



Navigator Schools Communications Proposal

TO: Caprice Young Kirsten Carr
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Navigator Schools Navigator Schools

FROM: Gary Larson Heather Vega
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RE: Navigator Schools' Communications Proposal

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Background and Introduction

Larson Communications (LC) is the only strategic communications firm in the nation specializing in public education reform. Since its inception in 2007, LC has worked selectively with groups that are committed to advancing academic achievement and increasing access to quality educational opportunities. We help organizations tell their stories and specialize in five key areas of communications: strategic positioning, public relations, digital recruitment and advocacy, branding and marketing, and social media.

LC works with education leaders and organizations across the country, including public school systems, charter school networks, education technology organizations, advocacy and research groups, and higher education institutions. Many of our clients are particularly focused on improving education for students in underserved communities. We raise their visibility, strengthen their narratives, and work closely with them to plan and execute communications campaigns that inspire their communities, so that they can have the greatest possible impact on students' lives. We also use our decades of experience in education policy and politics to advise clients as they navigate the challenges of education reform.

Larson Communications would like to support Navigator Schools to:

- **Strengthen internal communications to engage existing families, staff and external stakeholders, and**
- **Build awareness of Navigator schools in their respective communities to attract and engage potential students and families as well as soften the ground for long-term expansion efforts.**

What follows is a proposal for what we recommend based on Navigator's goals.

Scope of Services

Our work would be conducted in two phases:

1. Phase I (*the first 90-120 days*) will focus on the tools Navigator uses to share its story proactively. It will begin with an audit of all owned channels, resulting in a recommended plan of action to

strengthen the content, create alignment across websites and social channels, and provide training and capacity building to empower the Navigator team to own updating in the future.

2. Phase II (*After 90/120 days through June 2024*) will focus on building awareness and recognition of Navigator’s model externally through proactive storytelling as well as stakeholder engagement to soften the ground for expansion in 2025.

To do this work well, we must work collaboratively and flexibly through our partnership. This partnership will likely include the following elements:

Communications Strategic Plan

LC will develop a communications strategic plan for all owned and proactive communications efforts. To build Phase I of this plan, LC will conduct a full audit of owned channels (including websites, social media, stakeholder communication, parent apps, etc.) to identify opportunities, make recommendations and create an action plan to guide our workflow. As part of this, and in preparation for Phase II, we will also hold a strategic planning session where we will identify (or refine) Navigator’s key differentiators which will serve as the foundation for clear and resonant messaging and will be leveraged across platforms. We will also identify Navigator’s vulnerabilities and proactively develop messaging that addresses those while communicating a path forward. The resulting plan will include a calendar of all communications activities for the length of LC’s engagement with Navigator.

Aligning and Improving Owned Media

The strategic plan will guide our efforts to meet our Phase I goals. The results of our comprehensive audit of your owned channels will inform our approach to updating Navigator's websites, aligning and improving the network’s social media sites, and our recommendations for engaging with your parent community. This part of the work will ensure consistent branding and messaging across all platforms.

Once we build updated websites and set up social media channels, we will want to build capacity of the Navigator team to keep these channels up-to-date and engaging and pivot to proactive storytelling/ground softening.

Social Media Strategy and Management

Social media is a tool that allows schools to differentiate themselves and show their individual personalities while aligning with Navigator’s overall brand and messaging. Regular engagement with your social media audience will also raise its visibility in the community and with potential families. To do this well, owners of social media must have a plan that includes regular posting and engagement and aligns with network-wide themes. LC will execute a training for all Navigator team members responsible for social media at each campus and develop tools for them to plan their postings. LC will also develop monthly social media toolkits that include themes, recommended posts and tips for engaging with your social media audience. LC can also create content for and manage Navigator’s social media presence on an interim basis while identifying a long-term owner of this organizational function.

Proactive Communications Campaigns

Generating a positive cadence of visibility for Navigator’s schools – in Gilroy, Hollister, Watsonville and Hayward – will raise awareness of your success and allow Navigator to take credit for their good work. Proactive communications allow Navigator to define itself on its own terms, build affinity to the organization amongst staff, and support student and staff recruitment. LC will develop a steady cadence of announcements or targeted pitches that reinforce Navigator’s key differentiators. Resulting stories will be amplified using Navigator’s owned media platforms.

This work includes developing story ideas, interviewing internal stakeholders, producing press releases and pitches, conducting key staff media prep as necessary, and executing media relations.

Stakeholder Communications

Regular communications that reinforce Navigator's key messages to its stakeholders – including families, staff and external partners – keep everyone informed, provide an opportunity to celebrate successes and build affinity to the organization. LC will develop a calendar for stakeholder communications and work with the Navigator team to develop and execute each of the communications for dissemination. This can build off the work Kirsten Carr is doing to identify external stakeholders. Messages from stakeholder communications will be reinforced on social media so that Navigator's branding is consistent across all platforms.

Investment

To execute on the project scope laid out above, LC recommends a retainer agreement of \$10,000 per month through the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

Conclusion

LC is very excited about the opportunity to work with Navigator Schools to reach target audiences during this important moment in the network's history. We look forward to continuing the conversation about our work together. Please let us know what you think!