SURREY SCHOOLS SUCCESS STORY:
A STUDY IN USABILITY

Creating a new website can be a daunting task, starting with choosing the best system and partner to help in the process and moving onto page design, site navigation, content migration, training and launch. Ensuring that the new websites will meet the needs of the entire community, from content to layout is a challenge for any school district.

THE PROBLEM

Surrey Schools was faced with this challenge and chose SchoolBundle to provide the ideal solution. Surrey didn't want to go through yet another website redesign that would leave them with a site that looked good but wouldn't meet the needs of their community and reached out to SchoolBundle to find the answer they needed. The answer - a Usability Study which focused on the information as well as the navigation, structure and design of their new sites.

THE SOLUTION

SchoolBundle brought forward over 3 decades of experience, knowledge and insight for School Districts, designing and facilitating the Usability Study to focus on Surrey Schools new site navigation (their Information Architecture). The Usability Study looked at the existing behaviour of different personas within Surrey's audience, restructured the site navigation to meet identified needs and tested that the content was presented in a way that was logically structured and easy to find.

"This project with SchoolBundle is the culmination of a long working relationship as we evolve beyond Sharepoint and a system which had developed performance challenges related to the Districts rapid growth and technology adoption."
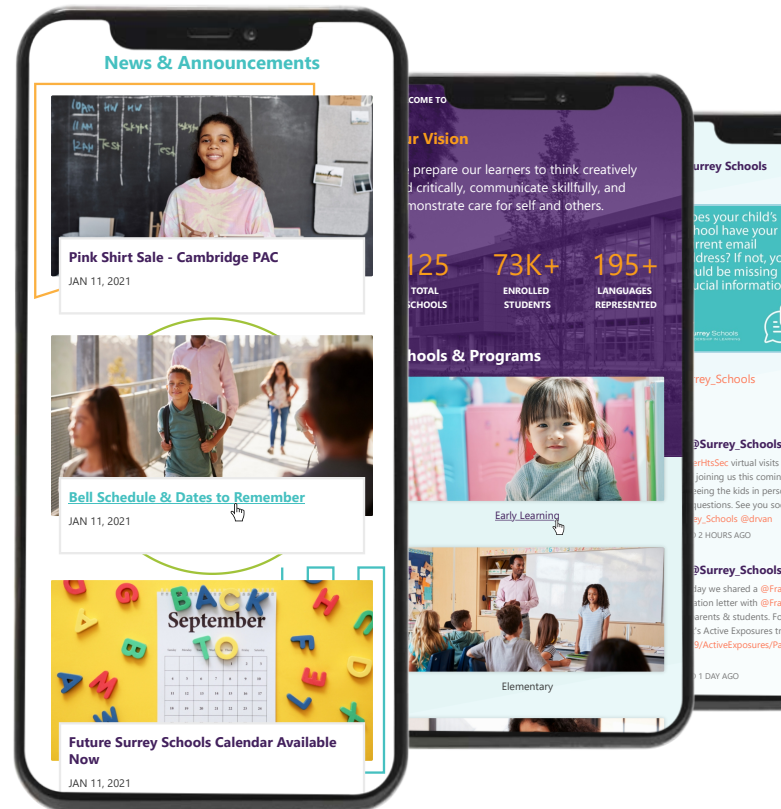
Dan Turner
Director, Information Management Services, School District #36 (Surrey)

THE PROCESS

The Usability study began with an audit of Surrey Schools' Google Analytics, examining the behaviors and identifying the existing bottlenecks and issues that users were encountering on the current sites. During this first phase, personas were developed for the major groups of the Surrey stakeholders - Teachers, Students, School Staff, District Staff and Community members. These personas, based on the initial research, outlined typical behaviours, concerns and main channels of communication.

Surrey's existing Information Architecture (IA) was then mapped and restructured following the major identified issues and the existing knowledge from the SchoolBundle team. This restructured IA was then recreated in a prototype environment to allow the participants to explore the navigation in a natural website scenario. The tasks undertaken by the participants in the study were then created to match the behaviors and goals discovered during the Google Analytics audit.

"School Bundle has been supportive and responsive throughout this process, providing outstanding expertise and experience as we work to ensure ease of use for our diverse community."

Sheila Reynolds
Manager, Communication Services School District #36 (Surrey)

The study sessions took place online over video calls, where the users were recorded both on camera and their screens to better map their behavior. As participants completed tasks that were relevant to their specific Persona, they were timed and asked to provide feedback while explaining their thought processes throughout.

After the completion of the sessions, the feedback and data were analyzed to make final adjustments to the new IA and provide recommendations and key findings to the Surrey Schools team. While several metrics were measured, three core factors were examined, User Satisfaction, Efficiency and Effectiveness which provided a baseline to compare the existing IA to the new IA.

THE OUTCOME

The Usability Study provided a view of the Surrey stakeholders that was both broad and deep. Students, parents and guardians, principals, teachers and staff members were all involved in developing Surrey's new websites, generating excitement about the project throughout the district. Surrey was able to move forward with their design knowing that they were going to have a site that meets the specific needs of their community.

"I'm so excited that we are being asked to give input on this; we are the end-users and being able to give our thoughts and ideas to help the new site meet our needs is amazing."

Usability Study Participant, School District #36 (Surrey)