

Amphitheater Public Schools: “The Secret” Video

The Amphitheater Communications team created ‘The Secret’ story project for Love of Reading week. The goal was to unite the district to promote reading, writing and illustration.

Each school added to an ongoing written story over the course of several months. The process is described below. Once we had the whole story in written form, we brought it to life in a video with students and community members cast to voice the characters and using student illustrations. We released the video in five parts over the course of Love of Reading week and then released it as one piece in its entirety.

While this is not a traditional school district video, we thought that using community voices and student illustrations was an effective way of sharing this group story without simply having someone read it. Watch to the end to see who voiced the parts!

“The Secret” had 2,803 views on YouTube and Facebook, but the reach was much more extensive. Classes in schools throughout the district watched together each day as it was released, and families also told us they watched together.

We are already hearing from students and principals about doing it again this year.

Here was the process for creating the story:

- We asked Superintendent Todd Jaeger to write the beginning of a story in 250 words or less. In his part, he introduced us to Maggie, a young girl trying her best to hold in a secret.
- We sent his part to our first school and asked students to continue the story. We chose one submission as Part 2.
- We sent Parts 1 and 2 to the next school. Again, students submitted entries, and we chose one for Part 3.
- After three schools, we sent only the previous two parts to the next so that students wouldn’t know everything that had happened thus far. This allowed for a lot of imagination and lots of unexpected twists and turns!
- The only rules: Write no more than 250 words, use at least one character from the preceding parts and end on a cliffhanger, or even midsentence. The students were also asked to submit illustrations for their stories, and we used those in the book.
- Over the course of several months, all 21 of our schools participated.
- The Communications team members were the only ones to know the whole story before it was released, and we wrote an ending to tie things up.

Link to Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyUtw5Rpfig>