



Environmental Charter School Implementation Guide

MA VCF Fall 2020

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5. Summary

1. Problem

Due to the pandemic, the **communication** between ECS and caregivers has faced challenges after a hybrid learning system was initiated consisting of in-person & **remote learning** classes.

How do we mitigate the challenge through a **visual communication system**?

2. Goal

Our goal was narrowed down to the following:

How might we help caregivers receive information confidently and securely with their children's education?

From studying our stakeholders in this situation, we focused on the available communication channels between our main stakeholder in this case, the caregiver, and his/her channels with the rest of the stakeholders. From this, we created solutions that would help facilitate conversations and information being passed along to them. The solutions are as follows:

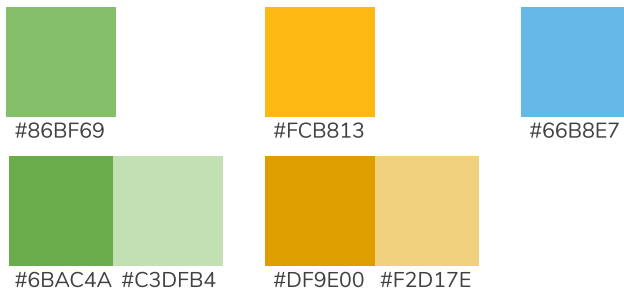
- Weekly Email Template
- Planner
- Slack Channel
- Caregivers' One Stop Shop Website

3. Style Guide

Our style is aimed at keeping it lighthearted while aligning with ECS's current style. The main colors are taken directly from ECS's logo and modified with darker and lighter color variants. We chose Nunito as our main font for a modern style and paired it with Blockhead for a more playful feel. Blockhead is a Adobe font.

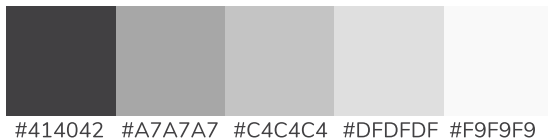
- **Color Palette**

Main Color



Secondary Color

Usage: Text, background, table edges, etc



- **Typeface**

Nunito

Nunito	24px
Nunito	22px
Nunito	16px
Nunito	14px
Nunito	12px

Blockhead OT

Blockhead	Blockhead	24px
Blockhead	Blockhead	22px
Blockhead	Blockhead	16px
Blockhead	Blockhead	14px
Blockhead	Blockhead	12px

4-1. Solution - Email

- **Problem**

As email is the most popular method of receiving information for caregivers, ECS's most reliable way to reach caregivers would be through this communication channel. However, caregivers receive notifications from various external sources such as work. This can lead to cluttered emailboxes and many notifications.

- **Goal**

The goal of the newsletter is to deliver news and updates in a way that's easy to access, quickly scannable, and reliable. We've restructure the email in the following hierarchy and sections to do this:

1. Banner & General Info
2. This Week at a Glance
3. Reopening Status
4. Activity Annoucements + Calendar
5. Other School Annoucements
6. Miscellaneous
7. Contact Us + Community Guidelines

Weekly Updates

December 4th, 2020



1- Banner & General Info

The email would be send out once a week in a PDF format to prevent too many emails being cluttered and and can be easily updated into the current ECS website. Small and minimal, the banner it doesn't take up too much space and jumps right into the info.

This Week at a Glance..

- ECS is fully virtual
- Two new activities added
- We're now on slack!
- Messages from the nurse & counselor
- Enrollment is open
- Another space for an update

2- This Week at a Glance

This section is a basic summary of the email. It's a quick look for caregivers who want to just skim through the email. If they see what a topic they're highly interested in, they move directly there. If there's isn't anything that requires immediate attention, they can read it later. This area also accounts for situations when caregivers are looking for a specific email - they can look at the summary and quickly see if whatever they are looking for is there.

Reopening Status

ECS remains fully virtual at this time. All extracurriculars are also cancelled.

Based on today's PCR test update from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PDH) and the Thursday, December 10, update on limited-time mitigation efforts from Governor Wolf's office.

We continue to reassess opening schools based on the PCR percent positivity for Allegheny County weekly. The PCR positivity rate of COVID-19 in Allegheny County reached 14.6% This number exceeds our safety threshold for opening schools at this time.

3 - Reopening Status

Since ECS's reopening status can vary week to week, we placed this category on the front page because of its time sensitivity and urgency. Caregivers would not have to search for this information. This placement makes it hard to be missed by the reader.

Activity Announcements

K-5 Specials and Activities Night

This Thursday's K-5 Specials and Activities Night has been rescheduled for Tuesday, Dec.15 at 5:30 p.m.

Please join our Activities Coordinators and our Specialists on Tuesday, Dec. 15 at 5:30 p.m. to learn more about our programs. Looking for opportunities for social connections for your student? Our Activities Coordinators will share how to access both virtual and in person opportunities. Looking for more information about your student's Specials or wondering how Specials are supporting the EL program? Our Specialists will be shining a light on our unique classes and how they are being taught within the Virtual Learning Plan (VLP). We will also share some suggestions and tips for how you can best support your children as they engage with their Specials classes.

ECS Calendar



Virtual Field Trip from
Black Violin
[November 10 - December 22](#)

K-5 Specials and
Activities Night **NEW**
[December 15, 5:30 PM](#)

Last Day to Register
for Hope for the Holidays
[December 18, 5:30 PM](#)

4 - Activity Announcements + Calendar

Following reopening status, activity announcements are also constantly changing. There are new additions and removals each week. To help this, we introduced a small calendar section here so dates can be scanned quickly jotted down. The "New" sticker helps caregivers differentiate from the old to the new so they can skip through activities that have already been seen.

Other School Announcements

A Message from the Nurse

While the holiday season is often a joyful time filled with family and loved ones, it can also be stressful. We know that this year has been difficult with kids at home and normal routines shifted. We want to provide assistance for as many families as possible in our ECS community that need some support during this holiday season.

If your family is in need of a little extra help either in the form of a gift card or gifts, please complete this form by December 15, 2020 at 5:00 PM.

A Message from the Counselor

Holding on to Hope

Consider completing a Virtual Holding on to Hope Butterfly with your child. For information about support services for grieving children, check out The Caring Place and/or reach out to a school counselor.

5 - Other School Announcements

For school announcements that aren't related to activities, we've included a section here.

Because these announcements may not change as consistently, they are lower on the hierarchy.

Enrollment for 2020 - 2021 School Year

Sibling Preference

Have a sibling that would like to attend ECS for the 2021-2022 school year? Please complete an application by logging in to your SchoolMint account and pressing the add/edit new student application.

A sibling is defined as one of two or more individuals having at least one common parent/guardian. A birth certificate is required for sibling preference for the proof of child's age on the application. Sibling preference does not guarantee enrollment.

Current students do not need to apply. Re-enrollment information will be sent to all current families in January. Tell a friend or neighbor that ECS is accepting applications through January 31st!

6 -Miscellaneous

Similar to other school announcements, other miscellaneous topics such as enrollment have their section to mark their significance. By separating these topics on their own, they will stand apart from the rest of the newsletter and won't be grouped together with other information. In their "This Week at a Glance" section, they can have their own bullet point as well.

Contact Us

Have more questions? Feel free to contact us! Click here below to send us a message!

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram for some more fun. We're also on Slack and invite current parents to join us the community for questions, comments, and more info!

Community Guidelines



In order to lower community numbers for our schools to open and to stop the spread, we strongly encourage all families, students, and staff to be a part of the solution:

- Wear a mask when you leave your home. (There is a right way to wear a mask!) Stay six feet away from others.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.
- Wash your hands, frequently, for at least 20 seconds.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces often.
- Limit gatherings and avoid crowds.
- Avoid travel and plan for quarantine or testing if you do.

Stay home if you feel sick.
Contact your healthcare provider if you think you might have COVID-19.
Download the COVID Alert PA app to your smartphone.

7 - Contact Us + Community Guidelines

The email template ends with Contact Us so that caregivers know where to go when there are questions and comments. The social media inclusion also can help grow a social following.

Following on the right side, we placed the community guidelines on the last page to the side so it doesn't distract readers too much. We kept the community guidelines to remind caregivers of the ongoing pandemic and to be consistent with other newsletters ECS has been sending out so far.

4-2. Solution - Planner

- **Problem**

Students are responsible for their schoolwork and sometimes pass messages on from their teachers to caregivers. However, occasionally, material and messages are lost in between. This can be because they are unsure how to organize information or sometimes forget after a long day of school. This can lead to caregivers not being aware of what their children are learning in school. Because there isn't always a direct interaction with the teachers, caregivers would mainly communicate with the students. How can students relay information over to their caregivers while staying motivated to do so?

- **Goal**

The main goal of the planner is for students to write down their assignments, a quick recap of their school day and any messages from the teacher. The student has daily interactions with both the teachers and caregivers and form an indirect communication channel between them. By keeping it vibrant and fun with journal/diary prompts, the planner encourages students to not just write down their work but also stay motivated to continue doing so.




We kept a pastel color variant of the ECS colors and added characters to keep it playful. The pages on the right encourages students to really make the planner theirs.

Today's date:

What did you learn in class today?

Homework Assignments

Did you share this with your caregiver? ☐

Give today's world a face! 

Anything else happen today?

This space is for you.
Draw. Write. Create!

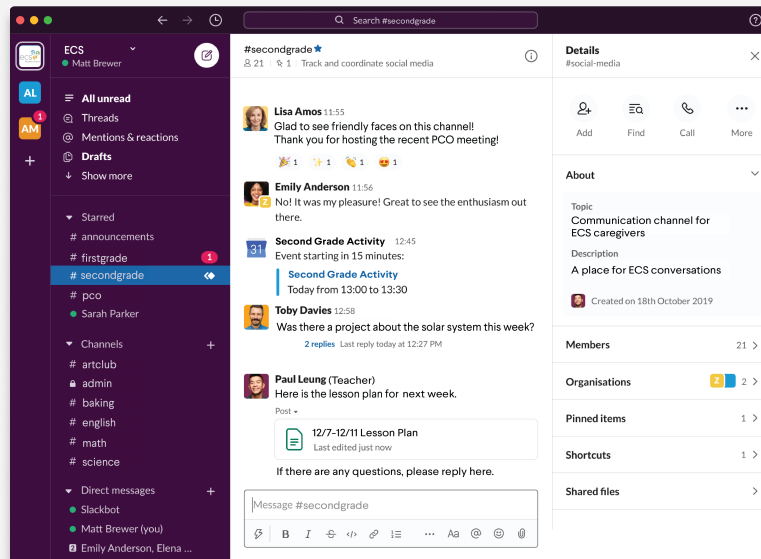
This would be the daily prompt for the student to write in. The prompts on the left are geared towards academic purpose while the ones on the right are for more creative reasons. The goal of the planner is for the child to write about their day and share with the parent what they did. The prompt on the bottom left is a place for students and parents to touch base each day. Depending on teachers and ECS, this can be a serious check such as an initial or a loose check like a sticker or drawing. It would depend on if parents and teachers want another required account of their work.

What was your favorite part of this week?

What's your favorite TV show? Why?

Similar to the daily check in, the above is a weekly prompt to break up the continuity. More activity pages can be added instead to be more engaging with the students.

4-3 Solution - Slack



- **Problem**

Previously, caregivers received important school related information such as their children’s performance or school events when chatting with other caregivers/teachers during pickup/dropoff times or other in-person interactions. However, because of the pandemic, these interactions are minimized and caregivers have much less opportunities with other caregivers to exchange information. How might we recreate those moments and the sense of community for caregivers during pandemic times?

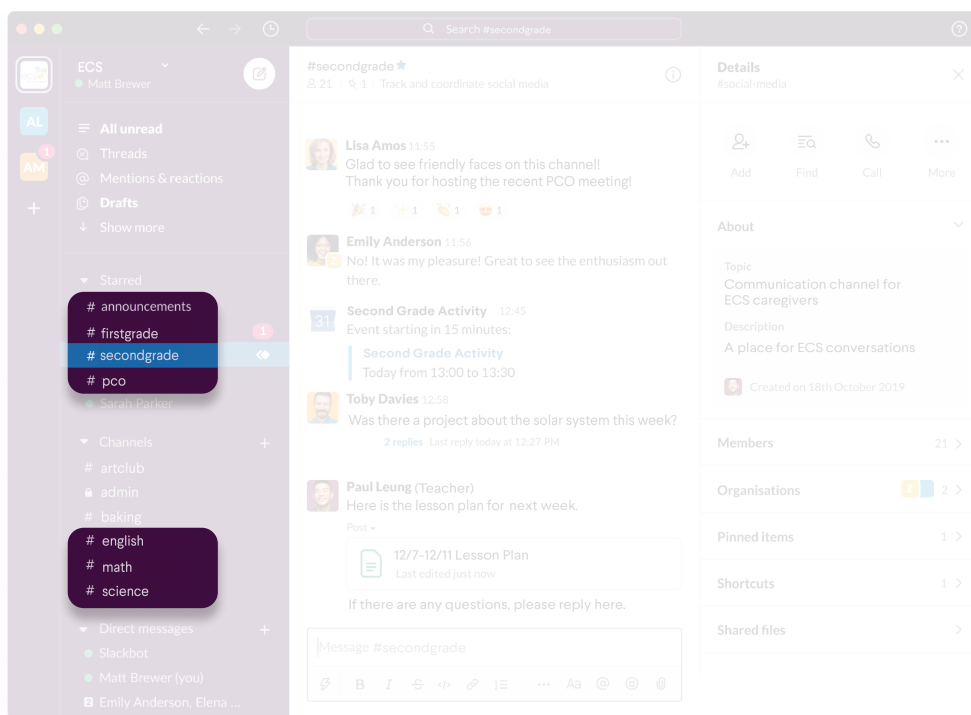
- **Goal**

By utilizing a slack channel, caregivers can share information online with their classroom groups. Easily answered questions such as “Where is the lunch form?” or “What was the homework for this week?” can reduce emails to to the administration and the answers are shown for everyone to see. By introducing administration and teachers to the slack, this also creates initiative for caregivers to join Slack to have occasional direct access to ask questions.

- **Channels and usages**

There will be different channels for different usages. For example, #firstgrade, #secondgrade, # Englishclass, #Mathclass.

Teachers can make announcements directly in here to make the communication between caregivers more direct. Questions that are answered are shown to everybody as well.

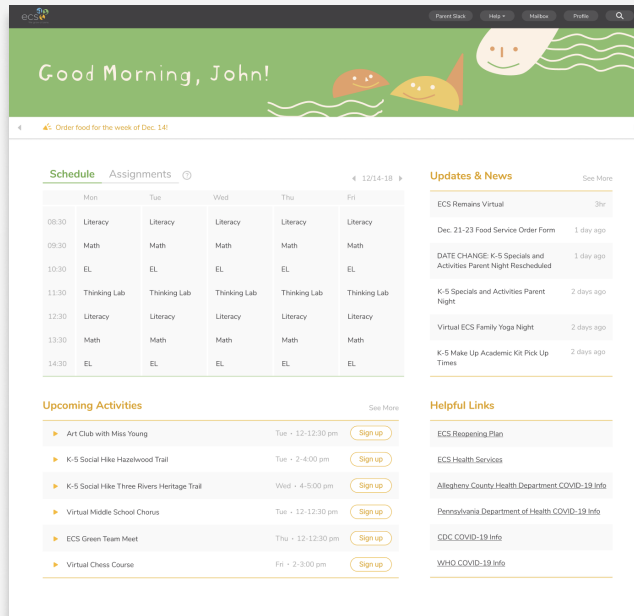


- **How to onboard users(caregivers)?**

Caregivers will be encouraged to join Slack in Caregivers' One Stop Shop Website and through the weekly email. Another encouragement would be the occasional direct interaction with the administration and teachers.

For more detail, please go to Solution #4 - Caregivers' One Stop Shop Website.

4-4. Solution - Caregivers' One Stop Shop Website



- **Problem**

As caregivers are becoming an additional education facilitator of their child, caregivers have become more eager to know what their child's schedule is like, what needs to be done, what is expected, and their children's performance. However, with multiple information channels, they can find it hard to access and navigate this information. How might we help caregivers access related and actionable education resources efficiently?

- **Goal**

The Caregivers' One Stop Shop Website is an overview of a student's weekly schedule and activities while including ECS updates and useful links. This platform neatly organizes this information and makes it accessible for caregivers to learn about school related information.

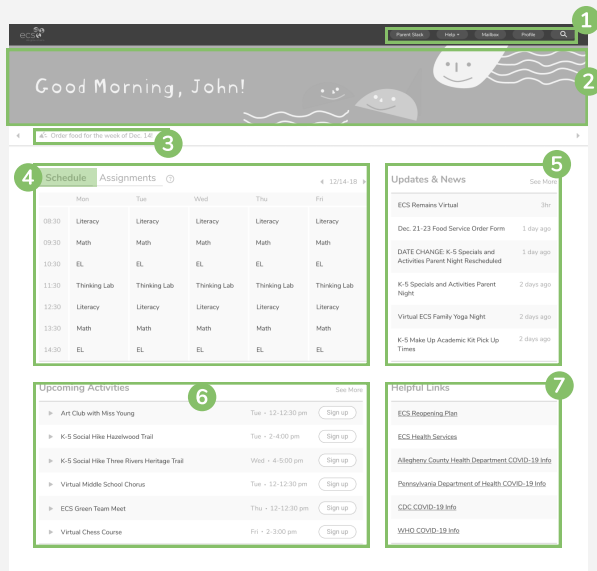
- **Prototype Link**

<https://www.figma.com/proto/sV1GNAIMhRA16zPG6W6yv8/ECS-Project-Visual-System?node-id=239%3A2&scaling=min-zoom>

• Information Infrastructure

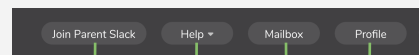
A one stop shop for caregivers to access information that related to them and actionable
Please fo to Website folder for detail.

Wireframe



Annotation

1 Navigation bar



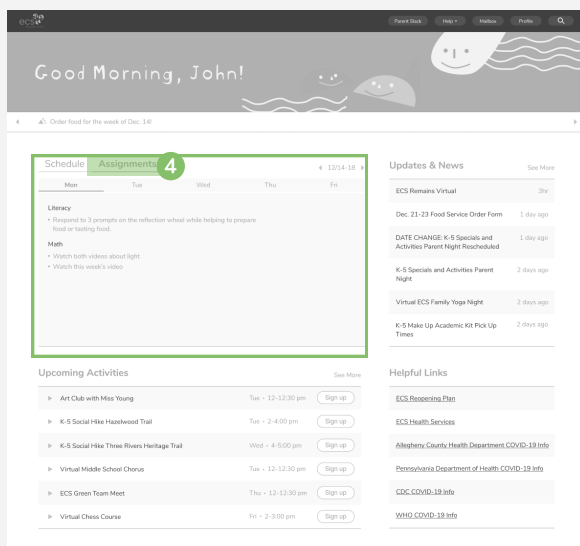
Click to open Slack

Click to reveal links to the existing FAQ and Ask us a question page



Click to navigate to profile page

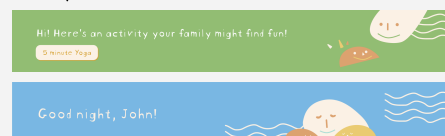
Click to reveal all the emails that currently sent to caregivers



2 Banner

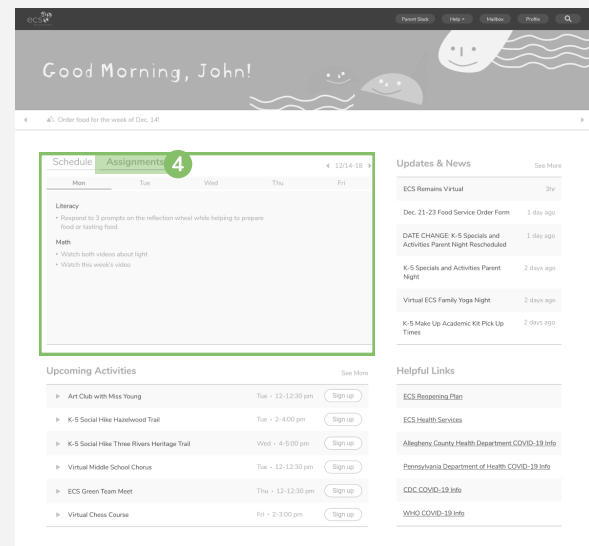
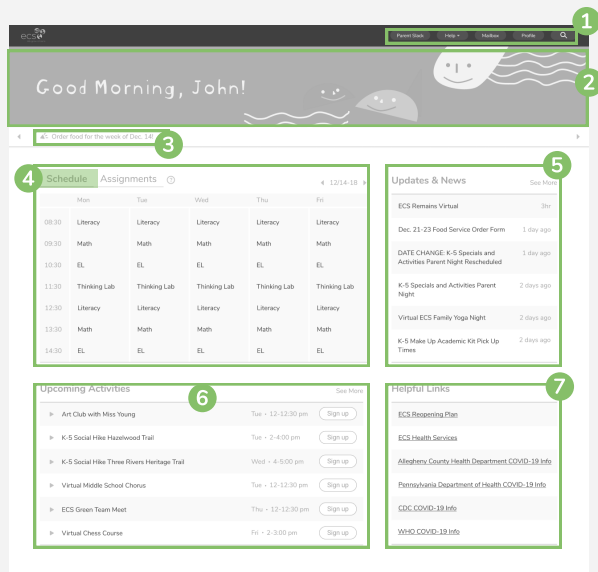
There will be different type of banners showing in different time. For example, if it's morning, use a "Good Morning, (caregiver's first name)" or "Hi! Here's an activity your family might find fun!" banner.

Examples of banners



Please go to Website UI folder for banner files.

Wireframe



Annotation

3 Crucial, time sensitive & actionable news

This space work as a carousel that showing multiple crucial, time sensitive, related to the very users and actionable messages, such as order food, change on reopening status.

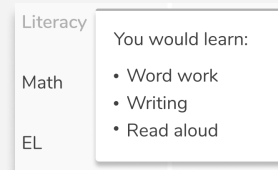
4 Schedule / Assignment section

This space has two tabs: Schedule and Assignment.

- Schedule: Shows the schedule of the caregiver's kids. Data are the same as the one on the current VLP platform, while organized by time.

- Assignment: Show the assignments for each day.

When hovering on class name, a popover will show to explain what would be included in that class. The data also are the same as the one on the current VLP platform.



3 Updates & News

Contain latest updates and news that related to the caregiver. Click each updates will link to the current individual updates page. Click "See More" will link to current page that contain all the updates.

3 Upcoming activities

Contain the latest, upcoming activities for the kid of the caregiver. The one whose event time is the most latest will be on the top of this table.

3 Helpful Links

Contain links to the reopening page, health service and governments' covid-related resources.

• Work Flows



• UI - Layout

Please go to Website UI folder for detail.

5. Summary

Our goal for these solutions is to improve the communication between caregivers and other stakeholders of ECS. As we have experienced in the pandemic, clear cut communication is appreciated greatly even when the answer is not what we wanted to hear.

By having more questions answered and voices heard, these actions can help alleviate some of the stress and frustration that caregivers are holding. Receiving their information in a clear and confident manner can provide more reassurance as they continue to navigate this pandemic with ECS.

Thank you!

If you have any question or feedback,
please feel free to contact us.

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