Indicators of Digital Readiness

Indicator	District Virtual Identity
Theme	Leadership
Priority Level	P1
Organizational Level	District

Description of the Indicator

Branding is defined as the marketing practice of creating a name, symbol, or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products. It is critical that our schools develop a brand as well, and that the brand represents visionary thinking and 21st Century learning. Branding your district identifies the goals, activities, celebrations and accomplishments that can be shared with all community stakeholders. The brand should be transparent to all members within the organization—they must all be telling the same story, one that they believe in and stand behind.

Why is this indicator important?

A Digital Ready district knows what is needed to educate students that are global thinkers and adaptable learners. In order to do this the district needs to know what they are "selling" to the students and their community. It involves clearly defining what a district does that makes it unique. It also creates a sense of ownership for people who support the "brand.: When people feel ownership, they are more likely to be involved. The ultimate outcome is to empower all community stakeholders to share in the success of the district and its students.

Indicator Rubric

Insufficient Evidence of Implementation **(0 Points)**	• District leaders have conducted a review of current branding practices and research models for establishing a brand • They have surveyed the community to gather information on current perceptions of the district
Foundational Stage of Implementation **(3 Points)**	Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as: • District leaders have utilized the results of the survey and research to conduct focus groups and/or interviews related to the story that various constituents want the brand to convey • If a brand is already created, groups focus on how the brand is currently being utilized
Achieving Success in Implementation **(6 Points)**	Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as: • District leaders have developed a comprehensive plan to define the brand and use the Internet and interactive multimedia to implement the "branding plan"
Exemplary Success in Implementation **(9 Points)**	Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as: • District leaders have developed the web structure for the branding and the initial content for the brand • Their model includes opportunities to refresh continuously the stories that represent the brand

Who in the school/district should lead and be involved with this indicator?

Members of the school technology committee/department led by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee. Committee members should include a cross-section of the community (teachers, administrators, parents, students).

How to execute the indicator

1. Create a communications survey to be distributed to the community.
   A. Survey should analyze the following:
      a. How community views our school district
      b. Popular methods of communication by the community
      c. Which methods used by the school are most effective in "branding" the school district?
      d. Frequency of communication
      e. Understanding how brand is correlated to district mission statement

f. Other information as needed by the individual district

2. Analyze the current "branding methods" used by the district and see how they compare to your district's vision and mission outlined in the strategic plan.

2. If a brand is not already created, create a brand that encompasses the mission and vision of the district. Activities *could* include:
   a. Work with a team to create a brand announcement timeline
   b. Create a district brand implementation plan aligned to the district mission statement and strategic plan
   c. Hold a brand kick-off event at each building. Include all district employees.
   d. Share the district brand implementation plan in follow up meetings.
   e. Do weekly email updates about the brand to community stakeholders

Recommended evidence to submit for successful execution of this action

1. Submit documentation of your assessment of the current brand. Documentation can include:
   a. Survey results
   b. Samples of "branding" practices
   c. Technology Committee meeting agendas/minutes
   d. District Digital Mission Statement
2. Submit the proposed recognizable brand plan (if creating initial branding)
   a. Survey results
   b. Implementation Plan
   c. Technology Committee meeting agendas/minutes
   d. Presentations
   e. Announcements, publications, social media platforms (ex. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat)

Resources schools can use to complete this action successfully

- *Edcamp Leadership 2014 Building Your Brand in 3 Easy Steps via Joe Sanfelippo and Tony Siannis https://docs.google.com/document/d/1T9oxv0KcJ70mZjCbqFz74_Z6mc5hUHqVxFYbJ6_dUx0/edit*
- *League of Innovative Schools via Digital Promise: http://www.digitalpromise.org/initiatives/league-of-innovative-schools*
- School Business Association Branding http://www.naylornetwork.com/asb-nwl/pdf/SBA_November_2014_Brand.pdf
- How to Develop a Brand Powerpoint https://www.slideshare.net/dalberico/branding-your-school-district
- Creating a communications Road Map http://www.endeavormgmt.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Message-Mapping-Creating-a-Communications-Roadmap.pdf
- District Brands tied to strategic planning: . https://www.nspra.org/e_network/2015-09_goldstandard
- Internal branding tool kit: http://www.civicus.org/view/media/CIVICUSInternalCommunicationToolkit.pdf
- Amplifying your school brand:
- http://www.hmhco.com/media-center/blogs/2017/february/strengthening-school-brand

- Sample branding announcement letter:
  http://www.rumson.k12.nj.us/rumson/Press%20Releases/Rumson%20Launches%20a%20New%20Brand.pdf

Certified Schools Exemplars: See links for school evidence

1. **Northern Valley Old Tappan HS, Northern Valley Regional HS District, 2018 Silver Certified**

   The NVOT leadership team has done tremendous work to develop and promote the Old Tappan High School "brand." This is reflected on the school website, as well as on continuously updated social media channels (such as Twitter) that are contributed to by various school leaders, including (and especially) the building principal. The web based architecture that we've put into place allows us to continuously keep students, parents, and staff informed via social media, while simultaneously promoting an NVOT brand that is in sync with students' needs, community philosophy, and district vision. We have recently seen students begin to take ownership of the brand as well -- evidenced by student groups creating and selling "swag" that is branded with NVOT mottos and quotes that are aligned with the HS brand and district vision.

2. **Black River Middle School, Chester School District, 2018 Bronze Certified**

   Black River Middle School and the Chester District School take great pride in promoting student and staff achievements and informing stakeholders of school happenings in the virtual world. We take a multi-faceted approach to telling our school and district story in the both the physical and virtual worlds. Our district hashtag, #WeAreChesterNJ, binds us together as a virtual community. At any given moment parents can log into Twitter, access the #WeAreChesterNJ hashtag and see the great learning experiences that are taking place in our schools. Through our district app and Blackboard Connect we can reach stakeholders with important information with a few taps of the cell phone screen or clicks of the mouse. Additionally, our use the Smore digital newsletter allows district and school staff to reach a wider audience with interactive content pertaining to various initiatives and upcoming events.

3. **Hazlet Middle Schools, Hazlet Township Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified**

   Hazlet Middle School has a strong virtual identity, with a high-traffic social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Following Hazlet's branding plan, a districtwide hashtag was created, #HazletProud, and is included in all of the middle school social media posts. Through the districtwide Curriculum & Technology Committee, Hazlet Middle School administration inform the board of education and district stakeholders about all developments and initiatives aimed at maintaining, assessing and increasing our virtual identity and presence.

4. **McManus Middle School, Linden, 2018 Bronze Certified**

   Over the past few years, Linden Public School has rebranded and reformed our logo across district. Instead of having different mascots for each school, the Board of Education resolved to make all schools and mascots the Tigers. By using the same mascot, we show that we are unified as a district. The logo and mascot is displayed on all district, school, and teacher social media accounts. Additionally, for the 2017-2018 school year, Linden Public Schools hired a Public Information Officer to disseminate and share information to the staff and community.

5. **East Brunswick Campus, Middlesex County Vocational School District, 2018 Bronze Certified**

   Our campus uses Class Intercom which allows students to create social media content to promote our school brand. The Social Media Internships allow students to be social media ambassadors for the district. Currently we have a part time public relations employee. Every MCVTS campus has at least one Twitter account that is updated regularly. Multiple campus also have Facebook and Instagram accounts and Facebook. The district also launched a new website and app.

6. **Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, New Brunswick Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified**

   Woodrow Wilson Elementary scored exemplar in the District Virtual Identity indicator. The Woodrow Wilson community recognizes the importance of having a digital identity in today's ever-connected technological world. We have a robust website that is continuously being updated to better serve the needs of the educational stakeholders. Additionally, we have a vibrant presence on social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, through which we promote our

educational mission, publicize school events, and activities. Recognizing the importance of student voice and agency, we allow students to keep track of their academic progress and benchmarks via the student portal in conjunction with other data provided by educational programs used within the classrooms.

7. **Hillview Elementary School, Pequannock Township School District, 2018 Bronze Certified**

Establishing a successful virtual identity requires a gradual building process with a unified vision, one that must be aligned with the district's mission statement. The Pequannock Township School District began with the advent of district website many years ago, but has been carefully cultivated over the past two years to incorporate social media and multiple outlets for sharing messages about the district's news and progress. Buy-in is critical to the process as the generators of content (administrators, staff, and students) need to believe in a common goal; likewise, getting our stakeholders on board (the same as the generators, as well as parents and truly a global community). We launched a district app to engage our community in the content of the websites more easily, and then expand our scope through a series of online newsletters and then a significant presence on Twitter, as well as a student-generated district wide lip dub on YouTube. We have also managed our message through a Facebook page and are looking to meet our students where they are on platforms such as Instagram and SnapChat. As the platforms and technologies change, we intend to maintain a consistent message, which includes encouraging all stakeholders to leave a positive digital paw print.

8. **Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified**

We included an image of our district's identifiable logo, along with examples and photos of where the logo is found throughout the school and the community. There was the inclusion of a secondary logo as well, and we explained how the letters in the logo have become an acronym/community motto. We demonstrated that our district has a social media presence through our superintendent's active Twitter account, for which we included a screenshot. We told about our school's website, which has a mobile app. Also included was a description of our district's Community Relations department and a link to work they've done on our district website. We explained that we also have a district cable station coordinator who videos, edits, and produces media that is shared with a local cable channel and other news opportunities. Finally, we included information about our individual school's webpage, logo/mascot (screenshot), and Twitter page.