

Beaufort County School District

A more fitting way to reach families: How Beaufort County School District built a blueprint for connection

OVERVIEW

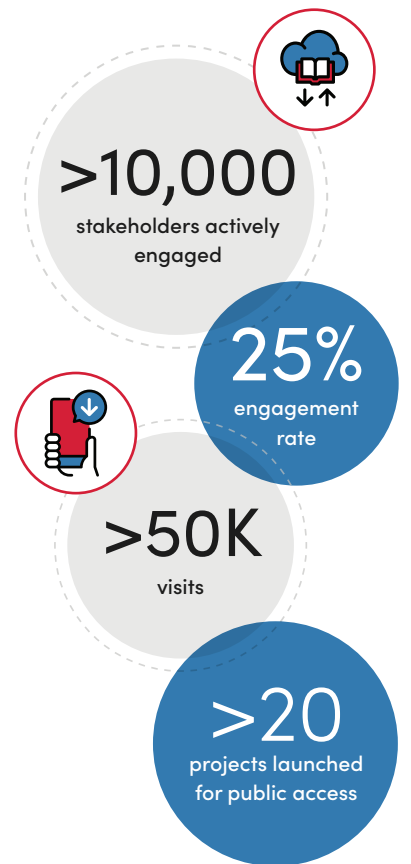
During a period of strategy reassessment to meet modern communication needs in a complex environment, Beaufort County School District (BCSD) desired a better way to hear from its community — one that promoted constructive dialogue, reduced misinformation, was accessible to any stakeholder, and provided engagement data. BCSD reshaped its communications strategy into a connection strategy by launching BCSD Connected, a modern, inclusive engagement hub built on Granicus Sentiment & Feedback (EngagementHQ). BCSD created a trusted space for meaningful participation by meeting community members where they are — online, on their own schedules, and across devices.

SITUATION | FACE-TO-FACEBOOK

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Beaufort County School District faced the same challenges as many K-12 systems: in-person meetings were no longer possible, while the need for public input only increased. Federal funding requirements, evolving policies, and heightened community concern made engagement essential — but traditional methods weren't working.

MUST HAVE SOLUTION

Sentiment & Feedback



“This digital engagement strategy has really paid off. We have expanded community reach, improved the quality and quantity of our public participation, and modernized our approach to transparency. It’s scalable, cost effective, and sustainable.”

Candace Bruder | Chief Communications Officer | Beaufort County School District

BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Even in a post-pandemic era, town halls and meetings drew limited attendance, and many leaned on social media instead, which often amplified polarizing voices and misinformation. **The district needed a better way to:**

- ✓ **Reach as many families, staff, students, and residents** as possible.
- ✓ **Create productive, two-way dialogue** in a more controlled environment.
- ✓ **Gather required and meaningful feedback** at scale.
- ✓ **Demonstrate engagement outcomes** with defensible data.

“Social media is not the place where you want these discussions to take place,” said Candace Bruder, chief communications officer at Beaufort County School District. **“Commenters may not even be our constituents, and we can’t always refute misinformation or contribute in a productive way.”**

SOLUTION | REFLECTING REAL VOICES

Led by Cristin Casper, external engagement and strategic communication specialist for Beaufort County School District, the team used Granicus’ Sentiment & Feedback solution to create **BCSD Connected**, an always-on home where families can learn, ask questions, and actively shape decisions.

By gathering input on key district initiatives, the team has been able to foster thoughtful, two-way dialogue with families, staff, community members, and even students. Each project asks participants to identify their relationship to the district, helping leaders understand whose voices they’re hearing from and ensuring feedback is well contextualized.

Annual initiatives like the district budget and future academic calendars consistently see strong participation, particularly through interactive tools like the Ideas Board, where community members can share perspectives and respond to one another. The platform proved especially valuable for one-time initiatives, such as the district’s cell phone policy. Leaders collected feedback in multiple phases, gaining clarity on both community sentiment and preferred implementation timelines.

By pairing plain-language updates with accessible, easy-to-use tools, BCSD turned scattered feedback into a steady, inclusive conversation that reflects the real voices of their community.

“The platform is intuitive and responsive to how constituents want to interact online,” said Bruder. **“It reduced barriers; it is one place where everybody can participate.”**



RESULTS | A SOURCE OF TRUTH

The school district quickly became a source of truth for families, staff, community partners, and even students – giving leaders a fuller picture of district sentiment. **Since launching BCSD Connected, Beaufort County School District has transformed community participation through:**

- **More than 20 projects have launched on the platform**, creating consistent opportunities for public engagement.
- **More than 10,000 stakeholders are actively engaged**, including families, staff, students, and community partners.
- **More than 50,000 online visits have been logged**, with a 25% engagement rate.

Perhaps most importantly, the district sees fewer extreme or misleading narratives dominate the conversation. All voices are visible, balanced, and grounded in context, helping leaders move forward with confidence.

BCSD Connected played a key role in an **award-winning policy engagement**, helping district leaders validate community support, refine implementation strategies, and reduce risk before rollout. Internally, the platform provides leadership and the Board of Education with clear participation metrics.

“This platform gives us proof of engagement,” said Bruder. **“Instead of saying ‘eight people showed up to a meeting,’ we can show real data, real participation, and real feedback from our community.”**

Today, BCSD Connected serves as a blueprint for transparent, inclusive school district engagement that other districts can replicate. This commitment to creating a trusted space for dialogue shows how thoughtful engagement can empower a school district to grow alongside its community.

*This story highlights the hard work and innovation that earned BCSD recognition as a winner in the 15th Annual **Granicus Digital Government Awards**, honoring exceptional achievements in digital government.*

SENTIMENT & FEEDBACK, POWERED BY AWS

Granicus’ Sentiment & Feedback (EngagementHQ) capability offers public sector organizations a complete, unified engagement platform. Sentiment & Feedback leverages AWS modern and global infrastructure to deliver a fast, high quality engagement experience that enables governments to converse across multiple channels, improve community connection, and gain insights faster. As an example, Sentiment & Feedback utilizes AWS Elastic Container Services and Registries for server-side interactive component rendering. Using AWS EKS Managed Nodes provides our customers with a seamless and fast user interface for the best community engagement experience.