



MAGNOLIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board Of Directors

Board Agenda Item #	IV A
Date:	November 12, 2015
To:	Magnolia Board of Directors
From:	Caprice Young, Ed.D., CEO & Superintendent
Staff Lead:	Alfredo Rubalcava, Chief External Officer
RE:	Quarterly Report of Media Coverage from Larson Communications

Proposed Board Recommendation

Information only, no action needed.

Review MPS Quarterly media report for the months of July-September 2015.

Background

MPS goal is to inform the Board about our media coverage for the months of July-September 2015. One of the underlying goals of this quarterly media report was to speak to local media in San Jose and Santa Ana in order to spur awareness about our school programs, thus, increasing enrollment in both MSA-SA and MSA-SC.

Budget Implications

No budget implications

Name of Staff Originator:

Alfredo Rubalcava, Chief External Officer

Attachments

MPS narrative and analysis of quarterly media report for July-Sept 2015.
Larson Communications Quarterly Media Report for July-Sept. 2015

Quarterly Report Analysis
Outreach and Communications Department
July – September 2015

Summary

The Outreach and Communications Department and C-Level team reviewed and analyzed the last quarterly report from Larson Communications based off of the representation of Magnolia's brand and push to increase enrollment at MSA Santa Clara and MSA Santa Ana.

In order to reach out to prospective parents in the neighborhoods around MSA Santa Clara's new campus, Larson secured both Spanish and English radio interviews with CEO Dr. Young and Chief External Officer Alfredo Rubalcava on KLIV – Silicon Valley News and Radio Kaliente. We also received positive coverage in the largest area newspaper, the San Jose Mercury News. Along with the effective communication around Santa Clara, MSA Santa Ana also received two positive features in the Orange County Register. The executed efforts in outreach done for both MSA Santa Clara and Santa Ana highlighted the impact that Magnolia can have on the community by bringing a quality, STEAM-focused program into these new neighborhoods. These stories will help bring about an increase in enrollment and give local authorizers a positive view of Magnolia that will likely result in future facilities decisions.

Overall, these positive stories gained traction and reached current and prospective parents, staff, authorizers and potential donors. Unfortunately, along with the positive coverage, we still continue to experience negative legacy stories around the misperception of the Gulen movement and inappropriate staff conduct, which somewhat mitigated the positive. Continuing to tell Magnolia's positive story on our own terms will be critical to overcoming these legacy stories, which, we believe will continue to be unfairly used by critics. Furthermore, as we move into the next quarter we will begin to utilize search engine optimization, which will allow our external audience to quickly and easily find us on search engines such as Google and Yahoo, and also pursue local human-interest stories. This brings our total for the year to 52 placements, with 38 positive and 14 negative ones.

Larson Communications provides a critical external communications and crisis management expertise that is necessary to move Magnolia away from years of bad press the organization has accumulated. We believe we're on the right track with their work. Their work has created momentum in the positive direction with regard to the tone and content of news stories about the organization, but it is critical we continue to generate positive stories to push the negative stories further down in search results for Magnolia. Larson is also helping our communications team build its social media reach, enhance the effectiveness of internal communications (to families, staff, newsletters, etc.) and be able to generate hyper-local news stories on events, positive trends and stories happening at individual schools.



MAGNOLIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Magnolia Public Schools Communications Report July – September 2015

Summary

In the summer of 2015, Larson Communications (LC) worked with Magnolia Public Schools to not only continue to proactively define Magnolia's brand, but to communicate more effectively to further drive enrollment at MSA Santa Clara and MSA Santa Ana. In order to reach out to prospective parents in the neighborhoods around MSA Santa Clara's new campus, **LC pitched and secured both Spanish-language and English radio interviews with Magnolia administrators and received positive coverage in the largest area newspaper, the San Jose Mercury News.** All of these stories were focused on MSA Santa Clara's facilities, drawing attention to the high-quality education that school provides in their new San Jose neighborhood. The goal of this local campaign was to help increase enrollment and give local authorizers a positive view of Magnolia that will likely inform future facilities decisions.

In Orange County, **LC worked with both the education reporters and editorial board at the Orange County Register to secure two positive news stories about MSA Santa Ana and Magnolia schools throughout the state.** These strong news stories for MSA Santa Ana showed that a respected, experienced education reform leader is now at the helm of Magnolia. The articles were positive and optimistic about the impact Magnolia can have on the community by bringing a quality, STEM-focused educational program there. Similar to San Jose, the purpose of the campaign was to help drive school enrollment, assist with future facilities issues and building general goodwill in the community for future expansion.

Overall, these positive stories continue to bolster Magnolia's brand of student achievement and success, appealing to current and prospective parents, staff, authorizers and possible donors. These past three months saw a total of **12 news placements**, with articles in the *Orange County Register*, *San Jose Mercury News* and radio stories. Furthermore, we contained a possibly negative story in the *Orange County Register* about perceived ties between Magnolia and the Gulen movement. This brings our total for the year to 50 news placements, with 38 positive stories and 12 negative ones.

While stories about Magnolia are trending in the positive direction, LC would like to point out that there is a broader challenge that Magnolia must address. Unfortunately, stories like the teacher who was arrested for conducting a relationship with a non-Magnolia student as well as legacy stories on the Gulen movement that mention Magnolia, continue to come up on the first several search pages of the schools.

Unfortunately, incidents like the staff misconduct situation are common in U.S. public schools. They generate strong interest when they hit and in time, move further down in the search results. The bigger issue is stories about the repeated claims in articles of ties to Gulen as well as old articles suggesting fiscal mismanagement. LC believes that the more we are able to generate positive media coverage and get Magnolia's story out on our own terms, the more effectively Magnolia will be at minimizing the impact. However, this is a process that will happen over time, and we must be prepared to weather the storm. The more we distance ourselves from the issues and allegations from 2013 and 2014, while continuing to raise awareness about the good work Magnolia is doing, the more these stories will be minimized. However, we strongly advise Magnolia to consider hiring a search engine optimization (SEO) consultant to begin work on minimizing some of the more damaging stories that come up when the organization is searched.

Improvements in SEO will be invaluable, particularly in the organization's efforts to increase enrollment and expand.

Media Placements

Charter Schools in Santa Ana

- [“Santa Ana has become a nucleus for county charter schools.”](#) *The Orange County Register*, Aug. 26, 2015.
- [“Education reformer turns sights on Santa Ana,”](#) *The Orange County Register*, Sep. 26, 2015.

MSA 3 (Carson) Teacher Arrested

- [“Long Beach man arrested after O.C. deputies say he had inappropriate electronic conversations with underage girl.”](#) *The Orange County Register*, Sept. 11, 2015.
- [“Carson teacher arrested in alleged sexual relationship with underage girl.”](#) *Daily Breeze*, Sept. 11, 2015.
- [“Underage sexting alleged; girls coach, Carson teacher faces chargers.”](#) *My News LA*, Sept. 11, 2015.
- [“Gülen-affiliated school in US stirred by teacher's inappropriate relation with minor.”](#) *Daily Sabah*, Sept. 12, 2015.
- [“Police Suspect their May Be Multiple Victims of Hockey Coach Accused of Sexting Teen.”](#) *San Clemente Patch*, Sept. 14, 2015.
- [“Mark Falkowski Goes From Classroom to Courtroom for Alleged Sexting with Girl.”](#) *OC Weekly (blog)*, Sept. 15, 2015.

MSA Santa Clara

- Interview with *KLIV – Silicon Valley News*, 1590 San Jose, Sept. 2, 2015.
- [“San Jose: Charter school seeks Southern Lumber site.”](#) *San Jose Mercury News*, Sept. 14, 2015.
- Interview with *Radio Kaliente*, 1370 San Jose, Sept. 21, 2015.

Miscellaneous:

- [“California, Speaks Immorality in Gülen Schools” \(Translated Title\) “California, Gülen Okulundaki Ahlaksızlığı Konuşuyor,” \(Original\) Turkishny](#), Sept. 13, 2015.

Magnolia Public Schools Media Audit

Overall, individual media audits of MPS' schools still produce results that reflect the network's recent troubles – especially LAUSD's investigation as well as mentions in anti-Gülen blog posts. The following reflects the news articles that came up in the first 10 pages of Google searches (not including public listings for the schools) for each individual school as of Oct. 30, 2015.

Magnolia – Reseda:

- Notable hits:
 - [Post navigation LAUSD charters score well on U.S. News & World Report list](#), *LA Schools Report*, May 15, 2015.
 - [Magnolia schools remain open but relationship with Accord changes](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 31, 2014
 - [Muralist Levi Ponce makes his mark on Reseda](#), *Los Angeles Daily News*, December 29, 2013.
 - [Magnolia Science Academy, Reseda- Crackhouse, hobos and skid row OH MY](#), *Magnolia Science Academy – A Gülen Charter School Blog*, November 22, 2010.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Reseda is most recently associated with its positive ranking from the US News and World Report. Other recent mentions of the school are mostly positive, with a few caveat connected to the history of the network. The only truly negative mentions come from anti-Gülen blogs.

Magnolia –Valley:

- Notable hits:
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
 - [LAUSD's financial probe of Magnolia broadens to six more charter schools](#), *Los Angeles Daily News*, July 21, 2014
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Valley has not been in the news often over the last few years. Most news articles that came up associate the school with the network's past scandals and LAUSD probe. The school is also negatively featured in anti-Gulen blogs.

Magnolia – Carson:

- Notable hits:
 - [Underage sexting alleged; girls coach, Carson teacher faces charges](#), *My News LA*, September 11, 2015.
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Carson was recently associated with the coach's sexual harassment scandal. Other news articles are mostly associated with the network's past scandals and the anti-Gulen rhetoric.

Magnolia – Venice:

- Notable hits:
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
 - [LAUSD Probing Charter Schools, Says They're Financially Insolvent](#), *Venice-Mar Visa Patch*, July 24, 2014.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Venice was mostly recently associated with MPS' scandals and LAUSD's probing, as well as the anti-Gulen rhetoric.

Magnolia – Hollywood:

- Notable hits:
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
 - [Four Hollywood Schools on State's Earthquake Hazard Report](#), *Hollywood Patch*, April 8, 2011.
 - [Gulen Charter Schools BOOMING h1-b Visa Fraud contributes to Homeless and laid off American Teachers](#), *Gulen Charter Schools in the USA*, December 20, 2010
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Hollywood's news audit produces mostly negative news placements in regards to MPS' scandals and the anti-Gulen rhetoric.

MSA – Palms:

- Notable hits:
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
 - [Judge blocks LAUSD from shutting down Magnolia charter schools in Northridge, Palms](#), *The Los Angeles Daily News*, July 25, 2014.
 - [Judge questions legality of LAUSD's effort to close Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 24, 2015.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Palms' news audit produces mostly placement related to LAUSD's probe of MPS.

MSA – Van Nuys

- Notable hits:
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
 - [Live Coverage: LAUSD in court trying to close Magnolia Science Academy charter schools](#), *Los Angeles Daily News*, July 17, 2015.
 - [Judge questions legality of LAUSD's effort to close Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 24, 2015.
 - [US Charter School Muslim Founder Fethullah Gülen: "Explode yourselves like a bomb against the US"](#), *Freedom Outpost*, December 26, 2014.
 - [LA Charter Schools Face Closure Amid Financial Questions](#), *CBS Los Angeles*, July 21, 2014.
 - [Exclusive: FBI Whistleblower and Teacher Expose Islamic Gülen Movement Infiltrating U.S. Through Charter Schools](#), *Truth in Media*, July 28, 2014.
 - [LA Judge Grants Injunction to Keep Magnolia Charter Schools Open](#), *Educationnews.org*, July 29, 2014.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Van Nuys is mostly associated with LAUSD's probe of MPS and anti-Gülen rhetoric.

MSA – Bell

- Notable hits:
 - [JUST IN: LAUSD expands probe into Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 17, 2015.
 - [Judge questions legality of LAUSD's effort to close Magnolia charter schools](#), *LA Schools Report*, July 24, 2015.
 - [L.A. Unified ends effort to close embattled charter schools](#), *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 2015.
 - [US Charter School Muslim Founder Fethullah Gülen: "Explode yourselves like a bomb against the US"](#), *Freedom Outpost*, December 26, 2014.
 - [Sheriff Leroy Baca to Deliver Keynote Address At Magnolia Science Academy](#), *The Street*, May 24, 2010.
 - [Exclusive: FBI Whistleblower and Teacher Expose Islamic Gülen Movement Infiltrating U.S. Through Charter Schools](#), *Truth in Media*, July 28, 2014.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-Bell is mostly associated with LAUSD's probe of MPS and anti-Gülen rhetoric.

MSA – San Diego

- Notable hits:
 - [Magnolia charter troubles having an impact beyond LA Unified](#), *LA School Report*, July 18, 2014.
 - [Parents hot about charter schools without AC](#), *Fox 5 San Diego*, Sept. 4, 2013.
 - [Scott Barnett vs. San Diego Unified is the Least Surprising Fight Ever](#), *Voice of San Diego*, Jan. 27, 2015.
 - [Sale of San Carlos land puts charter school in limbo](#), *La Mesa Courier*, Jun. 26, 2015.
 - [One in Custody, All Lockdowns at San Diego-Area School Lifted](#), *NBC 7 San Diego*, Mar. 6, 2015.
 - [US Charter School Muslim Founder Fethullah Gülen: "Explode yourselves like a bomb against the US"](#), *Freedom Outpost*, December 26, 2014.
 - [Classes Resume After Security Threats At 5 San Diego County Schools](#), *KPBS*, Mar. 6, 2015.
- Analysis:
 - MSA-San Diego's news audit produces mostly recent news placement about troubles at the schools (e.g. security threat, facility), as well as anti-Gülen rhetoric.

MSA – Santa Clara

- Notable hits:
 - [Santa Clara County School Board extends charter for Magnolia Science Academy](#), *San Jose Mercury News*, Jan. 24, 2015.

- [Magnolia charter troubles having an impact beyond LA Unified](#), *LA School Report*, July 18, 2014.
 - [Santa Clara Middle School Holds Medieval Catapulting Competition](#), *ABC 7 News*, Apr. 02, 2015.
 - [CA Charter Schools Linked to Reclusive Turkish Imam Face Closure](#), *Nonprofit Quarterly*, Jul. 23, 2014.
 - [Middle College GPA Screw-Up Has Lasting Consequences for Students](#), *The Santa Clara Weekly*, Mar. 18, 2015.
 - [US Charter School Muslim Founder Fethullah Gülen: “Explode yourselves like a bomb against the US”](#), *Freedom Outpost*, December 26, 2014.
- Analysis:
- MSA-Santa Clara’s media audit produces mostly placements about the school’s troubles as well as anti-Gülen’s rhetoric.

MSA – Santa Ana

- Notable hits:
- [Santa Ana has become a nucleus for county charter schools](#), *OC Register*, Aug. 28, 2015.
 - [SAUSD considering a charter school that may be part of a Turkish Islamic sect](#), *New Santa Ana*, Aug. 26, 2013.
 - [CA Charter Schools Linked to Reclusive Turkish Imam Face Closure](#), *Nonprofit Quarterly*, Jul. 23, 2014.
 - [US Charter School Muslim Founder Fethullah Gülen: “Explode yourselves like a bomb against the US”](#), *Freedom Outpost*, December 26, 2014.
 - [Charters Face Difficult Odds](#), *The Howler*, Sept. 20, 2015.
 - [LAUSD Probing Charter Schools Says They’re Financially Insolvent](#), *Patch*, Jul. 24, 2014.
- Analysis:
- Besides one positive mention in an article about the charter school boom in Santa Ana county, MSA-Santa Ana’s media audit produces mostly placements about MPS’ troubles and anti-Gülen rhetoric.

Next Steps

This fall, we recommend continuing our work building on the positive momentum created through the first half of the year with proactive media campaigns. These stories will range from highlighting student accomplishments to reinforcing Magnolia’s financial responsibility and stability through independent sources. LC recommends continuing this momentum by utilizing the communications plan that’s now in place as well as augmenting that plan with a strategic social media plan as well as SEO work.

LC is currently working with the Magnolia team to strengthen social media platforms and makes sure that all messaging is aligned with the messaging and goals of the Magnolia strategic communications plan. This includes prioritizing social media platforms, making branding more consistent and aligning stories between platforms. LC will also continue to provide strategic counsel on both internal and external communications which will further Magnolia’s ability to serve students and families.

In an effort to further drive positive coverage of Magnolia, LC recommends getting coverage for feel-good human-interest stories, like the student who is courageously battling Leukemia and the efforts her school is making to keep her engaged in her classroom work while she undergoes treatment. Also, we recommend proactively announcing Magnolia’s intentions in Nevada. We will pitch an op-ed by Caprice on the importance of tailoring instruction to gifted students, while also continuing our support to the Magnolia communications team to help them generate community news coverage of local school events.

If we continue to proactively push out positive stories that gain attention, we will build our brand as that of a high-performing, STEM-focused school system preparing students for college and career. LC is confident that together we can continue to mine and pitch these stories, spreading awareness of Magnolia’s brand and pave the path towards the organization serving even more students.