GOLDEN ACHIEVEMENT:
MARKETING/BRANDING CAMPAIGN

KANSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

LYNN GOEHRING, Marketing Manager
lgoehring@kcpublicschools.org • (816) 418-7201

KELLY WACHEL, APR, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer
kwachel@kcpublicschools.org • (816) 418-7624

STAFF SIZE: 10

DISTRICT SIZE: 14,710
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
In a city where there are several excellent options, Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) offers a variety of world-class educational options for just about any student. With themed magnet-style schools available for students across the district, along with high-performing traditional neighborhood schools, plus, schools providing specialized special educational needs, KCPS provides a school for just about any student. Even with the top-rated schools in the city, since the introduction of charter schools in 1998, KCPS has experienced a steady decline in enrollment. While KCPS had worked to stem the loss of students since 2018, the pandemic caused a 3% loss in enrollment from SY20 to SY21. To best combat the loss of enrollment, we developed the Focus School Campaign to purposefully promote the top six elementary and secondary schools that offered the greatest opportunity to secure new students. Along with opportunity to attract students, these schools are typically high-performing schools and have the capacity to increase enrollment.

Campaigns focused on purposeful marketing, reaching each distinct target audience where they live within the city via a variety of traditional, social, and online media outlets. Each school had its own story to tell; we developed consistent branding for the campaign using vivid, original student photos. “Why I love/chose my school” messaging accompanied the branding to highlight each school’s strengths, student-centered programs, and more. We used a mix of student and family photos to develop a personal connection and visual sense of word-of-mouth marketing. In addition, we wrapped in a component to emphasize everyone is welcome at KCPS.

RESEARCH:
KCPS has discovered multiple factors that drive enrollment and define strategies to improve recruitment and retain students. In multiple sets of research, key points were shared across the board:
• Parents indicated a major determining factor for choosing a new school was parent referral/word of mouth
• Showcasing the good things happening within a school, even incremental improvements, helps that school’s overall perception
• Families place the highest value on the quality of education
• While quality of education is important, families cite warm, welcoming school environment, along with school location, as extremely important when choosing a new school

PLANNING:
• Objectives: Promote each Focus School’s unique academic program to gain exposure throughout the targeted communities.
• Audience: Each school has a different audience. African-Centered College Prep best serves African American families located in the southern part of the city. Gladstone Elementary best serves Latino families from the north side of the city. With this understanding, each unique audience was defined in individual school marketing plans.
• Advertising Methods: Radio, TV, newspaper, billboards, flyers, social media advertising, social media posts, geofence advertising, online display advertising, community meetings, direct mail post cards, yard signs, events, etc.
• District Considerations: KCPS has a high mobility rate; a large percentage of parents move, causing a change of addresses, phone numbers, and emails frequently. Because of this, email campaigns tend to fail. However, targeted direct mail, redirected geofencing, social media posts and advertising, along with word-of-mouth marketing were more successful.
• Goal for Audiences: Increase overall awareness of each Focus School to meet or exceed forecasted enrollment projections, increase traffic to EnrollKC.org website by 15%, increase digital advertising impressions by 25% and CTR by 10%.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES & IMPLEMENTATION:
• Website:
  • KCPublicSchools.org school websites
  • EnrollKC.org marketing/landing pages
  • New Mover Direct Mail Campaign
• Advertising:
  • Newspaper Advertising
  • Radio Advertising
  • Billboards
  • Geofencing Advertising
  • Online Display Advertising
  • Social Media
• Community Engagement:
  • City School Fair
  • Open House & Virtual Tours
  • Kindergarten Round Up
  • Neighborhood/Church Handouts

EVALUATION:
• For SY22, five of the six focus schools started the year at or exceeding projected enrollment: a first in two school years
• Increased traffic to EnrollKC.org for the six focus schools from SY21 to SY22 by an average of 327%
• Increased digital advertisement impressions by 64%, click through rates (CTR) by an average of 124%
BILLBOARDS: Posters and Junior Posters
Boards nestled within neighborhoods with high foot or vehicle traffic, focused on messaging on either outperforming area charter schools or a general “Where everyone is welcome” message.

RENDIMIENTO SUPERIOR A LAS ESCUELAS CHARTER DEL ÁREA.
J.A. ROGERS: DONDE TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS.

GEOFENCED ADS:
As targeted families passed a branded billboard, they were served a mobile advertisement of that school next time they went on their phone.
EXAMPLES:

DIGITAL DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS:
Google Display and YouTube Ads
Advertisements were served up to targeted families and re-targeted based on set search/action criteria.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS:
Facebook, Instagram, Audience Network Websites
Social media advertisements served up to targeted families within various school boundaries.
Note: Some advertisements animated to reveal the full picture.
DIRECT MAIL:
Post Cards
Mailed to new movers and families within a specified school boundary.

NEWSPAPER ADS:
Advertised in neighborhood-specific community newspapers targeted specific audiences within school boundaries.

RADIO ADS:
Ran targeted radio advertisements on traditional broadcast radio as well as Spotify.
Click the link to listen to radio commercials:
- AC Prep
- J.A. Rogers Elementary