Virginia Association of Counties

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico

Program Title: Help Chats for Virtual Learning

Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Victoria Davis

Title: Public Relations Specialist

Department: Public Relations

Telephone: 804-501-4933   Website: www.henrico.us

Email: dav127@henrico.us

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton

Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration

Signature:

3

Program Overview

Sept. 8, 2020 may have been the most important first day of school in the history of Henrico County Public Schools. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) began the 2020-21 school year with predominantly virtual learning for the first time ever.

"We realize that the predominantly virtual start to the school year presents families with a host of challenges," said Amy Cashwell, superintendent. "We want to do our best to make sure that the technical aspects of virtual learning are as simple as possible, and that families can get their questions answered quickly."

To ensure that Sept. 8 was successful for Henrico families and to strengthen their resolve that virtual learning was a viable option, HCPS created the "Virtual Learning Help Chats'' program to support families with every aspect of technology for virtual learning "from log in to learning." The program included pre-recorded videos, live interactive question-and-answer sessions with experts, and online step-by-step instruction slideshows. The program met HCPS families where they were, targeted their specific needs, and helped advance equity, so that all HCPS families felt empowered and were able to help their learners have a successful virtual-learning first day of school and a successful year.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

In August 2020, evolving health data resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic forced Henrico County Public Schools to begin the 2020-21 school year with predominantly virtual learning for the first time ever. HCPS was ahead of many other school divisions when it came to technology infrastructure at its schools, but it was a completely different situation outside of our school facilities. As families began readying their students to use Chromebooks, iPads and laptops for

virtual learning, Henrico identified the need to help our families better understand the concepts and technologies behind virtual learning. To do this, the school division needed to be responsive to the differing schedules, ranges of technical skill and understanding, and the various primary languages of Henrico County families. Additionally, HCPS would need to come up with completely new ways to support its families, as the pandemic limited public gatherings.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Virtual Learning Help Chats program was a collaborative, innovative project through which the following goals were achieved:

- The program supported a successful first day of virtual learning, with more than 38,000 students accessing instruction without visiting a school campus in person.

- The program promoted greater equity throughout Henrico County by meeting families where they were and by targeting their needs for supporting their learners through virtual learning.

- The program helped to communicate to the community that HCPS students, teachers, and leaders were up to the task of providing safe, high-quality instruction during virtual learning.

- The program demonstrated the power of collaboration among HCPS departments to impact the community on a greater scale than could be accomplished individually.

How Program Was Carried Out

"We realize that the predominantly virtual start to the school year presents families with a host of challenges," said Amy Cashwell, superintendent. "We want to do our best to make sure that the technical aspects of virtual learning are as simple as possible, and that families can get their

questions answered quickly." Help Chats for Virtual Learning were created to address these needs across the division.

Program Goal and Objectives

Help all Henrico County families be empowered with a better understanding of the concepts and technologies behind virtual learning, by providing;

- Anytime, anywhere access to various formats of technology support (such as prerecorded video, live interactive sessions and self-paced slideshows).

- Easy to follow step-by-step instructions that take families from "log in to learning."

- Targeted support that meets families where they are, so they can get the information they need quickly.

- Access to HCPS technology and learning experts to answer questions directly.

Development

The Virtual Learning Help Chats team developed a three-tiered approach to accomplishing the goal and objectives.

- **Pre-recorded Videos:** The team developed a set of six pre-recorded videos in which HCPS technology and learning experts talked through exactly what families need to know, from logging into the devices and signing into various accounts, to learning with the devices. These videos feature pre-recorded segments addressing specific aspects of virtual learning, so families could easily get the information they needed. Each video was uploaded and shared via YouTube, and linked to the Henrico County Public Schools website and social media outlets. YouTube automatically created closed-captioning for the videos to provide increased accessibility. The six recorded "Help Chat" video

segments can be seen at https://henricoschools.us/returntoschool/ and at http://youtube.com/henricoschoolstv. The video topics are:

- Resources for Virtual Learning.

- PowerSchool, Part 1: Creating Your Parent Account.

- PowerSchool, Part 2: PowerSchool (Device Login Info, Schedules and Grades.

- Devices: iPads, Chromebooks and Laptops.

- Clever and Schoology (Plus, Creating Your Schoology Parent Account).

- Microsoft Teams.

- **Live Help Chats question-and-answer sessions:** The team scheduled three live, interactive sessions using Microsoft Teams virtual conferencing application. The sessions were available to join from any internet-connected device, and no registration was required. Attendees could submit a question to an online form, enter a question in the "chat box," or choose to ask the question live. Andy Jenks, HCPS' chief of communications and community engagement, moderated the events by directing live questions to members of a panel of HCPS technology and learning experts, who would provide answers in real time.
  - Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020 - Live Help Chat Sessions (First day of school was Tuesday, Sept 8):
    - 10-11:30 a.m. session.
    - 2-3:30 p.m. session.
    - 6-8 p.m. session.
  - Each session was also recorded and added to the prerecorded Help Chat video catalog on YouTube and the HCPS website.

- **Anytime, anywhere self-paced slideshows:** Beyond the live and recorded videos, the team recognized the need for written and illustrated step-by-step instructions, and created the Virtual Learning Homepage. This openly accessible webpage covered everything from laptops to learning for the new virtual setting, but at a self-paced speed for families. The webpage divided support topics based on grade level and device type, to enable families to easily find what they needed for their learner. Each topic contained a slideshow with step-by-step instructions and screenshots to enable even the most inexperienced user to easily navigate the technology. Since the instructions were written, HCPS could translate many of the topics into Spanish to increase accessibility.
  - [Henrico Virtual Learning Homepage](#)
  - Topic slideshows:
    - [Device Support](#) (includes Spanish language support)
    - [Clever Support](#) (includes Spanish language support)
    - [How to Use Schoology](#) (includes Spanish language support)
    - [Microsoft Teams Support](#)
    - [Google Apps for Education](#)
    - [How to Use PowerSchool](#)
  - Grade Level Technology Overviews:
    - [Digital Learning for Elementary School Families](#)
    - [Digital Learning for Middle School Families](#)
    - [Digital Learning for High School Families](#)
  - Student and Family Tips:
    - [Virtual Learning Tip Sheet](#)

Implementation Timeline:

- Aug.17-20, 2020: Project needs-assessment, planning, and development.

- Aug. 24, 2020: Publish self-paced slideshows to Virtual Learning Homepage.

- Aug. 27-28, 2020: Video and produce virtual learning pre-recorded videos.

- Aug. 30, 2020: Publish pre-recorded Virtual Learning Help Chats videos to YouTube and advertise to HCPS families.

- Sept. 3, 2020: Live Help Chats sessions (10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.).

- Sept. 8, 2020: First day of school.

Clientele

The clientele for the Virtual Learning Help Chats were the families, guardians and caregivers of all 50,000 HCPS students. The various methods of support reached parents, siblings, extended family members, neighbors, daycare providers, church leaders, public librarians, community advocates and business partners, who all wanted to help HCPS students have a successful virtual learning experience. Additionally, many HCPS staff and leaders used the Help Chats materials as a supplemental source of professional learning in preparing for virtual learning.

Contributions of other partners

The Virtual Learning Help Chats were a collaboration among several departments within Henrico County Public Schools.

- The Department of Communications and Public Relations: planning, scheduling, content creation, advertising, event logistics, hosting, community engagement, web hosting, social media.

- The Department of Technology: research, video production, content creation, participation on panel.

- The Department of Teaching, Learning and Innovation: research, video production, content creation, participation on panel.

Financing and Staffing

The Virtual Learning Help Chats program was efficiently designed to function without additional funding outside the salaried time of the design and implementation team.

- **All online content** (videos, slideshows, documents) was posted to the existing Henrico County Public Schools website and YouTube channel.
  - www.henricoschools.us
    - Return to Learn page > HCPS Help Chats
    - Return to Learn page > Virtual Learning Homepage
  - Henrico Virtual Learning Help Chats on YouTube
- **All Live "Help Chat" Question-and-Answer Sessions** were hosted on Microsoft Teams' virtual conferencing platform (already purchased by the school division).
- **All community outreach and advertisement** for the various Help Chats options was done through existing channels to HCPS families, such as:
  - SchoolMessenger.
  - School division and school websites.
  - Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
  - News releases aimed at local news outlets.

Program Results

The goal of the Virtual Learning Help Chats was to help empower all HCPS with a better understanding of the concepts and technologies behind virtual learning. Most importantly, it was about supporting a successful first day of school and beyond. Sept. 8, 2020 was a monumental

first day of school in the history of Henrico County Public Schools, in part due to the success of the Help Chats program. On a day in which all HCPS students started virtual learning, never having done it before, with some having never used an iPad, Chromebook or laptop before, more than 38,400 students logged on successfully. Participation in virtual learning increased in ensuing days:

- *9/8/2020: 38,483 unique student users*

- *9/9/2020: 38.572 unique student users*

- *9/10/2020: 39,193 unique student users*

- *9/11/2020: 38,633 unique student users*

When reflecting on the success of the various elements of the Help Chats program, the team reviewed data on each.

**Pre-recorded videos: (45,239 total views)**

- Resources for Virtual Learning (8,735 views)
- PowerSchool, Part 1: Creating Your Parent Account. (8,967 views)
- PowerSchool, Part 2: PowerSchool (Device Login Info, Schedules and Grades. (4,709 views)
- Devices: iPads, Chromebooks and Laptops. (5,758 views)
- Clever and Schoology (Plus, Creating Your Schoology Parent Account). (8,660 views)
- Microsoft Teams. (8,410 views)

Live "Help Chat" question-and-answer sessions: (Total views 2,073)

- Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020 - Live Help Chats sessions (First day of school was Tuesday, Sept 8)

  - 10-11:30 a.m. session. (421 live participants, 618 views)
  - 2-3:30 p.m. session. (345 live participants, 203 views)
  - 6-8 p.m. session. (255 live participants, 231 views)

Anytime, anywhere self-paced slideshows: 25,000+ views

○ Henrico Virtual Learning Homepage: The daily views bar graph below shows the huge increase in views the Virtual Learning Homepage received after the beginning of the Help Chats campaign release on Monday, Aug. 31, 2020. That week, the site had roughly 17,000 views, and another 4,000 on Sept. 8, 2020 (the first day of school), and 4,250 on Sept. 9.
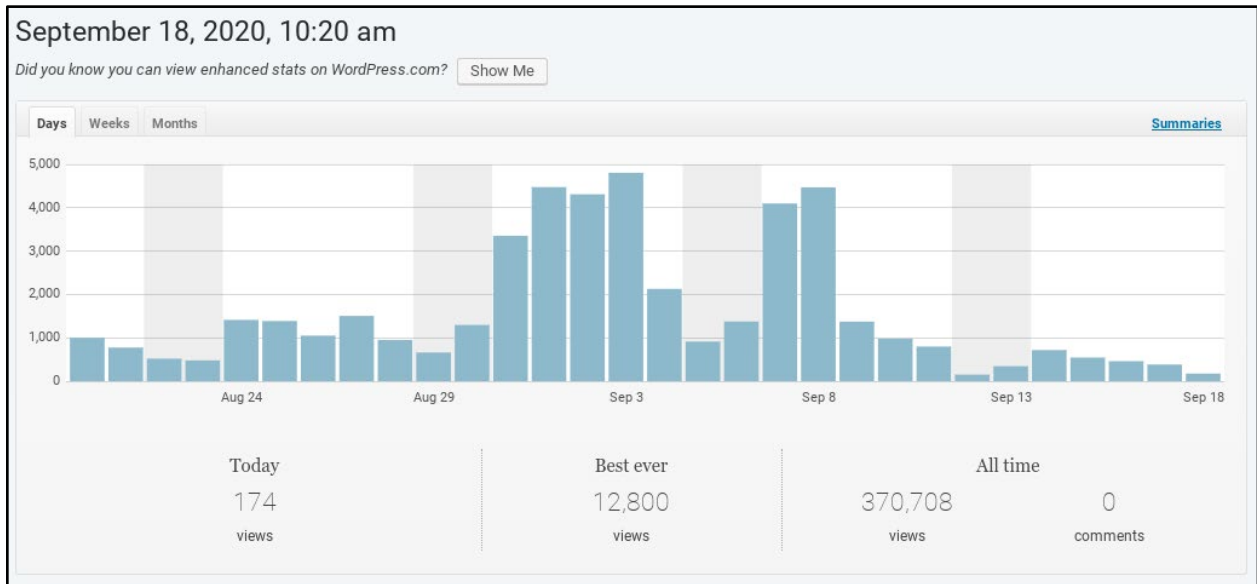
Self-paced slideshows: 5,699 unique user views
- Device Support (1,004 unique user views)
- Clever Support (585 unique viewers)
- How to Use Schoology (1,795 unique viewers)
- *Microsoft Teams Support (1154 unique viewers)
- Google Apps for Education (480 unique viewers)
- How to Use PowerSchool (681 unique user views)

Brief Summary

As the likelihood of a virtual start to the 2020-21 school year increased, and as families began readying their students to use Chromebooks, iPads and laptops for virtual learning, Henrico identified the need to help our families better understand the concepts and technologies behind virtual learning.

In order to meet this challenge, HCPS created the "Virtual Learning Help Chats" program to support families with every aspect of technology for virtual learning "from log in to learning." The program included pre-recorded videos, live interactive question-and-answer sessions with experts, and online step-by-step instruction slideshows. The program met HCPS families where they were and targeted their specific needs so that all HCPS families felt empowered and were able to help their learners have a successful virtual-learning first day of school and a successful year.

The success of the program is evidenced by usage data and the division reaching the following goals:

- A successful first day of virtual learning, with more than 38,000 students accessing instruction virtually without visiting a school campus in person.
- Greater equity throughout Henrico County by meeting families where they were and by targeting their needs for supporting their learners through virtual learning. Usage of the various support elements was as follows: Pre-recorded videos: (45,239 total views); Live "Help Chat" question-and-answer sessions: (Total views 2,073); Anytime, anywhere self-paced slideshows: 25,000+ views.
- Communicate to the community that HCPS students, teachers, and leaders were up to the task of providing safe, high-quality instruction during virtual learning and that HCPS departments were working collaboratively to meet the needs of students and families.

Help Chats for Virtual Learning
Supplemental Material

[Henrico County Public School website](#)
[Mission Forward (return-to-school) webpage](#)
[Virtual Learning Help Chats prerecorded videos](#)
[Live Virtual Learning Help Chats sessions](#) (videos No. 7, 8 and 9)
[Virtual Learning Homepage self-paced slideshows](#)