

Advocacy & Communication SOLUTIONS, LLC

Child Care and Early Education Fund

Methods & Messages: National Snapshot of Early Childhood Strategic Communication

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What is strategic communication?

- Paid and earned media
- Focus groups
- Identifying messages
- Developing the frames
- Talking points

Strategic communications is not exclusively about billboards, sound bites, spin, glitzy brochures, polished annual reports, and animated Web sites.

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Prioritization of Strategic Communication

- Most effective early childhood education efforts include a major strategic communication component
- Strategic communication must have the same prioritization as fundraising, staffing, etc.
- NOT a “nice to have” it is integral to success of an effort

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Least & Most Effective National Methods & Messages

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Least Effective Messages & Methods

Messages

- Merit based messaging
- Exclusively academic messages

Methods

- Staleness of messengers and message
Message research should drive messengers; not habit/easy
- Social media vs. e-advocacy
Texas, Pennsylvania & California

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Most Effective: Messages

Messages

- Economic Return on investment arguments—national message that works in most places
- Kids who start school behind, stay behind (PA)
- Children of today are the work force of tomorrow (PA)
- Getting children ready for school means more than packing their lunches, filling their backpacks, and getting them to the bus on time. In fact, the job of helping children succeed in school starts the day they’re born (AZ)
- ALL children

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Most Effective: Methods

Methods

- Engaging business to do the advocacy and media outreach
- Better Data—not enough to say “its good for kids”— local, evidenced based, data driven messaging is most persuasive
- Bringing together partners (veterans, parents, workforce, community colleges, Univision)
- Emphasis on family engagement and the role of the parent
- Engaging in media advocacy

Measures of Success

Measures of Success: Texas

TECEC is looking at the following outcomes:

- Bills passed that improve policy
- Funding secured for goals
- More than \$200 million in funding
- Building public awareness to increase advocacy
- Measure in hits to their website, research requests, media mentions, emails opened, advocates reaching back out to them
- Statewide advocacy day.

Measures of Success: California

Preschool CA does not focus on whether the bill gets passed – too many other factors. They measure how well they provided policy support through tangible actions and the effects of that (the Governor’s staff asked for a meeting). The work is not driven by the communications and advocacy team, but by the policy and field teams.

The measures to get there fall into four categories:

- Outreach and collaboration (partnerships),
- Policy development (incl. roundtable events, forums, and focus groups to attain local feedback from parents and teachers, as well as national organizations)
- Communications (developing materials for advocacy and news),
- Policymaker education (organizing advocacy events and briefings with partners and supporters such as sharing findings from Latino voters poll).

Comprehensive Evaluation Grid

	Planned for pre-campaign	Evaluated post-campaign	Results
Advocacy Impact			
Change Behavior			
Raise Money			
Grow Membership/ Email List			
Reframe			
Build Skills			
Build Relationships			
Lexicon			
Brand Power			
Quality + Quantity			

Source: Fenton Communications

State Examples Ohio - Arizona - Florida

Ohio: groundWork

- Developed a targeted political campaign model to build public and political will for early childhood
- Research to change/influence/advance the dialogue
- Concrete research drove all collateral materials many of which were targeted toward specific, key audiences like media and legislators

Ohio Messages

- Goal: Inc. Awareness, funding, and legislative agenda
- groundWork is an effort to provide families with the support and choices they need to get their children to school ready to learn.
- Every child deserves a chance to succeed in life.
- Join us in preparing our youngest learners to compete in the global economy, fueling long-term economic growth and ushering in a new era of prosperity for our next generation by increasing access to high-quality early childhood development.

Arizona: First Things First

Goal: Fluid but in general: Inc. awareness, protect funding/pursue funding, win election

Problem: Early childhood issue and supporters were villains. Existing frames spoke to issues beyond the content of the early childhood. Attacked by media, legislature, & stakeholders.

Solution: Work within that frame and had to advance a new frame that shifted FTF from the Villain to Vindicator.

Solution: Extensive Community Outreach

Arizona: Villain Frames OUTSIDE of ECE context

- Counties will have to raise taxes if FTF doesn't go away.
- If dismantled FTF money will go to kids anyway so why have another bureaucracy.
- If FTF isn't dismantled, Arizona state government won't be able to balance its budget and K-12 education/children will suffer

Florida – The Children's Movement

- Goal: Inc. Awareness, prioritize kid's issues, legislative
- Regularly "refresh" - stale messages & effort
- Children's Campaign to Children's Pilot Project to Children's Movement
- Used the hook of MILK Party and leveraged this unique brand
- Toured the state via bus tour and targeted legislative districts and media outlets within those districts

Resources

- www.missionreadiness.org/index.html
- www.americasedge.org/press-release/media-advisory-pa-business-leaders-tout-economic/.
- eyenearlyeducation.org/2010/11/09/workforce-boards-learn-about-early-education-workforce/.
- www.groundworkohio.org
- www.azff.gov
- <http://childrensmovementflorida.org/>