

Rally & RVS

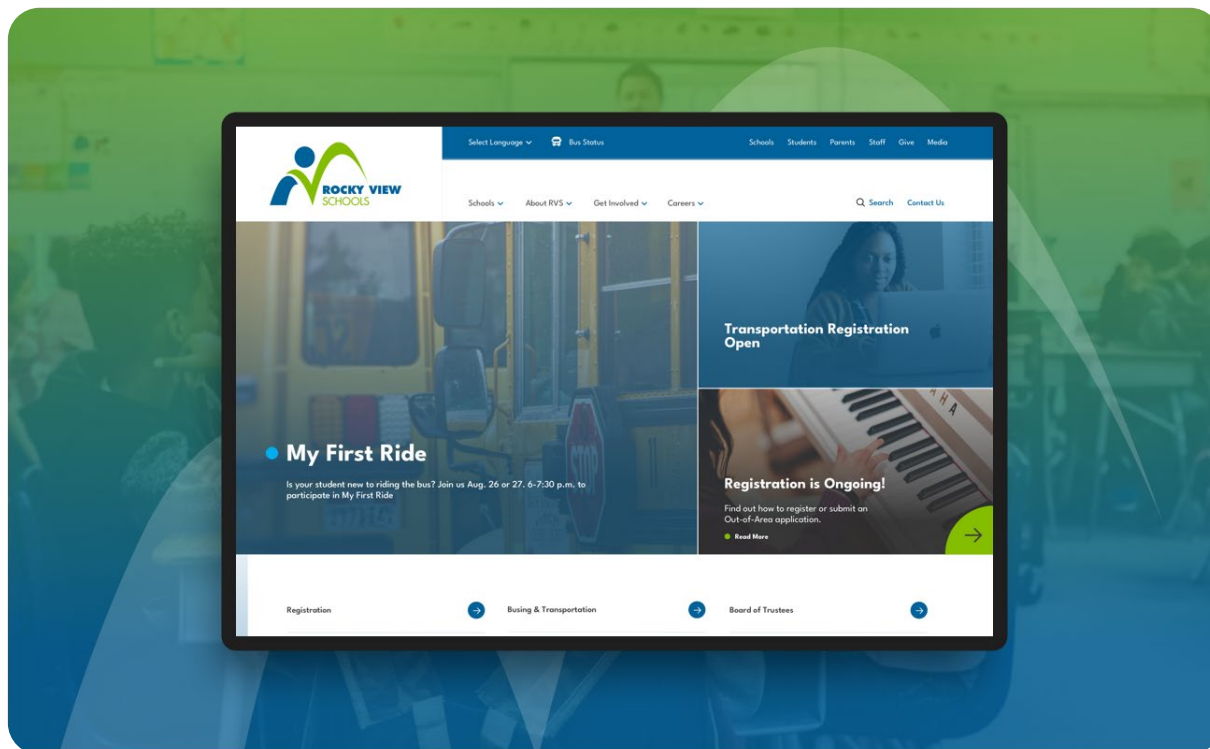
Case study

How Rally and RVS changed over 49 schools websites in 9 months.

Introduction

“Rally felt like an extension of our team and provided prompt support exactly where we needed them.”

- Kim Smith, Communications Advisor, Rocky View Schools



The Challenge

Rocky View Schools (RVS) was on the hunt for a new website provider for their division. They chose Rally. “Our goal,” Kim Smith, Communications Advisor at RVS says, “was to design and launch 49 custom branded school websites in nine months.”

Now this was an ambitious project. Usually, we’d do a custom website for the school division, while schools would use one of Rally’s pre-designed templates. RVS wanted something truly unique for their division - their very own school-branded template. The Rally team has done this before - but not on such a short timeline and with so many schools.

The project timeline didn’t just encompass two custom designs. In that timeline, we’d also need to coordinate content migration for the division’s website and all 49 school websites and develop and implement specialized training for all of the webmasters. RVS also wanted to take this opportunity to thoroughly audit school website content. The project was ambitious, but with careful planning and close collaboration, Rally and RVS were able to surpass this challenge.



The Solution

Rally has been building school division websites since 2005. In that time, we've developed an approach that allows us to collaborate closely with a division's key decision makers. We ask new clients to form a website committee of the key stakeholders and decision makers. These decision-makers work with Rally to create a design that reflects the division's needs, culture, and branding to create a beautiful new website.

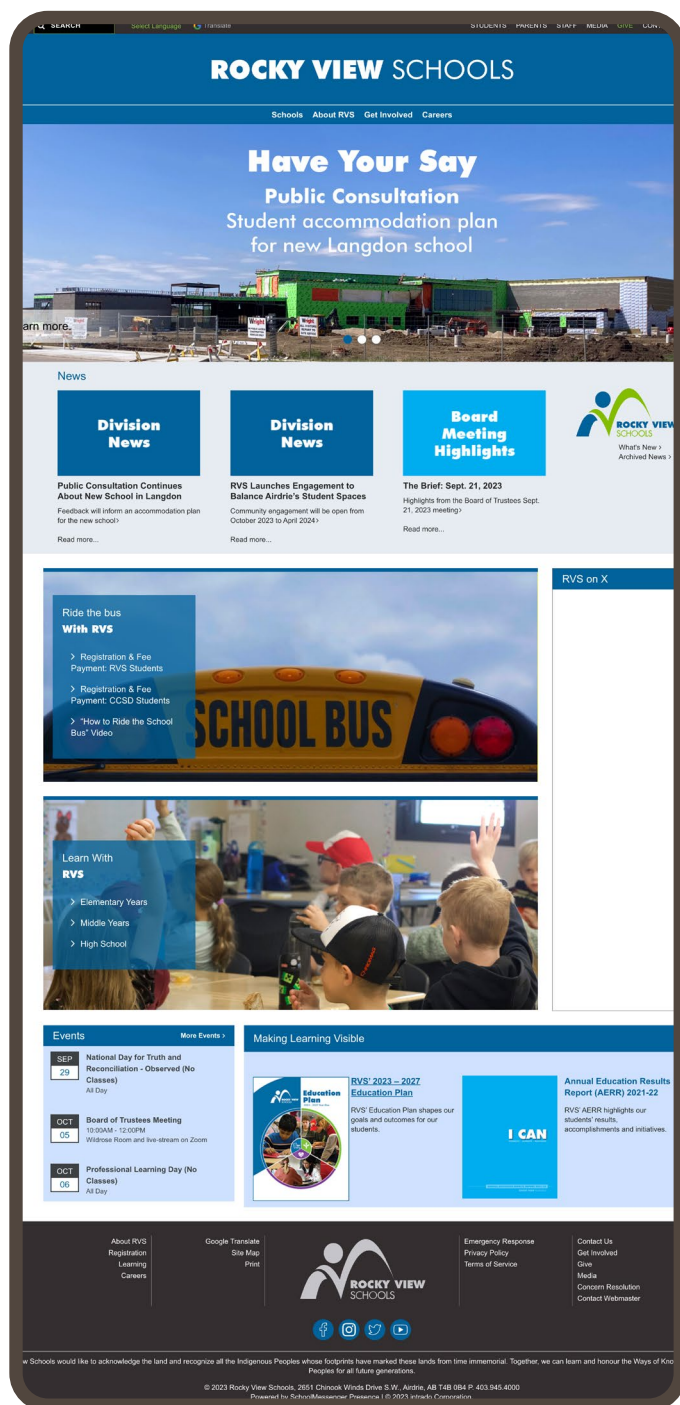
"RVS does not have a dedicated web team," Kim says. Getting the right people on the website committee is key to its success. "We assigned one project manager to work directly with Rally and a primary backup. This mirrored Rally's setup and allowed information to be clearly communicated between the two internal teams."

"Our next challenge," Kim continues, "was to determine the process and schedule needed to redevelop 49 school sites in nine months. Given our school webmasters are typically busy administrators and office staff, we worked with Rally to ensure we were mindful of school staff time and supported them as best we could."

While the website committee helps with determining the websites' design, RVS was also using the change as an opportunity to overhaul all of their schools content and would need time to review each site prior to launch.

School staff still needed to learn how to use a new content management system. Rather than attempting to complete everything simultaneously for all 49 schools, we developed a phased approach to allow us to launch the school websites in batches.

A phased approach made it easier for RVS to thoroughly review each school website before it launched, ensuring they had all the content they needed and that nothing extraneous was cluttering up the sites. We were also able to train school staff in smaller groups, ensure they were confident in their Rally skills, and ensure content could be migrated to the new websites in a timely manner. This hands-on approach really supported school staff at every step with the aim of getting high buy-in for the new websites.



The old Rocky View Schools Website Landing page



“Rally recommended details to our phased approach,” Kim adds, “including how many schools should be in each batch; how long each batch should take; and how long schools should have with their sites before going live. Rally set clear deadlines for the design process and gave precise instructions regarding what they needed from us at each step.”

For us to meet RVS’s deadline, communication between our teams was key. The timing of when a school needed to halt posting so we could migrate their content to the new website, to when the sites needed to be ready for school staff to use, and to when staff needed to receive training all had to be carefully planned.

“Another challenge was training,” Kim continues, “for not only our team, but for our newly appointed school webmasters, and continued access to support after training. Rally set up training sessions customized to our site designs. The training was concise, respecting the limited time school staff have available. Each website is also equipped with a strong and up-to-date help section.”

With a custom school website design, RVS school webmasters needed training that allowed them to leverage the design’s features. While Rally websites are intuitive for even non-technical staff to use, we do include a comprehensive help section.

Rally does provide support to school webmasters, but your staff control the content on your websites. Knowing whom to connect with for support - or whom to refer support tickets to - is crucial to getting the websites used on a regular basis.



The new Rocky View Schools Division Website Landing page



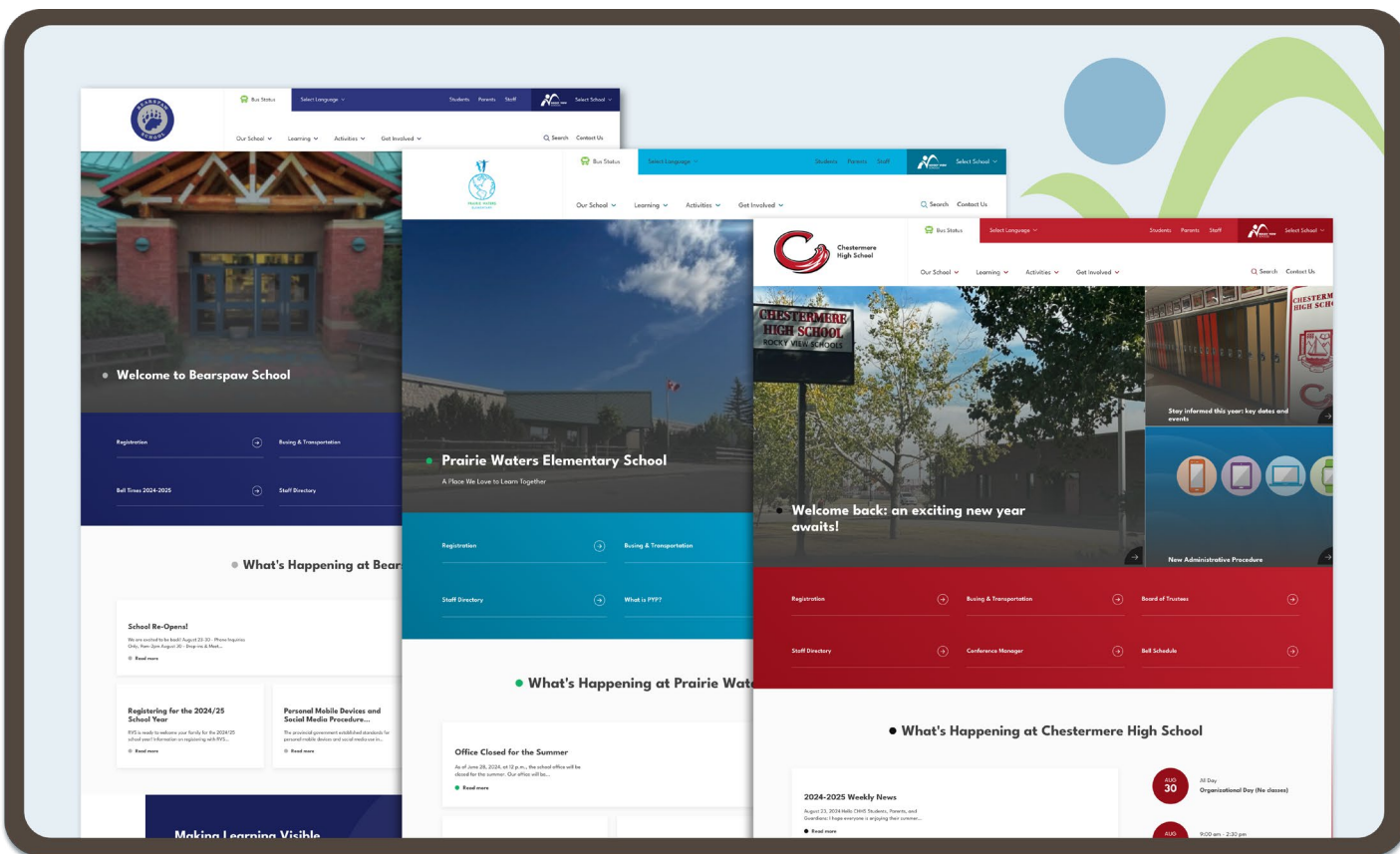
The Result

Working together, we were able to achieve RVS' ambitious goal. We launched RVS school websites in their designated batches. The design was finalized in December, and we launched the division website in February. The first school websites launched in March, and the last one launched in June.

“Throughout the entire process clear communication and collaboration became the keys to success,” Kim says. “Rally felt like an extension of our team and provided prompt support exactly where we needed them.”

“Rally brought their expertise and A-game while also maintaining approachability and openness,” Kim adds. “They understand schools and how school staff operate; what they need, and how each is unique.” As a specialized website provider for just school divisions, Rally brings years of experience into each project. Our background in K-12 allows us to jump right into the gritty details for your project. The world of websites can be intimidating - that's why our expert designers are directly involved in the project from day one. We're here to support your division and ensure that you can be proud of your websites.

RVS schools and their 49 school websites are all up and running on their custom designs. More importantly, “Since moving over to Rally the division and schools can more effectively and efficiently deliver on our website strategy,” Kim says.



The new Rocky View Schools Website Landing page, featuring Bears paw School, Prairie Waters Elementary School and Chestermere High.



Since then

“School staff,” Kim says, “are excited to work on their new sites. They are easier to update on the back end, clean and easy to navigate so families can find what they are looking for faster. The design and functionality provides opportunities to draw attention to timely information.”

Rally’s websites empower school staff through their intuitive user experience. Great websites should make it easy for staff to add and update content. With Rally, it’s possible to have websites that are both easy to use and packed with off-the-shelf features for school divisions.

Bonus: Kim’s Advice

After completing such an ambitious project, we asked Kim what advice she would give to other large divisions looking to redevelop their websites. Here are her answers:

- * Ensure your Executive team and Administration team are champions. As we know, schools are busy, and this is a big lift that will require leadership support to ensure it is prioritized.
- * Be clear with Rally about your division’s needs and expectations and then listen to their feedback. In turn, you will find that Rally is responsive and proactive with their solutions.
- * Plan your internal project management approach. Ensure your team has resources to dedicate to the project and assign clear roles and responsibilities. Crosstrain to have backups in place.
- * Limit the number of people working directly with Rally to ensure you have clear instructions traveling between your team and theirs. Assign a resource (or resources) on your team to communicate with webmasters and schools.
- * Attend all the training sessions and be prepared to jump in to clarify when schools have conceptual, non-technical questions.
- * Keep the momentum going. Our schools had short turnarounds and we did everything we could to ensure sites could go live. Once the sites are live, schools can continue to update them.

