DEER VALLEY
Unified School District

The Road to Success Starts in Deer Valley!

2022
Gold Medallion Entry
Marketing Communication Campaign

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3 Communications Team Members
PreK 12 Unified School District |
40 schools | 32,217 Students
By August 2020, life was bleak within Deer Valley Unified School District (DVUSD), as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic raged across the country and the world. Our three-member communications department, which was already half the size of our neighboring comparable districts, was cut to two when our long-time webmaster died from complications of COVID-19 in July 2020. We were heartbroken to lose a colleague, and saddened to lose his decades of institutional knowledge.

In the coming months, DVUSD would face the worst enrollment crisis in its history. District enrollment had fallen by nearly two thousand students in one year, and Kindergarten registrations for the upcoming year were down by 80%. If something wasn’t done quickly, DVUSD would see another major drop in enrollment in the coming school year, which would lead to harmful funding cuts affecting every school, program, teacher, and student.

The data was overwhelmingly bad. We could have just ignored it, made excuses, or hoped that things would turn around on their own; but that’s not how Deer Valley operates. The small but mighty communications team is enthusiastically positive. We poured over district studies, enrollment data reports, and parent survey results to craft a strategic, comprehensive marketing plan. We used more than 20 different tactics to create multiple touch points for each of our future students and parents. Our planning led us to our theme: The Road To Success Starts in Deer Valley, which wove its way through our advertising, publicity, and events.

District and school leaders believed in our plan and provided unprecedented support. We knew success would take time, so we made micro goals to increase Kindergarten registrations by 20% each month. This helped us continually evaluate our tactics and kept us moving successfully toward our overall goal of increasing enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year.

Through our strategic planning and focused implementation, we achieved our overall goal of increasing Kindergarten enrollment by more than 10% year over year, which brought in more than $520,000 in additional funding to the district. The Road to Success really does start in Deer Valley!
Kindergarten registration for the upcoming school year (21-22) started one month late on December 1, 2020 because staff across the district was focused on the return to in-person learning throughout the fall of 2020. For the communications team, not being able to work robustly on increasing enrollment took a real toll by January, 2021. We did not need or want any more bad news, but we couldn’t ignore the data staring us in the face. **Kindergarten registration for the upcoming 21-22 school year was down 80% from the previous year with just 52 registrations received by January 1.** In other words, we had only signed up 20% of the students that we had at the same time during the previous year. If something wasn’t done soon, we could see another major drop in Kindergarten enrollment and overall district enrollment in August 2021.

Let’s pause here to answer three critical questions that drive our work:

1) **Why would DVUSD focus marketing efforts on Kindergarten?** Deer Valley commissions an annual Demographic and Enrollment Analysis Report from Applied Economics. Many district administrators, as well as the communications staff, pour over this 60+ page report each year. The latest demography study shows that **more than 12,000 students, 16% of students living within our boundaries, attend 33 charter schools located inside or within one mile of the district’s boundaries.** DVUSD also tracks every student who enrolls and exits the district with monthly EXIT and ENTRY reports compiled by our IS&T department. The reports track where a student went after an “exit” or where they came from during their “entry.” Parents also share why a student was leaving or coming. Examined together, these reports showed that students were NOT leaving in droves for charter schools. After much analysis, we discovered that these students started at charter schools before ever setting foot inside a DVUSD school. They never knew about the extraordinary Kindergarten Program they were missing.

2) **Why did the parents enroll their Kindergarten children into Deer Valley?** Since 2015, every Kindergarten enrollment packet included a one-page robust Kindergarten survey asking parents specific questions about how they heard about the district and why they were enrolling their child. We review the survey results regularly to learn: a) which tactics are worth their return on investment, b) our parents’ overall impression of the district, and c) what parents valued most in a Kindergarten program. This data would prove invaluable during our planning process.
3) How does our communication department, superintendent, and district leaders view data? Data is viewed with sharp eyes and a clear focus. We live and breathe data with the belief that what doesn’t get measured doesn’t get done. So, to be an organization of continuous improvement, we measure the data tied to our Strategic Plan. As a district, we track outcome measures in four Strategic Priority areas. The communications department tracks many of the measures in Priority Area 3: Excellence in Stakeholder Relationships with the objectives of engagement, communication, and enrollment. Increasing enrollment is a goal of the Communications Department, as well as the district and Superintendent.

So, upon returning from Winter Break and comparing the Kindergarten registration numbers for the upcoming 21-22 school year with the previous year, we took a moment to feel devastated. It was another gut punch in a school year full of them. It’s possible that if we were part of a district that did not have such a robust strategic plan with specific measurable goal-setting as well as a focused, non-emotional view of data, that we could have kept quiet and crossed our fingers. We could have blamed COVID or charters for our problems. But, that’s not how Deer Valley operates. We never hesitated to bring this information forward. We alerted the Superintendent and district leaders, asked for guidance and assistance, and got focused on a winning plan.

We knew we had to meet or exceed the number of Kindergarten registrations from the previous year to keep our enrollment and funding stable. We also knew that the Kindergarten registration trend couldn’t be reversed overnight. Small, micro goals would help us evaluate our tactics and keep us moving toward our overall goal. The Superintendent, who was a former math teacher and quite good with numbers, helped us realize that 20% wasn’t just a devastating statistic. It was the key increment that would prove to be a challenging but achievable goal over the next several months. We committed to increasing Kindergarten registrations by 20% each month until we met and then exceeded 100% of the previous year’s numbers. This graphic shows each month’s goal.
Planning

Goals
Our overall goal was to increase Kindergarten enrollment for the 21-22 school year to meet or exceed the enrollment of the prior year.

We made short-term specific goals to increase the total number of Kindergarten registrations received by 20% each month from February through June, 2021.

Audience Identification and Strategies
Based on results from the Kindergarten survey, we knew that parents were attracted to our free full-day program, our great teachers and academic results, and our extraordinary programs. We planned to directly communicate to parents of 4- and 5-year-olds to share with them three main competitive advantages of Deer Valley:

1) DVUSD students have better academic results than students from other districts and charter schools.
2) DVUSD schools offer more opportunities for their children, including free, full-day Kindergarten (offered by some but not all nearby schools), before and after care, specials (Art, Music, or PE) everyday in Kindergarten, a comprehensive gifted program, and specialized programs including STEAM and STEM academies and Language Immersion Programs.
3) And, new for the COVID pandemic: DVUSD Kindergarten enrollment is convenient and safe (outdoor and virtual events) for parents, so they shouldn’t delay registering their students.

Tactics
Once the strategies were identified, the communications department developed tactics to support each strategy. We created a six month plan to reach parents of 4 and 5 year olds through traditional marketing, publicity, events, and more. Since it was difficult to be together indoors, we had to get creative. Our team with our new Digital Content Manager/Webmaster reimagined events as drive-thru affairs, and the marketing collateral reflected the theme: The Road to Success Starts in Deer Valley. This theme was carried through for online webinars as well.

Unlike the marketing plans of years past, we needed to ramp up the number of touchpoints for each potential parent, ensuring that they saw and understood the advantages of enrolling their soon-to-be Kindergarten students into one of the district’s schools. We used tactics that had worked in the past, as well as implementing new tactics, like the multiple drive-thru events, webinars with Kindergarten experts, and plastering our message on a new, district-owned billboard. We had a budget of $67,000 to complete the plan which included direct mail postcards, print ads, online ads, digital flyers, events, targeted emails, email blasts, flyers to preschool students, banners, working with PTA/PTO presidents, and more. The complete table of tactics and which strategy they enforced can be found in Additional Supporting Materials on page 9.

To accomplish this ambitious plan, we had to be efficient. Our small staff had to clearly understand the strategies, streamline the planning, and step out of their comfort zones. Our secretary was coordinating the district events, recruiting other district and School staff to assist with the drive-thru events, designing targeted email messages, and developing marketing materials to send to parents through our Big Kid Book Club for 3-5 year olds. (Additional explanation about Big Kid Book Club in Implementation.)
Our new **Webmaster/Digital Content Manager** created **print and online ads**, promoted Kindergarten content with creative posts on social media, and developed relationships with teachers, some of whom she had known when she was a student. She recruited teachers for the webinars, which she promoted with **eye-catching flyers** and ads. She visited the teachers in their classrooms to capture photos and videos of children learning and loving our Kindergarten program.

The Director kept all the plates spinning while creating the budget, buying ads, and improving relationships with our local media to help us with **publicity** surrounding our Kindergarten program and events.

We kept the Superintendent and leadership team updated at least weekly (and sometimes daily!) on the registration results. School registrars entered the number of Kindergarten registrations they received at least once each week on a shared Google form. The communications department updated a **Kindergarten registration tracking spreadsheet** each week to compare enrollment trends going back multiple years.

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**Implementation**

We knew our audience well - families with kinder-age kids, but we looked for them in obvious, as well as unexpected places. We sent books to any 3-5 year old whose parents signed up (providing a home address and email address) for our **Big Kid Book Club**. This gave us contact information for more than 1,100 potential Kindergarten parents for direct marketing. We cultivated our relationships with our preschool teachers and staff to share key information with their parents about our Kindergarten program, events, and enrollment. Surprisingly, this hadn’t been done in a coordinated way in previous years. We blasted messages to 50,000 families across the region, because casting that big net wasn’t nearly as expensive as you’d think. If we gained just one student per email blast, we’d earn back more than we invested. And, we used any district-wide communication available, such as our **Annual Report to the Community** (a slick 4-page mailer to all homes in the district), to spread the word that enrollment for our extraordinary Kindergarten program was underway for next school year.

In addition, we expanded the slate of events. In previous years, the communications department coordinated one school-based event held on the same night at all 30 of our K-6 and K-8 schools. We heavily promoted this one event as the Kindergarten Preview night across the district. But this was no ordinary year. Our event schedule blossomed into **five varied events** spanning two months, including two district-wide drive-thru events (with teachers, principals, book giveaways, and onsite registration support), a coordinated Kindergarten event hosted onsite or virtually at all 30 elementary schools on the same date, and two **webinars**. During the webinars our best and brightest Kindergarten teachers and curriculum experts answered questions from about 100 families, while explaining the competitive advantages of DVUSD.

The clear strategy and increased number of tactics paid off in February and March, as we met both of our goals of a 20% increase for these months (see graphic on the next page).
Despite that good news, we still had a lot of ground – another 40% – to make up. The best feedback to reveal which tactics were working was our comprehensive Kindergarten survey. With an excellent return rate of 73.5%, we are able to gain a clear understanding of which marketing tactics motivated parents to register and which aspects of the Kindergarten program were most attractive to parents. We reviewed the results from surveys as they were completed and compiled the data weekly into a spreadsheet. We saw that the email blasts attracted parents of 22 students (3 from outside of the district), direct mail postcards brought in 43 students, and 270 parents learned about the Kindergarten program from their child’s preschool. While we had money reserved for print and online ads through June, we created an addendum to our communication plan to add two more direct mailings for families with 3-5 year olds, two more email blasts for families with young children, and produced additional materials for our preschools. We asked for additional funding to complete this expanded plan. The Superintendent saw the success we were having, believed in our strategy, and found the $11,000 to fund our additional budget so we could fulfill our plan.

The additional budget also allowed us to make a final push in June for summer enrollment opportunities for all grade levels with direct mail postcards to ALL homes in and just outside the district with K-8 school-aged children. We saw 606 students register for school during the summer, including 194 additional Kindergarten students, which was 25-30% higher than during the previous three summers.
Let’s look first at our short-term goals. On the previous page, we reviewed the January - March results. Below you will see the success continued for every month through the end of the school year. In fact, in both April and June, we exceeded our goals by an additional 9% and 14% respectively.
Meeting goals during the registration process is important, but it really means nothing if we don’t pass the “butts in seats” test during the school year. Arizona schools are funded by overall student enrollment count. That funding is necessary to retain staff and programs, which were able to do by meeting our overall Kindergarten enrollment goal. By September 29, the 40th day of school, DVUSD had 209 additional Kindergarten students, an increase of more than 10%. Overall district enrollment increased by 2.5%.

Because Kindergarten students are funded in Arizona at 50% of the $5,000 per student calculation, the additional 209 students brought in $522,500 in their first year alone.

If these 209 students stay through their graduation, funded at the full $5,000 per student, DVUSD could bring in an additional $12,540,000 in funding.

These results affirm our commitment to stay focused on marketing to increase Kindergarten enrollment as the best way to boost overall district enrollment in Deer Valley.
### Additional Supporting Materials

#### Tactics (See examples by clicking here and links in table below)

| Postcards mailed to homes of 3-5 year olds (January and February) | X | X | X |
| Print Ads in 6 local publications popular with parents (January - June) | X | X | X |
| Online Ads targeted to parents of 3-5 year olds on greatschools.org & Facebook (January - June) | X | X | X |
| Digital Flyers for current district parents | X | X | X |
| District Drive-Thru Events (February and March) | X | X | X |
| School Events – Drive-Thru and Virtual (February) | X | X | X |
| Website - Robust Kindergarten Information and events page (January - May) | X | X | X |
| Email Blasts to families across the region to promote events (January-April) | X | X | X |
| Targeted emails to parents for Big Kid Book Club and/or email list on the Kindergarten webpage (January - April) | X | X | X |
| Preschool staff – direct flyer distribution to families (January & March) | X | X | X |
| DVUSD Staff – promotional material shared in staff eNewsletter (January, March, & April) | X | X | X |
| DVUSD-owned Billboard (January - April) | | | |
| Traditional Media articles (January - April) | X | X | |
| Social Media Post (January - April) | X | X | X |
| City Council Monthly Newsletter (January-June) | X | X | |
| Presentations to PTA/PTO Presidents/Word of Mouth (January & March) | X | X | X |
| Welcome Wagon Mailers to all new residents (ongoing) | X | X | |
| Parent Webinars with Kindergarten Experts (February & March) | X | X | X |
| Report to the Community – Newsletter mailed to all homes district-wide November | X | X | X |
| Banners at all Schools | | | X |
| Postcards | X | X | X |
Additional Supporting Materials

Road to Kindergarten Postcard Sample

**Accelerate Your Kindergartner’s Success!**
*The BEST Kindergarten is in your neighborhood!*

Visit www.DVUSD.org/Kindergarten

Next Step: In-Person Tours & Drive-Thru Events

DVUSD Kindergarten Offers:
- Free, Full Day Program
- STEM & Language Immersion Opportunities
- Art, Music or P.E. Every Day
- Before & After School Care
- Gifted Programs
- 92% of DVUSD Schools are A & B-Rated
- 1:1 Student to Computer Ratio
- 17:1 Student to Teacher Ratio
- ... and more!

**REGISTER NOW** for the 2021-22 School Year!
To Register: www.dvusd.org/enroll

Kindergarten Information: www.dvusd.org/kindergarten

Future Kindergarten Events: www.dvusd.org/kindevent

Summer Enrollment Postcard Sample

**Your Student’s #EXTRAORDINARY FUTURE is Waiting!**

DVUSD Schools Offer:
- Free; Full Day Kindergarten
- STEM & STEAM Schools and Programs
- Spanish and Mandarin Language Immersion Programs
- Award-Winning Career & Technical Education Programs
- Before & After School Care
- Social-Emotional Learning Support
- Award-Winning Fine Arts Programs
- Gifted & Special Needs Programs
- Championship Athletic Programs
- International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs
- College and AP Level Classes
- 92% A & B-Rated Schools
- 1:1 Student to Computer Ratio
- 17:1 Student to Teacher Ratio
- ... and more!

**REGISTER NOW** for the 2021-22 School Year!
Easily Register Online: www.dvusd.org/enroll
Kindergarten Readiness Webinar with DVUSD Kindergarten Experts

Mapping Your Students Success
Kindergarten Readiness Webinar

What is a typical Day for a Kindergarten Student at DVUSD?
Additional Supporting Materials

One of the websites created with Kindergarten Information

Facebook Advertisement

EASIEST AND MOST CONVENIENT WAY TO REGISTER FOR KINDERGARTEN!

DRIVE THRU REGISTRATION EVENT! Join us THIS THURSDAY, March 4 from 5-6:30 p.m. in the District Office parking lot (20402 N. 16th Ave., Phoenix, 85027) for the Road to Kindergarten Drive-Thru Event!

This drive-thru will offer a chance to receive Kindergarten registration packets, a snack, a book, and other Kindergarten goodies! Meet our #Extraordinary DVUSD school staff and get your Kindergarten questions answered!

PLUS - When you turn in a completed registration packet, your child will receive two FREE activity books!

For upcoming Kindergarten events, visit:
https://www.dvusd.org/kinderevents

For information about DVUSD Kindergarten:
https://www.dvusd.org/kindergarten

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS STARTS IN DEER VALLEY!

Visit www.DVUSD.org/Kindergarten for all event details
Drive-thru and virtual options

DVUSD.ORG
Kindergarten / Kindergarten
Join DVUSD for upcoming Kindergarten events in Feb...
Flyer provided to attendees Stops along the District Wide Drive Through Event

Register NOW for the 2021-22 School Year!
The most #Extraordinary Kindergarten is in Peoria!

Free, Full-Day Program

Variety of Specialized programs, including: Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM), Academy of Arts, gifted program models, Spanish and Mandarin language immersion programs

Before and After School Care Programs

92% of DVUSD K-6/K-8 Schools are A or B-Rated Schools

Small class sizes offer individualized attention for students from certified, highly-qualified teachers

Special Classes offered every day including: Art, Physical Education and Music

www.DVUSD.org/Kindergarten

Print Advertisement featured in six locally printed publications
Additional Supporting Materials

District Owned Billboard

Flyers to All Preschool Classrooms and at Events

Why Choose DVUSD?

Kindergarten Program Highlights

- Free, Full-Day Program
- Special Classes offered every day including: Art, Physical Education and Music
- Before and After School Care Programs
- Variety of Specialized programs, including: Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM), Academy of Arts, various gifted program models, Spanish and Mandarin language immersion programs
- 92% of DVUSD K-6/K-8 Schools are A or B - Rated Schools
- 1:1 student-to-computer ratio
- Extraordinary support on every DVUSD campus for students identified with disabilities including IEPs and 504 plans
- 94.5% of our students graduated with more than $63 million dollars in scholarship offers

Learn More
For more information about our DVUSD Kindergarten Program: www.dvusd.org/kindergarten

Next Steps
2. Turn in registration packet and supporting documents to school of your choice or at the March 4 event. (See information to the right.)
3. School registrar examines documents and follows up with parent/guardian if needed.
4. School staff confirms that all registration documents have been collected.
5. Check your mailbox/email in July for information on Meet the Teacher night and other communication from the school.
6. Begin your child’s road to success at an Extraordinary DVUSD school!

Upcoming Kindergarten Events
- Feb. 25 @ 5:45-6:30 p.m. “Mapping Your Child’s Success” Kinder Readiness Webinar
- March 4 @ 5:45-6:30 p.m. Road to Kinder Drive-Thru (Second event) DVUSD District Office Parking Lot 20402 North 15th Avenue Phoenix, AZ 85027
   - “First 150 students to turn in registration forms will receive a free activity packet!”
- March 11 @ 5:45-6:30 p.m. “Mapping Your Child’s Success” Kinder Readiness Webinar

Learn more about upcoming events: www.dvusd.org/kinderevents
Flyer for Kindergarten Webinars

MAPping YOUR STUDENT'S SUCCESS

KINDergarten Readiness Webinar
Featuring DVUSD Kindergarten Teachers!
Early Childhood Education Experts will discuss topics including:
• Is my child ready for Kindergarten?
• How do I ensure my child's success in kindergarten?
• What is a typical day for a kindergarten student at DVUSD?

How to watch:
**Event Zoom Link posted on Feb. 24 on www.dvusd.org/Kindergarten**

WATCH LIVE! FEB. 25 - 5-6:30 P.M.

Flyer for Kindergarten Events

Kindergarten Preview Events Now Underway!
We promise to nurture and care for your child in a safe and secure environment. By working together, we will make this road to Kindergarten a happy and rewarding experience.

The Road to Success starts in Deer Valley

Upcoming Kindergarten Events

Feb. 4 @ 5-6:30 p.m.
Virtual and Drive-Through Kindergarten Preview Night at all K-8 & K-3 schools.

Feb. 18 @ 5-6:30 p.m.
Road to Kinder Drive-Thru
DVUSD District Office Parking Lot – 20802 North 15th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85027

Feb. 25 @ 5-6:30 p.m.
“Matching Your Child’s Success”
Webinar featuring Early Childhood Experts

March 4 @ 5-6:30 p.m.
Road to Kindergarten Drive-Thru event!

March 11 @ 5-6:30 p.m.
“Mapping Your Child’s Success”
Webinar featuring Early Childhood Experts

To learn more about our upcoming events and our #ExtraordinaryKindergarten program, visit: www.DVUSD.org/Kindergarten

Drive over NOW...To the BEST Kindergarten in the Valley!

Register NOW for the 2021-22 School Year!

www.DVUSD.org/Kindergarten