

Blair Ewing Center

IN IT TO WIN IT

Strategic Communications Plan 2018



Blair G. Ewing Center staff serve students with a variety of learning and social emotional needs in a safe and supportive environment. We are committed to delivering personalized, rigorous and engaging instruction, nurturing positive connections and using flexible teaching methods to promote critical thinking and college and career readiness.



Blair Ewing Center

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Introduction

The purpose of the Blair Ewing Center Strategic Communication Plan is to develop a plan focused on raising awareness and changing negative perceptions of the program.

About the Blair Ewing Center

The Blair Ewing Center, also known as the Alternative Education program, provides middle and high school programs for students who are not achieving at their potential for reasons, such as behavior and/or attendance problems, as well as for students who have been involved in a serious disciplinary action that warranted a recommendation for expulsion.

Challenges:

There have been negative perceptions of the program circulating around. Members of the community have shared that they believe the Blair Ewing Center is dangerous, primarily for African American and Latino students, offers a poor educational experience, and is located at an inconvenient location.

Overall Goals

The goal is for the district to make changes and officially launch the revamped program with a few changes in communications management at the start of the 2019-2020 school year. The changes proposed include moving to a new location; offer more online learning options, and a change to the school's name.

Objectives:

Internal Communications:

Suggested Goals –

Branding:

The first step should be geared towards being on brand and having a clear and consistent message that are delivered in one voice. Presenting our brand correctly is crucial; therefore, we need consistency with the logo we use, tag line, colors, key messages, and other images. These will communicate the kind of center we are – dedicated, passionate and engaging.

Actions Steps:

- Develop a consistent Internal communications plan
- Develop a stylebook or style guide and hold regular meetings/trainings to go over it with staff
- Develop key messages for staff and key communicators
- Rewrite Vision and Mission statements
- Change the three pillars to more action words like *“Dedication, Passion, and Engaged.”*
- Change the name of the center for a fresh start
- Develop clear and concise language for the use of automated answering systems

| |
|---|
| Questions to keep in mind when developing messaging: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Is the message passionate and enthusiastic?❑ Is it optimistic and forward looking?❑ Is it inspirational?❑ Does it challenge and confront the issues?❑ Is it persevering and prove our commitment?❑ Is it delivering results and show what we have achieved? |

External Communications:

Actions Steps:

Redesign marketing materials to create a brand image.

▣ **Press**

– **Press release**

This can be used when announcing new mentoring programs or other programs to the community.

– **Opinion editorial**

There can be a news section as part of the website, where people can access positive opinion pieces written by parents and other community members.

– **Feature stories**

Similarly, in the news section, we can have feature stories of those students who have achievement excellent grades. These stories featuring outstanding students can be a great way to show that the center provides positive outcomes.

▣ **Online**

– **Revamp website**

Have a more interactive and visually appealing website. The audience will be more engaged in reading about the center if they see pictures of students, classrooms, a homepage video, etc. The website should also be easier to navigate with downloadable PDF marketing materials people can download and read or print.

– **Visuals/Multimedia: video, slideshows**

Collect pictures from student field trips and classrooms and feature some of the pictures in a slideshow on the website's

homepage. That way the first thing one will see when going to the website is how the kids are happy and engaged in learning and exploring. Also, feature images that show diversity and not only portray African American and Latino students. The pictures should include all races.

- **Provide regular e-newsletter updates** highlighting students' successes, introduction of new programs or special announcements. A platform such as Mailchimp can be used at a reasonable monthly cost.

▣ **Social Media**

It would be beneficial to have a presence on the top social media outlets identified below. Social media has become a great way to create awareness, start a dialogue and influence others nowadays. Positive stories can also be shared on these platforms, which later can be re-shared by others. On the different field trips for example, staff and teachers can be tweeting as they go.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube Channel

YouTube Channel:

Each week, a student can be given the opportunity to talk about his/her experience and what he/she learned and accomplished on video, which will be posted on the YouTube channel. Visual storytelling is powerful and engaging, thus may change perceptions more effectively.

PSA's highlighting the positive of the programs can also be featured on the YouTube channel and shared on the other

social media platforms. This PSA can feature the community residents, the students, parents, staff, etc.

□ **Advertising**

Once a new location and name is launched, it is important to advertise on the following media outlets.

- Print
- Radio
- Television

□ **Print**

Have marketing print materials highlighting the programs ready to distribute.

- Brochures
- Posters
- Program reports highlighting the different programs

□ **Public Engagement**

It is beneficial to keep the public engaged and involved.

- Have events
- Town hall meetings
- Provide public input opportunities
- Develop outreach programs to distribute information and feedback on issues
- Telephone calls

Communication to the community:

Actions Steps:

- Develop a publication for district residents as it relates to the center
- Provide an opportunity for community businesses to advertise in the center's e-newsletter, which will

generate income for the center while establishing a relationship with the community.

Involve the community:

Involving the community with the center will help bring positive perceptions.

Actions Steps:

- Have volunteer opportunities for senior citizens to be a part of the center/school
- Identify influential students, parents and community leaders
- Have a district's update section in the newsletter highlighting the district

Innovations:

Introduce more online learning options that are efficient and cost effective. The idea behind this would also be to make students write more and improve their skills.

Actions Steps:

- Have more writing assignments posted online students can have a week to work on and turn in
- Have a discussion about a topic going and encourage students to interact and participate through writing short posts
- Other science-related disciplines can be thought online, too

Locations:

Actions Steps:

Make it Metro accessible:

The Blair Ewing Center is currently not located at a very convenient location for people to easily access. Those who use public transportation can have long commutes transferring from bus to bus. Changing the location of the center to a more “Metro accessible” location would make the center easily accessible and more attractive to others. Convenience sells.

Find a diverse neighborhood:

A second reason to change the location would be move to a more diverse area, where students from all ethnic/racial backgrounds can attend it. That will erase the negative perceptions behind only African American and Latino students attending it. Maybe moving it to an area like Silver Spring where there is a great diversity would be beneficial.

Target Audience & Budget:

| | Website Revamp | Rebranding/ Redesign Materials | E-mail communications | Events |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|
| Target Audience | Staff, community residents and parents | Staff, community residents and parents | Staff, community residents and parents | Staff, community residents and parents |
| Budget | \$12,556/one time | \$3000/one time | \$80/monthly | N/A |
| Timeline | 6 months | 12 months | Immediate | 4 months |

Evaluating Success:

To evaluate if these communications measures are impactful, evaluations and research should be contacted.

Actions Steps:

External:

- Perform regular research and evaluation on program successes, marketing materials, public engagements, etc. We can get feedback through monthly Survey Monkey surveys on how our communication is being received.
- Readership surveys of e-newsletters/publications (evaluated by email service platform, Mailchimp)
- Social Media reach evaluated by Twitter Analytics and Facebook Insights
- Website performance and visits evaluated by Google Analytics

Internal:

- Have monthly staff surveys about their experience adjusting to the new revamped program
- Have regular trainings to go over the already established style guides, as well as new ones

Conclusion:

In closing, these are suggestions for how to best position us for a bright future and a change in public perception. With proper execution, collaboration, and buy-in, we could maximize our strengths and attract positive opinions about the Blair Ewing Center going forward.