



Bright Futures Begin Here: LCPS Preschool Outreach

Campaign Lead: Christina Arpante, Communication Coordinator
Natalie Allen: Chief Communications & Community Engagement Officer

Department of Communications and Community Engagement
Loudoun County Public Schools
21000 Education Court
Ashburn, VA 20148
(571) 252-1040

Communications Staff Members: 19
Division Size: 82,713 Students; 12,804 Staff
Size/Type of District: Large, Suburban K-12 Public School Division

SYNOPSIS

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) launched the **Bright Futures Begin Here – LCPS Preschool Outreach campaign** to increase awareness and participation in its free full-day preschool programs, Head Start and Starting Towards Excellence in Preschool (STEP). This strategic communications initiative provided timely, accessible and targeted information to ensure families understood the benefits of early childhood education and the preschool application process. The short campaign ran from July through September.

By combining research-driven messaging, strategic outreach and measurable outcomes, **Bright Futures Begin Here** successfully increased awareness and participation in LCPS preschool programs, filling classrooms to capacity for the first time since the program became available within the division. The campaign directly contributed to a 120-application increase compared to the same period the previous year, ensuring both programs reached full enrollment by the Sept. 30 reporting deadline. The campaign supported enrollment goals and reinforced the division's commitment to fostering early childhood education and promoting long-term student success.

SUMMARY

LCPS Head Start and STEP provide free full-day preschool opportunities for eligible four-year-old children. To increase awareness and participation in the 2024-25 preschool application process, the division launched **Bright Futures Begin Here**, an abbreviated strategic communications plan to provide timely, accurate and accessible information to the diverse Loudoun community audiences. This multi-tiered, multi-phased approach aimed to expand outreach, increase application rates and support families in understanding the lifelong benefits of early childhood education.

Goal

The goal of this research-based communications campaign was to develop and execute a concise, high-impact outreach strategy to increase preschool applications by 15% and expand audience engagement within a short timeline. The focus was to provide clear, timely and accessible information across multiple communication channels—social media, email, school websites and community partnerships—to drive application submissions before the start of the school year.

Target Audience

The primary audience for this campaign was the Loudoun County community at-large, including current and prospective LCPS families with children eligible for preschool. The campaign aimed to reach families already engaged with LCPS, as well as those new to the division, ensuring that all eligible children had access to information about free full-day preschool opportunities.

Research

Extensive research underscores the benefits of preschool education for children's development and long-term success. Studies from the [Harvard Graduate School of Education](#) highlight that high-quality preschool programs contribute to improved academic outcomes, including higher test scores and increased high school graduation rates. Research from the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(MIT\)](#) further reveals that preschool attendance correlates with higher college enrollment rates and better economic prospects in adulthood. Additionally, early childhood education plays a crucial role in social and emotional development, fostering better social skills, emotional regulation, and adaptability, as documented by the [Learning Policy Institute](#). Preschool access has also been linked to decreased placement in [special education programs](#) and lower rates of grade repetition, reinforcing its importance in early learning initiatives.

The campaign focused on reaching all key stakeholders, including families with eligible preschool-aged children, community organizations and leaders, educators and school staff, and local media and news outlets. By targeting these groups, the campaign ensured that information about the program was widely disseminated and accessible to families who could benefit from these early education opportunities.

Planning

Phase 1 – 2024-2025 Program Recruitment

The shortened communications plan for preschool recruitment prioritized three key messages: free full-day preschool opportunities for Loudoun County residents, clear and simple guidance on the application process, and the social, emotional and academic benefits of preschool. The campaign focused on ensuring eligible families were informed through multiple communication channels, including social media, email campaigns, school websites and community partnerships. These efforts provided timely, accessible information and a streamlined application process for families.

Phase 2 – 2025-2026 Program Recruitment

To support a longer timeline and sustained engagement, planning for 2025-26 began in November 2024 and launched in January 2025. The communications plan follows a deliberate cadence designed to build awareness, reinforce key messages and drive engagement over six months. By strategically spacing updates across multiple channels, the approach supports consistent visibility while preventing message fatigue.

Regular, collaborative check-ins allow for adjustments and enhancements to maximize outreach effectiveness.

Implementation

Phase 1 – 2024-2025 Program Recruitment: The communications rollout began with a division-wide email request to share preschool information and flyers on July 24. A needs and planning meeting was held on July 26, followed by the campaign’s official launch on July 29, when email messages were distributed and the full communications plan was finalized.

Digital and print advertising played a key role in outreach. A Loudoun Now advertisement ran on August 16, and preschool application details were included in family newsletters sent on August 15, 21, 29 and September 5. Social media efforts began with an initial “Apply Now” post in both English and Spanish on August 28, followed by a targeted Facebook ad campaign running August 21-29. A second call-to-action post was scheduled for September 19. To sustain engagement, monthly social media posts highlighting preschool education benefits were planned starting October 17.

Community engagement and partnerships further amplified the campaign. Collaborations with local organizations helped distribute information, and school networks provided direct outreach to eligible families, ensuring they had access to application details and support throughout the enrollment process.

Phase 2 – 2025-2026 Program Recruitment: The current communications implementation follows a strategically spaced, multichannel approach to maximize reach and engagement over six months. Messaging is distributed across digital, print and in-person channels, ensuring consistent visibility. Major updates occur in three-month intervals, with ALERT messages, School Board updates, elementary school live feeds and Facebook event promotions scheduled for January, March and May. Family newsletters and principal updates align with these milestones to reinforce messaging.

Monthly social media campaigns sustain engagement, while advisory committee outreach, PTA/PTO communications and PeachJar flyer distributions focus on spring outreach to reach families effectively. Additional storytelling efforts include a web story in March and a newspaper insert in late spring to expand awareness. This phased approach ensures messaging is timely, accessible and impactful for diverse audiences.

EVALUATION

The campaign’s success was measured through application numbers, engagement analytics and media interest. By August 14, 196 applications had been received, demonstrating an early positive response. The goal was to achieve full program enrollment by September 30, aligning with Student Records Collection data used for grant funding.

Social media performance was tracked through analytics measuring reach, engagement, and shares of campaign posts and advertisements. Email analytics provided insight into the effectiveness of division-wide communications, measuring open and click-through rates. Website traffic data was also monitored to assess the number of visits to preschool application pages.

Media interest and community response served as additional indicators of success. Preschool enrollment efforts were featured in Loudoun Now and other local media outlets, further expanding outreach. Additionally, the campaign generated increased inquiries through email and the Let's Talk system, highlighting growing community engagement with the preschool program.

Key Results:

- **120 more applications** received for **2025-26** by **March 10** compared to the same date in **2024-25**
 - **SY24-25 applications: 295**
 - **SY25-26 applications as of March 10: 415**
- By **Sept. 30, 2024**, both Head Start and STEP programs **achieved full enrollment**, meeting the grant funding reporting deadline. This marked the **first year** all classrooms in both programs reached **full capacity**.
- Increased **Let's Talk inquiries** and **email engagement**, indicating a heightened level of interest from families
- High **social media reach and engagement** on targeted posts, with campaign messaging shared widely across community networks
- **Media coverage in Loudoun Now** and other local outlets, reinforcing public awareness of free preschool opportunities

CONCLUSION

The **Bright Futures Begin Here – LCPS Preschool Outreach Campaign** successfully applied strategic research, planning, implementation, and evaluation to drive increased awareness and participation in free preschool opportunities. With a multi-platform communications strategy, the initiative fostered meaningful engagement, expanded audience reach, and contributed to long-term educational success for young learners in the community.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

FACEBOOK AD: AUGUST 21 - 29

Cost: \$195



SAMPLE: LCPS FAMILY AND COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER ARTICLE - AUG. 15, 2024

Apply Now for FREE Full-Day Preschool!

The LCPS Head Start and Starting Towards Excellence in Preschool (STEP) programs offer FREE full-day preschool opportunities for children who turn four years old by Sept. 30, 2024, and meet eligibility criteria. Both programs offer high-quality preschool instruction to prepare students for kindergarten. Classes are taught by a teacher and teacher assistant and are located throughout Loudoun County. Classes meet six hours a day, Monday through Friday, during the school year, and enrollment is open now!



Parents/guardians who are Loudoun County residents and interested in these programs can apply online by visiting the [Preschool Application Page](#). At the time of application, parents may upload income verification, proof of residency, child's birth certificate, and parent photo identification, which are required to help determine program eligibility. For more information about the Head Start and STEP classes, including eligibility criteria, locations, and how to apply, visit the [Head Start and STEP webpage](#) or call 571-252-2110.

SUPPORT LINKS

- [Preschool Flyer \(English/Spanish\)](#): Created/Designed by HeadStart and Starting Towards Excellence in Preschool (STEP), distributed by Head Start and STEP, Schools and the Division of Community Engagement and Family Engagement
- [LCPS Family And Community Newsletter Open Rates and Sample Article](#)
- [Phase I Implementation Timeline](#)