



THE
Blueprint
for **EDUCATIONAL CHANGE™**

Goal 4

Strategy Options

Central Texas as a Community Prepares Children to Succeed

2010 Blueprint Leaders Summit
February 24, 2010

Strategy 1:

Launch major regional education “movement” leveraging campaign messaging around the theme: *Graduates are Made. Not Born.*

Background:

In 2008, The Mitchell Group spent months meeting with education stakeholders and focus groups to develop an "umbrella" regional message for education, integrating the Blueprint goals: Each of the four goals of The Blueprint were developed by asking ourselves the central question that defines Central Texas' need to generate more college-and-career ready graduates – *what does it take to make a graduate?*

Goal 1 – It Takes Entering Kindergarten Ready to Learn.

Goal 2 – It Takes Every Student Being at or Above Grade Level.

Goal 3 – It Takes Being Ready for College and Career.

Goal 4 – It Takes All of Us.

Because Graduates are Made. Not Born.

This message was designed to be the centerpiece of a media and outreach campaign to the entire Central Texas region, emphasizing that we all have roles to play because successful high school and college graduates don't just happen.

San Antonio has recently undertaken a \$12M “got to college” media campaign to students and parents, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has launched a statewide marketing campaign to support college access that could be leveraged locally. Are we ready to launch a major regional campaign?

Target Audiences:

Very broad - families & students, educators and communities

Message:

Graduates are Made. Not Born.

Pros:

- Reach many people, with potential for huge impact on community ownership if successful
- Could create a common language around education for our region
- Well controlled, well designed message
- Expense could be mitigated through PSA media support

Cons:

- Very expensive
- Similar messages are already out there and haven't seemed to have a huge impact on our region – is this kind of broad outreach effective for Central Texas?
- Raises awareness, but does not necessarily lead to tangible action unless we have a coordinated way to channel input and people.
- Encourages passive participation on the part of local businesses

Strategy 2:

Expand/strengthen/focus Speakers Bureau

Background:

The Blueprint Speaker's Bureau is comprised of education professionals, business and community leaders who spread the Blueprint message to individuals and groups throughout the Central Texas region, primarily through small group presentations to rotaries, clubs, - any group of people in our community. E3 staff members have created presentations and support materials to train new leaders on how to personalize the Blueprint message, and how to talk about data. Additionally, community groups can contact E3 to request speakers (via the Blueprint website).

Target Audiences:

Community & Business Leaders and established community groups

Messages:

Regional education data and trends, Blueprint goals, how others can get involved.

Pros:

- Opportunity to provide a much deeper understanding of the Blueprint goals and background through small group presentation and discussion
- Given by an individual who has already shown commitment so is likely to influence others more than a generic message
- Can reach a broader variety of audiences than E3 staff would ever be able to
- Opportunity to create a database of presentation recipients for additional messaging and calls to action

Cons:

- All volunteer support, so it has been difficult to get people to be proactive (leaders to present and community groups to request presentations)
- Quality of message/presentation is hard to control, especially because it's a complex message
- Even if this scales, will never hit a huge number of people – could we get to enough to create a Tipping Point?
- Sometimes challenging to identify “take action” suggestions for each group
- Currently little centralized support to direct interested parties to get involved.

Strategy 3:

Provide outreach to recruit significantly higher numbers of community volunteers into schools as mentors, tutors and coaches

Background:

UWCA 1 Hour for Kids has brought together eight nonprofits that specialize in providing mentors and tutors to vulnerable youth. These eight organizations work with students in different ways, but all of their programs have shown the positive effects of connecting youth to supportive adults. Similarly, APIE recruits and trains large numbers of coaches and mentors and places them through AISD schools. In selecting this strategy we would be supporting these groups by recruiting more volunteers sorely needed in our schools.

Target Audiences:

Individual Volunteers, but likely through corporations, churches or other established groups

Messages:

Direct Call to Action - volunteer in your neighborhood school

Pros:

- Mentoring, tutoring and coaching, when done well, has potential for significant improvement in student performance
- Getting volunteers personally involved and vested in schools is likely to make them strong advocates for life
- Existing non-profit organizations with structured mentorship programs – we don't have to reinvent the wheel, just tap into/direct folks to organizations that do this well

Cons:

- Needs of our students and schools are broad and deep – this addresses just one part in the continuum and doesn't create a broader understanding of systemic needs
- Mentoring and tutoring programs are time consuming and often hard to scale

Strategy 4:

Identify and promote best practices in corporate citizenship in education including volunteerism, career awareness, industry skills alignment and financial support

Background:

Businesses have proven to be strong change agents in education, when they use their capital and human resources well to leverage support and change. They also represent concentrated groups of community influencers who can be reached relatively straightforwardly. A few communities in the country have shown tremendous results when corporate leaders used peer pressure to create strong involvement from businesses. Our own community has some excellent examples of corporate leadership, for instance in the Chamber's Financial Aid Saturdays. But some corporations and corporate leaders are much more involved and influential than others.

Research what engagement models are working best in our own region and throughout the country work best in medium and large corporate environments, then work through corporate leaders to strengthen the business culture of supporting education and adopting policies that promote educational involvement and higher outcomes.

Target Audiences:

Business Leaders; employees through their corporate policies and culture

Messages:

Businesses can be great levers in helping/changing education

Pros:

- Focused, deep leadership from business has been proven to have huge leverage in communities
- Could have significant impact in changing behavior on both an organizational level and individual level

Cons:

- Highly dependent on one sector of the community – businesses – which may be difficult to sustain in challenging economic times
- Would require significant coordination with all area Chamber and other business groups or other coordinating mechanism

Strategy 5:

Launch a New Media Outreach Campaign to reach students, parents and engaged influencers/creators.

Background:

Austin is a relatively young, very high tech community. In regions like ours, the most effective ways to market and outreach, and create communities of affiliation where they may not have existed, is very different than it was just a decade ago. Younger generations especially respond to interactive media, real time messaging, and information that reaches them whenever and wherever they are. These types of engagement can be much more focused on individual and affinity group interests and work more efficiently than broad outreach campaigns. Focus resources on online and social media (Wiki pages, Facebook, Twitter, Email Signatures, etc.) to create viral outreach and efficiently reach Central Texas audiences as well as interested influencers beyond our region.

In combination, utilize TV and radio media to local markets. A local TV station has offered its time and resources to support education outreach through targeted and repeated messaging through PSAs centered around the Blueprint, as well as related education programming that could be branded for Central Texas. A common format would be developed that incorporated objective data, personal stories, and a call to action to support education. The station may even be willing to share these PSAs with other TV stations to significantly broaden the available audience.

Target Audiences:

Social media outreach audience would typically be Tech savvy; younger generations, not necessarily just in Central Texas, but outreach efforts can be targeted to some degree. PSA audience would be much broader- students, families, and individuals that comprise education, business and community organizations.

Messages:

PSAs can contain many individual stories/data all supporting the Blueprint and how the community can own it.

With social media the messages can be varied, frequent and controlled. The online conversations resulting from these efforts cannot be centrally controlled.

Pros:

- If the messages truly go viral and can be sustained, it could reach lots of people, with individual and community ownership if successful
- Allows campaign to use relevant technologies important to target audiences

Cons:

- Raises awareness, but does not necessarily lead to tangible action unless we have a coordinated way to channel input and people.
- Requires dedicated resources to keep content current, engage in conversations on a timely basis and ensure messaging provides value to end receivers

Strategy 6:

Assist school districts and communities in creating an integrated communication strategy and engagement plan

Background:

Education institutions have well defined stakeholder groups (PTAs, community influencers lists) and have many mechanisms to reach out to these groups around bond issues, boundary changes, and many other needs. Yet they are faced with many challenges in communicating effectively with their own students/parents and the broader public, especially in engaging “hard to reach” audiences and balancing good and bad news without appearing disingenuous. In addition, districts and other education institutions very rarely have effective mechanisms to communicate common messages across boundaries, even though they have many common issues and needs.

This strategy would engage Blueprint leaders and PR professionals to help districts and other education institutions strengthen their own messaging and outreach while developing common tools and messages to reach much broader audiences more quickly.

Target Audiences:

Work through/with district community relations and leadership to get effective messages out to their stakeholders

Messages:

Education institutions and communities need to work well together for students to succeed.

Pros:

- Provides a common language from which all school districts and communities can speak.
- Educational institutions at all levels have often struggled to get to the most “hard to reach” audiences. By working together they could potentially develop more effective strategies
- Provide an on-going understanding of the changing needs of area schools so that plan can be adapted accordingly and timely.

Cons:

- Would be challenging to coordinate with limited resources.
- Might be difficult to scale.

Strategy 7:

Expand and utilize community deliberative dialogues process to deeply engage a diverse set of community change agents

Background:

Working with the Kettering Foundation, Texas Forums, and others, E3 Alliance developed a model of multi-night “deliberative dialogues” to deeply engage diverse stakeholders (students, teachers, business, higher ed leaders, parents, etc.) in developing common perspectives and plans to address educational needs in our communities. Over 1000 diverse community, business and education "change agents" in 9 districts throughout the region have already been engaged in their own communities to work together on local education issues and contribute to regional planning. This effort has been very successful and has been held out as a national model for engaging constituencies deeply. However, it is unclear how to keep the momentum going after initial dialogues process has been undertaken.

This strategy would include funding and staffing support to follow up local Community Plans once they have been developed through a dialogues process through ongoing community engagement and support. It could also include expanding the deliberative dialogues to new communities or with different constituent groups beyond school districts.

Target Audiences:

Community Change Agents (individuals who are aware of challenges in education and want to learn more about how to be engaged to move efforts forward).

Messages:

While each dialogues process has a common theme (e.g. closing achievement gaps), the messages and plans that emerge are varied because they are design by the community participants.

Pros:

- Dialogues have proven to be an excellent mechanism for engaging “unusual suspects” who don’t normally engage together on very deep levels – if you can get them there.
- The dialogues create not just deep conversations, but ownership of solutions to strengthen and support education institutions and students.

Cons:

- Deliberative dialogues are very resource intensive, and require at least 9 hours of time commitment by participating community members (much more for organizers), so are not likely to be repeated in a community more than once a year or two.
- Effective follow up to the dialogues process to maintain momentum in implementation of plans has been difficult.

Strategy 8:

Expand outreach to families and students through messaging and events that tie education to personal and community prosperity

Background:

The *Para Una Buena Vida* (“For the Good Life”) campaign (developed by CommuniCard) has been quite successful at reaching students and families to provide a common understanding of the economic value of education and how education allows students to provide a better life for their family. Focus groups show that tying high school and college graduation to economic outcomes molds higher expectations for students and families. To date, this campaign has been targeted most successfully at English Language Learners – the fastest growing demographic in Central Texas schools – through Spanish language media and education fairs. This strategy would seek to expand this messaging to other demographic groups.

Target Audiences:

The "retail" market of Parents and Students

Messages:

1. Graduate from high school for lifetime earnings of over \$1 Million dollars.
2. Graduate from college and earn another million in lifetime earnings.
3. Speak two languages for more opportunity and better pay.

Pros:

- Has been very well received by English Language Learner students and families- likely to work well with other groups
- Localizes the Education Equals Economics message

Cons:

- Raises awareness, but does not necessarily lead to tangible action unless we provide students and parents tools to be successful in educational achievement and attainment
- “Grass roots” messaging does not address significant other system needs in education

Strategy 9:

Work more closely with individual Community Based Organizations to better leverage the Blueprint

Background:

Over 40 organizations (Greater Austin Chamber, Austin Partners in Education, Communities in Schools, etc.) were part of defining and/or reviewing the original Blueprint Strategic Plan documents in spring of 2008. However, they may or may not have identified ways to align Blueprint strategies with their own mission, goals and services.

E3 Alliance staff and Blueprint leaders will engage intensely (at least one half day meeting with staff, discussions with board members) with individual community-based organizations (CBOs) and related partners and education groups to discuss the Blueprint, how it fits with their own mission, how the Blueprint can support their work, whether common metrics represent the outcomes they are trying to achieve, what strategies they might want to become more deeply involved with, etc. By doing so, we should be able to identify ways to leverage the Blueprint and resources associated with the Blueprint to help these organizations and at the same time increase their strategic impact on the region.

Target Audiences:

CBO boards, leaders and staff

Messages:

Our CBO's and our community all win if we collaborate and align educational efforts through the strategic framework of the Blueprint

Pros:

- Many organizations throughout the region would be more actively aligning with Blueprint strategies to increase impact of their own work and the Blueprint
- Working more collaboratively could identify additional activities already going on that support Blueprint outcomes, help smaller CBO's link to others, and potentially provide a platform to increase funding for this collaborative work
 - Example: College Forward, Breakthrough, and Con Mi Madre have been able to apply for new, joint funds to collaborate on college success of their students by working together in support of Blueprint Goal 3
- Opportunities to decrease redundancy in work across organizations
- Opportunities to leverage collaborative efforts to secure additional grant funds for participating organizations

Cons:

- Many organizations are so busy with their own programs and services that they may not have time to strategize, and may feel that collaborating through the Blueprint distracts from their current mission or focus
- Time consuming for Blueprint teams, while the indirect audience of CBO stakeholders may still be limited
- There are fewer CBOs in outlying regions so this effort may seem "Austin-centric".

Strategy

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Expand outreach to families and students through messaging and events that tie education to personal and community prosperity

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