

## **Charter School Renewal Communications Campaign Planning Tool**

As education communications professionals prepare for charter school renewal campaigns, these tips will help you proactively and positively tell your school's story on your own terms—using logical and emotionally resonant communications.

### **Tell a tight, compelling data story.**

**Nail your narrative.** Proactively highlight what makes your school unique, how you're succeeding and the changes you're making to improve outcomes on which you will be judged. Be aware of your strengths and vulnerabilities and leverage these differentiators in advance of communicating through the news media, stakeholder engagement and social media. Possible differentiators include:

- Academic model/programmatic approach
- Arts and athletics
- Longer school day
- Charter-incubated programs
- Organizational goals and unique vision

**Context matters when you are talking about student learning data.** Communicate what your school is doing to meet the needs of students. Explore your sub-group data to put your academic achievement into context. This will help decision makers understand the level of impact you have on students compared to other schools in neighboring communities.

- How is your school meeting the needs of English Language Learners?
- Students of color?
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged students?
- Foster or unhoused students?

**Think about data as plot points that mark the beginning, middle and end of a story.** Leverage your data to show our school's ability to fulfill a unique gap in your broader community. Possible data points that could tell a compelling story include:

- Student engagement
- Parent satisfaction
- Teacher growth
- Graduation rates
- College acceptance rates
- Teacher retention

### **Demonstrate strong, positive community impact.**

**Your school community and third-party validators will play an integral role in your renewal.** You need your community partners, teachers, parents and students to support your efforts. Empower your school community to become advocates in your renewal campaign. When identifying your validators think about quality over quantity. Choose validators with the capacity, expertise and authenticity to represent your school. Arm them with accurate information and consistent messaging.

**Strike a positive-sum tone that articulates your value as a needed public school option for the community.** It's important to develop a plan to refute criticisms before you're hit with them. Keep the focus on teachers, students and families.

**Highlight partnerships with community organizations.** Share how your school has benefits the entire community—not just your students and families. Are there any partnerships with community organizations, religious organizations or local businesses you can highlight? Think about possible volunteer opportunities your school offers and how they benefit the community and add value to students' education.

### **Renewals are about relationships. Approaching renewal as a transactional activity will no longer work.**

**Start building relationships when there is not a transactional ask of the authorizer or the trustees.** To be successful, you will need strong relationships with your authorizer, those voting on your petition, your own school community and third-party validators. Start fostering a positive relationship with these groups in advance of the renewal process. Relationship-building ideas could include:

- Schedule one-on-one meetings. The focus should be: How can we work together for all kids?
- Attend board meetings, especially when your school is not on the agenda. Introduce yourself to board members and staff. Provide a quick update on the success of the school during public comments.
- Invite authorizers to hosted or virtual events. Highlight how the school is unique, helping students succeed and benefiting the community.

**Tactics, Collateral, Leadership Prep and Meetings.** Create a calendar of items and events you'd like to tackle in the months leading up to your renewal vote. Below is a suggested schedule with ideas to keep in mind:

- **6-9 months prior before submission through the day of the vote,** consider hosting a celebratory event around specific milestones that includes and recognize officials, hosting a professional development training with other schools, publishing an opinion piece in local media focusing on your school's impact and promoting your success on digital platforms.
- **3-6 months prior to the vote,** develop a one pager highlighting the success of the school to leave behind, create a presentation deck for meetings with individual decision makers and public hearings and draft talking points for current and potential validators.
- **1-3 months prior to the vote,** prepare for a successful board meeting by gathering and supporting possible speakers by writing out their stories and practicing their speeches. Be creative in how you will share your school's story and show a unified front whether it's wearing matching t-shirts, custom Zoom backgrounds or bringing board members food.

*[Larson Communications](#) is the only strategic communications firm in the nation specializing in public education reform. We work selectively with groups that are committed to advancing academic achievement and increasing access to quality educational opportunities.*

**Get in touch.** We'd love to hear from you. To get in touch with someone about working with Larson Communications, email us at [info@larsonpr.com](mailto:info@larsonpr.com).