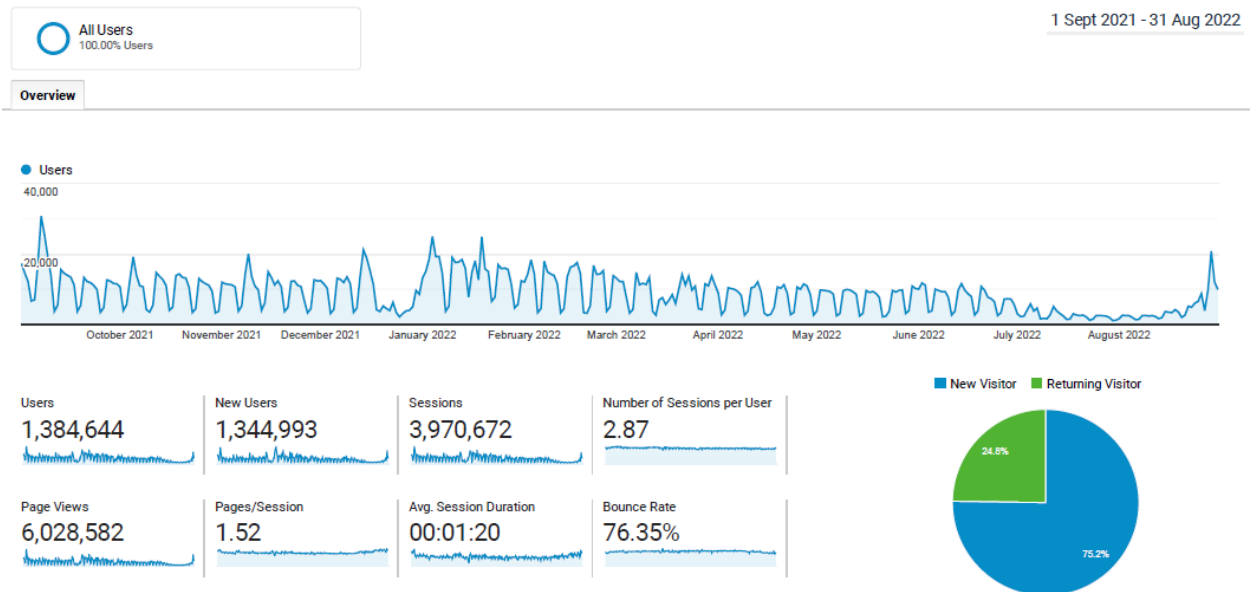


Social Media Impact

Stats (May 2018)	Stats (Nov. 2019)	Stats (Nov. 2020)	Stats (Oct. 2021)	Stats (Nov. 2022)	Trends (2021 to 2022)
Twitter Tweets: 8,021 Followers: 25,433 Facebook Likes: 4,902 Instagram Posts: 506 Followers: 987	Twitter Tweets: 9,505 Followers: 31,747 Facebook Likes: 9,915 Instagram Posts: 838 Followers: 4,618	Twitter Tweets: 10,800 Followers: 35,410 Facebook Followers: 13,318 Instagram Posts: 1,485 Followers: 8,747	Twitter Tweets: 12,500 Followers: 36,875 Facebook Followers: 14,291 Instagram Posts: 2,401 Followers: 10,200	Twitter Tweets: 15,400 Followers: 41,600 Facebook Followers: 15,691 Instagram Posts: 3,427 Followers: 13,200	Twitter +4,725 followers (12.8% increase) Facebook +1,400 followers (9.7% increase) Instagram +3,000 followers (29% increase)

Website data: Audience Overview for the 2021-22 school year

Audience Overview



Appendix D: HWDSB Unites Digital Tools in new Mobile App

To help families find – and use – a useful suite of digital tools, HWDSB is excited to announce the debut of a new app available now in the [Android](#) and [Apple](#) app stores.

The HWDSB app will help families locate schools, keep up to date with news, monitor important events, book a student absence and much more.

The app was developed by Intrado, the provider that also supports the SchoolMessenger service that HWDSB and many other Ontario school boards use to reach families by phone, email and text messages.



HWDSB

Get Connected.

Download Today!



Future plans will integrate the app into the messaging platforms used to reach HWDSB families, so that alerts can also be found in the app.

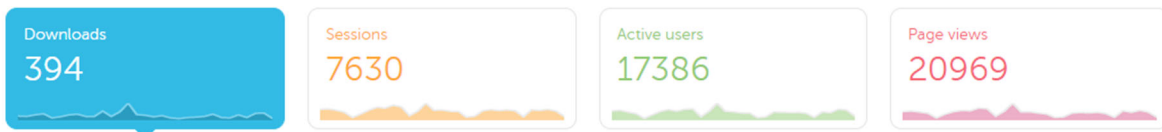
The new tool builds on work to enhance HWDSB communication by making digital tools more accessible and easier to understand for families.

As of Monday, August 29, the Parent Portal is expected to be updated with 2022-23 timetables and classroom information. School offices will be able to support Parent Portal use.

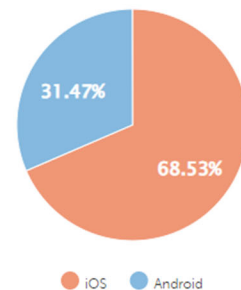
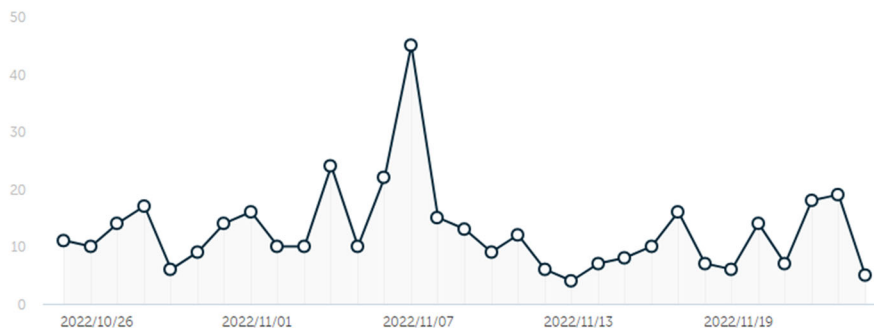
For a full menu of digital tools provided for families, please see the enhanced [Parent](#) page of the HWDSB website.

Learn more:

- [Digital Tools for Families](#)
- [Intrado](#)
- [SchoolMessenger](#)



Number of downloads





EXECUTIVE REPORT TO STANDING COMMITTEE

DATE: December 19, 2022

TO: Standing Committee

FROM: Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Director of Education

PREPARED BY: Matthew Gerard, Associate Director of Support Services
Richard Koren, General Manager, HWSTS

RE: Transportation Consortium Update

Action

Monitoring X

Rationale/Benefits

Since 2009, Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) Consortium has established itself to be an innovative, efficient student transportation provider for both partner Boards. With an organizational commitment to continuous improvement and a dedicated staff driving the results we are pleased to share the following update.

September 2022 Start Up

This report provides a preliminary overview of the start-up highlights for the 2022-23 school year and the associated impacts on both consortium member Boards. Also included are a number of start-up metrics, comparisons to prior school years and overview of key accomplishments in 2021-22.

The biggest challenge for the start of this school year was managing a chronic driver shortage. HWSTS has been managing driver shortages over the past several years and continues to look for solutions to the current situation, which has been amplified by the province wide labour shortage in all sectors. HWSTS continues to monitor weekly driver status with bus operators and is investigating best remedies to improve the shortage. This bus driver shortage has affected multiple School Boards/Consortiums much more severely within southern Ontario, including daily route cancelations. Because of this shortage, multiple schools experienced service issues relating to late buses/delays.

HWSTS continues to monitor bus operator's driver status and requires operators to log delays into the web portal to help minimize the impact and maximize communication for students and families/caregivers waiting for service.

2022-23 September Start-Up Highlights:

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	Comments
PUBLIC COMPLAINTS:	21	12	10	16	15	103	85	N/A	General public complaints relating to bus speed, parking, stop locations
FRENCH IMMERSION:	8	18	31	26	30	15	67	52	Improved public awareness French Immersion transportation
LATE BUS	223								New for 2022-2023
HSR SERVICE	42								New for 2022-2023
ADDRESS CHANGES	115								New for 2022-2023
COURTESY/EMPTY SEAT:	200	81	57	307	253	290	364	340	
STOP CONCERNS:	605	991	377	575	646	782	768	830	
GENERAL INQUIRIES:	451	638	878	1,135	675	1,459	1,285	1,451	
PARENT PORTAL QUESTIONS:	591	209	319	107	105	74	N/A	N/A	Login enquiries
SERVICE COMPLAINTS:	1432	1581	2,092	1,788	1,613	1,901	2,066	1,794	Delays, Complaints
TOTAL HWSTS ISSUES:	3688	3540	3,770	3,965	3,354	4,646	4,678	4,496	Calls dealt with by HWSTS Staff Direct
TOTAL CALLS:	7699	8584	9,530	9,053	9,168	8,777	8,486		Calls received by Answering Service

Figure 1 – Phone calls received by category

Routing

Fleet Size:

HWSTS does have bus routes that service multiple schools (multi-tier). The purpose of this is to maximize efficiency where it makes sense to combine students on a route to service a number of schools, which are close in proximity to one another.

HWSTS also provides bus routes that service a single school (single-tier). Single school routes (single-tier) are also provided in area where it is not feasible to add runs. This occurs primarily in rural areas and for schools with larger catchments areas. In 2022-23, the percentage of single-tier bus routes is 14.84%, which is a 1.77% decrease compared to last year. (Figure 2)

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	Comments
Fleet Size Increase (or Decrease)	472	471	499 (477 Covid Route Opt)	499	497	504	503	501	
Bus Routes planned to provide service to both Member Boards	231	197	126	186	189	173	178	195	Number variation due to changes in demographics, bell times, boundaries and efficiencies
Planned taxi students	251	258	257	254	276	245	271	299	A slight decrease of students for this school year
Multi-Tier bus routes (overall)	76.84%	72.83%	57.63%	69.90%	66.90%	67.40%	67.60%	70.40%	
Single-Tier Regular bus routes (overall)	14.84%	16.61%	26.09%	22.68%	20.19%	23.00%	21.20%	24.50%	
Multi-Tier Regular bus routes	85.16%	83.39%	73.91%	77.32%	79.80%	77.60%	78.80%	75.50%	
Multi-Tier Special Needs bus routes	63.69%	62.36%	61.35%	56.74%	45.05%	48.60%	49.70%	61.10%	

Figure 2 – Key fleet and route statistics

Reported Run Delay Posting Comparison First Full Month of School

Driver Coverage Late delays have increased in September 2022 due to the province wide labour shortage in all sectors, including school bus drivers (Figure 3). Driver coverage is consistently the highest reported cause of delay each year. The major causes impacting delays are detailed below in Figure 3.

Date	Avg Delay (Min)	Break Down	Driver Coverage Late	Operational Misc	Student Issue	Traffic	Vehicle Collision - Bus Involved	Driver Absence	Dispatch Error	Driver Error	Parent No Show	School Caused Delay	Total Delays
15-Sep	20	49	145	37	19	47	6						303
16-Sep	19	76	412	92	41	179	7						807
17-Sep	17	86	1,061	108	34	169	9						1,467
18-Sep	20	74	1,525	98	45	343	8						2,093
19-Sep	21	82	1,438	134	50	166	3						1,873
20-Sep	37	77	2,144	535	5	14	2						2,777
21-Sep	16	107	594	117	20	326	0						1,164
22-Sep	21	68	1980	32	9	227	3	395	3	24	8	35	2,816

Figure 3 – Major causes of bus delays

There are multiple factors that have influence the number of reported delays over the past few years:

- Historically, all service providers were reporting inefficient supply of permanent drivers.
- Providers continue to enter and update the delays more accurately than they have in the past. This is something that is stressed by HWSTS in order to ensure the best communication with its users.

Note the categories highlighted in yellow above, were added for 2022-23**

- The numbers in Figure 3 reflect not only the delay of individual runs, but also updates in delays. If a run is reported as 10 minutes late, and the driver communicates additional delay minutes, the provider posts an extra delay. The same run may show multiple delays for both morning and night. This updating of delays has been reiterated by HWSTS to all bus operators.

**A bus run is a portion of a school bus route. Each school bus route may contain between 2 and 8 bus runs throughout the entire day.*

HWSTS Transported Students

Figure 4 below shows the number of eligible riders and the number of courtesy riders. The number of eligible riders has increased significantly from last year back to pre-covid 19 levels. Courtesy rider is up significantly as well, as it was reinstated for 2021-22 school year. However, they are down from prior years as HWSTS continues to find efficiencies, thereby decreasing the number of courtesy space available.

Each school year students are allowed to apply for courtesy transportation. Due to the high volume of phone calls and requests in September, HWSTS completes courtesy transportation by the end of October. Courtesy transportation is granted for one year only and is subject to available room on school buses. Families/caregivers must reapply every year. In 2020-21, this service was paused for the school year to better manage transportation during COVID-19. The service is currently being provided again.

Date	Eligible Riders	Courtesy Riders
June 1, 2022	29,208	1,270
June 1, 2021*	18,923	29
June 1, 2020	29,119	1,799
June 1, 2019	27,817	2,018
June 1, 2018	27,117	2,080
June 1, 2017	26,948	2,100

**Overall ridership temporarily decreased due to COVID-19 and remote learning*

Figure 4 – Breakdown of ridership for both member Boards

Incident Reporting

Incident reports concerning student and family/caregiver behaviour is currently completed at the school level. HWSTS does not track student behavior on buses nor lost bus privileges. Bus operators work closely with school administrators to complete incident forms and complete investigations.

Student Management Training

School Bus Operators provide their own specific Student Management Training during the initial hiring of a new driver as well as curriculum items during training sessions throughout the year. Drivers are informed that the law requires them to report any serious student incidents that happen on the bus to the school administrator. Operators are trained on how to report student management issues and are trained on specific techniques to deal with student behavior.

2021-2022 School Year Accomplishments

In addition to supporting daily operations, HWSTS staff also completed a number of value-adding initiatives. While the following list is not exhaustive, it does provide a high-level overview of the deliverables from the staff.

Safety Initiatives

Each school year HWSTS participates in and promotes first rider education, on site/virtual bus safety training, safety patroller training and distribution of kindergarten identification tags. Figure 5 below shows the number of participants or number of sessions over the past 8 years. The numbers are significantly lower in 2021-22 in some categories due to COVID 19 restrictions. Bus safety training continued to be delivery virtually through on-line training. First Rider Programing has resumed for the 2022-2023 School Year. HWSTS continues to explore an appropriate means by which to provide the Safety Patroller training previously lead by the Hamilton Police Services.

	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
First Rider program for Kindergarten students and parents/guardians/care givers	0 students	0 students	372 students	360 students	336 students	483 students	487 students	375 students
On-site bus safety training sessions at HWDSB elementary schools	162 sessions	134 sessions	180 sessions	221 sessions	173 sessions	165 sessions	181 sessions	195 sessions
In collaboration with Hamilton Police Services, conducted CAA School Safety Patroller training	0 students	0 students	534 students	582 students	649 students	760 students	472 students	846 students
Identification tags to Kindergarten students	3457	3501	4180	4130	4260	4170	4,200	4,200

Figure 5 – Summary of safety initiatives and activities

Routing Efficiencies

HWSTS completed a comprehensive, district wide School Bell Time Optimization study in an effort to reduce the total number of school buses required to service the Hamilton-Wentworth community. This initiative, with implementation in Sept 2021-22.

- Mini Bus and accessible vehicles were routed to best accommodate the bell changes stemming from the 2021-22 bell optimization. A comprehensive review of Student with Special Need Transportation, was conducted to better align with new bell times and changing demographics of student with special needs transportation. HWSTS was able to service more students on mini-bus and accessible school buses thus reducing the amount of student assigned to taxi service. This plan has been implemented for the 2022-23 school year.

Procurement for Transportation Service

With the planned termination of the Specialized Transportation Services Agreement on August 31, 2022, HWSTS, under direction of both Member Board Procurement Departments, began a competitive procurement process (e.g. request for tender) to secure Specialized Transportation Services (taxi service). HWSTS successfully secured school transportation services for both member Boards for a term of three (3) years plus two additional one-year extensions. Using this process, HWSTS was able to attain best market price, create a new pricing model, integrate taxi services onto routes, managed and visible to all stakeholders through HWSTS transportation management software.

Looking Ahead

The 2022-23 school year will continue to present opportunities for HWSTS to provide valuable support and service for both of the member Boards. In addition to maintaining a focus on operational excellence, the HWSTS team will focus on initiatives to position the organization for future service needs. HWSTS in partnership with its bus operators are working to implement Global Positioning System (GPS)/Automated Vehicle Location across all vehicles servicing HWSTS routes. HWSTS is using the 2022-23 school to review the GPS technology, audit operators for accurate use of the systems, and create procedures to ensure compliance. The next phase of the project will be to introduce further value-added applications associated with the GPS technology including but not limited to automated bus status/delays, parent apps and student ridership tracking.