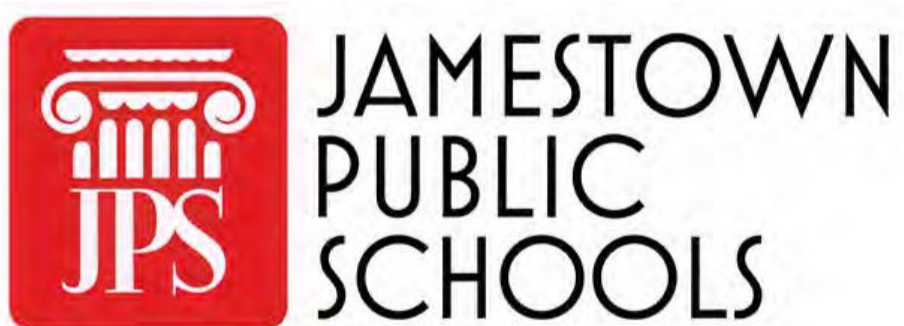


Case Study

How Jamestown Public Schools Builds Connection Through Communication

A few years ago, Jamestown Public Schools in western New York sent only a handful of newsletters each year. Today, their communications strategy looks completely different. The district has transformed how it connects with both employees and families.

For Cameron Hurst, the district's fourth-year Public Relations Specialist, the investment in more frequent communications is a no-brainer. He believes that "communication and public relations are the first step to family and community engagement." With Smore, he and others across the district can frequently communicate with the Jamestown community and encourage campuses to do the same.



Size: 4,500 students; 9 schools

Number of employees: 1,100

Location: Jamestown, NY



Strengthening Employee Engagement

Before the 2025-26 school year, Jamestown’s internal newsletters, which began in 2023, were sent just four times per year. A newsletter celebrated the beginning of the school year, another marked the holiday season, a third recognized Teacher’s Appreciation Week, and a final newsletter closed out the year. Employees enjoyed receiving the newsletters, but the infrequent schedule made it impossible for them to impact staff culture.

After attending a presentation at the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) conference by Sarah LeBlanc and Gracie Durham from Round Lake ISD in Illinois, Cameron was inspired to try something new: a weekly staff newsletter.

That idea became the JPS Bulletin, a Smore-powered newsletter sent every Friday morning at 7:45.

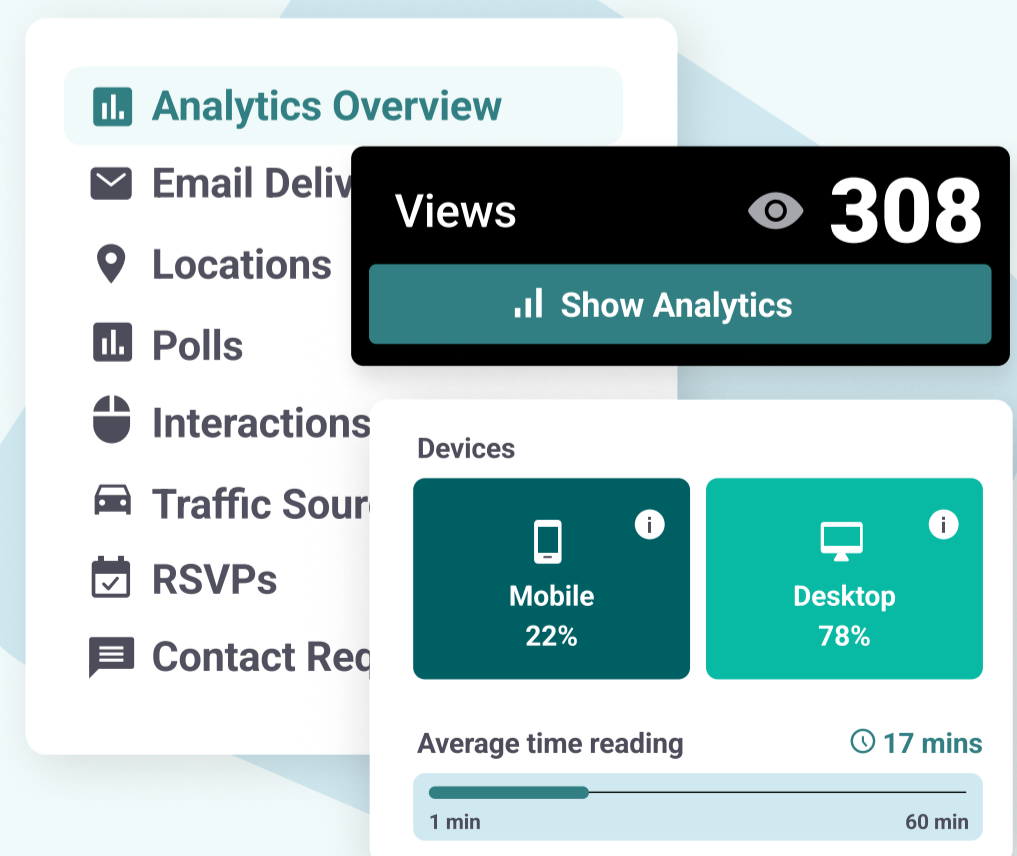
Each issue begins with a short video story, often a message from the superintendent or a highlight from around the district, followed by a section called “Pillars of JPS.” The Pillars of JPS highlights staff members who exhibit the district’s core values. Staff nominate each other for the honor, and all nominations are featured prominently in the newsletter to spread positivity and encouragement. Each nomination is added to a monthly pool, and at the end of the month, all nominees are entered into a drawing for a special prize. Cameron says it’s become a favorite feature among employees:

“We average 20 Pillar submissions. People log on every Friday to see who’s being recognized. It’s become something people look forward to.”

Beyond recognition, the newsletter also centralizes important updates from HR, payroll, and district leadership, functioning as a digital hub for staff in a district that doesn’t have an internal intranet.

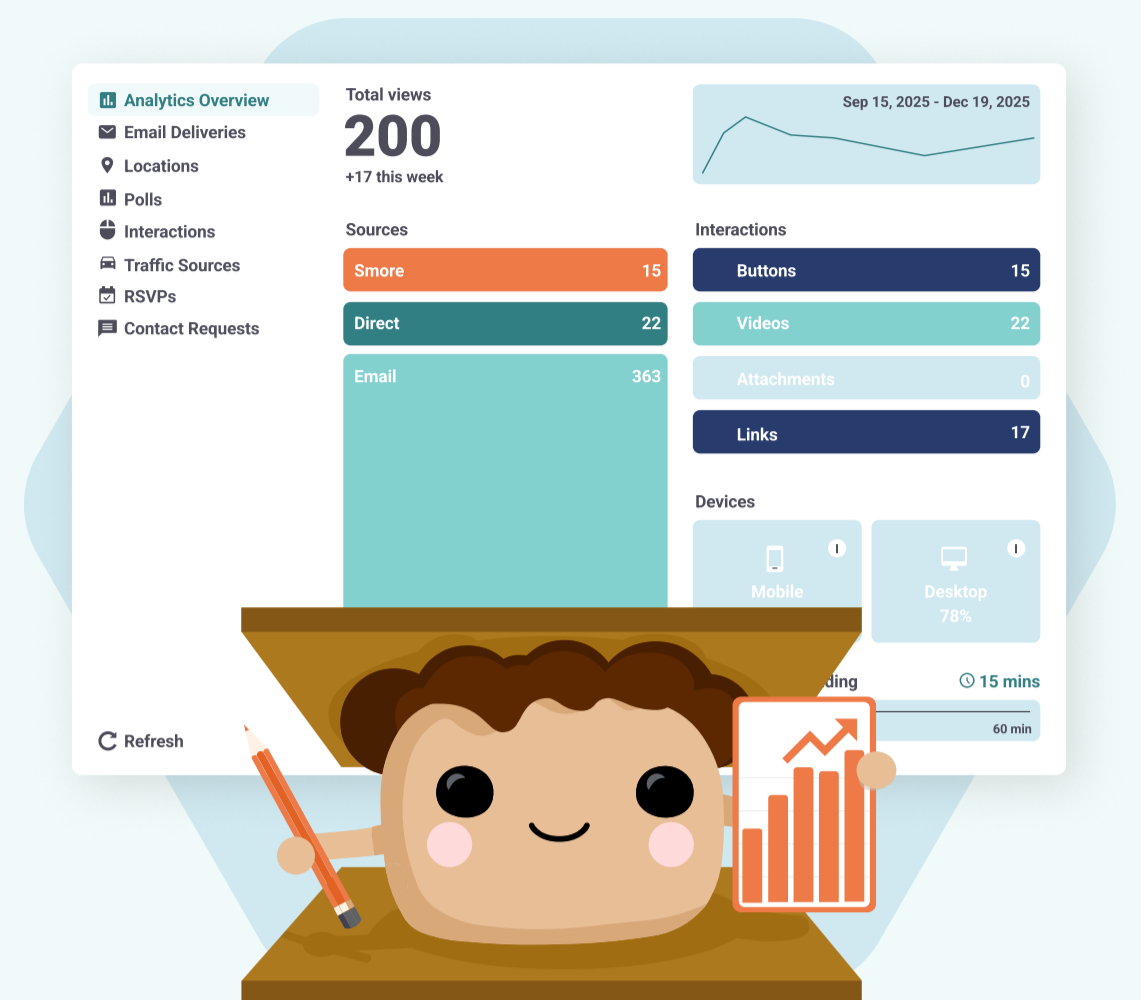
With so much to cover, Smore’s built-in analytics help Cameron refine the content each week.

“I love the analytics,” he explains. “I can see what staff are clicking on and how much time they spend reading.”



Those insights help him keep each edition relevant and engaging. And it's working: every issue averages more than 200 views, meaning a large portion of the district's employees are tuning in regularly. The early signs of engagement are already having an impact on staff alignment. Cameron remarked:

"It's hard to get everyone on the same page across nine buildings," Cameron says, "but Smore helps us do it."



A Fresh Approach to Family Engagement

For Cameron, there are three levels of family engagement: information, engagement, and empowerment. He explains:

"We ask ourselves, are we just telling families what's going on, or are we inviting them in and ultimately empowering them?"

Each of the district's principals now sends out a family newsletter with Smore. Some publish them monthly, while the high school shares updates weekly. Families love receiving them. In fact, parents reference the newsletters during meetings and conferences.

And since Smore includes auto-translation, families can read the newsletters in the language they speak at home. That's especially valuable in a district as diverse as Jamestown's.

"Having the ability to translate content right in Smore helps us empower families who might not otherwise feel as connected," Cameron says. "And with how far translation technology has come, it's more conversational now. It feels personal."

Over time, these consistent, positive updates have helped shift the tone of family communication. Instead of hearing from schools only when there's a problem, families now get regular stories celebrating students, staff, and school events.

"It's a chance to change the narrative," Cameron says. "We want families to hear from us often and for good reasons."

Unique Ways Schools Are Using Smore

What makes Jamestown's approach stand out is how each school has made Smore their own.

At Bush Elementary School, for example, the principal publishes a Smore newsletter called the Bush Broadcast, an internal staff resource that's updated daily with coverage schedules, lunch menus, and notes from the instructional coach. It's been viewed more than 25,000 times just this school year, as staff check it each morning to stay informed.

"We didn't think Smore would be used this way," Cameron laughs, "but it's working beautifully."

Elsewhere, Persell Middle School's journalism club uses Smore to create its own family newsletter. Students produce the content, and advisors use Smore to publish and distribute it, giving students a hands-on experience in real-world communication.

Principals are also encouraging staff members to collaborate by co-editing newsletters and sharing templates. Cameron sees this as another sign that the district's culture of communication is thriving: "When people are asking how they can get their own Smore account, that's when you know it's working."

Looking Ahead: Consistency and Connection

After transforming its approach to both internal and external communication, Jamestown Public Schools is now rewriting its strategic communications plan for the first time in a decade. The goal, Cameron says, is to build on the momentum Smore has helped create.

"We're looking at how we can be more consistent, using our tools intentionally and seeing what works. This is about helping our community feel connected, informed, and proud to be part of Jamestown," Cameron remarked.

